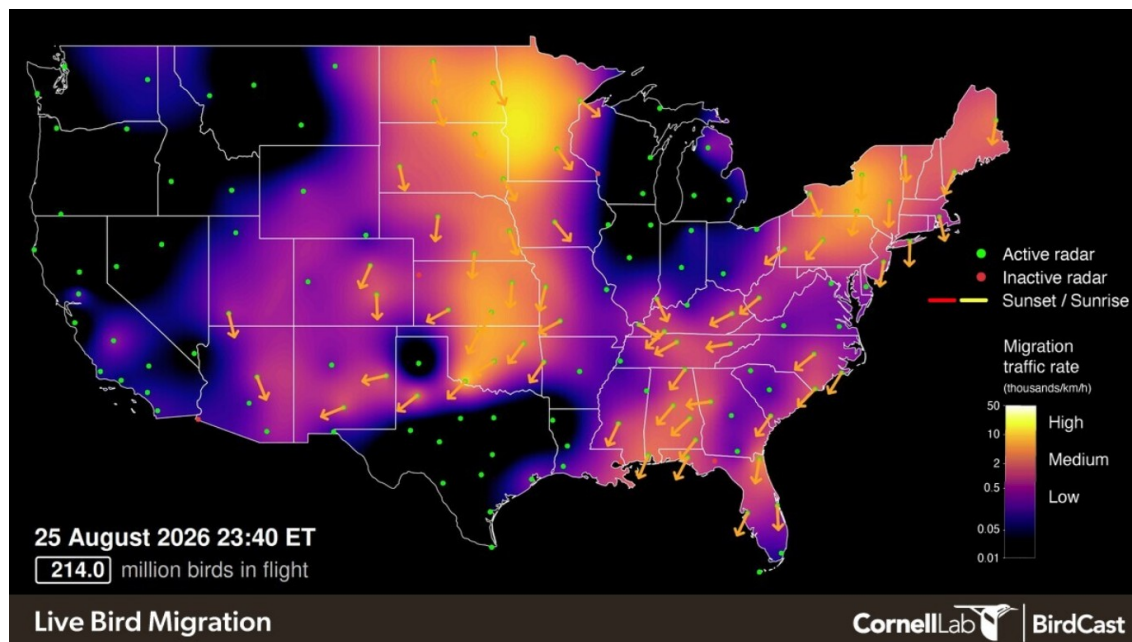


*Mission: Building on the tradition of special interest in birds, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is organized to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat.*

SEP 2026

VOLUME 56, NUMBER 7

## Fall Bird Migration



As the days shorten and cool, the roster of birds you are likely to find on that morning walk is also changing. Some have already headed south, and some are passing through Montana on their way south. This process will continue all fall, through November, until the number of likely bird species seen in Billings falls below 100, according to the Merlin birding app.

The study of bird migration has advanced in several directions simultaneously. Individual bird movements have been tracked using GPS satellite packs, and more recently, by Motus radio transmitters attached to individual birds. Population movements have also been studied, especially in the last decade, through big data-crunching projects using citizen science observations from eBird and Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD).

These advances have resulted in a free public website called [BirdCast](#) that displays live nighttime bird

migration all over the lower 48 United States, with information available by state or county. Cornell Lab partners with UMass Amherst, Purdue, and the University of Illinois to “use weather radar to detect and predict the numbers and flight directions of migrating birds aloft to support bird conservation and expand our understanding of migratory bird movement.”

*Submitted by Kristin Neva*

Join us on Monday, Sep 21, to learn about the secret lives of birds that stay with us all winter. **Karisa Boyington of Wild Birds Unlimited will present on “Caching Cousins,”** the fascinating food storage behavior of Chickadees and Nuthatches. YVAS programs are free and open to the public, at the Mayflower Church on Poly and Rehberg Lane. A social with coffee and cookies begins at 6:30 PM; the program begins at 7:00 PM.

## YVAS Events Coming Up!

### Programs

**Monday, Sep 21 YVAS Program:** Karisa Boyington of Wild Birds Unlimited will present on “Caching Cousins,” the fascinating food storage behavior of Chickadees and Nuthatches as winter approaches. YVAS programs are free and open to the public, held on the third Monday of the month, from September through May, at the Mayflower Church on Poly and Rehberg Lane. A social with coffee and cookies begins at 6:30 PM; the program begins at 7:00 PM.

**Monday, Oct 19 YVAS Program:** Dr. Marco Restani will speak on the 'Eagle Protection and Offset Program' implemented by NorthWestern Energy to aid eagle conservation.

### Birding Field Trips

**Saturday, Sep 19, Hawk Watch** on the Meeteetse Trail if road condition permits. Marco Restani will lead. Meeting place is the Red Lodge Town Pump at 8:00 AM. Updates via email to the “Bird Trip Notification List.” Brush off your raptor cheat sheets!

**Sunday, Nov 1, Yellowtail Dam Afterbay.** Meet up at Rocky at 8:00 AM. Ron Kuhler will lead. Raptors, overwintering songbirds, and a wide variety of waterfowl are to be found at this time of year since the Afterbay does not freeze over and fall migration is still underway for some birds.

**Saturday, Dec 19, Christmas Bird Count 2026.** Jerry Dalton will coordinate.



### Evening Under the Big Sky

September 19, 2026

Montana Audubon Center's annual community celebration and fundraiser, ***Evening Under the Big Sky***, returns September 19, 2026, at 5:30 PM, bringing together supporters, partners, and friends for an unforgettable evening along the Yellowstone River.

***Proceeds support outdoor education, conservation initiatives, and programs that connect thousands of children, families, and community members with nature each year.***

*Individual- \$95*

*Table (seats 8)- \$750*

*Childcare- \$30*

Visit [center.mtaudubon.org](https://center.mtaudubon.org) for more info and to purchase tickets.

### Montana Audubon Center Events

Learn more about these and other activities on the website: [mtaudubon.org/center](https://mtaudubon.org/center)

**Nature Nuts:** Every Tuesday, 10-11 am (Children ages 1-4 with accompanying adult.) Register in advance.

**Morning Bird Stroll:** Saturday, Sep 12, 8:30 - 10 am

Enjoy a stroll by the river and learn a few birds on the way. Great for beginning birders!

### Evening Under the Big Sky

Saturday, September 19• 5:30 – 9:00pm

*Submitted by Emily Chilcoat  
Montana Audubon Center Director*

## Is This a Young Herring?

I can misidentify an avian species as well as any other fledgling birder. Nevertheless, or maybe for that reason, when I stumbled upon the “Facebook Bird Misidentification Page,” I was hooked. In this corner of Facebook, bird identifications from other sites featuring typos, malapropisms, and wild guesses are shared and commented on. One of the group rules is “Be Nice,” and comments trend toward clever puns that hint at the more accurate ID.



Pileated Woodpecker  
Photo by David Margrave

The malapropisms are delightful—Least Bitterness, Oreo, and Affiliated Woodpecker, for starters. Novices often seem to have difficulty with herons, both in identifying them and then getting the word out correctly. Not only have a Wild Turkey and Common Loon been rechristened herons, but a Northern Bobwhite became a “Great Blue Huron,” which inspired the punsters with comments (“They have such superior birds in Michigan, it is eerie.”) And then there was a blurry photo of a gull with the caption “Heorn?” and another bird with the question “Is this a young herring?” Besides herons, a recurring theme is a variety of raptors receiving the fallback guess of “baby eagle.” Names of the hapless humans are blacked out before a post is shared to the FB Bird Misidentification Page.

The [Facebook Bird Misidentification Page](#) was created in 2013 and has about 35,000 members. “All are welcome to join, none are welcome to complain.”

My takeaway is that it is a good thing that people are noticing birds around them—in their yards, at their feeders, with their cell phone cameras and security cameras, etc.—and beginning to wonder about what they are seeing. An organization like Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society provides field trips and speakers that can help the newly curious. If you want to learn more about your avian neighbors, we encourage you to join us in learning. You are also encouraged to follow YVAS on Facebook (not to be confused with the Misidentification page!)

*Submitted by Ginny Waples*



Great Blue Heron CC photo



### Recycle Reminder:

YVAS members and friends, please recycle your aluminum cans at one of the **REFOREST** bins in Stewart Park, Veterans Park, or Cleverger Park in the Heights.

Larry Handsaker is no longer providing a recycling service, so please do not leave cans at his house on Avenue C for recycling.



## Dog Day Birding 8/9/2026

As I was driving east toward Rocky, the crimson hue of the rising sun was eerily beautiful, and the south hills and the rimrocks to the north were a hazy mirage, like a blurred landscape in a dystopian dream. The wildfire smoke and the heat were still smothering Billings and as I drove, I wondered, will anyone show up? To my surprise we had four birders show.

Our destination was Broadview Ponds. This departure from going to Big Lake was intentional, as Big Lake is evaporating and the shoreline and mudflats are so far from the viewing spots that they make shorebirding challenging. First, we took a detour on the road that goes to the Acton Recreation Area to scope for Burrowing Owls (thanks to Rebecca for this guidance to the side spot). When we stepped out of our cars, the first thing we noticed was a badger face sticking up out of a den and the badger was flanked by 3 coyotes. There was talk amongst us on how coyotes will take advantage of badgers flushing prairie dogs and ground squirrels out the "back door" of their burrow and the coyotes will be waiting to pounce on them. The coyotes trotted off but one waited at the edge of the field as if expecting us to leave soon.



Burrowing Owl Photo by Ron Kuhler

We were treated to a Burrowing Owl party! It was hard to get a count as every minute or so there would be an owl or two in flight. Some owls would be standing erect, and others were crouched low in the grass or maybe in a burrow with just the head showing. I guess there were probably a dozen owls within easy view of the roadway. It was interesting to hear the owl's click-clacking calls which was a first for me.

Our next stop was on the shoulder of the highway right outside of Broadview where we looked East to the sewage treatment pond. Perhaps a dozen American Avocets were feeding in the shallows, their spring rusty-colored head and neck molting to their whitish-gray fall and winter plumage. Wilson's Phalaropes were spinning circles in the open water, and they too have lost their spring plumage luster. Probing along the shore were Baird's Sandpipers and 2 Semipalmated Sandpipers. Countless Killdeer skittered up and down the alkaline-white beach protesting loudly with their namesake call.



Vesper Sparrow Photo by Rebecca Seago

During the short drive from the highway into the Broadview Ponds parking lot, a large mixed flock of Red-winged, Yellow-headed, and Brewer's Blackbirds lined the barbed wire fences and then before too long would flush into the air and would land in the stubble of a



Young Eared Grebe Photo by Ron Kuhler

nearby wheat field. A couple Vesper Sparrows clung to the barbed wire fence. At the entrance we heard the

## *Dog Day Birding 8/9/2026 continued*



Lesser Yellowlegs Photo by Ron Kuhler

trumpeting of a Sandhill Crane and watched a pair fly and land on a hillside across from the pond.

The most numerous bird species on the pond were Eared Grebes. Most had dependent young and were busy diving under the water and bringing up food for their greblets. Some greblets looked like they had recently hatched and some were nearly adult size. A few American Coots were around with young, and a number of duck species had their own families in tow.

Greater Yellowlegs was the most common migrant shorebird and I counted nearly 20. There were a few Lesser Yellowlegs mixed in with them. We heard and then saw a lone Solitary Sandpiper. The Black-necked Stilts were present in healthy numbers and several pairs had chicks. The chicks were almost the same size as the parents, except the black back was a mottled gray and the legs were yellow instead of pink.



Eastern Kingbird Photo by Ron Kuhler

They were already flying around the pond with their parents. We had 5 Long-billed Dowitchers that were still sporting the cinnamon breeding colors that we unsuccessfully tried to turn into Short-billed Dowitchers. A few Baird's Sandpipers hugged the shore, and we saw one or two Least Sandpipers. We observed both Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. A Willet flew by flashing its two-tone black and white wings. Two weeks prior, the pond was flush with spotted sandpipers, but today there were none.



Long-billed Dowitchers Photo by Ron Kuhler

After Broadview Ponds, we decided to drive the back way and go to the Big Lake area via Conover Road, which turns into Seitz Road. We took a wrong turn and headed north on Seitz Road and got lost in the best way. Along the way we saw many American Kestrels, Eastern Kingbirds, a couple Western Kingbirds, Red-tailed Hawks and near an old farmstead we got great looks at a Loggerhead Shrike. When you take Seitz Road north out of Broadview the flat farmland eventually turns into a series of rocky sandstone-studded hilltops. The hills overlook a beautiful and expansive valley. The road winds down into the valley and heads north through a green and lush lowland fed by creeks. Eventually we made our way back east to Highway 3 and called it a day.

*By Mike Weber*



## Bridger Creek Bingo - 51 Bird Species

Saturday, Aug 15, 2026

We headed out from Columbus in three cars carrying nine birders equipped with radios. Susan Hovde had asked us to choose a bird we aim to find during our Bridger Creek loop on this sunny, perfect day. Several people chose the Lewis's Woodpecker as their "bingo bird." Ginny chose Sandhills. Ross chose the Red-headed Woodpecker.

Driving along the Stillwater River from Columbus to Absarokee we saw Sandhills, Eastern Kingbirds, Red-tailed hawk, Turkeys, and a Goldfinch among others. One easy bingo down.

We crossed the Stillwater, turned west on the North Stillwater Rd, then turned NW on Stockade Road. Other than a few Pronghorns, raptors and prairie birds it was a little ho hum until we entered a mixed forest and burn area.

Bridger Creek was totally dry in some spots. Susan told us about the difficult foraging conditions for the bears due to the drought and late frost affecting chokecherries and some other food sources. In 2025, the conditions were much wetter for this trip, and we managed to spot a Northern Waterthrush.



Lewis's Woodpecker Photo by Tracy Enterline

up the road shouted "Red head!" The group turned and marched in phalanx to catch beautiful views of the Red-headed Woodpecker--a bingo for Ross and lifer for Sarah.

Some of us were captivated by a soft purring sound in the undergrowth to the side of the road, sure that a Ruffed Grouse would pop out at any moment. Our concentration was interrupted by Susan and Zach calling Bear! A young cinnamon-colored black bear had emerged a few dozen yards away, and once discovered, slowly headed up the slope, followed by 18 eyeballs and many clicking cameras.

Some headed back to Billings at that point, but the rest of the group drove further along the road to see another bear and three more beautiful Red-headed Woodpeckers!

*Submitted by Kristin Neva*



Red-headed Woodpecker Photo by Tracy Enterline

Then bingo! the Lewis's showed up. Also Spotted Towhee, Kestrels, and remarkably, a Kingfisher. (See Rebecca Seago's complete trip report on eBird.)

After a relaxing lunch that included a bombing hummingbird, we drove further up the road, turning into the West Bridger Creek drainage, Derby Gulch Rd with slopes of old burns on both sides of the road. We piled out, focusing on the Lewis's flying between the dead branches. Suddenly Tracy and Linda, who were further



Black Bear #2 Photo by Tracy Enterline

## YVAS MEETINGS &amp; PUBLIC PROGRAMS

**Next Board of Directors Meeting: Monday, Sep 14, 2026** —The YVAS meeting of the Board of Directors will be held from 4pm to 6pm. Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of the month. Board meetings are open to all members.

**In-Person Program: Monday, Sep 21, 2026.** Programs are held on the third Monday of the month at the Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. YVAS programs are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:30 for coffee and cookies; the program begins at 7:00 pm.

**Board of Directors**

President: Open  
 Vice President: Open  
 Secretary: Sue Weinreis granpeak47@gmail.com  
 Treasurer: Pam Pipal ppipal@charter.net

**Board Members**

Kris Decker krisdecker4@gmail.com  
 Carolyn Jones carolyn684@gmail.com  
 Kristin Neva ksneva@gmail.com  
 Bernard Quetchenbach bqetchenbach@gmail.com  
 Deb Regele debregele@gmail.com  
 Bruce Waage bruce.waage@outlook.com  
 Ginny Waples waplesv@gmail.com

**Committees and Assignments**

Christmas Bird Count: Jerry Dalton jerrydalton96@gmail.com  
 Facebook: Ginny Waples waplesv@gmail.com  
 Field Trip Chair: Carolyn Jones carolyn684@gmail.com

**(Committees, continued)**

Flyer Editor: Kristin Neva yvasflyer@gmail.com  
 Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center  
 406-585-1211  
 Membership Data Admin: Kris Decker  
 YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com  
 Mt Bluebird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones and Angus Fulton  
 carolyn684@gmail.com  
 angusfulton@gmail.com  
 Osprey Nest Monitor Coordinator:  
 Ginny Waples waplesv@gmail.com  
 Osprey Research Coordinator:  
 Marco Restani restani@stcloudstate.edu  
 Program Committee: YVAS Board of Directors  
 Publicity: YVAS Board of Directors  
 Recycling (aluminum): Recycle to Reforest Containers in  
 Stewart, Veterans, and Clevenger Parks  
 Website: Deb Regele debregele@gmail.com

**Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society**  
 Application for New & Renewal Membership



*Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 51-0206955.*

Please enroll me as a supporting member of Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS). I understand I will be supporting local Chapter activities and receiving the YVAS newsletter. I will enjoy full family Chapter benefits.

- YVAS is affiliated with the National Audubon Society, but membership payments and benefits are independent.
- YVAS cooperates with the Montana Audubon Center in some projects, but membership is separate.

Make check payable to **Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society** for \$25. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$15 and indicate academic affiliation.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want to receive the YVAS Flyer electronically?

\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO

Send this application and your check to:

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society  
 P.O. Box 1075  
 Billings, MT 59103-1075



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY  
AUDUBON FLYER**

P.O. Box 1075  
Billings, MT 59103-1075

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Chipmunk near Bridger Creek Photo by Tracy Enterline

## Membership Updates



**August reminder:** Mary and Bob Francis

**September renewals:** Emily Chilcoat, Lynn Halderman, Lou & Bridget Hanebury, Jan & Mike Kransky, Laurie Neuman, Kim Small & Jamey Schaub, Gail Speck, Borden Thomas, Ross & Ginny Waples

If you have any questions regarding your membership, please contact the Membership Administrator at [YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com](mailto:YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com).