



oice of the Meadowlark

Newsletter of the
Meadowlark Audubon Society
of the Big Horn Basin and Northwest Wyoming

Volume 17, Number 1

Fall 2016

President's Letter

By Melissa Hill



Hello Fellow Meadowlarks!

It's a bit strange to be writing to you as your new president, rather than just a member with a passion for sharing my love of raptors with anyone who will listen. I suppose being President means that now I need to actually do what I've been threatening to do for ten years – get better acquainted with the other groups of birds out there! That's where you come in....

I'm excited to be a bigger part of our birding community but I will need a bit of help from all of you. One of my main duties is to organize the speakers and activities for our membership meetings. I would love to know what topics you'd be interested in learning about, birding trips you'd like to take, and speakers you might know of who would talk to our group.

In our April meeting, I was incredibly inspired by our presenter, Zach Hutchinson, from Audubon Rockies. Not only did he talk about ways to try to

get children excited about nature, he emphasized that adults need to adapt and leave our comfort zones every once in a while as well.

I challenge each of you to step out of your comfort zone this year and help me make Meadowlark Audubon Society more active and more of what you want it to be! Email me with ideas, concerns, and questions you have. If no one speaks up, we'll never know how to improve and expand our group. This is **your** club, let's make it amazing together!

Happy Birding!

The Ponds in Powell

By Rex and Susan Myers

Have you visited "The Ponds" in Powell? Bird watching is new and improved. Locals have long known that Powell's treatment ponds are a great place to see water birds, but a city employee has now improved the experience with a pull-out, sign-in, easy-open walk-in gate, and actual viewing benches.

Directions: from US 14-A, turn north at the east edge of Homesteader Park (Panther Blvd. or Road 8); obey two stop signs and then the ponds start at Lane 7; continue to the two mile mark and signs that say "Authorized Vehicles Only" and "Not a Through Street." Now you have two options. You can consider yourself an "authorized" bird watcher and take the road beside that sign, or you can drive another ten feet to the "Not a Through Street" sign and take that road because you don't want to go "through" anyway. Roads join immediately, so either way, a short hill will take you to the top of the berm. WARNING: you have to sneak up on the birds. Drive slowly; peek over the edge of the first

berm, and if you continue to ponds farther down, stop before the birds see you.

Plan B. If you feel “unauthorized”, continue down Road 8 another three-tenths of a mile and you will come to a small pull-out with a “Use at Own Risk” sign. It’s worth the risk. Park here, sign in at the mailbox register, go through the gate, and follow instructions to stay in designated areas. Again, sneak up the berm and see what is in the ponds on either side of you. Walk this berm to other ponds and pause at benches if you want to wait for jumpy birds to come back.

Worthwhile? We’ve been checking out the ponds for three years and normally see about three dozen species over spring/summer/fall. Migratory birds come and go quickly, as expected, and two years ago a misguided Osprey built a nest on an adjacent power pole. So far this year we have twenty-seven species. The usual locals are there, of course, but we’ve seen eared grebes, blue-winged and cinnamon teal, Wilson’s phalarope (saw red necked last year), gadwall, northern shovelers, lesser and greater scaup, avocet, brown-headed cowbird, California and ring-billed gulls, and several swallow types. Remember: it’s City of Powell property, so Cody types have to be especially respectful.



Last Children in the Woods

By Eric Rossborough

When I was seven years old, I took it upon myself to build a series of line camps in the woods behind my house. I wasn’t sure why I needed so many line camps a few minutes’ walk from each other, but this was what Daniel Boone had done, I had read; so I would do. I would go out and visit these places in the dripping Massachusetts summer, dragging a stick behind me which functioned as a rifle. These woods were a close together set of white pines, with

little living in them, but to me they seemed a vast wilderness. Surely I was the first person ever to go there; well, if not that, surely the first person in my family. One day I brought my father out to see my line camps. He was no hunter; he liked landscaping. He enjoyed spending his free time moving around big rocks in our yard into artistic poses, and planting flowers around them. But he seemed to get a kick out of my line camps; he may have even known what a line camp was, since he read me the book. They consisted of piles of sticks that I had arranged in log cabin fashion, coming about as high as my knee, and seedlings of red oaks and pricklers growing around. They might have looked like a blind, but they weren’t really high enough.

A few years later, my friend J.B. Bird and I built a shelter on an island off the coast of Maine. Motivated by a reading of *Old Jules* one summer day, I sought him out. He wanted to play whiffle ball; I talked him into building a fort. He and his sister Sarah and I hauled driftwood and piled up rocks for the front. The roof consisted of boards we’d found. We were so proud of our creation we sought out J.B.’s dad, Mr. Bird, and brought him to our fort. “Nice, boys,” he said, “but is that roof strong enough?” It was. We proved the fact by jumping up and down on it together while Mr. Bird looked on with an amused expression. J.B. went back to Oklahoma at the end of summer, but I kept an eye on our building, periodically going and sitting inside while a skiff of snow blew in through the window. It stood for years. Later a porcupine moved in and filled it with dung. The fort was only finally destroyed when someone built a trophy home on the spot, overlooking the ocean, where our home faced the woods.

Zach Hutchinson works as Community Naturalist for Audubon Rockies, and his mission is to get children outdoors. Everyone has heard the statistics. Children today spend an average of six plus hours on screens *per day*, and this is outside of school. Many think that number a conservative estimate. Obesity is epidemic. Each generation seems to know less about nature than the one before it. Books such as *Last Child in the Woods* have addressed this problem, featuring epigrams such as "I like to play indoors better 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are," according to one fourth grader. Audubon has seen fit to hire paid staff to address the problem, and Zach has gone after this target audience of disconnected (from nature, anyway) youth with great urgency.

“When you work with kids, you have to bring energy,” Hutchinson says. “That’s why I bring it all the time.” In the last school year, he has seen more than 4000 kids. “In schools today, there is less and less emphasis on outdoor ed.,” he said. “It’s all about the scores now.” However, studies have empirically and repeatedly proven that children who engage in outdoor education on a regular basis show increased scores in reading, science, social studies and math. The key is presenting ways to go outdoors that will appeal to children who have already spent the school day staring at a lecturer. “Nature walks tend to be passive, with people following a leader who points out this and that. This is not a good approach,” he said. “Adults tend to be analytical. ‘You should spend more time outside,’ is not a good approach. Instead you should offer fun activities as a positive. To engage kids, naturalists must recognize the fact that kids already spend all day in school staring at a lecturing adult, or a screen. How many people here still use the *Golden Guide*?”

I raised my hand.

“You do?” He looked at me. “The *Golden Guide* is thirty years out of date.” Zach pointed out that many of the common names used for birds in the *Golden Guide* are outdated. “That’s a problem,” he said. “Use up-to-date technology to reach kids on their level. Video games, smartphones, tablets, have all become more prevalent in the last ten years.” Birding apps, such as Sibley’s, are a way to reach kids on their level. Some young people, he noted, do prefer books, however. “Take a gander at what your kids like,” he said, “and proceed accordingly. You have to be a little tricky with this.

“We have to figure out ways to make Audubon events less like school. Structuring meetings around power point presentations is not a way to attract teenagers.” Better approaches include inventing games where children compete to identify birds, having them draw birds, having kids run half a mile, all the while identifying as many birds as they can. The annual Murie Audubon banquet this year included awards given out to young people, as well as humorous awards, such as one to the geologist who received one for having the best handlebar moustache.

At the Garden Creek Nature Center MAPS Program in Casper, kids get to be involved in a more personal way. They get to band birds, hold them, and let them go out of their hands. Boys and Girls

Clubs have been brought in, as well as summer camps and church groups. On International Migratory Bird Day, kids ran an outdoor migration obstacle course. The idea is to teach the basics of animal migration while getting kids outside. “The amount of laughter, the grass stains on their clothes, it’s so much fun,” Zach said.

Fresh air and better test scores are not the only reason for getting children outside. Biophobia, the fear of nature, is a growing problem among people who have no contact with the natural world. “I am shocked by how many kids are afraid of bugs,” Hutchinson said. “When I worked with kids from inner city Houston, I found they were scared of the wind. I did not believe this until I saw it.” While this is not such a problem in windy Wyoming, he noted that most of the kids he’s interacted with here cannot identify sagebrush.

“I just keep trying things, and I ask kids, ‘What didn’t you like about this? The reason I know they don’t like lectures is they told me,’” he said. “Look, some of these ideas might be terrible,” Zach continued. “But member numbers are declining. And the definition of insanity is continuing to do something that isn’t working. What do birds do? They adapt. And we have to adapt if we want to engage the next generation in the physical world.”

For more information about Zach Hutchinson and the services Audubon Rockies offers for anyone trying to get young people in the outdoors, contact him at zhutchinson@audubon.org or at 307-267-7560.



Postcard from New York City: Wildlife Notes

By Lee Herman

Greetings from the big city It is a misty moisty day today, it poured last night. As I was looking out the

window I saw what appeared to be an extra bump on the round globe atop the turret of the American Museum of Natural History. It is perhaps 150 yards from the apartment. I took my binoculars onto the deck and could see it was a hawk of some sort.

Unfortunately I did not have the camera. Indeed it was a hawk of some sort. Gray front and dark back. The light mist did make observation difficult. As I watched, a Mockingbird attacked it, swooping around and pecking at its back. For the most part the hawk ignored the Mockingbird. Suddenly there was another Mockingbird flapping around the hawk and finally a third Mockingbird appeared. I guess that the hawk finally got tired of the three of them swooping around his head and jumped into the air and flapped and soared away. It was a Red-tailed Hawk.



Yampa Valley Crane Festival

Craving cranes? Come visit Steamboat Springs and the beautiful Yampa Valley in Northwest Colorado for the 5th annual Yampa Valley Crane Festival-September 8-11, 2016. Witness hundreds of Greater Sandhill Cranes dancing and feeding in the fields. Enjoy four event-filled days featuring guided crane viewings, nature and bird walks, expert speakers, films, a crane and bird art exhibit, workshops, children's activities, live owls presented by HawkQuest, ranch tours, a community barbecue at The Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch, and more. Speakers include Nyamba Batbayar, Director of Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia; Barry Hartup, Chief Veterinarian for the International Crane Foundation; Ted Floyd, editor of Birding magazine, Paul Tebbel, crane biologist and former director of Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary.

Please visit www.coloradocranes.org or our Facebook page for a complete festival schedule

<https://www.facebook.com/YampaValleyCraneFestival>

Questions? Email coloradocranes@gmail.com

Ester Johansson Murray

Ester Johansson Murray, author, historian, and long-time member of Audubon, passed away on July 1, 2016 at the age of 97. The only child of Swedish immigrants, Ester was born in Cody on May 15, 1919. She grew up on Trout Creek on the North Fork of the Shoshone River. Ester graduated from the University of Wyoming, and taught at for several years at Cody High School. Her books include *A History of the North Fork of the Shoshone River* and *Red Lodge Meeteetse Trail*.

She was active in the Yellowstone Valley Audubon chapter in Billings and then joined the Meadowlark chapter when she returned to Cody in the late 80's. An avid environmentalist and outdoorswoman, she especially enjoyed the Audubon field trips and the Christmas Bird Count, taking part in it last winter. In addition to being an Audubon member, Ester served the Park County Historical Society as President, belonged to Westerners International, and other groups. She was known for being generous with her time in researching history for others. She was recognized by the Wyoming State Historical Society with an award for her books and published articles on Wyoming history.



Raptor Rescuers Wanted

The Teton Raptor Center is looking for volunteer Raptor Rescuers for their Golden Eagle Rescue Network.

Through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant, the Center is building a network of volunteer drivers, WGFD officers, pilots, veterinarians, and rehabbers to transport injured eagles in Wyoming to licensed rehabilitation centers, where they have the best chance of recovery. Wyoming currently has three raptor rehab centers: Ironside Bird Rescue in Cody, Teton Raptor Center in Jackson, and Wind River Raptors in Lander, WY. With the help of volunteer drivers, Ironside and the other centers can care for birds that would otherwise not have access to rehabilitation.

The Teton Raptor Center hopes that members of the Meadowlark Audubon Society, or other avian aficionados in your area, will be interested in becoming Raptor Rescuers. Volunteering typically involves transporting injured birds in kennels from a WGFD office to a rehabilitation center. There is no minimum time commitment, and rescuers can choose to participate on a case-by-case basis. While the network is initially intended for Golden Eagles, there will be opportunities to help other injured raptors as well.

“We are very excited to partner with Audubon chapters and other bird lovers in Wyoming to provide the best care possible for our injured raptors,” says Carrie Ann Adams, Program Associate. For more information, please contact Carrie at: carriann@tetonraptorcenter.org, or (307) 203-2551



Audubon Scholarship Award: “I feel obligated to preserve the land that has provided me with so much joy and adventure.”

By Zayne Hebbler

Snow covered peaks, vast sweeping valleys, and dense old growth forests. Environments where animals often outnumber humans, and where one can walk in a single direction for days and never see anything but true, untapped wilderness. For many, these words I write are merely something stripped from an old western novel their parents read them as a kid. But for me, this illustration is a reality. The rugged untouched landscape I speak of is where my family calls home. There are no skyscrapers, no packed interstates, or millions of people. Just pure, and natural land.

How many people get to say that they live next to nearly two million acres of wilderness? Being able to grow and develop in this environment has allowed me to look at the world in an entirely different way. These lands have instilled a love and appreciation deep within me that can never be taken away. As I grow up and look to begin my adult life, this love for the land has stayed true. I feel obligated to preserve the land that has provided me with so much joy and adventure. These environments are extremely fragile, and humans have become the main source of their difficulties. We have often become poor stewards of the land, and the land has seen many problems because of it. All these places ask from us is to be cared for in a sustainable and responsible manner, but we seem to have lost touch with this.



This is what is leading me to pursue a degree in Environmental and Natural Resources. With this degree, I will be equipped with the skills and information needed in order to protect these amazing landscapes. I am not sure exactly what I want to do when I graduate college, but what I do know is that it will mean fighting for and protecting land, and the animals within it that cannot stand up for themselves.

With the insane modernization of the world, people have lost touch with nature. I don't think that we are intentionally hurting the planet. I believe people either do not know what is going on, or have chosen to ignore it. That being said, my biggest goal for the future is to make these problems known. The fact that most people don't know about the continent sized pile of trash floating in the ocean, or the constant and ever worsening acidification of the worlds' oceans, is absolutely astounding. This kind of information should be known by all, and should not be something that people can choose to ignore. Everything that happens to the planet effects everyone in some way, so everyone should have the ability to know about these things, and have the ability to do something about it.

Humans and nature should not be two separate thoughts. We are connected in every way imaginable and if these amazing places disappear, then so do humans. I don't know what my future beholds, but I know that the world needs protecting, and I am prepared to be one of those protectors. I will do whatever it takes to be a good steward of the land, and hopefully teach others how to do the same.

Off the Grid in Australia

By Eric Rossborough

In November and December of 2015, Meadlowlark Audubon's John McGough got to spend two months in Far North Queensland in Australia, and John entertained us with his adventures there during the May meeting.

For the last thirty five years, John McGough's brother and his wife have lived in the rain forest of northeast Australia. Rain forest is not what you think of when you think of Australia, and indeed this kind of cover is atypical for a country that is largely arid. For years, John's brother and his wife commuted by foot through the rainforest to a resort they managed. Today, they maintain an orchard,

selling the fruit they grow, and also enjoy spearing fish and hunting wild pigs. Their house is accessible only by boat. John landed on a remote beach where Captain Cook attempted to land during his 1768-71 voyage in order to find wood to fix his ship. When John landed, the only people he saw were some indigenous teenage boys who were hunting turtles. John's brother came here as a Peace Corps volunteer and sank roots, marrying a Malaysian woman and establishing a mining claim. Lucky for him, the place was declared Daintree National Park later on, and now he has what amounts to a private inholding.



"I'm afraid you'll be seeing lots of flowers," John warned us bird lovers as he started his slides. "The cover is thick." And rich. The region boasts about thirty different kinds of fruit, including papaya, breadfruit, mango, Brazilian cherry, as well as avocados. The shore is lined with mangroves, salt tolerant trees adapted to brackish water and coastal conditions. Kingfishers live in the mangroves; blacktip sharks skirt the waters' edge. The fecundity of life here brings certain hazards, but the sharks do not comprise the greatest hazard: that honor goes to the box jelly fish: while adult fatalities are not reported, they do kill children, and if you tangle with one you could well end up in the hospital. Snorkelers and scuba divers deal with this threat by wearing wetsuits that cover you up completely. Saltwater crocodiles are in the area; up to fifteen feet long, they gain a greater proportion of human fear, but they do not pose the threat that they jelly fish do.

Many of the houses in the region are open-air. John asked his brother about mosquitoes. "It's no problem," he said. "The bats just fly through and eat them. They did sleep under mosquito netting.

Their home overlooks the Great Barrier Reef. John showed us photos of a stingray, which sports a very long tail. "The stingrays," John said, "will allow you to approach close enough to photograph. However," he continued, "the stingrays and blacktip sharks seem to hang out together." Being near one often means being near the other. While the Great Barrier Reef is threatened by illegal fishing, climate change and coastal runoff, among other things, the forest holds Tree-kangaroos. In years past they were very rare, but since the establishment of Daintree and other preserves in the area, Tree-kangaroo numbers have largely recovered.



Twenty years ago, on a trip to Australia, John tried bringing some deer antlers in. He got as far as customs. "The customs officials were two young guys," John said, "and their eyes got really big at the size of the antlers." John couldn't get them through. "I think they are on somebody's wall someplace now," he said. John did manage to leave Australia this time with a variety of seashells: this proved to be no problem. Some of them were quite large, and he had them on display for us.



Absaroka Outdoor Fellowship Hikes

Don't forget: The Absaroka Outdoor Fellowship, in conjunction with Meadowlark Audubon, has been sponsoring Saturday hikes. Hikes are chosen for a variety of interests and abilities. Participants typically break off into smaller groups: Some prefer to test their physical abilities, while others like a shorter trail and slower pace. This year Meadowlark Audubon has been sending along members on each hike to facilitate naturalist activities such as birding and botanizing. If you missed the first few hikes, it's not too late to get in on the action.

September 17 – Bald Ridge via Hogan/Luce Lakes – Moderate to strenuous 7 mile round-trip loop hike around a rock slab on the side of Bald Ridge. For those not interested in elevation gain, a shorter naturalist loop along the foot of the mountain will also occur. We should get some fall migrating birds. Rare plants will also be identified

October 15 – Ishawooa Creek Trail – Moderate 8 mile round-trip hike above Ishawooa Creek in the South Fork. We will travel through forest and open sagebrush steppe foothills. The trail is out and back, so participants can go as far as desired

Meet in front of Sunlight Sports, 1131 Sheridan Avenue, at 8 AM sharp.





Meadowlark Audubon Society of the
Big Horn Basin and Northwest Wyoming
P.O. Box 2126, Cody, Wyoming 82414

Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, 720 Sheridan Avenue Cody, Wyoming 82414. Information is subject to change, so please visit our website (<http://www.meadowlarkwyo.org>) for updates! If you would like to be added to our email blast list to receive notices and reminders about meetings and upcoming events, please contact Melissa Hill, eyriehill@gmail.com.

Thursday, September 8, 2016. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 13, 2016. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 10, 2016. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.