



oice of the Meadowlark

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

Volume 14, Number 3

Spring 2014

President's Letter



Dear Members,

Greetings and hopes for a better spring after our long winter! As was announced in our last newsletter, the Meadowlark Board held a three-hour strategic planning retreat back on January 25. Two non-Board members attended and offered their perspectives, which was wonderful. Over pizza and other good food, we plotted a strategy for the future. Great discussion on our failures and successes led us to consider challenges we face and how we can address them.

We have made many organizational and strategic decisions as we try to keep our society nimble and up to date with the changing times. We are a nostalgic group and we love the past, but we also can learn from our history. Like the variability of a Junco, we must be diverse to withstand unforeseen circumstances for survival. And so, we must strive to adapt. We need to

engage families and the next generation more than we have in order to grow our membership.

We need to be smarter and more proactive in our use of social media technology. And we need to think about where we should focus our time and energies most effectively.

Historically, we have concentrated on offering evening programs during our program year (September to June, with no meeting in December), with no formal activities during the summer. Yet the Bighorn Basin increasingly is seeing many more people during the non-winter months due to tourism, weather or retiree movements.

As a Board, we believe we can stay vigorous if we take advantage of the summer season, while still offering quality indoor programs to meet the needs of members who may not be able to take part in field trips. These thoughts led us to recommend the following changes as we go forward:

- Shift to a calendar schedule (January-December)
- Offer a yearlong menu of activities to better reach our membership and the public
- Reduce our indoor programs to every other month from September to May
- Offer more field trips throughout the year
- Offer weekend workshops and quick nearby birding trips to develop our birding skills together

After the May program, we will begin more field trips and advertise the proposed schedule on our website for next year.

We believe we should try these suggested improvements with our best efforts, and re-evaluate them after a year or so to see how they have affected our membership. If we find that these changes were not beneficial, we can consider changing them back. This is where your feedback will be very important.

Another critical issue occupied our attention during the strategic retreat—namely, Board membership. We are an entirely volunteer-run organization. Our Society's health and sustainability depends on members volunteering their services from time to time to lead the organization. Some Board members have served in their offices for several years. More rotation of Board members and Board duties will help minimize burnout; so, too, will better Board member recruitment and retention.

Along this line, after having served for nearly seven years, our Treasurer, Lisa Marks, has decided that she would like to step down while continuing to help the Society in other ways. Lisa has been a source of creativity, and her energy has been truly impressive. Among other things, she has managed the Society's operating budget, submitted our annual required tax forms, and administered our scholarship program—all of this while working full time! On behalf of the entire Meadowlark Audubon Society, I will say, thank you Lisa!

The Treasurer functions are the nuts and bolts of our Society. It may be the most important position on the board. So please, if you have some time, we can really use someone to manage our finances. Lisa will help train and orient you. Please step up and fill this much needed role. Contact any board member if you are interested.

Elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter, you will read about two individuals who have stepped forward and volunteered to serve on the Board. It is healthy to have new perspectives in this organization, and it's time for some new

leadership. If you are willing to serve on the Board, please make yourself known!

I end with an important goal of my own to offer the Society—fun! We should strive to have lots and lots of it! So let loose and remember why we belong to Meadowlark. For me—as, I'm sure, for many if not most of you—it is the fun that comes from loving birds and nature, and experiencing them both.

See you soon, at our next meeting or in the field!

— Destin Harrell

Annual Election 2014

It's time to cast your vote! Meadowlark Audubon Society's annual election of officers and directors for 2014-2015 will take place at the April 10th meeting. All members in good standing are eligible and invited to vote. Please note that the offices of Treasurer and Secretary are vacant and we need individuals to fill those positions. Additional nominations are welcomed and will be accepted prior to the vote.

President: Destin Harrell (1st year of 2-year term)

Vice-President: John Rumm (1-year term)

Secretary: (vacant, 1-year term)

Treasurer: (vacant, 1-year term)

Directors (1-year term): Eric Atkinson, Sally Disque, Donna Haman, Melissa Hill, Jarren Kuipers

If you are interested in becoming a Board member, please contact Destin Harrell, 307-899-0147 or destin_harrell@hotmail.com.

New Board Members



Sally Disque poses with Isham, the Red-tailed Hawk of the Buffalo Bill Center of the West's Greater Yellowstone Raptor Experience. Photograph by Melissa Hill.

Sally Disque: I was born in Birchrunville, a little village in northern Chester County, Pennsylvania. We had few neighbors growing up so my brother and sister and I made do playing in the woods and steam that surrounded our home. After graduating from Penn State University, where I earned my masters in Special Education, I taught middle school for 31 years. I realized my lifelong dream of moving to the West after fulfilling family obligations and getting a nice pension. I had visited Cody a few years ago and loved the town and its people, so after looking at a few other places, it just seemed to be the right place for me. I have been here since October 2013, and have loved every minute of it.



Jarren Kuipers. Photograph by Tara Kuipers.

Jarren Kuipers: My wife, Tara, and I moved to this area in 2009. We remain convinced to this day that northwest Wyoming is the best place to live in the whole country. I am a Certified Wildlife Biologist, with a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from South Dakota State University and a Master's of

Science in Zoology from the University of Wyoming. I operate Land Steward Services LLC, a wildlife and habitat monitoring company. Previously, I have worked as a conservation easement specialist, tall-grass prairie and sage-grouse biologist, and farm hand. In my spare time, I enjoy do-it-yourself projects, gardening, brewing, and all types of active outdoor recreation.

114th Christmas Bird Count

Cody Christmas Bird Count Report

This year's Cody Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 21, 2013. The day was overcast, with temperatures in the 20s and low 30s, and a gentle wind. Thirty-nine birders participated in counting along 16 routes, and four birders turned in feeder reports. Unfortunately one difficult route was not covered due to a prior injury to one of our long-time birders. Even so, the Cody count tallied 58 species, with a total of 7,325 individual birds reported.

A potluck supper was again held at the Christ Episcopal Church meeting room, with Chuck Neal leading the tally of the day's results. Birds represented by one lone specimen included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Wilson's Snipe, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Shrike, Gray Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Harris' Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow. One White-breasted Nuthatch was seen during count week. High numbers of European Starlings were counted, at 1,774, along with 1,702 Canada Geese. There were 19 Bald Eagles reported, and 7 Golden Eagles. This year no Sage Grouse were seen. In 2007 we had our first Eurasian-Collared Doves, with 23 reported; this year, their numbers have grown to 113.



Members of Bird Team #3, Cody Christmas Bird Count. From left to right: Kathy McDonald, Martha Kinkade, Ester Murray. Photograph by Bud McDonald.

Other participants included: Susan Ahalt, David Bragonier, Germaine Bragonier, Dave Buckles, Emily Buckles, Molly Buckles, Dorothy Bunn, Dave Burke, Claire Campbell, John Campbell, Greer Clark, Jo Cook, Barbara Cozzens, Sally Disque, David Dominick, Marshall Dominick, Alice Flyr, Dennis Flyr, Jerry Hager, Donna Haman, Kirk Haman, Joyce Harkness, Jan Hermann, Lee Hermann, Jan Hoar, John Housel, Kelly Idema, Micah Idema, Pete Idema, Lolly Jolley, Richard Jones, Jay Laffin, Marion Laffin, Carolyn LeFevre, Daryl LeFevre, Mac Lewis, Rita Lewis, Deb Marmon, Bernie Marsico, Jim Marsico, John McGee, Suzanne Morstad, Sarah Murray, Rex Myers, Chuck Neal, Grace Nutting, John Osgood, Dee Oudin, Laurie Pettinger, Lincoln Pettinger, Natasha Pettinger, Tom Pettinger, Jim Platt, Curtis Purcell, Jeff Purcell, Marlene Purcell, David Rach, Susan Richards, Mary Robinson, John Rumm, Nancy Ryan, Sean Sheehan, Donna Shippen, Dorothy Shippen, Gerald Shippen, Grant Shippen, Katie Shippen, Julia Smith-Lewis, Gavin Spierling, Holly Spierling, Laura Spierling, Randy Spierling, John Stafford, Lyn Stallings, and B.D Wehrfritz.

Thanks to everyone who had a part in this year's count, including the land owners who graciously allowed our birders to access their land.

—Joyce Cicco

Kane Christmas Bird Count Report

A calm, beautiful winter day greeted the 20 birders who gave up their Saturday to scour the Kane CBC circle for all possible candidates inhabiting this varied and rich bird landscape. The Kane Count Circle, created by Terry Peters in 1990, centers around the old town of Kane, extending from Moncur Springs on the west to Sand Draw near Lovell. The circle incorporates a good portion of the Yellowtail Habitat as well as private land.

Our teams found a total of 22,969 birds. That figure includes 13,092 starlings. Area 4 had as many starlings as the whole count had last year! A total of 51 species were found including two new species: Chipping Sparrow and Gadwall. The Chipping Sparrow is being challenged by National, and we are unable to document it. Flooding and freezing in Area 9 prevented that team from accessing the classroom area and river bottom, and therefore they missed some small bird and waterfowl species.

Teamwork makes this count successful. Thanks to the National Park Service for providing us with a wonderful facility at the Big Horn Canyon National

Recreation Area Visitor's Center in Lovell, and a special thanks to Shawn Williams who opened the doors in the wee morning hours and stayed overtime as we collected our data. Thanks to KaCey Ross for providing her delicious chili supper and to those who brought a dish to share. Finally, thanks go to Joyce Cicco, who reported our numbers to the National CBC. Teamwork—it works!

Five new birders joined our count this year, and three of the 20 participants were young people. We owe our success to our dedicated participants: Eric Atkinson, Ann Belleman, John Campbell, Jo Cook, Sally Disque, Tom Easterly, Alice Flyr, Dennis Flyr, Joyce Harkness, Ron Hitchcock, Jan Hoar, James Hobbs, Dennis Kaleta, Aaron Kania, Lily Kania, Jennifer Miller, Neil Miller, Suzanne Morstad, Rex Myers, Curtis Purcell, Jeff Purcell, David Rach, Susan Richards, John Ross, KaCey Ross, Nancy Ryan, and Zach Swope.

A special tribute goes to a longtime member of our birding team, Tom Easterly, whose untimely death saddens us all. Tom was the Wyoming Game & Fish Wildlife biologist in Greybull since 1992. He died February 20, 2014, while on a ski trip with friends in Montana. Tom was 50 years old. Not only did Tom support Meadowlark Audubon's efforts, but also he focused his career on ensuring that the Big Horn Basin native wildlife species were able to live in a sustainable habitat.

Tom played an integral role in the release and reestablishment of the bighorn sheep population in Shell Canyon and on Little Mountain, and on the introduction of Rio Grande Wild Turkeys in the river drainages of the Big Horn Basin. Tom chaired the Big Horn Basin Sage Grouse Working Group and was the liaison with University of Wyoming's sage grouse researchers in the Basin.

Tom served on the Paintrock Basin's Coordinated Resource Management Group and the Big Horn National Forest Resource Advisory Council to improve forestry management. He also worked with local chapters of Pheasants Forever and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Tom taught hunter safety, was active in the Hunter Mentor Program, and spoke with young people about wildlife biology as a vocation. Tom directed youth mountain biking clinics and did bike trail maintenance as a member of the Wyoming State Trails Council.

We all are shocked and heartsick to lose such a caring and talented young man. Everyone who loves wildlife in the Big Horn Basin will miss his friendship, his expertise, and his love for the land.

—Jennifer Miller

Consolidated Cody and Kane CBC Results

SPECIES	CODY		KANE	
	2013	2012	2013	2012
Trumpeter Swan		3	0	0
Canada Goose	1702	1105	2333	3119
Gadwall	5	15	1	0
American Wigeon	25	39	1	0
Mallard	506	936	2266	688
Northern Pintail	52	4	0	0
Green-winged Teal	22	15	12	11
Redhead	0	615	0	0
Lesser Scaup	15	1	0	0
Bufflehead	2	4	0	0
Common Goldeneye	86	150	4	32
Barrow's Goldeneye	144	121	0	0
Common Merganser	36	0	0	2
Duck <i>sp.</i>	62	1	0	0
Western Grebe	0	1	0	0
Great Blue Heron	0	2	0	0
Chukar	0	43	7	9
Ring-necked Pheasant	18	20	26	18
Wild Turkey	0	0	0	3
Greater Sage-grouse	0	3	0	0
Bald Eagle	19	17	18	24
Northern Harrier	5	4	23	29
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	1	1	0
Cooper's Hawk	1	2	0	0
Northern Goshawk	0	1	1	2
Red-tailed Hawk	5	12	12	25
Ferruginous Hawk	0	1	2	1
Rough-legged Hawk	54	53	49	66
Golden Eagle	7	14	6	16
American Kestrel	4	3	5	7
Merlin	0	1	1	2
Prairie Falcon	1	2	1	1

American Coot	3	2	0	0
Wilson's Snipe	1	0	0	0
Killdeer	0	4	0	1
Gull, <i>sp.</i>	0	3	0	0
Rock Pigeon	125	325	443	520
Mourning Dove	0	0	8	1
Eurasian Collared-Dove	113	96	51	167
Great Horned Owl	5	6	0	2
Long-eared Owl	0	1	0	0
Belted Kingfisher	1	1	2	3
Downy Woodpecker	7	12	2	7
Hairy Woodpecker	2	1	1	2
Northern Flicker	83	130	83	94
Northern Shrike	1	3	2	10
Gray Jay	1	0	0	0
Steller's Jay	2	0	0	0
Pinyon Jay	49	0	0	0
Clark's Nutcracker	2	0	3	0
Black-billed Magpie	247	313	25	123
American Crow	17	27	2156	1852
Common Raven	123	115	89	160
Horned Lark	103	11	63	164
Black-capped Chickadee	49	77	1	16
Mountain Chickadee	21	12	0	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	14	0	0
Brown Creeper	0	6	1	0
Marsh Wren	0	0	1	2
American Dipper	7	7	0	0
Townsend's Solitaire	15	19	5	16
American Robin	223	334	253	741
Mountain Bluebird	0	0	0	2
European Starling	1774	2097	13092	2237
Bohemian Waxwing	613	25	140	590
Cedar Waxwing	40	571	13	275
American Tree Sparrow	31	61	221	174

Song Sparrow	42	29	51	71
Harris's Sparrow	1	3	0	3
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	23	29
Vesper Sparrow	0	0	0	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	0	0	0	3
Dark-eyed Junco	57	61	83	84
Western Meadowlark	0	7	0	61
Red-winged Blackbird	7	15	1265	1270
Yellow-headed Blackbird	0	0	0	1
Brewer's Blackbird	0	22	2	7
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch	0	50	0	44
Cassin's Finch	0	6	0	3
House Finch	271	274	10	254
Common Redpoll	0	92	0	222
Pine Siskin	36	18	0	10
American Goldfinch	46	26	78	160
Evening Grosbeak	0	2	0	0
European House Sparrow	433	1091	30	304
TOTAL SPECIES	58	71	50	61
TOTAL BIRDS	7325	8554	22966	13383

2014 Spring Bird Count

The 2014 spring bird count starts on Monday, March 24th at 8:12 A. M. We begin counting one hour after sunrise each Monday morning for nine weeks. You can find the sunrise times on the Meadowlark website, on line, or in the newspapers.

We will meet at the west end of Taco John's parking lot to start bird counting, or up to a half hour earlier for a hot beverage or breakfast treat before we count. As the morning moves on we move eastward on Beck and Alkali Lakes and the Buchanan Wildlife Sanctuary, so if you cannot arrive right on time, feel free to catch up with us.

Hopefully winter will decide to give way to spring soon so we won't need our warmest clothes while we are out counting! If the weather is too cold or wet we will delay to a day later in the week.

Everyone is welcome to join us for some or all of the counts. If you are an ace at identifying birds you can help those of us who are not quite so knowledgeable, and if you are a beginner this is a great time to learn to identify birds because they are in their bright mating plumage which usually makes them easier to identify. Just bring your binoculars, bird identification books or spotting scope if you have one and join us. We are looking forward to seeing you there!

— Donna Haman

Wyoming Winter

We saw one eagle on the way
from Casper to Shoshoni
Ninety miles of two-lane west,
most people call it lonely.

J. Wesley Powell called it "Great American Desert."
Rainfall stops magically beyond the hundredth
meridian.

Irony is, it once was sea,
this plain of treeless tedium.

Now across this inland floor of sea
snow floats east in plume-like wakes.
Bitterbrush and sage
hunch to earth as microcosmic breaks.

The eagle is quartering,
hunting up a small ravine.
Windward wing upright, a sloop's proud sail,
rotating tail, a weather vane.

Some call this a "six-pack drive,"
measuring distance from bar to bar.
What thoughts have these weary people
as they press their speeding car?

Past Powder River, Hell's Half-Acre;
names on maps along the way,
Lysite, Lost Cabin and Moneta.
In Moneta two souls live yet today.

On a sudden, west above the skyline,
"Rising from the Plains" by John McPhee,
mountains back-lit blue mirages
float like clipper ships on the sea.

The western sky continues changing.
The black eagle flies alone in miles past.

Yet we see him as God's connection,
tying earth to sky, in this place so vast.

— David D. Dominick



Join Us for the 2014 Spring Into Yellowstone Birding & Wildlife Festival!

Once again, and this year as an official sponsor, Meadowlark Audubon Society is partnering with the Cody Chamber of Commerce and a host of other agencies to present the second annual "Spring into Yellowstone Birding & Wildlife Festival," **Wednesday, May 14 to Sunday, May 18**, in Cody, Wyoming. The festival is expected to draw visitors from all points of the compass eager to discover the iconic birds and wildlife of northwest Wyoming and explore its rugged mountains, picturesque river valleys and high desert plains.

Several Meadowlark Audubon directors and members are leading tours or hosting special events, including:

- Evening Reception, May 14, Draper Natural History Museum, 5-7 P.M., featuring special presentation by **Dr. Charles Preston**, Senior Curator, and **Melissa Hill**, Program Manager, Greater Yellowstone Raptor Experience, on "The Magnificent Golden Eagle."

- Greater Sage-Grouse Tour of Chapman Bench, an Important Bird Area, May 15, 4:30-8:30 A.M., led by **Destin Harrell**, Wildlife Biologist, BLM Cody Field Office.



Greater Sage Grouse

- Sagebrush-Steppe: Realm of the Golden Eagle, tour of Wyoming's Bighorn Basin, May 15, 6 A.M.-noon, led by **Dr. Charles Preston**, Senior Curator, Draper Natural History Museum.
- Friends of a Legacy McCullough Peaks Wild Mustang Tour, May 15, 1:30-5:30 P.M. and on May 16 and May 17, same time, led by **Marshall Dominick** and other FOAL members.
- Heart Mountain Ranch Preservative Hike, May 16, 6 A.M.-1 P.M., led by **Eric Atkinson**, Biology Instructor, Northwest College.
- Shoshone River Float, May 16, 8:00 A.M.-noon and 2-5 P.M., led by **Destin Harrell**, Wildlife Biologist, BLM Cody Field Office, and **Jarren Kuipers**, Land Steward Services LLC.
- Owl Prowl, May 16, 3-10 P.M., led by **Melissa Hill**, Program Manager, Greater Yellowstone Raptor Experience, Draper Natural History Museum.
- South Fork Valley Birding and Wildlife Tour, May 17, 8 A.M.-2 P.M., led by **John C. Rumm**, Meadowlark Vice-President.
- *California Condors*, special film screening, Draper Natural History Museum, May 17, 2 P.M. and 5 P.M., hosted by **Dr. Charles Preston**, Senior Curator.
- Wings of the Night, tour to a local bat cave, May 17, 6-10 P.M., led by **Destin Harrell**, Wildlife Biologist, BLM Cody Field Office.

For more information, a full schedule and updates, visit Spring Into Yellowstone's website, <http://www.springintoyellowstone.com/index.html>



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 in the basement community room of Big Horn Federal Savings, 1701 Stampede Avenue, in Cody. Please make sure to check our website (<http://www.meadowlarkwyo.org>) for updates!

Thursday, March 20, 2014: Board meeting, 6:00-6:45; Program, 7:00-8:30, Room FAB 65, Fagerberg Building, Northwest College, Powell. Presenter: Andrea Orabona, Non-Game Bird Biologist, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, *The Value of Counting Birds*.

Monday, March 24, 2014: Annual Spring Migratory Survey of Beck Lake Complex in Cody begins. See article inside for more information.

Thursday, April 10, 2014. Board meeting, 6:00-6:45; Annual Meeting and Program, 7:00-8:30. Presenter: David D. Dominick, former Commissioner, Federal Water Pollution Control Administration and later Assistant Administrator for Hazardous Materials Control, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Environmental Policy During the Nixon Administration: A Personal Account*.

Thursday, May 9, 2014. Board Meeting, 6:00-6:45; Program, 7:00-8:30. Presenter: Joe Harper, former biologist, Shoshone National Forest, U.S. Forest Service, *The Toilet Vent Pipe Screening Project (aka "Poo-Poo" Project) in the Shoshone National Forest*.

Thursday, June 12, 2014. Meadowlark Audubon Society Picnic, 6:00-8:00 P.M., Beck Lake Picnic Complex. *Please bring a dish to share!*