



# oice of the Meadowlark

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

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## President's Letter



Dear Members,

Through our Meadowlark Audubon activities we aim to help our friends, family and neighbors have access to scientific information, debate and

opportunity in nature. This is one of the primary reasons I am involved. It is a nice framework for volunteering and contributing to our community. Plus there are free goodies at our meetings!

I've been giving a lot of thought to "local effect" and what it means for our organization. I want to point out that our organization does carry weight and credibility because we are local. Your local knowledge of the issues is an asset for developing within our community a culture appreciative of nature. Your perspective on issues can mean a great deal to people you interact with.

Trust requires integrity. Our Society's integrity has been important in maintaining relationships with our community and we have done a great job of this. I've always been really impressed with every effort from our members. Be proud of your efforts, whether you are monitoring waterfowl at Beck Lake, providing a helping hand on a work day, collecting important data for the Christmas Bird Count, or giving a presentation at our general meetings. These efforts and many others do make waves recognized by many living in the Big Horn Basin. Your efforts set an example that

may really affect someone's appreciation of nature. Talk about local effect!

I think birds are a beautiful way of finding common ground with people as most people can appreciate at least one bird species. Birds were a pathway for my improved respect for nature over the years. For years, my favorite bird was the Pine Grosbeak. It was one of the few birds that would actually stand still long enough so I could actually appreciate it! Their secret ways were explained to me by people I know and trust. Since then, I have cycled through many favorite birds, but when I think about those Pine Grosbeaks, it really brings back memories.

Now think back to what your first favorite bird was. Is it the same? Has your favorite bird changed as your perspective has changed?

Happy Birding!

— Destin Harrell

## 2014 Christmas Bird Count Plans

The Christmas Bird Counts held throughout North and South America and the Pacific Islands are sponsored by the National Audubon Society. As a citizen scientist during the Christmas Bird Count, your observations identify species at risk, focus public policy, initiate conservation strategies, influence public commitment, and locate birds on the move due to climate change. Visit our website ([www.meadowlarkwyo.org](http://www.meadowlarkwyo.org)) for more information about Christmas Bird Counts in our area.

## Cody Christmas Bird Count

The Cody Christmas Bird Count will be held Saturday, December 27. In case of a blizzard, the backup date is the following Saturday, January 3, 2015.

The Cody routes are assigned prior to the count and participants receive route maps, bird checklists, and other information about the count in the mail. It is then up to those covering each route to meet up and cover their territory. At 6:00 p.m., we will gather at the Christ Episcopal Church, 825 Simpson Avenue in Cody, to tally the results of the count and then enjoy a pot-luck supper. Soup and beverages will be provided. Please bring a dish of your choice to share.

All levels of birders are welcome and we'll try to pair experienced birders with those with less experience. Since the count will be after Christmas this year, perhaps Santa will have left you a new pair of binoculars or a new scope.

National Audubon is no longer charging a fee to participate in the count, but a small donation will be appreciated to help cover the expense of copying, mailing, food, and a donation to the church for use of the meeting room.

If you would like to participate in the Cody CBC, please call Joyce Cicco at 307-527-5030, or email [jcicco00@tritnet.net](mailto:jcicco00@tritnet.net).

— Joyce Cicco

## Kane Christmas Bird Count

Hi Fellow Birders,

The Kane Count Circle centers around the old town of Kane and extends from roughly Moncur Springs on the west side to Sand Draw near Lovell. It includes a good portion of the Yellowtail Habitat. This year's Kane Christmas Bird Count will be held Saturday, December 20. We will meet at the Big Horn Canyon National Recreation Area Visitor's Center in Lovell at 7 a.m., at which time we will check in, enjoy a hot drink and muffin, and select a route. Each team will be given a packet containing a bird list, map, and other pertinent information. At sunrise the teams will cover their routes and regroup at 4 p.m. for a chili dinner and compilation.

Please drive a 4-wheel drive vehicle if possible. If not, we will try to pair you with a team that's in a 4-wheel. At check-in, we'll ask for your vehicle license number and description, and if you have a cell phone, its number.

Please bring binoculars, bird books, spotting scope, camera, lunch, side dish for dinner, warm clothing and footwear, hat and gloves, and plenty of water and/or warm drinks. A clipboard is handy to record your findings. Since the pheasant season is still open, wearing hunter orange is a good idea for your own safety.

Everyone is welcome—no expertise is required, so bring a friend! We thank the National Park Service for being our host. For more information, please contact Neil and Jennifer Miller, 307-568-9346 or by email [njmiller@tctwest.net](mailto:njmiller@tctwest.net).

We are looking forward to a fun and successful count day while helping out our feathered friends! See you on count day! Until then, good birding!

—Neil and Jennifer Miller

## Meadowlark Board Member Is Now a Book Author!



*Photograph courtesy of Capstone Publishing; used by permission.*

Meadowlark Audubon Board Member Melissa Hill is now an avian author! Melissa was selected

by Capstone Publishing of North Mankato, Minnesota, to write several books in two different series about birds of prey for young readers. The first set, which features diurnal raptors, is slated to be released in early 2015. The books are part of the Pebble Plus series from Capstone and are designed as reference books for new readers. The content is aimed at piquing the interest of children from kindergarten through second grade and engaging them with simple text and bright, colorful photographs. For more information about Capstone Publishing, visit <http://www.capstonepub.com/library/>.

Melissa wrote *Peregrine Falcons*, *Red-tailed Hawks*, and *Golden Eagles* for the series, which also includes books on turkey vultures, California condors, and ospreys. She has recently begun writing books for the second series, which features owls. She will write each book in this series, focusing on Barn Owls, Burrowing Owls, Great Horned Owls, and Snowy Owls. The release date for these books has not yet been determined.

## Local Gardeners Recognized as “Habitat Heroes”



*A view of the award-winning garden of Stephanie and Andy Rose, near Powell, Wyoming. Photograph courtesy of Stephanie Rose; used by permission. See full-color versions of this and other photographs of their garden on our website!*

Congratulations to Stephanie and Andy Rose of Powell, Wyoming, whose ornamental garden is one of 28 in the Rocky Mountain region, and one of only two in Wyoming, to be recognized as a “Habitat Hero” in the 2014 Awards sponsored by

the Habitat Hero Project of Audubon Rockies and the Terra Foundation, in partnership with Plant Select® and High Country Gardens. The Habitat Hero Project’s overall goals include growing a network of habitats for songbirds and pollinators in gardens across the Rocky Mountains and beyond, saving water, mitigating global climate change, and restoring joy in nature every day. Habitat Heroes develop “wildscapes” for songbirds, pollinators and other imperiled wildlife by creating diverse layers and shelter, growing natural food, providing water for drinking and bathing, controlling invasive species, and conserving water, energy, and chemical use. This year’s 28 Habitat Hero winners include examples from cities and suburbs, multiple family housing complexes and rural areas. Twelve awardees, including the Roses, were recognized as “Outstanding” examples of creative habitat restoration; Stephanie and Andy’s garden was named an “Outstanding Zone 4 Garden.”

Established starting in 2005, the Roses’ ornamental garden is situated in a sagebrush-steppe setting on 18 acres in the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming, near the towns of Cody and Powell. Enclosed by a low adobe wall, the garden surrounds the east, west and south sides of the house, and extends approximately 30 feet from the house. To the north of the house is a windbreak of *Pinus nigra*. Beyond the adobe wall are additional shrubs, trees, grasses and evergreens. Plantings include 10 varieties of grasses; 63 varieties of perennials, many of which are native and xeric; 2 varieties of shrub roses; 8 varieties of junipers, spruce and pine; and 24 varieties of deciduous trees and shrubs. An irrigation ditch and a small perennial stream provide water for wildlife and the garden. The Roses irrigate with hand-held hoses and small sprinklers, and limit “deep watering” of their xeric plants to one or two times per month. They do not use any pesticides or herbicides.

Creating habitat for birds is one aspect of gardens that Audubon Rockies wants to support through the Habitat Hero program. Stephanie and Andy note that the diversity and number of birds have risen each year as the garden has matured and the diversity of its plant species has increased. Among other birds, they have seen hummingbirds, sparrows, flickers, pheasants, robins and meadowlarks in the garden. However, as Stephanie writes, “I am not savvy or disciplined about identifying and counting birds. Solid data on our bird populations in and

around the garden would be great to have and share.” She and Andy would like assistance from Meadowlark Audubon in conducting a bird survey at their homestead. They are also interested in hosting a garden tour next summer or early fall, in partnership with Meadowlark. Please check Meadowlark’s website and future issues of the newsletter for more details!

— John C. Rumm, with information provided by Stephanie Rose and Audubon Rockies

## National Audubon Society Launches Major New Initiative to Help Protect North American Birds from the Effects of Climate Change

*Editor’s Note: With permission from National Audubon Society, we are reprinting several items from its new “Climate Science” website ([climatescience@audubon.org](mailto:climatescience@audubon.org)) about the Society’s 2014 “State of the Birds” report and its new initiative to help protect North American birds from the effects of global climate change.*

### It’s Time to Act!



*David Yarnold, NAS  
CEO and President*

Since its founding in 1905, Audubon has always stood for birds, and science-based bird conservation has been our core mission. Following in that tradition, our science team recently completed a seven-year study of the likely effects of climate change on North American bird

populations. The findings are heartbreaking: Nearly half of the bird species in the United States will be seriously threatened by 2080, and any of those could disappear forever. As global temperatures rise, as weather patterns shift, as vital bird habitats dwindle and disappear, familiar and beloved species will leave for more suitable locales or die out completely. According to our data, the Common Loon will likely abandon Minnesota. The Bobolink, a grassland bird, will find itself marooned in the boreal forest zone of Canada. Some birds are projected to lose all of the places where the climate is suitable for

breeding habitat—and, by inference, go extinct—a fate shared by the Baird’s Sparrow and the Chestnut-collared Longspur, the Eastern Whip-poor-will, and the Lesser Prairie-Chicken.

For bird lovers, this litany of ills is alarming. Rampant bird extinctions? Species leaving their home states forever? Still, within that same data lies hope, a fact that the Audubon science team has emphasized to me over and over again. For many species, the model has identified so-called “strongholds”—geographic areas that will offer shelter against the decades-long wave of climate change that is already washing over us. Those strongholds will be the key to many birds’ continued success in North America.

The computer model follows time-tested scientific methods to create and understand a range of possible futures. It’s the same modeling approach that forest managers, farmers, and even energy companies use to assess how multiple variables, such as temperature and precipitation, will affect growing zones, or to determine where to put power plants. If anything, it is a conservative model. Audubon is not in the business of using scary language or going beyond what the science tells us.

Our focus on urgent threats to birds is how Audubon has always worked. From the outset, we fought for groundbreaking legislation to halt the slaughter of birds for the millinery trade; the subsequent 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, supported by Audubon research, established our reputation as a science-based bird conservation organization. We built on that reputation in the 1960s through our efforts to monitor the effects of DDT on eagle populations. Today, just as it was in those two cases, the data is in, and the message is clear: It’s time for us to act—each according to our values, but urgently—to reduce the impact we’re having on our planet, and to preserve the habitat remaining for birds in a climate-challenged future.

We stress our collective passion for birds for a reason. Our love of birds is what brings a diverse base—from Alaska to Texas to New York—together under the same trusted name. Four in 10 of Audubon’s grassroots members identify as independents or Republicans, as politically moderate or conservative. That makes Audubon very different from most other national conservation organizations based in coastal blue states. And when we asked you if Audubon

should or must address climate change, 91 percent of you said “Yes.” That consensus, from a plurality of political voices, tells me that we all see birds in a similar light: as windows onto the health of nature, as unique and marvelous animals, and as part of the world we’re obligated to care for. In the 19th century the threat to birds was the plume trade. In the 1960s it was DDT. In the 21st century it is climate change.

One of the most challenging aspects to embracing the reality of climate change is that, for the most part, it’s invisible. You can hear chainsaws level a forest. You can watch backhoes fill in marshlands and see a subdivision rise. But it’s difficult to see the effects of a process that unfolds over the course of decades. It’s difficult to perceive the subtle shifting of rainfall patterns, of earlier flowerings that outpace the migrations of hummingbirds, of the slow degradation of marine estuaries due to the inexorable rise of the oceans. But all of those things are happening. For example, more than half of the marshland in the Delaware estuary, seasonal home to 1.5 million migrating shorebirds, has degraded due to sea-level rise and lack of sediment. Models predict that by 2100, 57 percent of that estuary habitat will have disappeared entirely.

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed. Blocking the logging of one forest is tangible and discrete; saving the planet from an invisible collective menace is not. But I’m not asking one person—or even a small group of people—to take heroic measures. I’m asking each and every one of you to join me in taking personal actions on behalf of birds. You know your local politics best. You understand the values that you and your peers bring to the climate conversation. Audubon works best when it works from the grassroots—we can’t and won’t dictate what the best path is for Minnesotans or Floridians or Californians.

What we will do, however, is describe the destination and the urgency we feel. We know that some of you will be most comfortable doing something concrete and visible—for example, planting native grasses or trees in your yard to replace nonnative species. Or you may be inspired to work with others to protect a local Important Bird Area. Even now, Audubon members are wielding sophisticated mapping technology (not to mention common sense) in local land-use planning. And if you’re inclined to act in your state on the big, tough issues like water use and renewable energy, go for it. If your

preference is to engage at the federal level to reduce greenhouse gases, we’ll support you.

Why? Because conservation doesn’t have a party. This isn’t a Democratic or a Republican issue; this is a bird issue.

Here’s my personal stake in this: I’ve been working with conservation organizations for a decade. For the past four years with Audubon, I’ve had the honor to serve teams that are pushing for habitat preservation across the Western Hemisphere. But the science described in this issue of Audubon has focused me like never before, and I’ve come to see that protecting birds from this peril may be the single most important thing I do in my entire career. I’ve met you, and you’ve told me the same thing. A year ago I spoke at a dinner in Lincoln, Nebraska, and during an after-dinner Q&A session, a longtime member of the Wachiska Audubon chapter challenged me: “I can’t look my grandkids in the eye about what we’ve done to the planet. When is Audubon going to put climate change at the center of what it does to protect birds?”

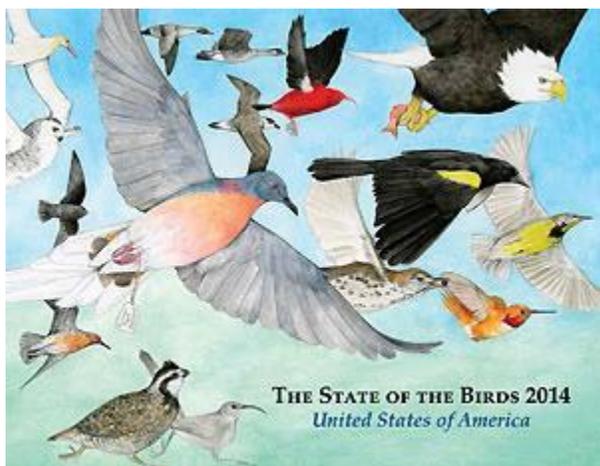
When? Now.

I speak for all of my Audubon colleagues when I say I want to be able to tell my kids (and, as of last November, my grandson) that I did everything I could to save their future and the future of birds. Together, Audubon represents more than four million people. Nearly 43 million Americans say they enjoy watching birds. I am confident our many allies will care about this groundbreaking science, so please share it with them. And then do something about it: You are what hope looks like to a bird.

— David Yarnold, President and CEO, National Audubon Society

## **Nearly Half of North America’s Birds at Risk from Global Warming**

Nearly half of the bird species in the continental U.S. and Canada are threatened by global warming. Many of these species could go extinct without decisive action to protect their habitats and reduce the severity of global warming. That’s the startling conclusion reached by Audubon scientists in a new study.



Copies of National Audubon Society’s State of the Birds 2014 are available at <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>

Of 588 bird species examined in the study, 314 are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and a further 188 species face the same fate by 2080, with numerous extinctions possible if global warming is allowed to erase the havens birds occupy today. Here in Wyoming, birds severely threatened by global warming include American Dipper, Trumpeter Swan, Bohemian Waxwing, Merlin, and Gadwall, among others.

“The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming,” said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. “That’s our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Global warming threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds – and the rest of us – depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively to avoid catastrophe for them and us.”

To understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them, Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed 30 years of historical North American climate data and tens of thousands of historical bird records from the U.S. Geological Survey’s North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Understanding those links then allowed scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive – and not survive – in the future. The study also reveals areas that are likely to remain stable for birds even as climate changes, enabling Audubon to identify “stronghold” areas that birds will need to survive in the future. The result is a roadmap for bird conservation in coming decades under a warming climate. The study provides a key entry

point for Audubon’s greater engagement on the urgent issue of global warming.

Responding to the magnitude of the threat to our birds, Audubon is greatly expanding its climate initiative, aiming to engage a larger and more diverse set of voices in support of protecting birds. Solutions will include personal choices to conserve energy and create backyard bird habitat, local action to create community climate action plans, state-based work to increase rooftop solar and energy efficiency, and our work in Important Bird Areas and other efforts to protect and expand bird habitats.

For more information about the report and its findings, please visit [Audubon.org/Climate](http://Audubon.org/Climate).

## Wyoming Birds Affected by Global Climate Change

The following tabulation presents data, derived from National Audubon Society’s eight-year study of the effects of climate change on North American bird populations, on the impacts of climate change upon Wyoming birds. For more information on Audubon’s efforts in Wyoming and this region, and to get involved locally, please visit [rockies.audubon.org](http://rockies.audubon.org)

Species	% Summer Range Lost	% Winter Range Lost
American Dipper	88%	58%
American Kestrel	72%	2%
American Wigeon	66%	17%
Bald Eagle	74%	58%
Barrow’s Goldeneye	97%	73%
Black-billed Magpie	86%	52%
Bohemian Waxwing	100%	52%
Brewer’s Blackbird	72%	25%
Brewer’s Sparrow	77%	9%
Brown Creeper	79%	20%
Bufflehead	79%	42%
Bullock’s Oriole	15%	95%
Cassin’s Finch	77%	68%
Clark’s Nutcracker	85%	75%

Common Goldeneye	61%	35%
Common Merganser	72%	39%
Common Raven	62%	35%
Common Redpoll	77%	38%
Dusky Flycatcher	73%	35%
Gadwall	92%	9%
Golden Eagle	79%	23%
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch		88%
Green-tailed Towhee	90%	8%
Hairy Woodpecker	78%	30%
Mallard	75%	9%
Merlin	98%	66%
Mountain Bluebird	78%	22%
Mountain Chickadee	71%	67%
Northern Harrier	86%	5%
Pine Grosbeak	87%	37%
Pine Siskin	60%	42%
Pinyon Jay	93%	67%
Prairie Falcon	90%	16%
Red Crossbill	71%	81%
Red-breasted Nuthatch	82%	42%
Ring-billed Gull	71%	32%
Sage Thrasher	86%	6%
Sharp-tailed Grouse	81%	59%
Short-eared Owl		91%
Spotted Sandpiper	57%	21%
Swainson's Hawk	77%	81%
Townsend's Solitaire	92%	23%
Tree Swallow	61%	57%
Trumpeter Swan	100%	67%
Vesper Sparrow	73%	8%

Violet-green Swallow	65%	38%
Western Wood-Pewee	74%	
White-breasted Nuthatch	79%	36%
Wild Turkey	49%	87%
Yellow-headed Blackbird	69%	64%

## Some Ways You Can Help Protect Birds

**Create a Bird-Friendly Yard:** Commit to creating safe spaces for birds in your home and community by using fewer pesticides, letting dead trees stand, installing bird baths, and converting lawns and gardens to native plants.

**Get Involved With Your Local Important Bird Area:** Protect the places birds need most today and in the future by pitching in with Audubon's IBA program, which identifies and conserves areas that are vital to birds and biodiversity. You can help with IBA restoration, cleanup, citizen science, and field trips.

**Put Birds on Your Community's Agenda:** Begin a conversation with your neighbors, colleagues, and local leaders about why it's important you to protect your community's birds, and share what you're doing on behalf of birds. Reach more people by writing a letter to your newspaper, speaking at a community event, or visiting a local school.

**Meet With Local Decision Makers:** Share this science with state wildlife agencies, city parks departments, extension services, and other groups that manage our natural resources to illustrate how global warming imperils birds, and ask decision makers how they plan to address global warming. For more information on how you can help decision makers to use and integrate Audubon's science findings, please email [climatescience@audubon.org](mailto:climatescience@audubon.org).



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. Information is subject to change, so please make sure to check our website (<http://www.meadowlarkwyo.org>) for updates!*

**Saturday, December 20, 2014: Kane Christmas Bird Count.** *See the website and article inside this issue for more details, or contact Jennifer and Neil Miller, 307-568-9346 or email [njmillier@tctwest.net](mailto:njmillier@tctwest.net).*

**Saturday, December 27, 2014 (back-up date, Saturday, January 3, 2015): Cody Christmas Bird Count.** *See the website and article inside this issue for more details, or contact Joyce Cicco, 307-527-5030, or email [jcicco00@tritnet.net](mailto:jcicco00@tritnet.net).*

**Thursday, January 8, 2015: Board meeting, 6-6:45 p.m. Program meeting, 7-8:30 p.m. Topic: A Biological Seminar on Trophic Cascades and Wolf Reintroductions.** *Offered by Meadowlark President Destin Harrell and Board Member Jarren Kuipers, this informal seminar, the first in a contemplated quarterly series, will identify and bring together individuals interested in occasionally digging deep into scientific research on biological topics that are locally relevant. All are welcome to attend and participate, regardless of the level of technical understanding.*

**Thursday, March 12, 2015: Board meeting, 6-6:45 p.m. Program meeting, 7-8:30 p.m. Location and program TBD.** *See website for further details.*