

MURIE AUDUBON'S

PLAINS & PEAKS

SEPTEMBER 2021 | VOL. 55 ISSUE 5

<http://www.murieaudubon.org> | Facebook @ Murie Audubon Society



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 24th at 4:30 (Occurred Already)

City Council Work Session about
Wetland Project

**September 9 at Izaak Walton
Clubhouse**

General Meeting
7:00 PM

September 11 at 9 AM, Morad Park

Field Trip to Goldeneye Reservoir

SPECIAL FEATURES

Teen Naturalist Club pg 5

Field Trips pg 6

A Yellow Northern Cardinal pg 8

FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome back everyone!

I'm so glad to be back and I have great news to share with you all.

First of all, the Murie board voted to have our general meetings in person this year! We highly encourage people to wear masks while meeting inside the building.

We will continue to meet at the Izaak Walton League Clubhouse, but we may change venues within the year. After various feedback, we've also decided to change the meeting date to the second Thursday of each month.

The Piggery project is progressing well. The Platte River Revival would sure like our support at the City of Casper's Work Session on August 24th, at 4:30. The more representatives we have from Murie, the better! There may be an opportunity of a work day for fence installation in September. Check out the website for more information.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon!

Jenny Edwards



GREAT HORNED OWL

Great Horned Owl - This powerful predator can take down birds and mammals even larger than itself, but it also dines on daintier fare such as tiny scorpions, mice, and frogs. It's one of the most common owls in North America, equally at home in deserts, wetlands, forests, grasslands, backyards, cities, and almost any other semi-open habitat between the Arctic and the tropics. Great Horned Owls have large eyes, pupils that open widely in the dark, and retinas containing many rod cells for excellent night vision. Their eyes don't move in their sockets, but they can swivel their heads more than 180 degrees to look in any direction.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Horned_Owl

BIRDS TO SEE

Say Goodbye To:

Townsend's Warbler
American Redstart
MacGillivray's Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Eastern Kingbird
Western Kingbird
American White Pelican

MURIE AUDUBON SEPTEMBER PROGRAM PRESENT



Triceratops, Sauropods and T-Rexs, Oh My! Or Why Wyoming was such a good place for Dinosaurs.

JP Cavigelli returns for our first program of this season. Jean-Pierre Cavigelli (JP) is Prep Lab Manager, Field Trip Organizer and Collections Manager at the Tate Geological Museum in Casper, Wyoming. A graduate of Lexington High School (Massachusetts, class of 1979) and with a biology degree from the University of Chicago (class of 1983), JP became interested in paleontology too late to get a degree in it. This led him to a summer spent in Wyoming in 1983 doing field work in search of small Cretaceous mammal teeth with a University of Wyoming team. JP fell in love with Wyoming but left for a five year adventure in fun and poverty as a ski bum and whitewater rafting guide in Colorado and Australia. JP came back to Wyoming in 1990 to be part of a paleontology field crew at the UW again. He stayed in Laramie working off and on in paleontology for 14 years, doing field work as well as a two year post as the Collections Manager for the UW's Dept. of Geology and Geophysics. He also was a fossil outfitter, running Western Paleo Safaris for six years.

For the past 25 years, JP has been doing freelance fossil preparation in his basement and garage. He has had the good fortune of having been invited to join paleontological expeditions to Mongolia, Niger, Tanzania, Alaska and North Dakota. In his 15 years at the Tate Geological Museum he has led collecting trips all over the state to collect small and large fossils from Dee the Mammoth and Lee Rex to microscopic mammal teeth (see above) and really old insects. When he is not involved with fossils, JP enjoys birdwatching, traveling, and failing to get on Jeopardy!. He recently got married to his supercalifragilisticexpialidocious wife Becky, and can smell retirement from his office door.

Wyoming is synonymous with dinosaurs to a lot of folks who give a hoot about dinosaurs. The American west was critical in the discovery and popularization of dinosaurs starting in the early 20th century. But have you ever stopped to ponder why? Why Wyoming? (I could ask Why Montana, but that doesn't rhyme and we don't care about Montana). JP will talk about why WY and more from a paleontology point of view.

Program Chair note: I suspect that JP didn't think that I would publish his total biography, but it reflects his personality, professionalism and why we enjoy having him back often as a guest speaker. Remember folks, we're moving to the 2nd Thursday of the month, but at the same venue. Please join us on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 at 7 pm at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse at 4205 Fort Caspar Road for this program. As always, the program is free and open to the public! Hope to see you there!

Bruce Walgren-Program Chair



Como Bluff

Wyoming State Archives

MURIE AUDUBON SOCIETY PRESENTS

MURIE'S TEEN NATURALIST CLUB

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BUGS AND
PLANTS, AND WILDLIFE?

MURIE AUDUBON WILL HOST MONTHLY
FIELD TRIPS BEFORE SCHOOL TO GET
YOU OUTSIDE AND ENGAGED WITH
OUR WILDLIFE. BREAKFAST WILL BE
PROVIDED.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED AND WANT TO
BE ON THE REMIND THREAD TO
RECEIVE TEXT MESSAGES ABOUT
UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS,
FOLLOW THIS QR CODE.



THE FIRST FIELD TRIP IS SCHEDULED
FOR SEPTEMBER 21ST, 6 AM, AT
NANCY ENGLISH PARK.

THIS GROUP IS FOR TEENS IN GRADES 6TH - 12TH. TRANSPORTATION TO FIELD TRIPS AND/OR
SCHOOL IS NOT PROVIDED BY MURIE AUDUBON SOCIETY.



FIELD TRIPS

I will send out a notice on wyobirds about the field trips and any changes, so if you get wyobirds you will be notified of any changes. If you don't want to sign up for wyobirds (which I completely understand), you can call me at 262-0055 or email me at hustace@gmail.com and tell me you are interested. I can let you know if there are changes or if the weather cancels a field trip. Also, call me if you have any questions about any of the trips, or if you have any ideas for field trips. Stacey Scott

Saturday, Sept. 11 to Goldeneye. Meet at 9:00 AM at Morad Park for a trip to Goldeneye to see if there are any late shorebirds or a Sabine's Gull. We should be back by noon.

Saturday, Oct. 16 to Gray Reef and Alcova. Meet at 9:00 AM at Morad Park for a trip to Gray Reef and Alcova to see what is migrating. We should be back by noon.

Saturday, Nov. 13 to Casper Mountain. Meet at 8:00AM at Morad Park. We will try an energetic hike on Casper Mountain with the objective of getting back about noon. The weather will dictate what we can do.

December and January. We will have the Casper (74th) and Bates Hole (44th) Christmas Bird Counts again this year. We will have more details later.

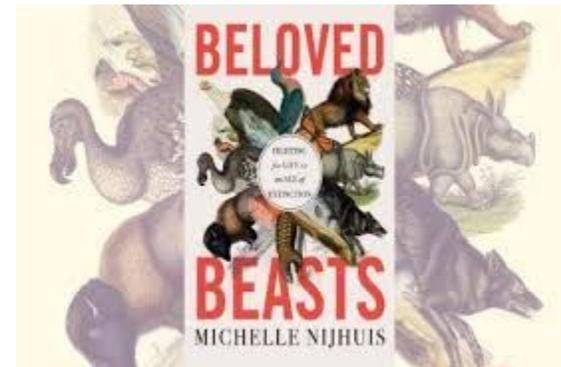
BOOK CLUB

Beloved Beasts: Fighting for Life in an Age of Extinction
by Michelle Nijhuis

***** 5 stars

This book traces the history of the conservation movement beginning with the plains bison. There are several chapters that discuss bird conservation and I learned about some surprising heroes beyond the Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. The storytelling is very engaging. Oftentimes, with books on conservation, I feel hopeless and full of dread. This book never cherrycoats the environmental issue and humans' role, however, I come away with hope that people can be helpful for the conservation movement in their own communities.

Jenny Edwards



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's that time again folks!

This is just a friendly reminder that September 30 is our annual membership and renewal drive. All memberships expire on that date each and every year, so this is our big push to renew current members and to encourage visitors and guests to join.

We would love to have you as part of our education and conservation team.

Features and benefits:

- Monthly Newsletter
- Education Programs
- Guest speakers
- Guided field trips
- Community projects
- Education Grants

You can be part of our citizen scientist efforts. You do not have to be a birder to join, enjoy, or take advantage of everything this site has to offer.

So, please, take a moment to sign up. The registration link is on our home page. We have on-line payment options for electronic payment, and of course, you can mail in payments using snail mail.

As always, thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Harry
Murie Audubon Society
Membership Chair



Eastern Kingbird

[© Frank Lehman | Macaulay Library](#)



Western Kingbird

[© Gerrit Vyn | Macaulay Library](#)

WHY IS THE NORTHERN CARDINAL YELLOW?

Yes, that is a cardinal. We asked experts how this redbird might have gotten its golden feathers.



“If you see one cardinal, you’ve seen them all,” said no one ever. As common as they are, Northern Cardinals rank among the most-loved birds in the eastern United States (unless you’re a Chicago Cubs fan). The National Audubon Society should know: Our Facebook followers can’t seem to get enough of them.

So, it’s no surprise when a cardinal turns heads—except in Charlie Stephenson’s case, where that double take may have resulted in some whiplash. Back in January, she found an impossibly bright male in her backyard in Alabaster, Alabama. But instead of the typical ruby-red color scheme, this Northern Cardinal looked like it had been dipped in a bucket of turmeric.

After hosting the oddball for weeks, Stephenson invited fellow Alabaman Jeremy Black over to photograph it. The resulting images [hit the internet](#) last weekend, and boy, were people psyched . . . and confused.

Thankfully, Stephenson had already consulted Geoffrey Hill, an ornithologist and coloration expert at Auburn University. He told her that the bird probably had a genetic mutation that renders the pigments it draws from foods yellow rather than red. The condition he cited, [xanthochroism](#), has been seen in other cardinals, along with eastern House Finches and maybe [Evening Grosbeaks](#).

(continued on page 9)

(continued from page 8)

But that's just one theory behind the bird's wardrobe malfunction. As Geoff LeBaron, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count director, points out, the cardinal's crest and wing feathers look frayed in photos. While wear and tear is a natural part of a bird's life, it can be exacerbated by a poor diet or environmental stressors. These health issues could also lead to changes in how carotenoids—plant-based pigments that turn feathers red, orange, and yellow—are expressed.

Although this alternative theory is plausible, ultimately, LeBaron agrees that genetics could be the sole factor. But the only way to solve the case is to wait for the cardinal to swap its feathers. "Time will tell with this bird," LeBaron says. If it sticks around Alabaster and is still yellow next winter, a mutation is the likeliest culprit. But if it comes out red after another molt, it means the bird somehow recalibrated its pigments.

As birds have shown over and over, there are always new plumage puzzles to investigate. Remember [the half-female, half-male cardinal](#) that made the news a few years ago? That turned out to be a [an obscure type](#) of hermaphroditism—a phenomenon that affects many types of animals.

For Stephenson's yellow cardinal (not to be confused with [a Yellow Cardinal](#)), we'll have to see if its look is permanent. Regardless, at least it wore its golden feathers boldly. "If I fly or if I fall, at least I can say I gave it all." That one's from RuPaul.

By *Purbita Saha* at Audubon

<https://www.audubon.org/news/why-northern-cardinal-yellow>

KIDS CORNER

CONSERVATION STATUS OF BIRD SPECIES

Some people work in the area of wildlife conservation. People that do this, work to protect ecosystems and environments, which provide habitat for wildlife. This, in turn, protects the wildlife that lives there. The International Union for Conservation and Nature (and Natural Resources), better known as the IUCN, is an organization that works to assess the conservation status of species worldwide. They have produced the “The Red List Categories” (see figure). This is a list that helps scientists and governments determine which species to try and conserve first. Most bird species have been categorized according to this list.

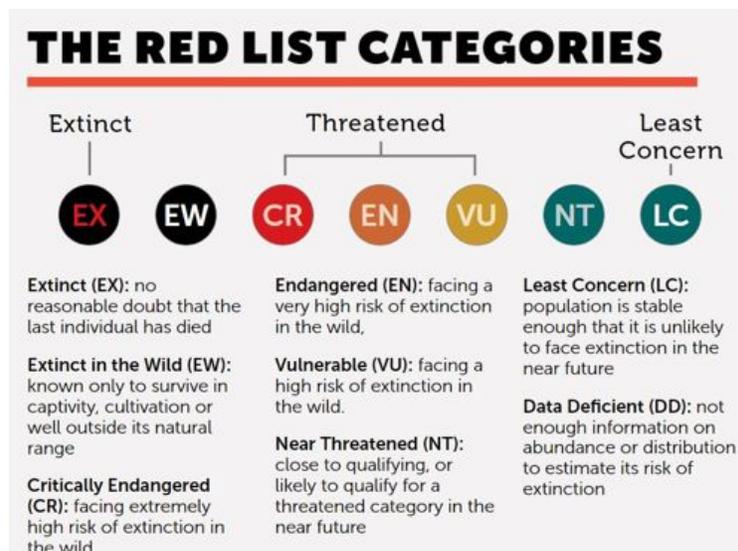
Let’s consider the conservation status of some species found in Wyoming (WY). The American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) can be found in several areas of the United States (US) but is considered a migrant bird in WY, one that visits us during the summer only, and is currently listed as “Least Threat”. The American Robin (*Turdus migratorious*), can also be found in most any region of the US, is considered a resident bird in WY, or one that can stay here all year, and is currently listed as “Least Concern”. In contrast, the Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) is a bird that is also migratory, one that visits WY in the winter only, but is found in few areas of the US, and is currently listed as “Vulnerable”. The Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercous urophasianus*), another resident bird in WY, is found in few areas of the US and WY, and is currently listed as “Near Threatened”. While one of its closely related species, the Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanushus phasianellus*) inhabits broader areas of the US and WY than the Greater Sage-Grouse, is considered a resident bird in WY and is currently listed as “Least Concern”.

Some examples that can affect the conservation status of a species are, loss of habitat, degradation/modification of habitat, introduced predation, and disease. In terms of habitat, a general rule is if a species is found in few areas and lives in a specific type of habitat, it is more likely to be listed in one of the threatened categories.

By Kelly Keenan

<http://www.birdlife.org>

<https://ebird.org/home>



MAS VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Murie Audubon Society is to instill a passion for nature in present and future generations through awareness, enjoyment, understanding, appreciation, conservation, and advocacy.

MAS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Murie Audubon Society is to promote the conservation of birds and other wildlife through education and enhancement of natural habitats, understanding, appreciation, conservation, and advocacy.

ABOUT MURIE AUDUBON

Please See: <https://murieaudubon.org/about/>

E-Mail: murie@murieaudubon.org

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Phone: _____ (Not shared with anyone – honest!)

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Please Join Us For An
In-Person September
General Meeting
Spetember 9

