

MURIE AUDUBON'S PLAINS & PEAKS

MARCH 2025 | VOL. 59 ISSUE 2

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

MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS:

From Flora to Flyways: Stories of Change and Phenology in Wyoming's Natrona County

CHANGES IN CLIMATE

What factors do we see in temperature data?
List in three short factors that might be affected by this change.
How does temperature impact plants?
How does temperature impact migration?

What trends can we observe in precipitation?
Why matter?

1. Students examine this data from Hogadon.
2. They begin to ask questions and make connections back to our Ecology Unit.

CHANGES IN MIGRATION

Are migration patterns changing due to changing climate?

Expert Ornithologist: Zach Hutchinson
Historical Bird Observation Journals from Oliver Scan 1953-1970
Citizen Science and Forecasting Data 2015-2024

NCHS BIODIVERSITY GARDEN WILDFLOWER PHENOLOGY WALK

Began in 2022 as a Biodiversity Project. Students designed, planned, and implemented a garden to attract wildlife, with nearly 200 plants, composed of more than 30 species.
Needed continued purpose. We began monitoring with wildflower walk protocols.

Beginning March 2nd, students collected phenological data each week.
How to Scape:
1. Mark observations
2. Label Plants
3. Add full date

STUDENT PRODUCTS

Utilizing 3-5 pieces of data, describe the extent to which changing climate impacts bird migration and phenology in Natrona County.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 13, 2025 Program: From Flora to Flyways: Stories of Change and Phenology in Wyoming's Natrona County

Mar 14-17: Kearney, NE Sandhill Crane Migration Overnight Field Trip

Apr 10, 2025 Program: Birds of the Sagebrush Steppe by Anna Chalfoun

Apr 12: Habitat Hero Workshop in Casper

Apr 16: Bird ID class begins at the Werner Wildlife Museum

FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



Spring is finally upon us and I'm looking forward to the return of many migrating birds to our area. This is one of the most exciting times of the year for birdwatching, as warblers, swallows, and other seasonal visitors make their way back. Whether you're keeping an eye on your backyard feeders or venturing out on a field trip with Stacey, now is the perfect time to grab your binoculars and enjoy the season!

Speaking of backyard birds, those looking to enhance their outdoor spaces, join us for a Habitat Hero Workshop on the morning of April 12th. This event will provide valuable insight for creating bird-friendly landscapes, supporting pollinators, and making your yard a haven for wildlife. Whether you're new to native gardening or looking to expand your knowledge, this workshop is sure to inspire.

Lastly, we're thrilled to announce that a brand-new website is on the way! This updated site will offer easier navigation, improved event information, and new resources to enhance your birding experience. Keep an eye out for the official launch in the coming weeks!

Wishing you all a wonderful start to spring—happy birding!

Jenny Edwards

MARCH BIRD CHALLENGE

This month's challenge is to check in on some of our key migrating species.

- Sandhill Crane
- Western Meadowlark
- Mountain Bluebird
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Killdeer
- American Kestrel
- Pinyon Jay

How to Participate

Many of these birds are feeder birds. Ravens and hawks are great birds to find while driving Wyoming's highways. Help kids document their observations.

Share Your Experience: Post your sightings on our Facebook page (Murie Audubon Society) with **#WyomingBirdwatchChallenge**

Email any photos to jenny5526@myncsd.org

KID'S CORNER



Image from eBird

As the northern hemisphere transitions from winter to spring, the migration of various bird species begins. Among them is the sandhill crane (scientific name *Antigone canadensis*), a bird that attracts spectators each spring as it migrates north to its breeding grounds from the southern United States and Mexico. Their journey takes them through several states, including Wyoming and Nebraska (NE), and provides some prime locations and unique opportunities to observe this species.

Before reaching their breeding grounds in the far northern regions of the world—such as Canada and Alaska—the cranes often make stops along their migration route. These rest areas provide an opportunity for the birds to refuel and regroup before continuing their journey. One of these stopover areas is along the Platte River in NE where it's estimated that more than half a million cranes gather each spring.

Kelly Keenan

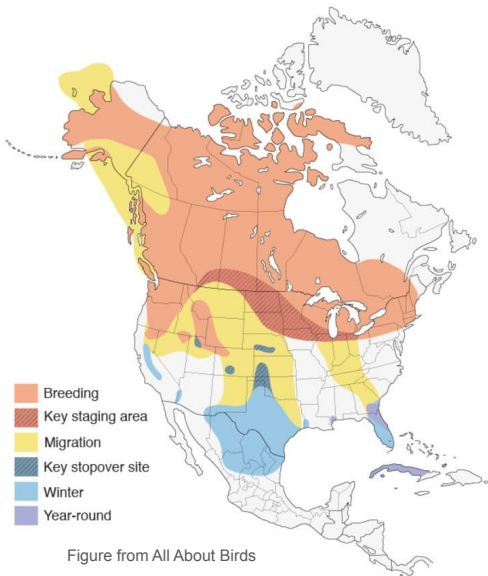
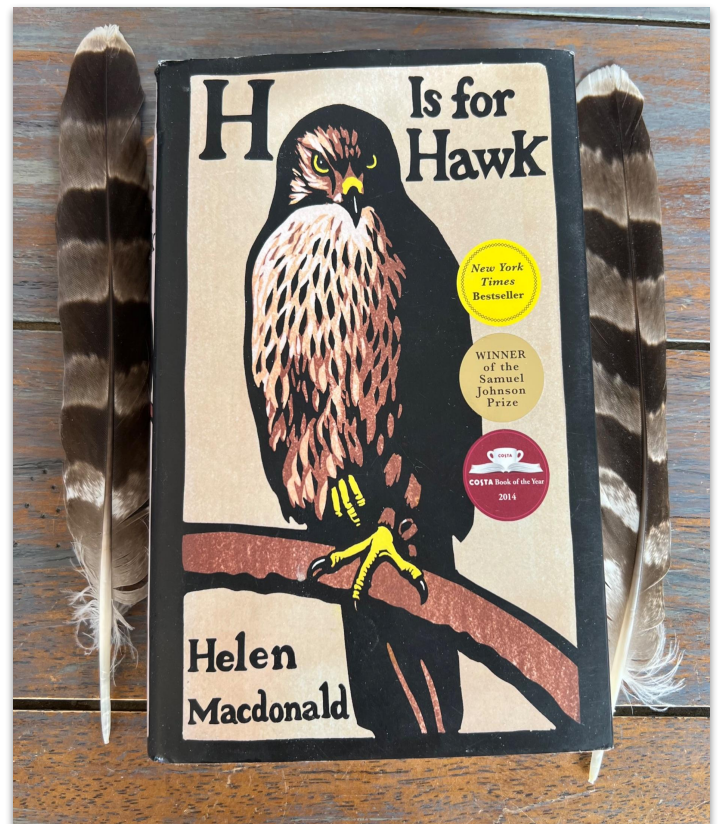


Figure from All About Birds

BOOK CLUB

“H is for Hawk” Time’s #1 Nonfiction Book of the Year

An instant classic and award-winning sensation, Helen Macdonald’s story of adopting and raising one of nature’s most vicious predators has soared into the hearts of millions of readers worldwide. Fierce and feral, her goshawk Mabel’s temperament mirrors Helen’s own state of grief after her father’s death, and together raptor and human “discover the pain and beauty of being alive” (People).



UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

If you have questions, please call Stacey Scott at 307-262-0055, I will post field trips and any changes under "Events" on the website, murieaudubon.org. Also, I am looking for more ideas for field trips. Let me know if you have any ideas.

Friday - Monday, March 14-17. We will go to Kearney Nebraska to watch the Sandhill Cranes. Everyone is responsible for their own transportation, lodging and food. The registration for this expired in February.

Saturday, April 12. The Audubon Habitat Hero Workshop will be this Saturday. We will have more details in the April newsletter, on the MAS website, and in emails sent out to our membership.

Saturday, April 19. Let's do a field trip to Goldeneye to look at the early duck migration. We will meet at 9:00 AM at the Game and Fish Parking Lot, and we should be back by noonish.

Sage-grouse Leks. I will be counting Sage-grouse Leks during April and early May and would like company. There is no guarantee that we will see Sage-grouse. Call 307-262-0055 if you are interested.

May at EKW - Every Wednesday, we will meet near the Platte River Shelter at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park (where you can look at the Osprey nest) at 8:00 AM for a walk around the park to see what birds we can find.

Saturday, May 10. We will meet at 8:00 AM near the Platte River Shelter at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park to see what birds are migrating through the park.

Saturday May 24- Mindfulness Birding with Dylan Hicks and Jacob Mills. More details in the next Newsletter.

Monday, May 26. We will meet at 8:00 AM at the Game and Fish parking lot for a trip to Little Red Creek. The road to Little Red Creek is dirt, so any rain will stop us. I will post a note under Events on the Murie website if we have to postpone the trip, or call me at 307-265-0055. This area has very different birds than the wetter, north side of Casper Mountain, so it is very interesting. We usually actually see Yellow-breasted Chats, and some will see Virginia's Warblers.

Early June - We will again do a survey down Garden Creek and Matheson Creek, and will have more details in the next Newsletter.

Saturday June 21 - Mindfulness Birding with Dylan Hicks and Jacob Mills. More details in the next Newsletter

MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS: FROM FLORA TO FLYWAYS: STORIES OF CHANGE AND PHENOLOGY



"From Flora to Flyways: Stories of Change and Phenology in Wyoming's Natrona County", will be presented by our own Jenny Edwards. Naturalists, farmers, and ranchers traditionally recorded changing seasons and wildlife in simple nature journals. Dr. Oliver Scott's bird checklists stemming back from 1953 offer a goldmine of baseline phenological data for students to investigate very local patterns of change in our community. Jenny will share how her students dig into these historical datasets and ask locally relevant questions while building their data science skills. Her students can pursue questions like, how climate changes are impacting bird migration and plant phases in Natrona County, and whether there will be food sources available when birds migrate here. She will also show how students combine those checklists with modern citizen science platforms of eBird and BirdCast to make comparisons between past and present data. She will also show how students are engaged in a citizen science wildflower monitoring program. This approach brings the past to life for her students, helps them see value in historical voices, and builds data science skills and citizen science tools that enable them to be life-long observers of nature.

Jenny will be delivering a similar presentation in Philadelphia on March 28 for the National Science Teaching Association. Jenny is a teacher of Environmental Science at Natrona County High School.

The public and Audubon members are invited to come to the Murie Audubon free talk on March 13, 2025, at 7 p.m., at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse, at 4205 Fort Caspar Road.

Jenny and Bruce

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

FEBRUARY'S PROGRAM REDDS SPAWNING HABITAT ENHANCEMENT



John McCoy, Aquatic Habitat Biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department was our guest speaker in February. His presentation, entitled Redds Spawning Habitat Enhancement, updated us on the efforts for habitat improvements not only for aquatic fauna but also for all species along the river. I have to confess that the term “redds” was now familiar to me.

To a fisherman, “redds” refers to the nests made by fish in streams and rivers where they spawn. Redds are depressions in the river bottom made of clean gravel, they may be lighter in color than the surrounding river bottom. Redds provide a safe place for eggs to sink to the bottom of the river, and are protected by the female salmon or trout, who guards it until she dies! Be respectful of redds by avoiding wading near them, not fishing near them, and by leaving actively spawning fish alone.

Game and Fish surveys had shown there were 8,000 fish per mile in the North Platte River below the Gray Reef Dam. More current surveys have indicated that there has been a decline to less than 3,600 fish per mile. Reasons for this decline are due to unfavorable spring reservoir releases because of downstream irrigation demand and heavy fishing pressure.

The Bureau of Reclamation has routinely provided flushing flows during April to enhance fish spawning habitat. Braided areas of the river have provided good spawning in their gravels.

The series of dams upriver from Gray Reef tends to cause gravels and substrate to settle out.

Proposed enhancements for the North Platte River's famed Gray Reef section include:

1. Diverting water into channels at 500 cfs
2. Adding supplemental gravels
3. Stabilizing eroding banks
4. Enhance and create wetland area habitat for waterfowl and amphibians (leopard frogs)

Wyoming Game and Fish works with many other agencies, academic organizations, non-profits, as well as the public, to gather data to help in the management decisions of species under their jurisdiction.

Bruce Walgren

BIRD ID CLASS

Stacey Scott and Luis Alza are again going to have a Bird ID class this spring. We will meet at 7:00 pm at the Werner Wildlife Museum on Wednesday evenings (starting April 16), and have a field trip to see the birds that we talked about each Saturday (last Saturday is scheduled to be May 17). This class is for anyone interested in having fun while identifying birds regardless of their skill level. The objective is to show people how to use the tools available, such as field guides and binoculars, but also online tools like the free App Merlin, to identify what they are seeing and hearing, and to add to the enjoyment of being outside.

Stacey Scott

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Every year First Graders at Lincoln Elementary study birds for two quarters in the spring. At the end of the year, all the first grade classes take a field trip to Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park to see some of the birds they have been learning about. Birders and Community Naturalists are needed to guide student groups in spotting and identifying birds. This is a great opportunity to work with young children and introduce them to the fun of birding.

This year's First Grade Class from Lincoln Elementary field trip to Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park will be on May 14, 2025. The itinerary for the field trip includes arriving around 10:00 in the morning, about an hour or so of walking and bird identification, different bird activity stations, a sack lunch, walking over to the playground area and some continued bird identification as the students walk and play.

The students will arrive about 10:00 a.m. After unloading from the buses, the kids will be ready for a bird identification walk and other bird related activities. It would be a wonderful enriching experience for the students if some experienced birders could guide them and help identify various birds. Please let me know if any of you could spare a couple morning hours to introduce some potential budding birders to the excitement and wonder of spring at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park.

You can contact me, Laurie Longtine, at ledgerpluscasper@gmail.com or Mrs. Ramsey Perea, First Grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary at ramsey_perea@natronaschools.org

YOUR STORIES

Calling All Murie Friends: Share Your Stories and Insights in Our Newsletter!

Whether you're a seasoned birder or just starting out, your experiences and knowledge are invaluable to our Murie Audubon community. That's why we're inviting you to contribute to our newsletter!

Why Share Your Bird Watching Experiences?

Birdwatching is more than just a hobby; it's a way to connect with nature, contribute to conservation efforts, and join a global community of like-minded enthusiasts. By sharing your stories, insights, and discoveries, you can:

1. **Inspire Others:** Your experiences could spark curiosity and enthusiasm in others. Whether it's a rare sighting or a simple joy of watching familiar backyard birds, your stories can motivate others to explore birdwatching more deeply.
2. **Learn and Grow:** Birdwatching is a continual learning process. By sharing your observations and challenges, you open the door to feedback, advice, and new perspectives from fellow birders. It's a great way to expand your knowledge and refine your skills.
3. **Contribute to Conservation:** Your sightings and insights can contribute to broader conservation efforts. By documenting bird behaviors, migration patterns, or unusual sightings, you can help scientists and conservationists track changes in bird populations and habitats.
4. **Build Community:** Birdwatching can be a solitary activity, but it doesn't have to be. Sharing your experiences helps build a sense of community. You may find others who have had similar experiences or discover new birding spots and techniques.
5. **Citizen Science:** Bird sightings and journal entries from 50 years ago are proving to be important scientific evidence for documenting key changes in migration, abundance, and frequency of birds.

What Can You Contribute?

Each month, the newsletter will provide a prompt. However, please share any of the following outside of the prompt. Here are some ideas.

- **Exciting Bird Sightings:** Did you spot a rare species or observe an unusual behavior? Share the story of your encounter and what made it special.
- **Birdwatching Gear:** Have you found the perfect gear that makes birding more enjoyable. Share your tips with fellow birders!
- **Favorite Birding Spots:** What's your go-to birdwatching location? Describe the habitat, the species you typically see, and what makes it unique.
- **Cool photos you've captured of birds.**
- **Advice to new birders in the area.**

YOUR STORIES

April Prompt: Tell us a story of:

a bird that you weren't expecting to see.

How to Submit Your Contributions

Contributing to our newsletter is easy! Simply write up your story, tip, or insight and send it to our editorial team at jenny5526@myncsd.org by the **third week of each month**. Feel free to include photos, illustrations, or links to additional resources. We'll review your submission and may reach out with any questions or for further details.

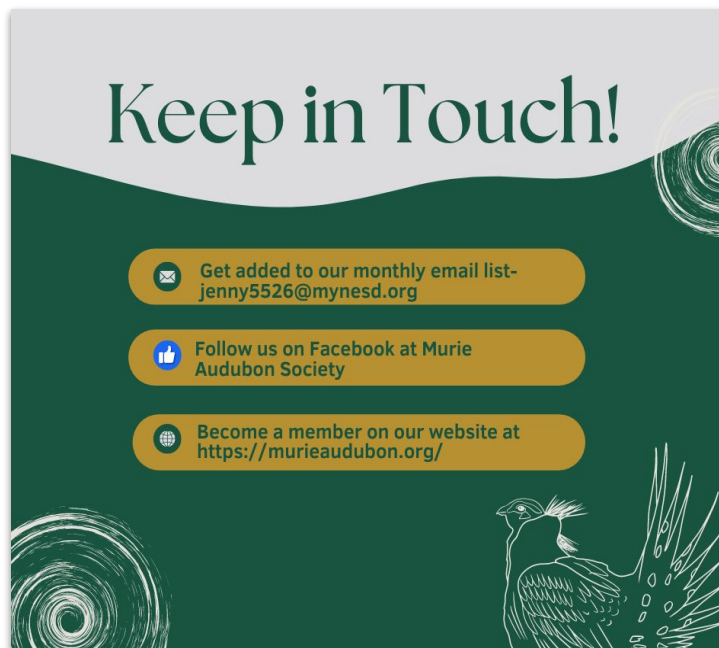
Happy Writing!

Jenny Edwards

CALLING FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR MARCH

Did you have a rare bird alert recently? Or were you able to capture an excellent shot? Did you travel somewhere and see a new species? Please share, by sending in your photos to be published in our newsletter!

E-mail photos to Murie@murieaudubon.org!



RAFFLE TO BE HELD AT MARCH MEETING

Chris Michelson recently donated some optics and some very nice bird books to Murie Audubon. If you're interested in a spotting scope or if you want to fill out your bird book library, this will be a great chance to get something for yourself or as a gift. The optics include: a Kowa TSN-824 M spotting scope with tripod and a Kowa TSN-2 spotting scope with 2 lenses and a window mount. We will be selling raffle tickets for the scopes and Doug Faulkner's Birds of Wyoming book, at our March meeting with a drawing after the meeting. Ticket prices will be \$20 each for the Kowa TSN-824 M scope, \$10 each for the Kowa TSN-2, and \$5 each for the book. There is still a good selection of other bird books available.

You don't need to be present to win, but you have to buy the raffle ticket. If you aren't going to be at the March 13 meeting, you can pay for tickets by clicking on the Donate button on the murieaudubon.org website. You need to also send the Treasurer an email (hustace@gmail.com) saying which tickets you bought. The deadline for this will be Wednesday, March 12 so we can send you an email with your ticket numbers the morning of March 13.

The Murie Audubon meeting is on March 13, 2025, at 7 p.m., at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse, at 4205 Fort Caspar Road.



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.



RENEW OR BECOME A REGULAR MEMBER OF MURIE AUDUBON FOR ONLY \$10. REMEMBER, ALL MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE SEPTEMBER 1ST

Today's Date: _____

\$10 One Year \$20 Two Years \$30 Three Years or electronic payment on our website.

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

Email: _____ (Again, not shared with anyone)

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