

MURIE AUDUBON'S  
PLAINS & PEAKS

APRIL 2025 | VOL. 59 ISSUE 3

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MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS:  
BIRDS OF THE SAGEBRUSH STEPPE



**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**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

**May 8:** Bridle Trail at Rotary Park by Joanne Theobald

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



Spring is finally here, and with it comes the return of many of our spring migrants. The Kearny Crane Migration was incredible! I highly recommend taking a trip to watch this incredible spectacle. Speaking of Spring, Murie has great upcoming opportunities.

Our Spring Bird ID Class is a great way to improve your skills, whether you're a beginner or an experienced birder. We'll meet Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm at the Werner Wildlife Museum, beginning April 16. Each week, we'll focus on different groups of birds, learning key identification tips. Then, on Saturdays, we'll take what we've learned into the field, with guided birdwatching trips to spot these species in their natural habitat. The final field trip is scheduled for May 17, so don't miss this chance to connect with local birds and fellow birders.

For those interested in making their yards more bird-friendly, Murie is hosting a Habitat Hero Garden Workshop on April 12, from 8:30 am – 1:00 pm at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse. This hands-on workshop is free and will cover how to design and maintain a garden that supports local wildlife, with an emphasis on native plants that thrive in Wyoming's climate. Whether you have a small backyard or a larger property, you'll leave with practical tips to make your outdoor space a haven for birds.

**Jenny Edwards**

## APRIL BIRD CHALLENGE

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

- Sandhill Crane
- Western Meadowlark
- Mountain Bluebird
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Sage grouse

### 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](mailto:jenny5526@myncsd.org)

## KID'S CORNER

*The Tulips are coming!*

Some of the earliest flowers to bloom in this area are the tulips planted by people in the community. Tulips are a type of plant that have modified stems with fleshy leaves on them, collectively referred to as a bulb. After the plant stops growing above ground for the season, the underground bulb will be all that remains. You see, one function of the bulb is to store energy during its period of dormancy so that the plant may sprout and bloom again the following spring.

What's more is although not native to Wyoming, these bulbs handle the cold temperatures of our winters quite well. Despite potential long periods of frozen soil, many species are able to sprout and produce colorful blooms each spring year after year. As you explore around town this month and the next, take a moment to admire these fleeting beauties. Their presence is a welcome sign of warmer days to come.



Photo - Kelly Keenan, backyard tulips

**Kelly Keenan**

## BIRD ID CLASS STARTS THIS MONTH

Don't forget, Stacey Scott and Luis Alza are again offering a free Bird ID class this spring. The first meeting is April 16th at 7:00 pm at the Werner Wildlife Museum. Each week we will have a field trip on Saturday to see the birds we talked about during the previous Wednesday evening class (last Wednesday evening class is scheduled to be May 14th and the last Saturday field trip is scheduled to be May 17). Feel free to attend any or all sessions.

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**

## HABITAT HERO WORKSHOP

# Habitat Hero Workshop: Gardening for Wyoming Wildlife

April 12, 2025 | 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon

### Planting a Better World for Birds & People

Join Audubon Rockies and Murie Audubon Society for a half day workshop to learn how to support birds and other Wyoming wildlife on your property through the creation of bird-friendly habitat with native plants. Come learn from Audubon Rockies staff and other local experts about how to create wildlife-friendly gardens that help combat the loss of open spaces and create green corridors that link your wildscape to larger natural areas by providing habitat for wildlife.

Full speaker list can be found on registration page.

Izaak Walton Club House  
4205 Fort Caspar Rd.  
Casper, WY 82604

Cost: Free (RSVP required)

Register Here:

<https://www.mobilize.us/audubon-rockies/event/763969/>

 Audubon

ROCKIES



## 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](http://murieaudubon.org). Also, I am looking for more ideas for field trips. Let me know if you have any..

**Saturday, April 12.** The Audubon Habitat Hero Workshop will be this Saturday.

**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 at 8:00 AM, we will meet near the Platte River Shelter at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park (where you can look at the Osprey nest) 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 14.** We will have a field trip, but the details haven't been worked out yet.

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

**Thursday, Aug 14.** We will have our annual picnic at EKW. We will meet at 5:30 in the afternoon and share a dish.

## MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS: BIRDS OF THE SAGEBRUSH STEPPE



While not unique to Wyoming, the sagebrush steppe is the dominant habitat in the state. With that, the birds that nest within these habitats include the Greater Sage-Grouse, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, Sagebrush Sparrow, and Vesper Sparrow. Many studies and projects have originated from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Wyoming to study these birds and their habitat. The projects include the response by songbirds to energy (oil, gas, as well as wind) development, ectoparasites, and the interaction of nest predators and songbirds. Dr. Anna Chalfoun is the Assistant Unit leader for Wildlife at the Unit. Anna and her graduate students have on-going projects focused on birds, small mammals, and herpetofauna. A primary focus of the work in the lab is to provide timely information to agency cooperators to facilitate the management of Wyoming's non-game wildlife species to greatest conservation need. Dr. Chalfoun will be our guest speaker at our April 10, 2025 meeting at 7 p.m., at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse, at 4205 Fort Caspar Road.

**Bruce Walgren**

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

### MARCH'S PROGRAM FROM FLORA TO FLYWAYS

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

**CHANGES IN CLIMATE**

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

**CHANGES IN MIGRATION**

Are migration patterns changing due to changing climate?

**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 100 plants, composed of more than 30 species.

**STUDENT PRODUCTS**

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

**Acknowledgements:**  
SMTC- Advice, so much advice  
TRKE- My professional circle increased tenfold. I've valued building relationships with each of you.

**Acknowledgements:**  
Oliver K. Scott- historical data from 1953-1970  
Stacey Scott- curator of data  
Zach Hutchinson- ornithologist

**Acknowledgements:**  
Luke Todd- WyAdapt- what the HUC?  
Charlotte Cadow- Plant Walk Protocols and Data organization  
Bryan Shuman- Climate Guidance

President Jenny Edwards put on her teachers “hat” and shared with us how her students are using baseline phenological data compiled in Dr. Oliver Scott’s bird checklists and other historical datasets to predict changes in bird migration as well as climate trends. Using these datasets have enabled her students to develop their data science skills. Her students are pursuing 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 showed how students combine those checklists with modern citizen science platforms of eBird and BirdCast to make comparisons between past and present data. Sadly, Jenny shared that her students believe that they will experience “Silent Spring” in their lifetime.

**Bruce Walgren**

### RAFFLE AND BOOK SALE IS SUCCESS



Thanks go out to everyone that purchased raffle tickets for the spotting scopes and the Birds of Wyoming book. Jenny Edwards won the book while Larry Keffer won BOTH scopes! There is still a good selection of books available at less than retail prices and we will have the books at our next two meetings for you to look through.

And, of course, thanks to Chris Michelson for donating the optics and the books to Murie Audubon.

**Bruce Walgren**

## **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

## **MAS SANDHILL CRANE MIGRATION KEARNEY NE TRIP RECAP**

On the way to Kearney to see the cranes, my wife and I stopped at a gas station for a bathroom break. The attendant asked where we were going, and when told he said that it would exceed our expectations. I thought that would be hard because I had very high expectations. He was right. Seeing and hearing thousands of cranes (maybe tens of thousands) at the same time is impossible for me to adequately describe. It is really awesome, and something everyone should experience at least once in their lifetime. For me it was also really neat to see the fields with cranes just doing their thing. A field might have 100, or a couple hundred or a thousand. On Sunday, I drove around just looking at the cranes in the fields, and looking for whatever birds I could find. The birds of note that I did find were Eastern Phoebe (the first I have seen in over 50 years), Cardinal, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, one sparrow I could not identify and I saw 3 Red-tailed Hawks in a couple hundred miles of driving. I would have expected many more hawks in that distance. Then Sunday afternoon, Larry Keffer called to say he had a big flock of Snow Geese. There were Ross's Geese in that flock, and with his new scope we were able to pick them out of the flock of 3,000 or so birds. That was a life bird for me.



# 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

May 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@mynesd.org](mailto:jenny5526@mynesd.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.

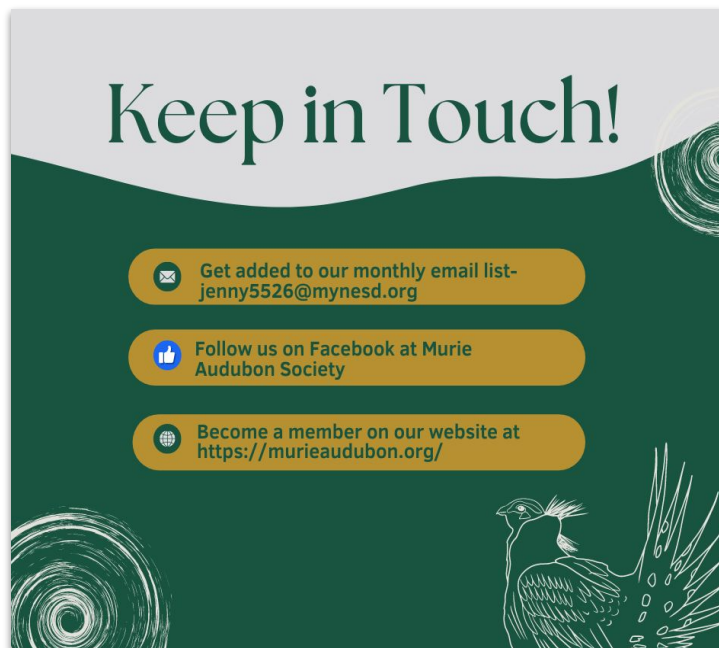
Happy Writing!

**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](mailto:Murie@murieaudubon.org)!



## 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.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (Not shared with anyone – honest!)

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (Again, not shared with anyone)

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