

MURIE AUDUBON'S

# PLAINS & PEAKS

MAY 2025 | VOL. 59 ISSUE 4

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

## MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ROTARY PARK



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 8:** What's Happening in Rotary Park

**May 7, 10, 14, 17:** Free Bird ID classes

**May 17th:** Tree Planting at EKW

**Aug 14th:** Murie Annual Picnic

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hey Gang!  
Anyone else looking forward to summer? As many of you know, Murie takes a summer vacation. We won't host monthly programs, but we do have a few things going on that we want to make sure you're aware of.

Many of the upcoming events in May are associated with conservation efforts. To celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, Murie is planting 300 native trees at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park. We could use some volunteers to help with planting. On May 17th, we will partner with Platte River Trails to clean-up our "Piggery" property near Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

And further into the summer, we will have our annual picnic on August 14th. The picnic, as in years past, will be held at Edness Kimball Wilkins' State Park. Chicken will be provided, but please bring a side dish to share!

Also, just a reminder, all memberships expire in September. We will focus that month on our annual membership drive and encourage everyone to renew to continue receiving this newsletter. If you'd like to be on our e-mail list, please e-mail me at [jenny5526@myncsd.org](mailto:jenny5526@myncsd.org) to be added!

I hope you have such a fun-filled summer full of adventure, relaxation, and birds!

**Jenny Edwards**

## SUMMER BIRD CHALLENGE

This month's challenge extends all summer long.

- ❑ Western Meadowlark
- ❑ Insects that serve as a food source for birds
- ❑ Pollinating Birds

### 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

### *Flow of the Platte*

What's the name of the river that runs through Casper? It's the North Platte River of course! The name "north" suggests there is a South Platte River, which is correct. The South Platte River originates in central Colorado and flows northeast to Nebraska (NE). The North Platte River originates in Colorado too, but further north compared to the South Platte, and also flows east to NE. These two rivers flow towards each other and meet in the city North Platte, NE to form the Platte River.

Water from numerous flowing sources, like creeks in Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska contribute to the flow of the Platte River system. Imagine all that water, the spring snowmelt, the rain water that drains from the residential areas, and more, ending in the Platte

River, and eventually, the ocean! That's right, the Platte River merges with the Missouri River, and finally the Mississippi River which flows directly into the Gulf of Mexico (see map above).

It really is true that things, even trash from city streets, that end up in our local creeks can, and do, end up in our oceans.

**Kelly Keenan**



## BIRD ID CLASS CONTINUES THIS MONTH

Stacey Scott and Luis Alza will continue the free bird ID classes in May. Meetings are Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm at the Werner Wildlife Museum, followed by a field trip each Saturday. The last Wednesday evening class is 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.

## 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..

**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: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ROTARY PARK



Joanne Theobald, a Certified Wyoming Naturalist and a member of the Rotary Park Improvement Committee (RPIC), will be our guest speaker in May. She will discuss the current activities of the RPIC, including the installation of a Geology Interpretive Trail near the waterfall platforms this summer, and the redesigning and creation of new wayfinding signage along the park's trails.

Theobald will also share her volunteer work in the park with Natrona County Weed & Pest to help manage the spread of burdock and houndstongue. She is establishing sections in the lower part of the park that volunteer groups can adopt (after being trained) to remove burdock and houndstongue seedheads each summer.

Finally, we will discuss the audience's birding experiences and sightings in the park.

Theobald, formerly director of counselling at Casper College, is a participant in University of Wyoming's Wyoming Naturalist Program and teaches community education classes about plant life and ecosystems of Rotary Park. You may remember her previous program on Turkey Vultures in November 2022.

The program will be on May 8, 2025 at 7 p.m., at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse, at 4205 Fort Caspar Road.

**Bruce Walgren**

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

### APRIL'S PROGRAM: BIRDS OF THE SAGEBRUSH STEPPE



Dr. Anna Chalfoun of the Wyoming Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit (The Co-op) gave a presentation on the Birds of the Sagebrush Steppe. Considered by some as “drive-through” country, the sagebrush sea is home to over 630 species of plants and animals.

The Co-op Studies have concentrated on three sagebrush dwelling bird species; Brewers' Sparrow, Sagebrush Sparrow and the Sage Thrasher.

Modern technology has developed tiny electronic transmitters that enable researchers to track these birds. While each species coexist in the Wyoming sage habitat, they do not share the same wintering grounds. Some birds even begin their migration by moving further north before retreating to their winter grounds.

The male Brewers' Sparrow has two distinct songs they sing once they are on their breeding grounds. One song is a simple two note song they use until the female birds show up, then their song becomes very long and complicated to defend their territory and to impress the girls.

Nest monitoring has revealed predation by various animals, chief of which is the Deer Mouse. Not only are there more mice in and around energy development, but other predators are also more numerous. Structures and equipment used to produce oil and gas are attractive as nesting sites to Common Ravens, adding another potential predator to the mix. Reclaimed areas tend to have more food that is attractive to mice. The plant species used in the reclamation process aren't necessarily the same species that existed on site before the development of an area, but do provide the food that is sought by mice and other rodents. Trapping the rodents hasn't proved effective. Trying to use sage and native plants in the reclamation process is being suggested to help provide a more balanced habitat, not just of plants, but animals also. Even after fledging (Brewers' Sparrows fledge in just 18 days), the young birds are susceptible to predators, parasites, temperature extremes and food supply.

A new study will be done on the preferred food that the adult birds provide their young. The color of the bird's eggs is also being studied, a blue colored egg has some UV protection. There is also a new study on Pygmy Rabbits set to begin soon.

Wyoming has the most intact sagebrush steppe habitat, therefore we have a responsibility to the obligates of that habitat.

**Bruce Walgren**

## HABITAT HERO GARDEN WORKSHOP SUCCESS

Last month, gardeners, bird lovers, and conservationists gathered for the Habitat Hero Gardening for Wyoming Wildlife Workshop — and it was a blooming success! This event was hosted by Audubon Rockies and Murie Audubon and included multiple volunteers who spoke on various strategies to transform outdoor spaces and backyards into habitats for birds and other wildlife.

Participants explored a variety of engaging sessions, each packed with practical tips and expert advice. One highlight was the session on planting for diversity, where attendees learned how adding a range of native plants to their yards can create year-round shelter and food sources for birds. Experts shared which species thrive in Wyoming's unique climate and how even small changes can make a big difference for local wildlife.

Participants learned about how to increase biodiversity and food sources for birds and other wildlife. There was an opportunity for everyone to get their hands dirty (in the best way!) during the native seed planting activity. Attendees learned techniques for starting native plants from seed, stratifying seeds, and they even got to take home their own seed pots to jumpstart their habitat gardens.

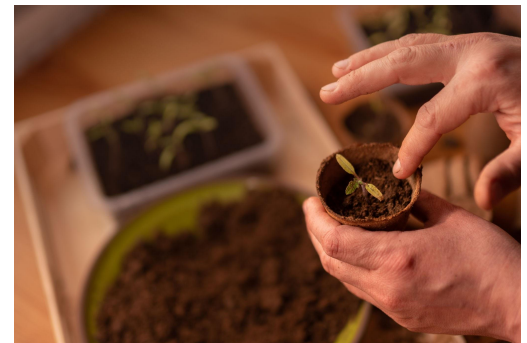
Proper tree care and tree-trimming was also explored as well as how to feed birds responsibly—from selecting the correct feeder and food to how often feeders need to be cleaned.

We extend a huge thank you to Audubon Rockies and all the volunteers who made this workshop possible. If you missed it this year, don't worry — we are excited by the potential to offer this workshop next year.

**Jenny Edwards**



**Photo by Luis Alza**



**Photo by Luis Alza**



## SUMMER PICNIC - AUG 14th

Our annual picnic will be on August 14th. The picnic, as in years past, will be held at Edness Kimball Wilkins' State Park at the Centennial Shelter. Chicken will be provided, but please bring a side dish to share! More details to follow!

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED- HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AT EKW STATE PARK!**

In honor of World Migratory Bird Day, we invite you to join us at EKW on May 10th to help plant 300 native tree species. These trees will create essential habitat for our local and migratory birds and provide food sources for the insects that some of them eat. Volunteers are welcome to bring their own shovels, gloves, and other planting tools — but if you don't have any, no worries! We'll have tools available to borrow. We will start in the morning and continue to mid-afternoon.

Our goal is to get all 300 trees planted on May 10th, but if we need more time, we'll continue planting on May 11th as well. Bring your energy, a water bottle, and a love for nature!

Meet at Edness K Wilkins State Park Platte River Shelter parking lot on May 10th by 9 am to help improve bird habitat near Betty's garden.

Contact Zach Hutchinson if you'd like more information!



## **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

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: PIGGERY CLEAN-UP MAY 17**

Our annual clean-up of the "Piggery" is scheduled for the morning of Saturday, May 17. As in the past, this will be in partnership with The Platte River Trails Trust and the City of Casper. For many years, Murie Audubon members have volunteered to pick up trash along the portion of the river trails where they cross Murie's property between Morad Park and Game and Fish Department's office and the new trail from Morad Park up the hill to the pedestrian crossing of CY Avenue-Highway 220 below Walmart. At the same time Murie volunteers can clean up the entire 8 acres of our sanctuary. Platte River Trails will have snacks and coffee from about 8:30-9 am at the Pumphouse patio from where we can head to the cleanup sites.

Volunteers can report for duty on that Saturday morning at the Tate Pumphouse where they can pick up trash sacks and "grabber" tools supplied by the City Parks Department. Upon completion of the task, the trash bags can be deposited in a dumpster in the Morad Park parking lot. So, we need 3 or 4 folks to spend about an hour keeping the "Piggery" welcoming to birds and birders.

***Bart Rea***

# 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

### 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.

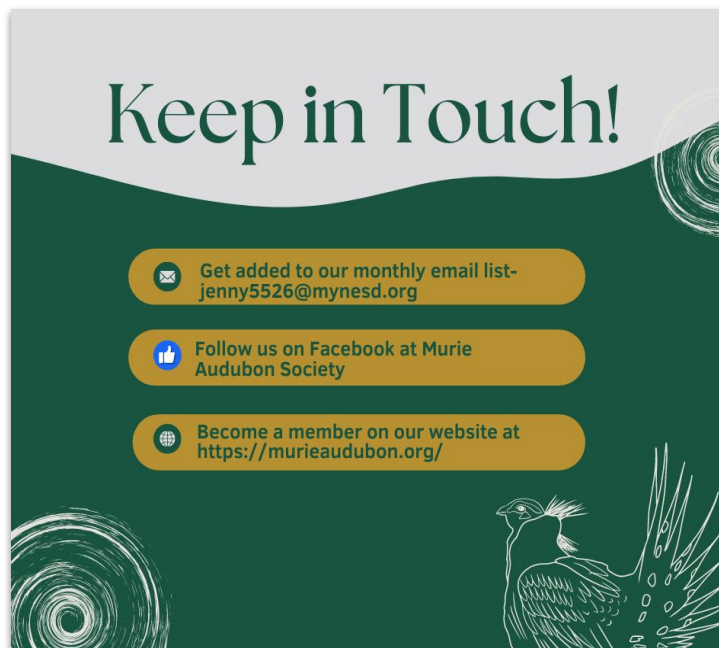
Happy Writing!

**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

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\$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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