

Report to the Billings Community Foundation (2016)

**Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
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Project Background

The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) in Billings has monitored osprey nests along the Yellowstone River since 2009. YVAS focuses conservation efforts on ospreys because 95% of pairs build nests on power poles and thereby come into conflict with utility companies (e.g., power outages, bird electrocutions) and because nestling mortality from entanglement in baling twine is evident (3-4% per year). In 2009 three volunteers located 22 nests while today over 30 volunteers hustle along 300 miles of river to monitor 90 nests. The project is the largest grassroots citizen science effort in Montana and is regularly featured in local and state media.

2016 Field Season

YVAS applied for and received \$800 from the Billings Community Foundation to devote toward the Osprey Monitoring Project. This past summer over 30 trained volunteers donated their time, expertise and expense to monitor over 90 nest sites along the Yellowstone River from Gardiner to Miles City. As part of the project, Dr. Marco Restani bands nestling ospreys to estimate survival and to determine short and long-range movements. In 2016, 83 nestlings were banded from 35 nests from 1 July to 29 July. The number of nestlings banded and number of nests visited was a season record (banding began in 2012). Two nestlings were discovered entangled in baling twine – one was freed and one was found deceased.

At the end of each summer, the nest monitors submit the completed data from their nests. This data is entered into one spread sheet for submittal to the Montana Natural Heritage Program and is used in various technical and informational publications.

In-kind project support was provided by Beartooth Electric Cooperative, Montana-Dakota Utilities, NorthWestern Energy, Park Electric Cooperative, Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative, and Yellowstone Valley Tree Surgeons.

The Billings Community Foundation award was applied directly to reimburse mileage costs associated with the banding of nestling ospreys. Dr. Restani drove 5751 miles while conducting project research and providing expertise to the monitors from June to August. Total cost of fuel and miscellaneous supplies was \$828.20.

Thank you!

Marco Restani
Deb Regele
Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
September 7, 2016