

21ST ANNUAL  
MONTANA AUDUBON  
BIRD FESTIVAL

JUNE 5–7, 2020  
YOGO INN,  
LEWISTOWN

*wings*  MONTANA  
AUDUBON  
*across the big sky*

John Lambing



*Curlew and  
Big Snowy Mountains*

# welcome

Montana Audubon is excited to host our 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival in the rolling prairies and surrounding mountain ranges of central Montana.

This year's festival headquarters will be the Yogo Inn, in Lewistown Montana from June 5–7. Registration will open at 3 pm on Friday afternoon and is followed by a dinner buffet and our festival keynote address.

Numerous field trips will explore wildlife-rich landscapes of this unique and underappreciated region of the state. There will be informative presentations, and many fun events scheduled over the festival weekend.

Please refer to this brochure for festival scheduling, field trip information and to learn about local points of interest in the Lewistown area. We know you will have a great time.

## Overview

### FRIDAY

- 3:00 pm Registration Opens
- 4:30 pm Social (Cash Bar)
- 5:00 pm Festival Kickoff dinner buffet and Keynote address

### SATURDAY MORNING & AFTERNOON

- 5:00 am Breakfast buffet with field trip leaders
- 6:00 am Depart on field trips
- 2:00 pm Field trips return (unless otherwise indicated)
- 3:00 pm Afternoon presentations

### SATURDAY EVENING

- 4:30 pm Social (Cash Bar)
- 5:30 pm Dinner buffet
- Executive Director presentation
- Dessert auction
- Nature Adventure Tour auction

### SUNDAY MORNING

- 5:00 am Breakfast with field trip leaders
- 6:00 am Depart on field trips (Field trips do not return to hotel.)

# keynote speaker

## Marshall Johnson Vice President, Audubon Conservation Ranching

For the past decade, Marshall has worked to build rural and urban community-focused habitat and ecosystem programs. Equipped with a business degree from the University of Minnesota, Marshall strives to bring conservation into the 21st century, creating eco-friendly profit centers and urban habitat initiatives driven by the ecosystem services they provide to communities.

Marshall's pioneering work in the Dakotas brings farmers, ranchers, retailers and consumers together with grasslands, herds and birds into win-win alignment. The groundbreaking market-based Conservation Ranching Program now enrolls more than 2,000,000 acres across 60 ranches. Additionally, creating safe passage and respite for wildlife and wild humans within an urban context has been a priority of Audubon Dakota under Marshall's leadership, with the program now managing the largest urban conservation program in the Northern Great Plains.



**“If we don’t fundamentally change what we’re doing, our grandkids will talk about grasslands, butterflies and birds the way we now talk about department stores and dinosaurs.”**



**Central Montana Historical Museum** Administered by the Central Montana Historical Association, whose mission is to collect, preserve and exhibit artifacts which depict the cultural past of Central Montana, with permanent and rotating displays representing the local history of Lewistown and surrounding areas.

**Downtown Lewistown** Surrounded by the beauty of the island mountain ranges, Downtown is the community hub of Central Montana. Much of the charm and strong sense of community found in Central Montana is reflected in the downtown and is rooted in its rich western heritage. Visit Lewistown Downtown for an authentic, western experience you won't soon forget.

**Ackley Lake** A local favorite of Central Montana, Ackley Lake is approximately a 40-minute drive from Lewistown near Hobson. Views of four mountain ranges along with spectacular sunsets are visible from any of the 23 campsites, with fishing, canoeing, boating and hiking opportunities.

**American Prairie Reserve** Experience the vastness of the prairie, birds, wildlife and trails. Visit [www.americanprairie.org](http://www.americanprairie.org) for directions and more information.

### Ghost Towns and Gold Mines

Maiden, Gilt Edge, Kendall and Fort Maginnis Ghost Towns offer a glimpse back to a time when these areas were once bustling with miners and merchants.

## FESTIVAL HEADQUARTERS AND LODGING

**The Yogo Inn and Conference Center** has been the center of Lewistown life for over 55 years. The Yogo Inn is a preferred central Montana hotel for travelers who enjoy the great outdoors. Featuring 123 guest rooms in a variety of accommodation types to suit your needs including courtyard, poolside and the historic train depot. All guest rooms offer complimentary wifi, fridge, microwave and morning coffee in the lobby.

Enjoy the fitness center, heated indoor pool and spa and expansive courtyard. Stetson's Restaurant and the Golden Spike Lounge offer dining options to satisfy every palate.



Book your room before April 15 for a special rate of \$100 per night plus tax.

The Yogo Inn, 211 E Main St.,  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
406-535-8721 • yogoinn.com

## PRE- AND POST-FESTIVAL LODGING

**American Prairie Reserve** is offering pre- and post-festival lodging (**June 1–4 & June 7–12**) at a discounted rate for festival participants who would like to come early or stay after the event and enjoy the spectacular expanse of the Reserve. Lodging is at Buffalo camp, Antelope Creek campground or the Reserve hut system.

**Huts on the PN Unit**  
The hut-to-hut system provides visitors with a base camp from which to explore the prairie. In the tradition of other hut systems around the world our huts offer comfortable and affordable accommodations. The Founders Hut and John and Margaret Craighead Hut each consist of 30-foot yurts connected by a

hallway and accommodate nine people in four bunk rooms. One yurt serves as sleeping space, the other contains a fully equipped kitchen, dining area, a library, and interpretive displays. A third connected yurt contains a composting toilet and a changing area. Solar panels power LED lighting, a refrigerator, and an outlet for charging small electronics. For those who would like to travel even lighter, Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures may be booked to provide meals, sleeping bags, and guided trip options.

Rate: 30% off  
Promo Code:  
Audubonfest2020  
Reservations:  
[americanprairie.org/  
where-to-stay](http://americanprairie.org/where-to-stay)



### Antelope Creek Campground at Mars Vista

The Antelope Creek Campground is located seven miles north of the Missouri River along US 191. The campground has 12 RV sites with power, four small rental cabins (each sleeps 4), five drive-in tent platforms and three walk-in tent platforms, fire rings, potable water, a bathhouse with showers, and an interpretive hiking trail.

### Buffalo Camp

Located on the Sun Prairie Unit, Buffalo Camp is situated on the home range of our bison herd. The camp has seven RV sites with electric hookups and six tent platforms, a supply of nonpotable water, vault toilets, fire rings, an amphitheater, and covered picnic areas.

# field trips

Please review each description and make your choices.

Please note trips labeled SAT/SUN are identical both days.



Family Friendly



Mostly Driving

All field trips will leave Lewistown's Yogo Inn at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Please join your fellow field trip participants and leaders at the breakfast table marked with your field trip number at 5:00 a.m. in the banquet room. This allows you to meet your group and leader, and make plans for car-pooling.

Lunches are available as part of your registration. Be sure to bring your gear to include comfortable walking shoes, water bottle, raingear, binoculars, bird guide, camera, and any personal needs for your trip. Restrooms are available on all trips.

All Saturday trips will return to the hotel by 2:00 pm. Participants will make their way home at the conclusion of Sunday trips. Check individual trip descriptions for specific information on trip ending time/place for your return trips home.

## SATURDAY/SUNDAY TRIPS

1SAT / 1SUN

### James Kipp Recreation Area and Missouri River



This tour will take you north along highway 191 to the James Kipp Recreation area, and along the Charles M. Russell NWR auto tour. Visit a remote stretch of the Missouri River and take in the Missouri River Breaks National Monument elk viewing area just miles upstream of Fort Peck Reservoir. Listen closely for all of your favorite riparian songbirds and larger species like American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, and more.

The group will be split in two, half for guided viewing of the pictographs and half birding in the brush. Groups will then swap. Day concludes with our guide explaining the pictographs. Birds to watch for include warblers, vultures, Mountain Blue-birds, nuthatches and nesting Red-tailed Hawks. **\$15 fee per person paid to Bear Gulch tour guide.**

6SAT / 6SUN

### Limekiln Trail

The Limekiln Trail offers birders a moderate hike in the Judith Mountains. The four-mile trip follows a good trail that ascends through lodge pole pine until reaching Lewistown Overlook at 5,880 feet. The forest opens to a south-facing vista. Lewistown can be seen nestling gently into rolling hills. West, three island mountain ranges thrust up: The Big Snowies, the Little Belts and the Crazyes. Watch for woodpeckers, flycatchers, kinglets and thrushes, and search for wild-flowers.

2SAT / 2SUN

### American Prairie Reserve PN Ranch

The PN Ranch hike offers birders a moderate hike near the confluence of the Judith and Missouri Rivers. The three-mile walking trip follows a two-track dirt road through a riparian area along the Judith River and gently ascends 1,000 feet through a grass/pine upland valley. Watch for riparian birds, water birds, as well as Clark's Nutcrackers, Brown Creepers, Wild Turkeys, Ruffed Grouse, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, woodpeckers, flycatchers, nuthatches, kinglets, thrushes, and search for wildflowers.

4SAT / 4SUN

### Big Springs State Fish Hatchery

Family Friendly Trip! Big Springs State Fish Hatchery is 7 miles south of Lewistown. Springs bubble up supporting greenery and giant willows. A leisurely walk takes you through grassy hills and shade trees. Watch for Belted Kingfishers, woodpeckers, crossbills, grosbeaks, sparrows, warblers, and duck and goose families. Tour the hatchery and feed the fish!



7SAT / 7SUN

### Citizen Science and Herons from Lewistown to Utica

Explore Lewistown and its surroundings, to search for historical Great Blue Heron rookeries while traversing a mosaic of grasslands, agricultural lands, prairie ponds, and vegetated coulees. Search for songbirds like Black-headed Grosbeak and Warbling Vireo that share their cottonwood habitat. Swing through tiny Montana towns learning about current Montana Audubon citizen science programs, how to use data collection programs like ebird in the field, and how to participate in our newest Great Blue Heron citizen science program. Stop along the way to listen and look for bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, Vesper Sparrows, Horned Larks, Lark Buntings, and other grassland specialists.



3SAT / 3SUN

### Bear Gulch Pictographs

A chance to combine birding with cool history! Bear Gulch is in the foothills of the Little Snowies southeast of Lewistown. Local American Indian tribes (500 to 1700 AD) told their stories by painting on the sandstone rocks. 2,000 pictographs dot the canyon.



5SAT / 5SUN

### Central Montana Raptor Route

Accipiters, buteos, falcons, vultures, Ospreys and eagles – this has them all! We'll follow one of the Montana Raptor Survey Routes. Our trip winds through rugged ranchlands and continues north to the Missouri Breaks town of Winifred. Having difficulty distinguishing between Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks? This is your chance to see enough to get it right. Short-eared Owls, harriers, kestrels and Merlins are common. You'll drop off a high ridge into the Judith River canyon, only to climb back up to another high plateau with views of the Missouri River and the Little Rockies!



8SAT / 8SUN

### Brewery Flats

Family Friendly trip! Brewery Flats Trail is southwest of Lewistown along an old railroad bed. The easy, level trail following Big Spring Creek harbors warblers, grosbeaks, Say's Phoebe, chickadees, nuthatches and Brown Creepers. Cliff Swallows circle rock uprisings with ducks, geese and Osprey by the creek.



9SAT

**Judith Mountains**



This 45-mile, mostly paved, loop through the heart of the Judith Mountains will begin by traveling east out of Lewistown then north through Giltedge and into Maiden Canyon. We will then travel west along Warm Spring Creek and return south to Lewistown via Highway 191. Much of our time will be spent in the foothills and mountains, where we should see a nice variety of songbirds present in the area. These will include several species of woodpeckers, flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers and sparrows, etc. In addition, a number of wetland species should be found during a stop at the Carter Ponds, on our return to Lewistown.

10SAT

**Fergus County and Carroll Trail**



Take a tour that will explore Fergus County via the historical travel route taken by George Bird Grinnell in 1875. Follow portions of the Carroll Trail, along gravel roads, visiting the locations of some of Fergus counties first recorded bird observations. As you travel, look forward to seeing sparrows, bluebirds, swallows, and raptors of all types overhead, all while listening to the meadowlarks sing. Especially look forward to the chance to hear the eerie call of the Long-billed Curlew. For this tour we request that you bring a hard copy of a field ID book, and limit the use of cellphones and photography. Photography is great for special moments, but we want to focus on birding and taking in the landscape.

11SAT

**Grassland Melodies East of Lewistown**

Explore the grasslands and sagebrush landscape east of Lewistown on this tour that showcases prairie songbirds. See and hear little brown grassland birds like McCown's longspur, Vesper Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Horned Lark, Lark Bunting, and of course meadowlarks. Take your time to enjoy the overlapping songs of these prairie birds as they "lark" high above your head, or skulk low in the grasses. Keep your ears open to hear the vocal Long-Billed Curlew, and keep your eyes to the sky to spot raptors high above.

12SAT

**King Hutterite Colony Tour**



This is a walking tour of the King Hutterite Colony, just outside of Lewistown, and will give visitors an insight into the Hutterite culture, way of life, and crafts. The tour lasts for about 1.5 hours and shows the communal lifestyle of the Hutterites. The King Colony was featured on the National Geographic Channel show "American Colony, Meet the Hutterites." Attendees will bird in the surrounding area prior to the 11:30 tour. **Fee is \$18 per adult and \$12 for children under 12 paid at tour to KHC.**

13SAT

**Crystal Lake**

Explore the area surrounding Crystal Lake in the Big Snowy Mountains where prairie and mountain vistas abound. Travel a few miles on foot, along moderately-rated nearby trails looking for birds and wildflowers on this island mountain range. Look for sparrows, nuthatches, vireos, forest hawks, and woodpeckers, along with waterfowl or shorebirds, like the Spotted Sandpiper.

14SAT

**Big Spring Creek Restoration and Birding Tour**

Walk out and back along two miles of Big Spring Creek, and experience a riparian corridor on the creek running through the heart of Lewistown. Listen for sparrows, catbirds, and warblers as one of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' professional restoration managers walks you through both unaltered and restored streamside habitats. Keep an eye out for a variety of blackbirds, swallows, and flycatchers.



Mountain Bluebird

Bob Martinka

## SUNDAY-ONLY TRIPS

All Sunday field trips depart from the Yogo Inn.  
Trips DO NOT return to the Yogo INN.

9SUN

### Lake Mason Willow Creek Unit to Roundup



On this tour, we will be exploring the grasslands, sagebrush and wetlands located in and around the Lake Mason National Wildlife Refuge complex, about 65 miles southeast of Lewistown. We will access the area by driving gravel and dirt roads that traverse the region. If road conditions allow, we may take time to visit Lake Mason itself, though our primary focus will be seeking out bird species associated with the native grasses and sagebrush in the area. Species of interest include Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs, plus Grasshopper and Baird's Sparrows. Also possible in the area are Greater Sage Grouse, Mountain Plover and Burrowing Owl. Located 65 miles southeast of Lewistown.

10SUN

### Bohemian Corners to Carroll Landing

Explore the grasslands and forests of Fergus County to the east of Lewistown, heading to Carroll Landing via Bohemian Corners and US 191. While you are likely to see nuthatches, chickadees, blue-birds and a few raptors, keep your fingers crossed for encounters with Burrowing Owls, Plumbeous Vireos, or even Common Poorwills. Because of potentially wet road conditions at this site, this field trip will visit the Judith Mountains as an alternative. In that case we will travel Gilt Edge Rd. to Maiden Rd. and over the Judith Mountains heading east to west. This alternative trip will pass historic locations like Fort McGinnis, the Teddy 'Blue' Abbott gravesite, and the Maiden Radar Base (Air Force) while searching for Ovenbirds and Plumbeous Vireos. For this tour we request that you bring a hard copy of a field ID book, and limit the use of cellphones and photography. Photography is great for special moments, but we want to focus on birding and taking in the landscape.

11SUN

### Bowdoin and Trafton Park



Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1936 as a migratory bird refuge. The 15,551-acre complex lies in the Milk River Valley northeast of Malta (140 miles north of Lewistown). The spectrum of habitat, from short and mixed grass prairie, creates an oasis for 263 species of birds. We'll take an

auto tour to look for American Avocet, White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Phalarope, Marbled Godwit, Cinnamon Teal, Brown Thrasher, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Black-necked Stilt. Upland nesting birds include Sprague's Pipits, Baird's Sparrows, Sharp-tailed Grouse and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. The area is important to wildlife such as white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, and coyotes. En-route we will visit Trafton Park in Malta for a chance to stretch our legs and explore an active town park.

12SUN

### Montana Raptor Conservation Center

Be one of the lucky festival participants to enjoy a private tour of the Montana Raptor Conservation Center (MRCC). The tour includes the hospital facility, ambassador birds, and flight cages. The MRCC is a non-profit raptor rehabilitation organization in Bozeman, Montana. The Center is dedicated to the conservation of raptors by providing rehabilitative care to sick and injured birds of prey, with the goal of releasing healthy birds to the wild. The Center strives to reduce conflicts between humans and raptors. The tour is limited to 10 people. *A suggested donation of \$25 per person paid to MRCC is appreciated.*

13SUN

### Explore the Musselshell Watershed

Explore nearby ranchlands within the Musselshell Watershed that have a little bit of everything. Visit grasslands and riparian areas, working lands, and forested parcels, searching for meadowlarks, warblers, flycatchers, chickadees, raptors, and other important wildlife like deer and antelope. Learn about working land conservation practices, restoration opportunities, and the watershed approach to conservation as you take in all of the sights and sounds of grasslands.

14SUN

### Castle Butte and East Fork Reservoir

Castle Butte Road, south of Lewistown is known for Mountain Bluebirds and raptors. This casual drive will stop at three reservoirs, Casino Creek, Hansen's and East Fork.



Bob Martinka

Golden Eagle

Casino Creek houses Northern Shovelers, American Wigeons and Redheads on the water; and warblers in the brush.

At Hansen's, one is likely to find goslings, mergansers, wigeon and even muskrat and beaver. East Fork is located 20 miles southeast. The reservoir covers 200 acres and is surrounded by tall-grass prairie and pine trees. Spotting scopes will be handy for identifying mergansers, grebes, and ducks. Sandhill Cranes, Great Blue Herons and shorebirds may show in the reeds on shore. Explore for Common Yellowthroats, Lazuli Buntings, catbirds, warblers and gamebirds. Some moderate hiking will yield great results.

15SUN

### East Red Hill Road

This tour will head southeast towards Billings and will explore a diversity of habitats from the Big Snowies to the Musselshell plains. Watch and listen as spruce-fir stands give way to open meadows. Cliffs house eagles and falcons, while the surrounding forests are full of woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, Mountain Bluebirds and maybe even an owl or two. The grasslands will abound with sparrows, meadowlarks and horned larks.

## SATURDAY AFTERNOON PRESENTATIONS

### Bird Identification Skills

*Ed Harper*

Test yourself and the experts! Join Ed Harper as he humbles expert birders in the audience with his bird identification challenge. This fun, educational experience helps us stretch our bird identification skills by focusing on key feather features and other clues to keep species straight.

Born and raised in Montana, Ed's vibrant passion for the Big Sky Country is clearly evident through his superb photography and informative narration. Bring a friend to share in this fine

program. An avid photographer, Ed has photographed over 2,000 species of birds, with many of his photos found in books and periodicals. In Alaska and the Lower 48, he has photographed over 800 species of birds. Starting out as a tour leader for the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1980, Ed now operates Sandpiper Journeys with his wife, Susan Scott. Together they have conducted many birding and natural history tours throughout the world.



### Supporting Whole River Management Through Whole River Collaboration

*The Musselshell Watershed Coalition*

The Musselshell Watershed Coalition is a partnership of individuals, organizations, and agencies working towards whole basin management through collaboration on the Musselshell River. Four water-user groups, several conservation districts, and state and federal agencies across Musselshell, Golden Valley, Wheatland, Garfield, and Petroleum Counties comprise the coalition.

The Watershed Coalition has a three-part goal to achieve a desirable quality of life for both water users, the residents of the Musselshell Valley, and the river itself. The Coalition's goals are to sustain sufficient water quantity, quality and provide governance, planning and outreach.

Join the representative from MWC to learn about current projects and the ongoing work of the coalition.

## SATURDAY EVENING PRESENTATION

### State of the Birds

*Larry Berrin, Montana Audubon Executive Director*

Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon works toward its mission through programs in conservation science, public policy, and environmental education. At the time of its founding, local Audubon chapters in Montana came together to establish an independent organization that could work directly on important conservation issues across the state. Montana

Audubon has since grown to be one of the largest conservation organizations in Montana. Join the Executive Director as he shares with you our current conservation work and the critical role that Montana Audubon plays in recovering and preserving bird populations in our state.



## CAKES FOR CONSERVATION!



One of the most enjoyable events during our annual bird festival is the dessert auction. Lively bidding on a variety of creative cakes and other sweet treats concludes the Saturday evening banquet. These are auctioned off, and eaten.

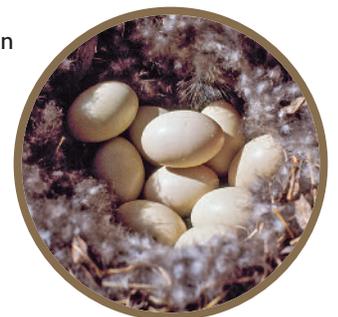
This year we are partnering with Musselshell Watershed Coalition (MWC).

Proceeds are evenly split between MWC and Montana Audubon, and funds are used to support conservation.

## MONTANA AUDUBON SUSTAINABILITY FUND

Your registration form includes a donation check box to help us build a restricted fund that Montana Audubon specifically uses for energy conservation, carbon neutrality and related sustainability projects.

Help our organization move toward a low-carbon future by contributing toward the Sustainability Fund!



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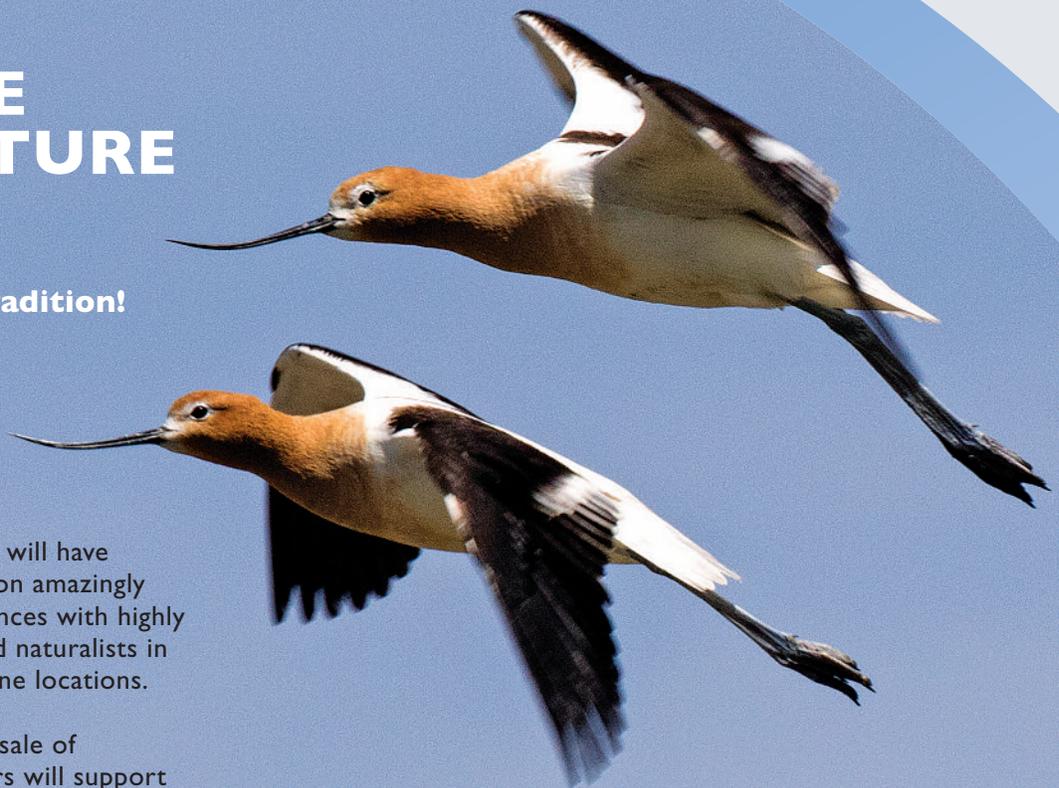
JUNE 5 – 7, 2020  
YOGO INN,  
LEWISTOWN

# NATURE ADVENTURE TOURS

**A bird festival tradition!**

All festival participants will have an opportunity to bid on amazingly unique birding experiences with highly experienced guides and naturalists in some of the most serene locations.

All proceeds from the sale of Nature Adventure Tours will support the work of Montana Audubon.



*American  
Avocet*