

December 16, 2007

Gene Blackwell
Superintendent of Parks
Billings Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands Department
390 North 23rd Street
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

I am a graduate student in the Ecology Department at Montana State University in Bozeman. During the summers of 2006 and 2007, my field crew and I conducted breeding bird surveys in the riparian zone of the Yellowstone River for the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council (YRCDC). Surveys were conducted at more than 300 locations from Big Timber to Sidney, including locations within three Billings city parks. Locations for surveys were randomly chosen in both forested and open habitats within the riparian zone along the river. Surveys were conducted using standard fixed-radius point count methods. The observer recorded all birds seen and heard within 60 meters of the location, for ten minutes each visit; all visits were conducted between sunrise and 10 am. Approximately 80% of our observations are from vocalizations (e.g. songs and calls), so these types of surveys are most effective for documenting songbirds. We conducted surveys at one location on Norm Schoenwald Island (2007 only), five locations at Riverfront Park, and six locations at Two Moon Park. Each location was surveyed for breeding birds three times during the month of June in 2006 and 2007. The bird species listed below were recorded during the surveys. Hopefully this information will be a useful supplement to existing data about riparian breeding bird communities within your city parks. Please let me know if you would like any additional information about the surveys and how or where they were conducted. Sometime next summer, we will be submitting a final report to the YRCDC with our findings from the entire study area. If you would like to look at the report, you will be able to access it from the YRCDC website <http://dnrc.mt.gov/cardd/yellowstonerivercouncil/>. Or, you can request a copy from me by giving me a call, or sending me an email or letter, and I would be glad to send you the report. Have a great year, and please give me a call if you have any questions—

Sincerely,
Danielle Jones
MSU Graduate Student, Fish and Wildlife Management

Norm Schoenwald Island

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| American Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis tristis</i> |
| American Robin | <i>Turdus migratorius</i> |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | <i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i> |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | <i>Molothrus ater</i> |
| Cedar Waxwing | <i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i> |
| House Wren | <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> |
| Killdeer | <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> |
| Least Flycatcher | <i>Empidonax minimus</i> |
| Song Sparrow | <i>Melospiza melodia</i> |
| Western Wood-pewee | <i>Contopus sordidulous</i> |
| Yellow Warbler | <i>Dendroica petechia</i> |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | <i>Icteria virens</i> |

Riverfront Park

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| American Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis tristis</i> |
| American Redstart | <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i> |
| American Robin | <i>Turdus migratorius</i> |
| Belted Kingfisher | <i>Ceryle alcyon</i> |
| Black-billed Magpie | <i>Pica hudsonia</i> |
| Black-capped Chickadee | <i>Poecile atricapillus</i> |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | <i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i> |
| Brewer's Blackbird | <i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i> |
| Brown Thrasher | <i>Toxostoma rufum</i> |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | <i>Molothrus ater</i> |
| Bullock's Oriole | <i>Icterus bullockii</i> |
| Canada Goose | <i>Branta canadensis</i> |
| Common Grackle | <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i> |
| Common Merganser | <i>Mergus merganser</i> |
| Common Yellowthroat | <i>Geothlypis trichas</i> |
| European Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> |
| Gray Catbird | <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> |
| Great-blue Heron | <i>Ardea herodias</i> |
| House Wren | <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> |
| Lazuli Bunting | <i>Passerina amoena</i> |
| Least Flycatcher | <i>Empidonax minimus</i> |
| Mourning Dove | <i>Zenaida macroura</i> |
| Northern Flicker | <i>Colaptes auratus</i> |
| Ovenbird | <i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i> |
| Plumbeous Vireo | <i>Vireo plumbeus</i> |
| Red-eyed Vireo | <i>Vireo olivaceus</i> |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> |
| Song Sparrow | <i>Melospiza melodia</i> |
| Spotted Towhee | <i>Pipilo maculatus</i> |
| Warbling Vireo | <i>Vireo gilvus</i> |
| Western Wood-pewee | <i>Contopus sordidulous</i> |
| Yellow Warbler | <i>Dendroica petechia</i> |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | <i>Icteria virens</i> |
| Yellow-headed Blackbird | <i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i> |

Two Moon Park

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| American Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis tristis</i> |
| American Redstart | <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i> |
| American Robin | <i>Turdus migratorius</i> |
| Black-billed Magpie | <i>Pica hudsonia</i> |
| Black-capped Chickadee | <i>Poecile atricapillus</i> |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | <i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i> |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | <i>Molothrus ater</i> |
| Bullock's Oriole | <i>Icterus bullockii</i> |
| Common Grackle | <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i> |
| Common Merganser | <i>Mergus merganser</i> |
| Common Yellowthroat | <i>Geothlypis trichas</i> |
| Downy Woodpecker | <i>Picoides pubescens</i> |
| Eastern Kingbird | <i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i> |
| European Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> |
| Gray Catbird | <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> |
| Great-blue Heron | <i>Ardea herodias</i> |
| Hairy Woodpecker | <i>Picoides villosus</i> |
| House Wren | <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> |
| Lazuli Bunting | <i>Passerina amoena</i> |
| Least Flycatcher | <i>Empidonax minimus</i> |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> |
| Mourning Dove | <i>Zenaida macroura</i> |
| Northern Flicker | <i>Colaptes auratus</i> |
| Red-eyed Vireo | <i>Vireo olivaceus</i> |
| Red-winged Blackbird | <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> |
| Song Sparrow | <i>Melospiza melodia</i> |
| Spotted Towhee | <i>Pipilo maculatus</i> |
| Tree Swallow | <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i> |
| Western Wood-pewee | <i>Contopus sordidulus</i> |
| Yellow Warbler | <i>Dendroica petechia</i> |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | <i>Icteria virens</i> |