



Bluegrassin'

Volume 26 Issue 1

Jan.—Feb. 2024

The Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting, preserving and sharing our love of bluegrass music in a spirit of family and friendship.

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Upcoming Bluegrass

Jan. 27: MRBA Winter Jam, Masonic Lodge, Missoula (126 East Broadway)
Doors open at 2:00 pm, Potluck at 6:00 pm.

Feb. 17: MRBA Winter Jam, Masonic Lodge, Missoula (126 East Broadway)
Doors open at 2:00 pm, Potluck at 6:00 pm.

Feb. 22—25: Wintergrass, Bellevue, WA <http://www.wintergrass.com/>

Mar. 23: MRBA Winter Jam, Masonic Lodge, Missoula (126 East Broadway)
Doors open at 2:00 pm, Potluck at 6:00 pm.

Regular Jams:

Whitefish: Tuesday Jams, North Valley Music School (432 Spokane Ave.)
6:00 to 7:30 pm (Call to RSVP—[\(406\) 862-8074](tel:4068628074))

Billings: Weekly jams on Friday nights, 7:00 to 9:00 pm? Yellowstone Bluegrass Association, Blue Creek Baptist Church.

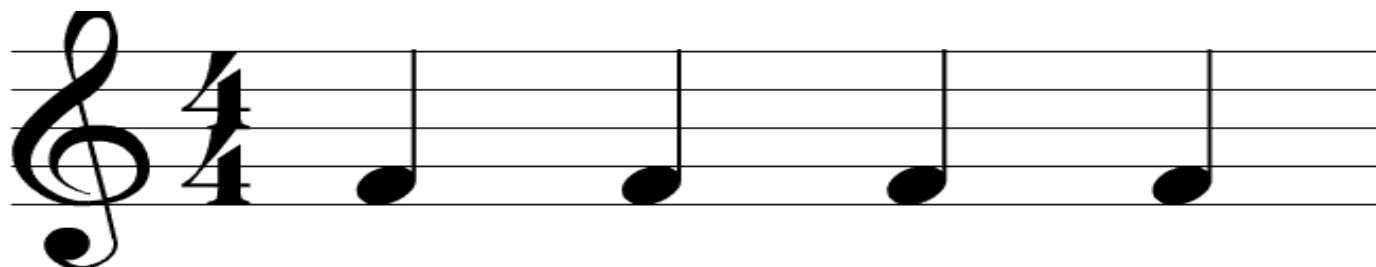
Kalispell: Montana Oldtime Fiddlers: Third Sunday of the month at the Buffalo Hill Terrace, 2:30 to 4:30 pm.

Save the Date:

April 13: MRBA Spring Festival, Neeley Center, Victor

Notes:

- 1) For ticket info & to confirm times, see venue websites
- 2) Send information about upcoming jams & band dates to newsletter editor



President's Message

The Christmas Party was lots of fun. Great food, friends, and three separate jam circles. The next winter jam is on Saturday, January 27, at the Masonic Lodge in Missoula. The other two for this winter are Saturday, February 17, and Saturday, March 23, at the same location. Doors open at 2:00 pm, potluck is at 6:00 pm. All Bluegrass Lovers Welcome.

In January, I will be signing up bands to play at the MRBA Festival on April 13 in Victor. The slots fill up fast, so if your group wants to perform a 25-minute set, email or call me, and I'll get your name on the list.

Mike

Wanted—Old MRBA Newsletters

Seeking old MRBA newsletters (before the year 2011), let me know so we can add them to the newsletter archives.

Send an email to: kate@appcom.net

Thanks!

Bluegrass Question of the Month

Have you ever traveled to a bluegrass festival in the months of January or February?

Where did you go?

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association

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President - Mike Conroy, mikevconroy@gmail.com

Vice President - Dallas Olson

Secretary/Treasurer - Anne Merrifield, happypasture9@gmail.com

Board Members - Tari Conroy, Kate McMahon, Randy Dollar, Jeff Campfield

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Bluegrassin' is a bi-monthly publication of the ***Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association***

Information printed in ***Bluegrassin'*** is at the discretion of the editor.

Montana Rockies Bluegrass Association

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 406-863-9255

Get MRBA Newsletter by E-Mail

If you would like to get your newsletter delivered electronically via e-mail send a message to:

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Electronic version has color photos & hyperlinks to websites.

(P.S.—It will help keep down printing and mailing costs for the Association.)



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MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
Membership Application

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 E-mail _____ Individual (\$10.00) _____ Family (\$15.00) _____

Do you want the newsletter delivered electronically? _____ YES _____ NO

Renewal _____ New Member _____

Please mail your application to: MRBA, PO Box 1306, Missoula, MT 59806

**MONTANA ROCKIES BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES**

December 16, 2023, 4:00 p.m., Masonic Lodge, Missoula, Montana

Board Members Present: Mike Conroy, Tari Conroy, Dallas Olson, Anne Merrifield, Randy Dollar

Board Members Absent: Jeff Campfield, Kate McMahon

Number of Members Attending: 18

The meeting was called to order by President Mike Conroy. The following items were discussed:

1. Update on the Association (Mike). Mike provided the 2024 jam dates to be held at the Masonic facility in Missoula (January 27, February 17, March 23). The date of the 2024 fundraiser/festival will be on April 13 at the Neely Center in Victor.

The 2024 picnic/campout will be held at Hughes Creek again. Mike will advise when a date has been set.

2. Financial Report (Anne). Anne presented the 2023 financial report (through November 30, 2023), which is in the MRBA files for reference. Income was \$5,767.50, expenses \$5,160.23, for a profit of \$607.27. The checkbook balance is \$9,595.57. The cost of the Hughes Creek/Forrest Flats Picnic was \$507.83, and the Victor Fundraiser/Festival raised \$1,207.36. Note that for the Victor fundraiser, we did not charge admission to MRBA members this year.

We have 155 members (down from previous years but holding steady). Still well below our pre-pandemic number that ran around 200.

3. Merchandise (Anne). Again due to not having a volunteer to handle merchandise, we will only be carrying bumper stickers in the future.

4. Old Business (Mike). While membership and dues have been relatively steady, the Association has been in decline for several years, mainly because so few members are actively involved, and member attendance at many of our events is sparse. He encouraged members to bring other folks to the jams and other events.

5. New Business (Mike). Many thanks to Kate McMahon for her years of service on the newsletter, and to Anne Merrifield for her work as Secretary-Treasurer.

6. Election of Officers (Mike). All of the existing Board members' terms will be continued for the next year. Therefore, the current slate will be as follows:

Mike Conroy, Tari Conroy, Dallas Olson, Jeff Campfield, Kate McMahon, Anne Merrifield, and Randy Dollar.

Phyllis Erck remains as Webmaster.

7. Business completed, Arlene Wolf made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Randy Dollar. Proceed to have supper and commence jamming.

Minutes compiled by Anne Merrifield, Secretary/Treasurer

MRBA Christmas Party Photos



A Whole Lot Of Plaid In This Jam



Some Serious Bluegrass Going On



Santa on Bass



Curtis and Teri Rocking It



Panoramic Bluegrass

MRBA Winter Jams Return

MRBA 2022 jam returns to the Masonic facility in Missoula!
(126 East Broadway, Suite A, Missoula, MT)

Pickin' and grinnin' starts at 2:00 pm.
Potluck at 6:00 pm, followed by more pickin' and grinnin'

Mark your calendars for the following dates:

January 27
February 17
March 23

New Year's Resolution

"Make sure my dues to MRBA are paid for 2024!"

Membership fees have not changed since MRBA was started 25 years ago.
"It's the best deal in Montana" says newsletter editor Kate McMahon.

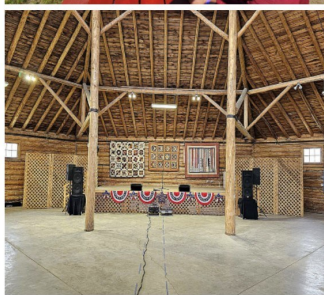
Most people renew their dues at the annual MRBA Spring Festival. If you can't make the festival, email Treasurer Anne Merrifield, and she can let you know when your membership expires.
happypasture9@gmail.com

If you are a new member or have a friend who wants to join,
use the membership form on Page 3 to join MRBA today.

Where is This?

Can you guess the location of this photo from a past MRBA campout?





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Cowboy Songs and Bluegrass

(by Kate McMahon)

Bluegrass music is considered “Roots Music,” and often songs associated with other “roots” genres cross over into a bluegrass jam. One of those genres, especially appropriate for Montana, is the “Cowboy Song.”

Along with bluegrass music, cowboy songs generally fall within the country/western category. Cowboys put the “western” in country/western.

According to Wikipedia, cowboy songs, “.... have dealt with many aspects of the West, such as the mountain men, the '49ers, the immigrants, the outlaws, the lawmen, the cowboy, and, of course, the beauty and grandeur of the West.” Worldwide, cowboys have always captured the imaginations of everyone from Bill Monroe to city slickers wearing cowboy hats and boots. Even for people who are not country/western fans, they likely know some cowboy songs. Many have been campfire favorites for generations.

In 1910, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* was published and included many of the traditional cowboy songs that most of us still know today. Cowboy songs achieved the height of popularity during the 1930's and 1940's when singing cowboy movie stars like Roy Rogers and Gene Autry were all the rage. Country-western singers, folk artists, and crooners like Bing Crosby have covered these old cowboy songs. They are mostly played on acoustic instruments and work well with bluegrass arrangements. Add some yodeling, close your eyes, and you can almost hear the coyotes howling away.

Below is a list of some of the more well-known cowboy songs that may already be part of your jam repertoire.

- Red River Valley (Traditional)
- I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart (made popular by Patsy Montana)
- Back in the Saddle Again (Gene Autry)
- Home on the Range (Traditional)
- Streets of Laredo (Traditional)
- Red Wing
- Jesse James
- Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie
- Ghost Riders in the Sky
- Tumblin' Tumbleweeds
- Don't Fence Me In (Roy Rogers)
- Night Rider's Lament
- Montana Cowgirl (Emmy Lou Harris) or Montana Cowboy (Osborne Brothers)
- I Ride an Old Paint (Linda Rondstadt)
- Happy Trails
- Yellow Rose of Texas
- Down in the Valley (Traditional)

Happy Trails

Written by Dale Evans

C G7
Happy trails to you until we meet again
C
Happy trails to you, keep smiling until then
F
Who cares about the clouds when we're together
A7 D7 G7
Just sing a song and bring the sunny weather
C A7 Dm G7 C
Happy trails to you 'til we meet a-gain



PLAYING FAST

HOW TO BUILD SPEED & DEXTERITY

While many banjo enthusiasts admire fast banjo playing, it isn't always clear how to train to play fast, effortlessly and with precision. Speed and dexterity will be loosely described here as a kind of familiarity. Familiarity is usually "created" when we repeat something, comfortably, slowly and regularly.

Do you know what the easiest, simplest concept is in speed training?

- When you practice slowly, you learn fast.
- When you practice slowly, your speed increases without trying to do so. That is why students practice with a metronome, to prevent speeding up beyond their comfort level.
- When you practice too fast, you introduce unwanted muscle tension and, therefore, bad habits.

Source: Deering Banjos

Speed is what you need. I would recommend working with a metronome. Start at the slowest speed that you can play it clean, as this is more important than how fast you can play it sloppy. When you have it down all the way through with no mistakes (work only on the parts you do not have down 'til perfect: this will save time), you may advance to the next tempo one at a time. You will be amazed at how much quicker that one little step is. Repeat this step until you hit the right speed you want (without mistakes). It will take more than a day, so be patient. Working on a few songs a click at a time will keep you from frustration. Being able to play fast will put you on a high, but do not be bummed out when no one else can keep up with you at a jam. Speed will work better alone or with your band. Also, if you have any recordings of your favorites, play along and be in the band. Backing tracks are great because there is no banjo player stepping on your toes.

Source: Banjo Hangout

Speed Bursts

You want to become the Usain Bolt of the banjo? Well, time to do some **SPRINTING**. Basically, play a roll slow and then quickly play a burst of 3-4 notes. Instead of trying to play an entire song or entire roll, you're limiting yourself to only playing a few notes fast. This allows you to get used to the feeling of playing fast without sustaining tension in your hand. Think of a runner training to become a sprinter, he has to work on getting out of the hole, a fast take-off if you will. As you play through these sprints, pay close attention to any tension within your hand, and try the best you can to **RELAX**.

Source: <https://jodyhughesmusic.com/increase-speed-banjo>.





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HARDTIMES UPDATE

(Melora Neaves)

I gifted this painting to my friend [Mike Conroy](#) for making it around the sun 70 times, but mostly for all the work he and his wife [Tari Conroy](#) do to keep bluegrass music alive and thriving in Western Montana and beyond. It is being used as the theme for this year's [Hardtimes Bluegrass Festival](#). This is the bumper sticker, but there are also going to be t-shirts!

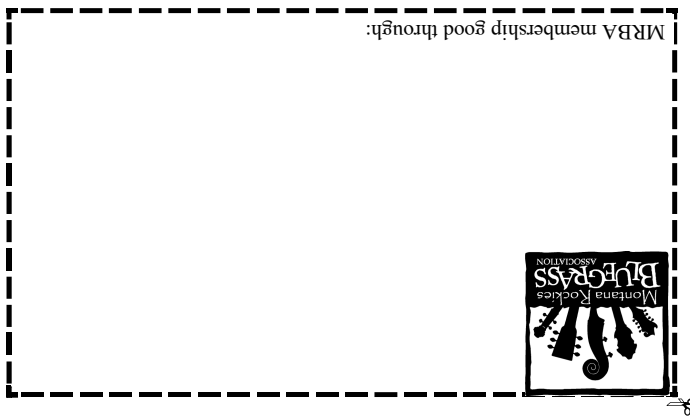


Answers:

Where is This: Gibbonsville—2016

ATTENTION:

We have set up the address label on your newsletter to be your membership card. Please clip it out and use it for proof of your membership to the MRBA.



PO Box 1306
Missoula, MT 59806

