

the curlew

June 2008

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Volume XLIII Number 10

Bateman Island bird walk

with Lisa Hill

May 3, 2008

The numbers were up for birds and birders on May's bird walk. About 30 people attended and collectively tallied up 59 bird species. Part of our large crowd included an eager group of beginning birders enjoying their first bird walk after attending an introductory birding class sponsored by LCBAS.

Before setting out on the walk, the parking lot revealed a number of good birds; BULLOCK'S ORIOLE, CEDAR WAXWING, nest-building WESTERN KINGBIRD and DOWNY WOODPECKER. There wasn't much activity along the causeway, but EARED GREBE, WESTERN GREBE, and CLIFF SWALLOW were seen. Nearly all of the swallow species were noted that day including TREE SWALLOW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, BARN SWALLOW and BANK SWALLOW. Although WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW numbers were still high, only a few YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS and one GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW remained; all will soon head north to breed. Only a very few water or shore birds could be found out on the delta, but AMERICAN AVOCET, BLACK-NECKED STILT, GREAT BLUE HERON, WESTERN SANDPIPER, CLARK'S GREBE, NORTHERN SHOVELER, WOOD DUCK, GADWALL and AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN were counted. A small flock of FORSTER'S TERNS made their presence known with harsh, rasping calls. A pair of resident GREAT HORNED OWLS with nestlings, and an unusual LONG-EARED OWL were located. Other birds of prey were NORTHERN HARRIER, RED-TAILED HAWK, AMERICAN KESTREL and OSPREY. Four CHIPPING SPARROWS, an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER and a RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET were the only other migrating or over-wintering birds.

The last Bateman Island bird walk of the season will be Saturday, June 7 at 8:00am. We meet at Wye Park above the causeway to the island. All are welcome; beginning birders are particularly invited to join in.

June Membership Potluck Picnic

Tuesday June 24, 2008

6 - 9 p.m.

South Leslie Groves Park
Richland

Our annual potluck picnic will be held in Richland at Leslie Groves Park, Shelter 2, Tuesday, June 24 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm. Directions: Turn east off George Washington Way on Newcomer Avenue, then north on Harris Ave., then east again on Park St. and there we are!

People are asked to bring a main dish and either a dessert or a salad. Beverages will be provided by LCBAS. No liquor permit was obtained so nonalcoholic beverages only, please. Bring your own plates, silverware, etc. The public is invited to attend. Come and bring a friend to share the good time and learn what your local Audubon Society has accomplished this year.

Those attending do not have to be members of Audubon. For more information go to the LCBAS website: lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org

**There are NO
Membership Meetings
or
Newsletters
in
July or August**

***** See you in September*****

AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT: To conserve and restore ecosystems, focusing on birds and wildlife, for the benefit of humanity and Earth's biological diversity. Audubon educates adults and children about the environment, advocates responsible public policy and legislation for natural resources, and conducts science-based projects using birds as indicators of health of the natural world.

Conservation Notes

by Rick Leumont

SOARING GAS PRICES - Crisis or Opportunity?

The price of gasoline continues to climb along with global demand. Supplies seem to appear static or shrinking. How will we as individual consumers deal with the cost of fuel? How will we deal with the impact of rising fuel costs forcing up the price of essentially everything we consume?

We are at a turning point in our history - which way we turn will impact our environment, our economy and our national security. We can continue down a path dependence on fossil fuels, continue to foul our planet and fight war and war over the remaining petroleum reserves.

We have an opportunity to choose a better path. Those of you who were around in 1958, when the Soviets put the first satellite into orbit, will remember the nation's shock and fear. How could this have happened? Well we didn't spend much time wondering about that - Pres Kennedy rallied us and promised an American on the moon in ten years - and damned if we didn't do it. That space race ushered in the age of computers and vast scientific advances never dreamed of.

Now is the time to break out of our fossil fuel addiction, find new ways to move people and products. It probably will not be one silver bullet but dozens, if not hundreds, of developments, innovations and new technologies. We must insure that protection of the environment, reversal of global warming, and the survival of all species and the habitat they depend on are an integral part of the solution.

We can no longer afford the government's colossal mismanagement of our affairs. The money, to say nothing of the cost in life, that has been wasted in Iraq probably could have put a new hybrid car in every American's family garage - wow, what would the price of petroleum be if our consumption were 30% to 50% less? What would the impact be on global warming? Air quality? Balance of trade?

The presidential and Congressional elections provide an opportunity to begin this change - sadly, up to now; I have seen little evidence the environment and new energy policies are high on the agenda for either party's platform. We need to press both party's to stop bickering and get to work - we have no time to loose.

We all need to make personal choices as consumers to buy green, reduce our fuel consumption and recycle.

We can turn this crisis into an opportunity and make the environment the big winner. Let's do it!

Have a wonderful summer!

Help for Injured Raptors:

If you find an injured raptor in the Tri-Cities or surrounding area you can call a local volunteer for advice. Injured raptors are usually transported to Blue Mountain Wildlife in Pendleton, Oregon for treatment and rehabilitation.

Who to call: Michelle Caron.....(509)366-0888
Marilyn Hayes.....(509)521-4648
Suzanne Baird.....(509)460-2434
Blue Mountain Wildlife..(541)278-0215

For more information see Lower Columbia Basin Audubon website and click on the [Help for Injured Birds](#) link.

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Bird Sightings -- April 2008

Bill LaFramboise - (billnanl@verizon.net)

(See the LCBAS webpage for directions to various locations)

Sightings of Greater White-fronted Geese included 300 at McNary NWR on 04/12 (M&MD), 64 at Warden Lake in Grant County on 04/20 (RH), and 150 at Groves Park on 04/23 (LF). There were 30 Snow Geese at Whitcomb Island on 04/05 (KK, mob) and 120 were there on 04/10 (HN). Two Tundra Swans were at McNary NWR on 04/06 (M&MD, KK, AKa) and 9 were at Tyson Ponds on 04/12 (M&MD). There was a Eurasian Wigeon at McCain Ponds near Othello on 04/09 (RH), 2 were at Columbia NWR on 04/09 (RH), 2 were at Whitcomb Island on 04/10 (HN), and 2 were at Tyson Ponds on 04/12 (M&MD). The first Blue-winged Teal of the season was along the lower Yakima River on 04/01 (WHe). The high count of Bufflehead was 10 at the Yakima Delta on 04/25 (NL). There were 12 Common Goldeneye at Two Rivers Park on 04/11 (NL, DR). Uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin, a Red-breasted Merganser was at Crow Butte on 04/05 (KK, mob). A Ruddy Duck was along Votow Road in Franklin County on 04/12 (BD) and 2 were at the Barker Ranch on 04/29 (NL, mob).

There were 2 Gray Partridge along Rotha Road on the South Slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 04/27 (NL, BW). That species has become hard to find in the Lower Columbia Basin. There were 4 Wild Turkeys at Washtucna on 04/27 (PB).

Uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin, a Pacific Loon was at Columbia Park on 04/29 (RL, CL). There were several sightings of Common Loons (mob). The high count of Horned Grebes was 5 at Groves Park on 04/25 (BW). Rare but annual, a Red-necked Grebe was along the Columbia River on 04/14 (JA). Locally uncommon, an Eared Grebe was at Bateman Island on 04/22 (NL) and again on 04/27 (CMc). The high count of Western Grebes was 3 at the Yakima Delta on 04/11 (NL). Clark's Grebes were at the Yakima Delta from about the middle of last month until at least 04/27 (BL, NL, BW, LH, CMc). The high count was 4 at the Yakima Delta on 04/25 (NL). The high count of American White Pelicans was 27 at Tyson Ponds on 04/12 (M&MD). Great Egrets and Black-crowned Night-Herons were at their nesting colonies on Fourth Island in the Columbia River throughout the month (NS, JA). Uncommon during migration, 3 Turkey Vulture were at Horn Rapids on 04/20 (JTin) and 1 was at Bateman Island on 04/27 (CMc).

Bald Eagle sightings included 1 at Two Rivers Park on 04/09 (DR) and again on 04/11 (DR, NL) and 1 was at the Yakima Delta on 04/16 (BW). That species becomes uncommon during April. The first Swainson's Hawk of the season was at FEALE on 04/02 when 2 were observed (NL, BDu). A Ferruginous Hawk was along Badger Road on 04/06 (BL, NL). There were 3 Rough-legged Hawks at the Wahluke Slope on 04/08 (RH, HB).

A Merlin was at FEALE on 04/02 (NL, BDu) and 1 was along the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 04/20 (JA, KA). There were 2 Peregrine Falcons at Sentinel Gap on 04/26 (AS, ES). A Prairie Falcon was at Horn Rapids on 04/21 (JTin) and 1 was at Washtucna on 04/27 (PB).

The high count of Sandhill Cranes was 3,600 at the Corfu Unit of Columbia NWR on 04/10 (RH).

The high count of Black-necked Stilts was 62 at County Line Ponds along Route 26 near Othello on 04/14 (RH) and the high count of American Avocets was 44 at the Yakima Delta on 04/14 (BW). A Solitary Sandpiper was at Migraine Lake at the Columbia NWR on 04/25 (RH) and 1 was at the Barker Ranch on 04/29 (NL, mob). The high count of Greater Yellowlegs was 5 at the Yakima Delta on 04/02 (BW) and the high count of Long-billed Curlews was 16 at FEALE on 04/02 (NL, BDu). The high count of Least Sandpipers was 13 and the high count of Dunlin was 200, both at the Walla Walla Delta on 04/26 (M&MD). A Long-billed Dowitcher and 4 Wilson's Snipe were at the Barker Ranch on 04/29 (NL, mob). The first Wilson's Phalaropes of the season were at Migraine Lake on 04/25 (RH).

A Bonaparte's Gull was at McCain Ponds near Othello on 04/25 (RH) and 4 were at Two Rivers HMU on 04/26 (M&MD). A Eurasian Collared-Dove was at Horn Rapids on 04/17 (NL) and 1 was at Warden Lake on 04/20 (RH). A Western Screech-Owl was in North Richland on 04/11 (BW) and 1 was at the Barker Ranch on 04/24 (NL, BW). Locally uncommon, there were 2 Vaux's Swifts at Two Rivers Park on 04/21 (DR) and 2 were in North Richland on 04/24 (PW). The first date ties the earliest Tri-Cities spring arrival date.

Spring arrivals of hummingbirds were earlier than normal. The first Black-chinned Hummingbird of the season was along View Road on 04/27 (RF). That species is rare during April. The first Calliope Hummingbird of the season was along View Road on 04/14 (RF). I am aware of only one earlier spring sighting of that species. Other sightings of Calliope Hummingbirds included 1 at Canyon Terrace on 04/19 (BL, NL) and again on 04/24 (NL), 1 at Johnson Park on 04/26 (LH), and 1 in Othello on 04/28 (RH). The first Rufous Hummingbird of the season was at Rancho Reata on 04/13 (RWe). That is the earliest arrival date for that species by 6 days. Other Rufous Hummingbird sightings included 1 along View Road on 04/16 (NL, RF), 1 at Johnson Park on 04/27 (LH, LU) and again on 04/28 (LH, LU), and 1 in Othello on 04/29 (RH). An uncommon migrant in the Lower Columbia Basin, a Red-naped Sapsucker was at Othello on 04/13 (RH) and 1 was at Washtucna on 04/27 (PB). Rare in the Lower Columbia Basin, a Hairy Woodpecker was at Washtucna on 04/27 (PB) and 1 was in Rancho Reata for approximately 2 weeks during early April (NO).

The first local Hammond's Flycatcher of the season was at Bateman Island on 04/26 (PB). The first Gray Flycatcher was at Washtucna on 04/27 (PB) and 1 was at the Barker Ranch on 04/29 (NL, mob). The first Dusky Flycatcher was at the Barker Ranch on 04/29 (NL, mob) and the first Pacific-slope Flycatcher was at Othello on 04/25 (RH). The first Western Kingbird was at Columbia NWR on 04/13 (RH). A Northern Shrike was at the Wahluke Slope on 04/08, which ties the second latest spring date for that species in the Lower Columbia Basin (NL, HN). The first Cassin's Vireos of the season were in Othello on 04/26 when 3 were observed (RH).

The high count Tree Swallows was 6 at Horn Rapids on 04/17 (NL). The first Northern Rough-winged Swallow of the season was at Ringold on 04/09 (NL, BDu). The high count was 50 at Two Rivers Park on 04/21 (DR). The first Bank Swallows were at Groves Park on 04/20 (NL) and the first Barn Swallows were at the Yakima Delta on 04/15 (NL). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was in North Richland on 04/22 (CSi) and on 04/23 (BW). A Brown Creeper was at FEALE on 04/02 (NL, BDu) and 1 was at the Barker Ranch on 04/29 (NL, mob). A Canyon Wren was along Old Inland Empire Highway on 04/27 (NL, BW). The first House Wrens were at Horn Rapids on 04/22 when 2 were observed (JTin).

Mountain Bluebird sightings included 3 at Tyson Ponds on 04/06 (M&MD, KK, AKa) and 1 at Columbia NWR on 04/13 (RH). Townsend's Solitaire sightings included 1 at Two Rivers Park on 04/01 (DR), 1 in North Richland on 04/05 (BW), 1 at Horn Rapids on 04/08 (JTin), 1 along Snively Road on 04/24 (NL, BW), 1 at Bateman Island on 04/26 (PB), and 1 in Othello on 04/26 (RH). A Hermit Thrush was at Johnson Park on 04/16 (LH, LU), 1 was along Rotha Road on 04/18 (BL, NL), and 1 was at Johnson Park on 04/21 (NL, LH). Varied Thrush numbers have been exceptionally low this winter. Two were in North Richland on 04/09 (CSi). The first Sage Thrasher of the season was a migrant on FEALE on 04/01 (NL, HB). They are rare at that location, especially after the last two fires. The high count was 4 on the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 04/27 (NL, BW). An American Pipit was at Bateman Island on 04/27 (CMc). The high count of Cedar Waxwings was approximately 100 along Leslie Road on 04/18 (BL, NL). The high count of Orange-crowned Warblers was 12 in Othello on 04/26 (RH). The first Nashville Warbler of the season was in Canyon Terrace on 04/12 (NL). There were several other sightings throughout the month (mob). The first Western Tanager was at Horn Rapids on 04/28 (BW). One was at Bateman Island on 04/29 (RL).

The first Chipping Sparrows were at Bateman Island on 04/28 when 4 were observed (NL). The first Brewer's Sparrow was at FEALE on 04/17 (NL). The high count was 7 along Rotha Road on the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 04/18 (BL, NL). The first Lark Sparrow was at the Yakima Delta on 04/22 (BW) and the first Grasshopper Sparrow was along Case Road on the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 04/27 (NL). There were

several sightings of Lincoln's Sparrows (mob). Uncommon, a White-throated Sparrow was in North Richland on 04/19 (LF) and 1 was in Othello on 04/30 (RH). The 2 Harris's Sparrows that have been in North Richland since January were observed until at least 04/28 (LF, NL). One was along Columbia River Road in Pasco on 04/27 (NS). There were several sightings of Golden-crowned Sparrows (mob). The first Bullock's Oriole of the season was on Horn Rapids on 04/28 (BW). A female Purple Finch continued to be seen in North Richland. It was observed until at least 04/02 (BW). A male Purple Finch was at Canyon Terrace on 04/04 (BL, NL). Cassin's Finch sightings included 1 in Othello on 04/20 (RH), 1 in Kennewick on 04/23 (NL, MDa, AD, JDit), and 4 in Othello on 04/24 (RH). A Common Redpoll was in Kennewick on 04/03 (AD, JDit). That is the second latest date that I am aware of for that species. There were several sightings of Pine Siskins (mob). The high count was 8 at Two Rivers Park on 04/11 (NL, DR).

Bird of the Month

This has been a good winter for Long-tailed Ducks in the Lower Columbia Basin with several sightings along both the Snake and Columbia River systems. Andy and Ellen Stepniewski had a rare spring sighting of this arctic breeding species on 04/26 on North Teal Lake at Columbia NWR. That is the latest spring sighting for the Lower Columbia Basin that I am aware of other than a mid June 1963 sighting also at Columbia NWR.

Observers

JA Jane Abel, **KA** Keith Abel, **PB** Phil Bartley, **HB** Howard Browsers, **MDa** Murrel Dawson, **M&MD** Mike and MerryLynn Denny, **MLD** MerryLynn Denny, **BD** Bob Derting, **AD** Annet Dittmer, **JDit** Jim Dittmer, **BDu** Bonnie Dunham, **RF** Ruth Fischer, **LF** Lucie Fritz, **WHe** Wayne Heinz, **LH** Lisa Hill, **RH** Randy Hill, **AKa** Anne Kahle, **KK** Ken Knittle, **BL** Bill LaFramboise, **NL** Nancy LaFramboise, **CL** Carole Louderback, **RL** Ron Louderback, **HN** Heidi Newsome, **NO** Neil Ofsthun, **DR** Dennis Rockwell, **CSi** Chris Simonen, **NS** Nancy Stansbury, **AS** Andy Stepniewski, **ES** Ellen Stepniewski, **JTin** Joel Tinsley, **LU** Larry Umthun, **RWe** Regan

MegaFloods & Little Badger Ridge Preservation Mega Event

This will be a free event presented by the Friends of Badger Mountain and the Ice Age Flood Institute, Lake Lewis Chapter. Come learn about Little Badger Ridge Preservation and some of the largest fresh water floods that ever occurred on our planet. Perhaps 100 Megafloods occurred creating the unique features of the scablands. Up to 900 feet of water covered the Tri-Cities during some of these Megafloods. NOVA's Megafloods PBS show will be shown at the **Richland Community Center, Game Room on June 14, 2008 at 3 PM.**

Following the 1-hour NOVA show there will be a 20 minute presentation on Little Badger Ridge Preservation. This is a proposed City of Richland ridge land park with non-motorized trails for public recreation. For information on the 60 Day Sprint to the Summit to raise money for this park, go to www.friendsofbadger.org. For more info: David Comstock, 372-3348

Second Saturday Event

from 9 am until noon at the
**McNary Wildlife Refuge's
Environmental Education Center**
311 Lake Rd., Burbank, WA 99323
1 mile east of the Snake River
bridge off US Hwy 12

June 14, 2008

It's a special day!

Come to McNary NWR and see the newly constructed Environmental Education Center next to the new staff offices.

Examine animal tracks imbedded in the new concrete sidewalk. View the pond and its waterfowl from our new deck.

Sign up to help build new displays in the new space. New rules apply.

All this free and of interest to all ages.

(The driveway and parking lot may still be under construction.)

Board Briefs – May 13, 2008 Board Meeting

from Debbie Berkowitz, Secretary

We have nominees for all the Board/Chairmen positions. The general membership needs to vote about whether to support the candidacy of Maria Skumanich (Seattle Audubon) for the Audubon Northwest regional-board position. At ACOW, water issues and shrub steppe issues were discussed. State Audubon is putting a person on staff to deal with shrub steppe issues. The Center for Environmental Policy will be developing water policy recommendations to the State legislature for the coming year with input from us. We wrote a letter of support for the City of Richland's application to the State Recreation and Conservation Office on behalf of the Friends of Badger Mountain for a \$1,000,000 grant towards the purchase of Little Badger. FOBM needs a 1:1 match, so has started a fundraising campaign to raise \$1,000,000 by June 30. We will be writing a letter in support of granting a conservation easement for the remainder of the area at Columbia Point South (i.e., beyond the 50 acres set aside for the Reach Interpretive Center). We discussed looking into the possibility of getting the burrowing owl listed as a threatened or endangered species. We will have two tables at the Youth Outdoors Adventure Expo on May 16-17. About 15 site visits have been finished for the Birding Trail, including almost all those in SW Benton County and Klickitat County; about 10 are left, many of

which are local. Another scout project is scheduled for the Audubon Nature Trail; a bench will be rebuilt and a new one installed. There are still openings for the Arizona and Australia trips. The taxidermy specimens at McNary will be moved to the new Education Building in early June. The volunteer and history pages on the website are being updated as information is received. We have notecards available for sale as a fundraiser. The June 24 picnic will be at the Leslie Groves picnic shelter #2 (same place as usual).

White-crowned Sparrow Color Banding Study – First banding cycle 2007-2008

Do the same White-crowned Sparrows you befriend and feed each winter return to your backyard year after year? Do the young ones experiencing their first migration find your hospitality to their liking and so "memorize" your address for future reference? In short, do White-crowned Sparrows (WCSP) return to known feeding locations each year?

Our study is designed to run for 5 years and the same three banding locations will be used each year, Richland, Finley, and Benton City. We try to band as many as possible because the recovery rate for small sparrows is extremely low. In addition to banding birds with US Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum bands, we color band them to increase our chances of observing returning birds without having to actually recapture them.

In this first year of our study, we banded intermittently from September, 2007 to April, 2008. During that time 461 birds were banded including: 197 White-crowned Sparrows born in 2007, 98 White-crowned Sparrows born before 2007, 79 Dark-eyed Juncos, 39 American Goldfinches, 38 House Finches, 3 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 2 Song Sparrows, and 1 each of Wilson's Warbler, Mourning Dove, Spotted Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, and Harris's Sparrow.

We were rewarded when birds we banded showed up at 2 other feeder locations this past winter/spring and were noted by the color bands they were wearing. The first of these locations was along the Yakima River 2 linear miles from the Richland site. An immature bird was noted on December 14, December 22, January 14, March 10, April 14, April 16, and April 24. The bird was in immature plumage when banded so we know that it was born in 2007. The second location was only 750 feet from the Richland banding site yet only this 1 immature bird was observed on April 10 and 11. That gives us a hint that perhaps the birds of the year wander around to find a feeder they like while the adults know where they are going to spend the winter.

But note that out of a total of 295 banded WCSPs, just 2 birds were observed at feeder locations other than where they were captured and banded!

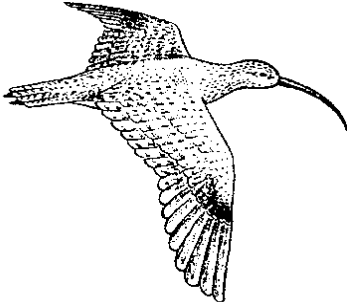
We are looking forward to this fall migration when we will find out if any of our birds return faithfully to the place they were banded. We will be adding more banded birds to the study population and will let you know the color schemes in case you find a WCSP in your yard that is wearing color bands on its legs. What a surprise that would be!

Nancy and Bill LaFramboise, Bonnie Dunham,
Howard Browsers, and Ed Rykiel

The Curlew
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Audubon Membership Information

Please Note: Membership in National Audubon Society (NAS) and the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (LCBAS) are **separate memberships**.

Chapter Membership (includes a year's subscription [10 issues] to *The Curlew*)

_____ \$20. for annual membership dues or

_____ \$10. for full time students.

Please make check payable to **LCBAS**. I can help with an additional donation of \$_____

_____ Send *The Curlew* to my email address listed below. All my dues will go towards supporting LCBAS in local education and conservation efforts.

_____ I want to be on your Environmental Alert e-mail list to receive timely notices about issues/work parties. (Your e-mail address will not be shared.)

National Audubon Society Membership (includes annual subscription to *Audubon Magazine*)

_____ \$20. for one year new membership in the NAS. (Renewal of NAS membership is currently \$35.)

_____ \$15. for one year new senior or full time student membership in NAS.

Please make check payable to **National Audubon Society**. Please do not sent renewals to LCBAS.

For any of the options above check the appropriate boxes, clip the form and mail it with your check(s) to:

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1900, Richland, WA 99352

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