

# the curlew

September 2007

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

## SEED SALE ! See pages 5 & 6

### Woodpecker Wonderland & Pine Mountain Field Trip Report

by Dennis Rockwell

The LCBAS mid-June field trip to central Oregon was blessed with beautiful weather and great birding and was deemed a success by all participants.

Part of the party rented Cascade House just a block from downtown Sisters while the rest of us camped at Cold Springs Campground just four miles west of town and everyone found their accommodations entirely to their liking.

The Cold Springs campers discovered upon arrival that after several years of drought the springs were once again flowing and within minutes we'd seen **White-headed Woodpeckers**, a **Downy Woodpecker**, and a male **Red-napped Sapsucker** mated with a female **Red-breasted Sapsucker** of the southern race which were feeding young. Other species discovered here over the next three days included **Bushtit**, **Red-breasted** and **Pygmy Nuthatch**, **Chipping Sparrow**, **Townsend's Solitaire**, **Dark-eyed Junco** and **Northern Goshawk**.

On Thursday at Gobbler's Knob we searched in vain for a Northern Parula that had been reported from that location. However, species we did identify here included **Swainson's Thrush** (heard only), **Black-headed Grosbeak**, **Fox Sparrow**, **Warbling Vireo**, **Cassin's Vireo** and **Olive-sided Flycatcher**. At Calliope Crossing we found **Calliope Hummingbirds** naturally. **Blad Eagles** were observed within the city limits of Sisters. On Friday a drive to Trout Creek Swamp took us through the area of a 2006 forest fire and here we found **Brown Creeper**, **American Three-toed** and **Black-backed Woodpeckers**. At Suttle Lake there were **American Dipper** and **Spotted Sandpiper**. During Saturday's adventure on and around Pine Mountain we found **Sage Sparrow**, **Sage Thrasher**, **Brewer's Sparrow**, **Green-tailed Towhee**, **Evening Grosbeak**, flocks of **Clark's Nutcrackers** and **Red Crossbills**, **Prairie Falcon** and a pair of **Williamson's Sapsuckers** feeding nestlings.

We supped together at Cascade House on Saturday evening and over good food and wine tallied the species. Our total for the three days came to eighty-nine.

### September Membership Meeting Tuesday, September 25, 7:00 pm

Kennewick First Lutheran Church, corner of Yelm Street and Highway 395 in Kennewick.

## Woodpecker Wonderland: Oregon's Eastern Cascades

**Our September meeting will feature as guest speaker Oregon naturalist, Stephen Shunk.** Join Steve as he leads a virtual tour of Woodpecker Wonderland, from the Cascades Crest to the Deschutes River and from Mt. Jefferson to the Three Sisters. Steve will cover the natural history and identification of the region's 11 species of woodpeckers as well as conservation issues faced by a few particularly sensitive species. The scenic backdrop of volcanic peaks offers additional inspiration.

Steve Shunk leads birding tours across Western North America through his company, Paradise Birding, and he is currently writing the Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America. He co-founded the Oregon Birding Trails program and coordinated the development of its flagship project, the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail. Steve also co-founded the East Cascades Bird Conservancy, through which he leads numerous field studies in Central Oregon's East Cascade Mountains.

## TIME TO RENEW!!

For many members - 150 of you in the next 2 months, this is the time of year for renewing your membership in LCBAS. Check the expiration date on your label. Timely renewal will keep costs down and the money saved will be used for the more important business we do.

**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.

## From the President

With this issue of the Curlew again published under the able management of Dennis Rockwell, we start a new program of LCBAS activities. Under past president Charlotte Reep's strong leadership the chapter's brochure was developed and produced. All of us should use this well done promotional publication as handouts to amplify community awareness of our activities and increase membership.

Our mainstays of activity continue: the Christmas Bird Count, the first Saturday of the month bird walks on Bate-man Island, the fourth Tuesday of the month membership meetings with programs at the Kennewick First Lutheran Church, the near and far birding field trips, the programs presented in the schools, the MEECE program at McNary National Wildlife Refuge, the publication of the monthly bird sightings reported by our active feeder watchers and field birders, the expanding conservation activities and the continuing development and maintenance of the nature trail in Columbia Park. I'm happy to have a strong and experienced board and staff of committee chairs. I hope you will review their names in the masthead to the right of this column and help them to carry out their activities.

In the coming year we should all visit Greg Greger's MEECE program in their new building at McNary NWR, we will continue development of the Great Washington State Birding Trail map for our district under Dennis Rockwell's chairmanship and support the Open Space Planning Project for the greater Tri-Cities under the leadership of Scott Woodward and Mike Lilga from the Tapteal Greenway Association. We are also involved in developing two panels for the kiosk at the foot of the Badger Mountain Trail.

Again I thank you all for your support of Audubon's mission and of our Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society chapter.

Rod Coler  
Chapter President

### For the Future by Wendell Berry

Planting trees early in spring,  
we make a place for birds to sing  
in time to come. How do we know?  
They are singing here now.  
There is no other guarantee  
that singing will ever be.

### 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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# Summer Bird Sightings (May 16—July 31, 2007)

Bill LaFramboise - ([billnanl@verizon.net](mailto:billnanl@verizon.net))

Starting with this month's column, the reporting periods will be changed. Previously, the reporting period was mid-month to mid-month. Future columns will cover a month-start to month-end period with this column being in transition. This change is occurring to match new submittal dates for Curlew publishing.

There were 2 Wood Ducks at Lyons Ferry on 06/01 (PS, RS). Uncommon during summer, an American Wigeon and a Northern Pintail were at Tyson Ponds most of the summer (NL, JorL, MLa, BDu). The high count of Redheads was 8 at Paterson Slough on 05/18 (NL). Rare during summer, a Bufflehead was at Tyson Ponds on 06/03 (NL, M&MD) and 1 was at Two Rivers Park on 06/25 (DR). Eight Common Mergansers were observed along the Columbia River on 05/24 (JA). There were several groups of female Common Mergansers, one of which had 4 hatchlings, along the Hanford Reach on 06/23 (RWe, SP). That species is an uncommon breeder in the Lower Columbia Basin. The high count of Ruddy Ducks was 18 at Paterson Slough on 05/18 (NL). Locally uncommon, two Gray Partridge were along the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 07/03 (BL, NL).

A Common Loon was at Two Rivers Park on 06/20 (DR) and again on 06/25 (DR). A Western Grebe was along the Columbia River on 05/24 (JA) and 5 were along the Pasco shoreline on 06/12 (NL). A Clark's Grebe was at Wanapum State Park on 06/01 (PS, RS) and 1 was along the Pasco shoreline on 06/12 (NL). The high count of American White Pelicans was 43 at McNary NWR on 05/20 (M&MD). A Snowy Egret was also at McNary NWR on 05/20 (M&MD). That species is very rare in the Lower Columbia Basin. I am aware of only 6 other local records. The high count of Black-crowned Night-Herons was 25 at McNary NWR on 05/20 (M&MD). Uncommon during spring, a White-faced Ibis was also there on 05/20 (M&MD). A Turkey Vulture was at Washtucna on 05/27 (PS, RS), 1 was at Touchet on 06/16 (M&MD), and 2 were along the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 06/24 (PB).

Cooper's Hawks have become uncommon breeders in the Tri-Cities. Sightings during the summer included 1 in West Richland on 05/21 (CJ), 1 at Groves Park on 05/31 (BW), 1 at Bateman Island on 06/03 (NL, mob), and 1 at Canyon Terrace on 06/03 (NL). A Peregrine Falcon was at Palouse Falls on 06/10 (NL, PB) and 1 was at Tyson Ponds on 07/22 (M&MD). There were several sightings of Prairie Falcons (mob).

Rare, occurring less than annually during spring migration, there were up to 2 Black-bellied Plovers at Tyson Ponds from 05/20 until 06/04 (mob). Very rare during spring migration, an American Golden-Plover was at Tyson Ponds from 06/02 until 06/04 (SM, M&MD, BL, NL). A Semipalmated Plover was at Perch Point on 07/14 (DS).

The high count of Black-necked Stilts was 32 at Tyson

Ponds on 06/04 (BL, NL) and the high count of American Avocets was 24 at Tyson Ponds on 06/03 (NL, M&MD). The high count Spotted Sandpipers was 6 along the Columbia River on 05/24 (JA). Greater Yellowlegs sightings included 1 along the Columbia River on 07/01 (JA), 1 at Tyson Ponds on 07/03 (NL, JonL, JorL, BDu), and 1 at County Line Ponds near Othello on 07/14 (RH). A Lesser Yellowlegs was at Tyson Ponds on 06/27 (NL, JorL) and 7 were there on 07/03 (NL, JonL, JorL, BDu). Rare in the Columbia Basin, a Marbled Godwit was at Tyson Ponds on 07/03 (NL, JonL, JorL, BDu).

A Semipalmated Sandpiper was at County Line Ponds near Othello on 07/14 (RH) and 6 were there on 07/29 (RH). The high count of Western Sandpipers was 97 at County Line Ponds on 07/14 (RH) and the high count of Least Sandpiper was 4 at Tyson Ponds on 07/03 (NL, JonL, JorL, BDu). A Baird's Sandpiper was at Perch Point on 07/14 (DS) and 1 was at Tyson Ponds on 07/21 (GMcW). A Pectoral Sandpiper was at Tyson Ponds on 07/21 (GMcW). The high count of Long-billed Dowitchers was 21 at County Line Ponds on 07/14 (RH). There were several sightings of Wilson's Phalaropes. The high count was 130 at Tyson Ponds on 06/27 (NL, JorL). The high count of Red-necked Phalaropes was 9 at Tyson Ponds on 05/20 (M&MD) and 9 again at Tyson Ponds on 07/22 (M&MD).

A Franklin's Gull was at Tyson Ponds on 07/22 (M&MD, GMcW) and 4 were there on 07/30 (NL, JorL). A Bonaparte's Gull was at the Sprague Sewage Ponds on 05/18 (BW), 1 was at Tyson Ponds on 05/28 (CW), and 1 was along the Columbia River on 06/20 (JA) and again on 06/25 (JA). The high count of Caspian Terns was 10 at the Yakima Delta on 07/25 (NL) and the high count of Forster's Terns was 50 at Paterson Slough on 05/18 (NL). There were 3 Eurasian Collared-Doves along Ward Gap Road in Prosser on 05/20 (BL, NL, KT) and 2 were along Old Inland Empire Highway on 06/24 (PB). Up to 20 have been in Washtucna (mob). Rare in the Northwest, a White-winged Dove was near McKay Reservoir on 06/11 (ASK). Good numbers of Short-eared Owls have been on the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain. Seven were there on 07/03 (BL, NL) and 5 were there on 07/20 (GMcW). A Common Poorwill was along Rotha Road on the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 07/03 (BL, NL).

A Calliope Hummingbird was at Johnson Park on 05/23 (LH) and again on 07/18 (LH). There were several sightings of Rufous Hummingbirds (mob). A Lewis' Woodpecker was at FEALE on 05/16 (NL, JFI). That species is an uncommon migrant.

An Olive-sided Flycatcher was at Washtucna on 06/01, 06/03, and again on 06/20 (PS, RS). There were several sightings of Willow Flycatchers (mob). An uncommon migrant, a Least Flycatcher was at Washtucna on 05/25 (PS, RS). A Gray Flycatcher was at Washtucna on 06/01

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

(PS, RS). Two Pacific-slope Flycatchers were at Washtucna on the relatively late date of 06/20 (PS, RS) indicating possible breeding at that location. An Ash-throated Flycatcher was at Washtucna on 05/25 (PS, RS). The high count of Warbling Vireos was 5 at Washtucna on 06/01 (PS, RS) and on 06/03 (PS, RS). Red-eyed Vireo sightings included 1 at Palouse Falls on 06/10 (NL, PB), 3 at Washtucna on 06/03 (PS, RS, GShe, KTh). That species is an uncommon migrant. A Western Scrub-Jay (*pacific race*) was at Ward Gap Road in Prosser on 05/06 (BL, NL, KT). Up to 3 birds have been observed at that location for the past 3 years. That species has been considered to be very rare in the Lower Columbia Basin and are apparently expanding from the population in the Columbia Gorge. Fledgling Tree Swallows were at Two Rivers Park on 06/07 (DR) and hatch year birds were at Bateman Island on 06/14 (NL). That species has become an uncommon breeder in the Tri-Cities.

A Swainson's Thrush was at Lyons Ferry on 06/01 (PS, RS), 2 were at Washtucna and 2 were at Windust Park, both on 06/02 (PS, RS), and 1 was at Washtucna on 06/03 (PS, RS). That species is a rare migrant in the Lower Columbia Basin. A Hermit Thrush was at Washtucna on 06/03 (PS, RS, GShe, KTh). A Varied Thrush was at the Hanford Site on 05/30 (fide RJ). That species is rare after early May. Rare in the Columbia Basin, Northern Mockingbird was at Columbia NWR on 07/29 (RH). A Sage Thrasher was on Lincoln Grade near Prosser on 06/24 (PB) and 1 was on the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain on 07/03 (BL, NL). The high count of Yellow Warblers was 8 at Lyons Ferry on 06/01 (PS, RS). Rare but annual, an American Redstart was at Washtucna on 06/03 (PS, RS, GShe, KTh). The high count of MacGillivray's Warblers was 6 at Washtucna on 06/01 (PS, RS). Uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin, a Common Yellowthroat was at Johnson Park on 05/20 (LH) and 1 was along Dodson Road on 06/20 (LSO). The first Wilson's Warbler was at FEALE on 05/07 (NL, BDu) and the first Yellow-breasted Chat was at Horn Rapids Park on 05/08 (NL, LH). There were at least 2 Black-throated Sparrows along Lincoln Grade near Prosser from 05/20 until at least 05/30 (SWi, BL, NL, KT, GMcW, DG) and 2 were along Huntzinger Road near Vantage on 06/09 (MF). A Swamp Sparrow was at Lyons Ferry on 06/09 (SM, BWa, M&MD). I am not aware of any local records of that species after the end of March. The last White-crowned Sparrow of the season was at FEALE on 05/16 (NL, JFI). A Golden-crowned Sparrow was at Washtucna on 06/01 (PS, RS). Up to 2 Great-tailed Grackles were at Tyson Ponds from 7/14 until at least 07/30 (M&MD, mob). Rare in the Lower Columbia Basin, 3 Red Crossbills were at Washtucna on 06/03 (PS, RS, GShe, KTh). A Pine Siskin was in West Richland on 05/24 (CJ), 1 was at FEALE on 05/26 (NL, GMcW), and 1 was Bateman Island on 06/02 (NL, KA).

## Birds of the Month

Late spring was especially exciting for eastern vagrants. Gina Sheridan and Kim Thornburn found a Philadelphia Vireo at Hooper on 06/03. A second Philadelphia Vireo was found by Patrick and Ruth Sullivan at Washtucna on 05/25. That species is rare in Washington with only a handful of local sightings. Charlie Wright found a Black-and-white Warbler on 05/27 at Windust Park. Black-and-white Warblers are birds of boreal and eastern forests and are rare in Washington. This sighting is about the 9<sup>th</sup> for the Lower Columbia Basin and the first for Franklin County. Lisa Hill and Larry Umthun found a second year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Johnson Park on 05/21. That species is common throughout eastern and central North America but is rare in Washington with a total of about 30 sightings. This is the first recorded sighting for Benton County. (There was a previous undocumented report.) Patrick and Ruth Sullivan found a male Indigo Bunting at Washtucna on 05/25. That sighting is the 5<sup>th</sup> that I am aware of for the Lower Columbia Basin. Nancy LaFramboise found a male Baltimore Oriole on 06/02 at Bateman Island. Baltimore Orioles are very rare in Washington. I am aware of only 3 other sightings for the state. This sighting is the first for Benton County.

## Observers

**JA** Jane Abel, **KA** Keith Abel, **PB** Phil Bartley, **M&MD** Mike and MerryLynn Denny, **BDu** Bonnie Dunham, **JFI** John Fleckenstein, **DG** Denny Granstrand, **LH** Lisa Hill, **RH** Randy Hill, **CJ** Chris Johnson, **RJ** Ray Johnson, **BL** Bill LaFramboise, **MLa** Martha LaFramboise, **NL** Nancy LaFramboise, **JonL** Jon Lucas, **JorL** Jordene Lucas, **GMcW** Guy McWethy, **SM** Steve Mlodinow, **SP** Scott Peterson, **DR** Dennis Rockwell, **DS** Doug Schonewald, **GShe** Gina Sheridan, **ASk** Aaron Skirvin, **LSO** Lonnie Somer, **PS** Patrick Sullivan, **RS** Ruth Sullivan, **KTh** Kim Thornburn, **KT** Kerry Turley, **BWa** Brad Waggoner. **RWe** Regan Weeks, **SWi** Susan Wierenga, **BW** Bob Woodley, **CW** Charlie Wright



Baltimore Oriole

## Trail chairman Coler thanks cleanup crew

A hard working group came together on May 26, 2007, to prune and sweep the Columbia Park Audubon Nature Trail.

Richard Romanelli and Dana Ward painted the elevated platform called "Overlook." Mike Lilga, Murrel Dawson, Fred Simonen, Mike O'Connell and the Barkley family (son Jason created the Monarch Butterfly story panel and bench for his Eagle Scout service project) pruned and loaded brush on the truck. Tom Clarke sawed and trucked brush to the dumpster.

Ben Borgen, retired railroad engineer, provided a hot lunch and coffee from his butane stove and kept track of the tools. Ben lived, as a boy, on the River Road west of the trail area and contributed history about the "River Roaders" to the trail story board that was placed at the trail entrance by Eagle Scout Kyle Ratuiste.

Former trail chairman Tom McMillin stopped by to return LCBAS's long-handled pruning saw. Tom and his wife Joyce developed and built the Regional Veteran's Memorial on the river in east Columbia Park. Tom just recently received a Commander's Commendation Award from the Governor and Washington State National Guard for "distinguished service" during "the flood of 1948."

On a nature note, the following fauna was observed along the trail during this week in May: Monarch Butterflies, a flock of American Goldfinches, a Western Painted Turtle and an American Beaver!

Tom Clarke is to be the trail chairman in the coming year. Having done the trail edge mowing for the past two years he is well acquainted with the site and armed with chainsaw and truck has been a most constant woodsman.

Rod thanks again all the past trail workers. We invite everyone to come "take a walk on the wild side" and review the LCBAS website which includes a history of the trail development.

[www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/history4.htm](http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/history4.htm)

*Thanks so very much*

*Thank you for your donation to my Eagle Scout project. It was very successful and I am now officially an Eagle Scout. I had a lot of fun working on the Audubon trail with Dr. Coler.*

*Zachary Jaquist*

## The Sixth Annual Bird Seed Sale and Information Fair

is almost here! (Details are on the order form on page 6.) Working with Columbia Grain & Feed has been a win-win situation for all involved. Our Education Committee is funded through this effort.

Prices for bird seed have gone up, but what hasn't? The folks at Columbia Grain & Feed have worked hard to make sure we got the best possible prices. ORDER EARLY to insure they are able to get what you need and want. Encourage children and neighbors to attend.

Blue Mountain Wildlife will be at our event again this year. They will have some of the birds that cannot be returned to the wild there for us to enjoy.

Last year people had up close looks at Flammulated Owl, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon and more. Blue Mountain Wildlife is working to train people in our area to be able to rehabilitate birds. We encourage your support of this organization.

## Update on the Open Space Coalition

The Open Space Coalition (OSC) was created in February 2007 to "serve as an umbrella organization for the organizations in the Tri-Cities region working on natural open space and open space-related missions." We have completed a Mission Statement (quotes in this article are taken from the mission statement), have set broad goals for the group, and are working on figuring out how the group will function. LCBAS is one of the founding members of the OSC and we plan to participate in what we hope will be "a coordinated community-wide effort to preserve our natural open spaces."

LCBAS has been taking part in an effort "to identify and inventory the natural resources that [the group considers to be] valuable as open space." We will also help in preparing an open space plan and will "work with private land owners, local governments, and other public and private entities to dedicate and/or acquire these resources." Our mission "is to create a network of undeveloped natural open spaces that preserves our community's hillsides, ridge tops, canyons, shorelines, waterways, and shrub-steppe habitat." "The purpose of the OSC is to unite member organizations and individuals to accomplish the stated mission. The organization seeks to combine the strengths of its members, establish an overall strategy for achieving its mission, educate the public, and speak with one voice while allowing individual members to implement the strategy in their own characteristic ways." "Organizations and individuals who share the stated purpose and mission and wish to contribute to the preservation of our region's special landforms, natural features, and habitats are welcome to participate." The OSC, with Tapteal Greenway Association as the lead, is currently applying for a grant from the National Park Service for help with facilitating an open space planning process in the greater Tri-Cities area.

LCBAS contact is Debbie Berkowitz (375-4740).

# Sixth Annual Seed Sale & Bird Information Fair - October 13

Once again, Columbia Grain & Feed will make a donation to LCBAS based on bird feeding supply purchases.

Who: Anyone who feeds birds or wants to know more about our local birds  
 What: Displays, Good Prices, Live & Taxidermy Birds, Answers to Questions  
 When: October 13, 2007, 9 am to 2 pm  
 Where: Columbia Grain & Feed, 2001 W Lewis St, Pasco  
 Why: FUN, Information, Benefits education programs, Good deals  
 Questions: Call Nancy at 627-3695

Hope for in-store promotions!

By preordering by October 1, Columbia Grain & Feed can get the amounts and varieties that customers want. Don't be disappointed. If you are not available on October 13, please PREPAY your order and enclose a note letting Columbia Grain & Feed know when you expect to pick up your order.

Remember; WHENEVER you buy bird feeding supplies at Columbia Grain & Feed tell the clerk that you want your purchase to count toward the donation to Audubon.

## Lower Columbia Basin Audubon – Columbia Grain & Feed Seed Order Form

**RETURN ORDER FORMS AND PAYMENT TO: Columbia Grain and Feed, 2001 W Lewis Street, Pasco, 99301  
 BY October 1, 2007**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Size	Product	Price	Quantity	Total	Size	Product	Price	Quantity	Total
50#	Black Oil Sunflower Seed	\$15.99	_____	_____	20#	Healthy Hearts Sunflower	\$21.99	_____	_____
50#	Healthy Hearts Sunflower	\$31.99	_____	_____	10#	Nyger Thistle	\$10.99	_____	_____
50#	Nyger Thistle	\$43.99	_____	_____	20#	Finches Feast (Thistle & sunflower hearts) fits in thistle feeders	\$15.99	_____	_____
50#	White Millet	\$13.50	_____	_____	20#	Shell Free Fiesta	\$18.49	_____	_____
50#	Regional Recipe (cracked corn, black oil sunflower, white millet mix)	\$14.99	_____	_____	25#	Peanuts in Shell	\$23.99	_____	_____
50#	Cracked Corn	\$8.29	_____	_____	25#	Squirrel Chow Select	\$16.99	_____	_____
50#	Bird Lover's Blend	\$16.49	_____	_____					

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_ Tax 8.3% \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

Other seeds, suet blocks, and feeders are available at Columbia Grain & Feed and will count toward the fundraiser!!! Come and see them and LCBAS displays on October 13.

**Payment can be made by check or credit card (Visa, MC, Am. Express, Discover). Credit card number \_\_\_\_\_**

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Conservation Notes

by Rick Leumont

## FIRE DEVASTATES MONUMENT

We are all painfully aware of the devastation that visited the Hanford Reach National Monument this summer. The blackened face of Rattlesnake Mountain stares down on the Tri-Cities as a stark reminder of this tragedy. The Tri-Cities have literally been circled by thousands upon thousands of burned acres ranging across public and private lands. It has been a difficult fire year all over the West and as I write, Greece is suffering massive fires.

First and foremost our heart felt thanks goes out to the dedicated fire fighters from US Fish & Wildlife Service, and a host of federal, state and local fire fighting agencies. These people put their lives on the line and performed excellent service. We commend them without reservation.

As a recap the July 13 fire destroyed 27,083 acres of prime shrub-steppe habitat on the Waluke Slope area of the Monument. This loss is particularly grievous as this was among the very best shrub-steppe habitat left on the Monument and was under study as a location to reintroduce the pygmy rabbit and was of great importance to all shrub -steppe species on the Monument.

The Arid Lands Ecology Reserve portion of the Monument suffered a 4,700 acre fire on August 13 and August 16th marked the beginning of the catastrophic fire which consumed 51,300 acres on the Monument and an additional 8,300 acres on central Hanford as well as 16,400 on private land. These fires where essentially a reburn of the area burned on the Monument in the massive fire back in 2000. The fire destroyed all the area which was replanted after the 2000 fire.

These fires have devastated wildlife habitat of the Monument and will continue to take a toll of wildlife succumbing to burns and predators due to lack of cover and starvation from loss of vegetation.

This vicious cycle of wildfire has got to stop. Historically, prior to European settlement fires ranged across this area every 35 to 50 years and in some places the fire frequency may have been between 75 and 100 years. The frequency is now between 5 and 10 years. These fires destroy native plants which are often replaced by noxious weeds such as cheat grass - which are more prone to fire and burn hotter destroying more and more of the ever decreasing native plant communities.

The current cycle of wildfire has got to stop. We recommend as a beginning the following actions to turn this situation around:

1. Reestablish native plant communities.
2. Conduct an aggressive campaign to eliminate noxious weeds in an environmentally safe manner.
3. Increase public education and awareness in preventing wildfire.
4. Prosecute to the fullest extent of the law, individuals whose negligence causes wildfire.
5. Establish a 100% fire watch of the entire Monument by remote video and infrared cameras for early fire detection.
6. Enlarge firefighting aircraft fleet.
7. Develop better tactics and equipment to fight wildfire.
8. Establish fire districts in all rural areas currently not served.

The problem we are observing is a not a Columbia Basin problem, it is a problem that plagues the entire country and must be addressed at the federal, state and local level.

**Next month - Crab Creek and the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge threatened by massive reservoir.**

### Second Saturday Event

from 9 am until noon at the  
**McNary Wildlife Refuge's  
Environmental Education Center**  
311 Lake Rd, Burbank WA 99323.

by Greg Greger

**September 8, 2007**

Let's look at cats, beautiful cuddly house pets and masterful predators of deer, moose and elk. Come share stories of feline animal worshiped in ancient times by Egyptian Royalty.

Count the species of flocking birds. Walk the chipped wood trail. See the construction progress on the Complex office.

9 am to enjoy cat videos.

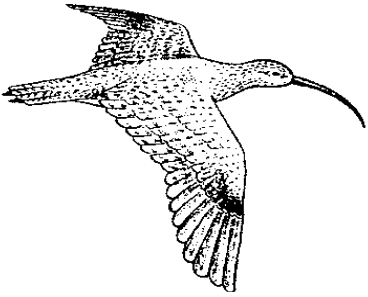
Education Center is open to view Audubon birds until noon.

See [www.nwr McNary.org](http://www.nwr McNary.org) for more information.

**The Curlew**  
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society  
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Richland, WA 99352

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**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.

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- \_\_\_\_\_ \$20. for one year new membership in the NAS. (Renewal of NAS membership is currently \$35.)
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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:*

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