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the curlew

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Special Interest Articles:

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Can Endangered Salmon and Protected Migratory Birds Coexist?

**Membership Meeting
Tuesday, February 22
2011, 7:00 p.m.
Kennewick First
Lutheran Church,
corner of Yelm and
Highway 395**

The February membership meeting of LCBAS will feature a presentation by Dr. Daniel Roby, Unit Leader -Wildlife at the U.S. Geological Survey - Oregon Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and Professor of Wildlife Ecology in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Oregon State University. Colonial fish-eating birds are some of the most charismatic species in the native avifauna of the Columbia

Plateau region, including American white pelicans, Caspian terns, double-crested cormorants, California and ring-billed gulls. All of these species are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and most are recovering from habitat destruction, effects of persistent chlorinated pesticides (e.g., DDT), human disturbance at colony sites, and human persecution. But with recovering population sizes have come new challenges related to the impacts of these predators on fish prey of conservation concern, especially salmon and steelhead, listed under the Endangered Species Act. Now there are new

calls for population control of some fish-eating colonial waterbirds to help restore ESA-listed fish. But can we find ways to both restore populations of threatened and endangered fish without harming recovering populations of fish-eating colonial waterbirds? This presentation will explore some options. Dr. Daniel Roby received a B.A. in Biology from Antioch College in 1974, a M.S. in Wildlife Management from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1978, and a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1986. Dan has conducted research on the ecology **continued on page 2**

Bateman Island Bird Walk *with Lisa Hill*

Report from February 5, 2011

At this time of year, many of the good birding sites are quiet – fewer species and fewer birds overall.

The waterfowl have thinned out and the spring migrants have not arrived yet. A group of about 20 birders on the Bateman walk still managed to find 48

species. It was fun to have on the walk a very inquisitive beginning birder, and a recent transplant from Florida. Their enthusiasm and



photo by L. Umthun

“On the north end of the island along the Columbia River, were two beautiful COMMON LOONS bobbing and diving together.”

Bateman Island Walk *Continued*

excitement at seeing the birds we often take for granted in this area, was a reminder that goldfinches, chickadees, juncos and song sparrows are new birds to many people. It becomes a great teaching opportunity. We found a pair of GREAT HORNED OWLS in the locust grove posed side by side. These owls will probably be nesting by mid-February. We only stayed a few minutes and quietly left the area so as not to disturb them, although these two seemed rather bored with our presence and quite unruffled.

On the north end of the island along the Columbia River, were two beautiful COMMON LOONS bobbing and diving together. A GREAT EGRET flying over was a very early sighting for this species. Another “early bird” was an unidentified SWALLOW out over the Yakima delta . Very few swallows are ever seen in this area before mid-February. Another great find was three PACIFIC WRENS (formerly WINTER WREN). We had a great opportunity to study and compare 3 WESTERN GREBES and 2 CLARK’S GREBES. The

Clark’s brighter orange-yellow bill was easy to see and compare to the Western’s greenish yellow bill. It was very interesting to watch nature in action as an adult BALD EAGLE methodically hunted down a COOT that had wandered a bit from a huge raft of coots. The eagle circled and swooped over the water where the coot tried to escape by diving, but the eagle won out in the end.

The next Bateman Island walk will be **Saturday, March 5** at 8am. We meet in the parking lot of Wye Park above the causeway to the island. Birders of all skill levels are welcome – binoculars are recommended.

Membership Meeting Information continued!

(continued from page 1) of seabirds in Alaska, Hawaii, Greenland, Newfoundland, South Georgia and Antarctica, as well as throughout the Pacific Northwest. His primary area of research interest is the physiological ecology and conservation biology of birds, with an emphasis on seabirds. His recent research includes impacts of avian predation on recovery of ESA-listed salmonids in the Columbia River Basin, effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on seabirds in Alaska, development of biomarkers of exposure to contaminants in birds, seabird/fisheries interactions, and effects of global warming on seabird populations at high latitudes, especially the Bering Sea.

The business meeting will begin at 7:00 followed by a short social time and refreshments. Our speaker usually begins around 7:45 p.m. Members are encouraged to attend this fascinating lecture. Please bring cookies or other snacks if you are able to do so. Winter is still here and sometimes a warm cup of cocoa and a cookie can coax us out of our winter hibernation mode!

McNary Environmental Education Center - Second Saturday Event- Make a kite and fly it!

When: Saturday, March 12 th, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

What: Kite making and flying!

Wish you could fly, soar, & swoop like a bird? Experience the lift, drag & thrust of bird flight for yourself by making a simple kite and flying it in a spring breeze. Kitemaster, Greg Greger, will teach you how!

Instruction begins promptly at 9 a.m. and a small donation of \$1 will cover the cost of all your materials. This activity is a favorite for all ages!

The Education Center is located off Highway 12 near Burbank. From Tri-Cities take Highway I-182 East/Highway 12 East to Burbank. Turn left onto Humorist Rd. at the second stoplight after the Snake River Bridge. Turn left onto Lake Rd. Look for Education Center on the left. Questions call the Friends of McNary Refuge at 509-546-8352 or the Refuge Office at 546-8300.

Birds and Wildlife Need You! Sign up for Audubon Action Network.

The only way we'll be successful in our conservation efforts is with your help. All members in Washington are encouraged to sign up for Audubon's Action Network. Through the network, you will receive action alerts for both federal and state legislative issues. Get access to your lawmakers, local media, and inside information on issues impacting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats! All you need to do is fill out the form at the link below, which will automatically match you to your specific federal and state lawmakers, and give you full and free access to all of the options our AUDUBON ACTION CENTER has to offer. This information is confidential and will not be used for other purposes.

http://www.audubonaction.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URI_ACTION_USER_REQUESTS&SURVEY_ID=1341

Helping is easy, won't take much time, and most importantly, will go a very long way in protecting our wildlife!

FERAL CATS – PREDATORS WITH HUGE IMPACT ON BIRD LIFE!

A new, peer-reviewed report entitled, *Feral Cats and Their Management*, from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, has put the annual economic loss from feral cat predation on birds in the US at \$17 billion. The report analyzes existing research on management of the burgeoning feral cat population – over 60 million and counting – in the US, including the controversial practice of Trap, Neuter, Release. The report can be downloaded from <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendlt/ec1781.pdf>.

February is the month that shorebird migration begins! Keep your binoculars ready for new species showing up throughout the month!

The 2011 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival will be the 14 th Annual! Mark your Calendar today! March 25,26,27!

The Festival has many tours for crane viewing along with specialty tours. Specialty tours have included Columbia National Wildlife Refuge/Potholes area wildlife tour, Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scablands geology tour, Lower Grand Coulee birding tour and Wahluke Slope/Shrub Steppe birding tour. Pre-registration is suggested to reserve your seat as some fill up quickly. With admission price into the Festival on Saturday, you may attend free lectures which are repeated throughout the day. Lectures given in the past have included falconry, Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scablands, Grouse of Washington, Othello History within the Drumhellar Channeled Scablands, Shrub-Steppe Flora and Fauna, Owls of Eastern Washington and Spring Migration in the Columbia Basin.

See the schedule of Events at <http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

Fast-growing social networking site **WeLoveBirds.org** celebrates first year anniversary with birding story contest

New York—Founded one year ago, the social networking partnership between the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) and the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) is celebrating its first anniversary with a birding story contest. New and returning site members are invited to share what they love most about birds at [WeLoveBirds.org](#) or its associated [Facebook](#) page from February 14 through 18. WeLoveBirds.org will provide prizes to a few randomly selected contest participants.

“WeLoveBirds.org has filled an important space in the birding community,” said Susan Casey-Lefkowitz, NRDC international program director and one of the founders of the site. “We look forward to members sharing their stories on this anniversary about why they love birds or what the site has meant to them and their birding.”

Over its first year, WeLoveBirds.org has grown to a member base of nearly 4,000 bird enthusiasts. WeLoveBirds.org also reaches a wide community of bird lovers through its facebook pages and through its twitter feed (@weluvbirds).

“The WeLoveBirds community actively exchanges information through blogs, birding questions, photos, and videos,” said Miyoko Chu, director of Communications at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “It’s truly an expression of why people love birds, every day of the year.”

WeLoveBirds.org started in February 2010 as a free, interactive online community for bird enthusiasts, offering an open social network of people who are passionate about birds. The site features access to information on birds and birding from a leading ornithology lab; and the chance to make a positive difference for birds and their habitats.

For more information, or to join the community, go to: www.welovebirds.org

Three ‘vulture restaurants’ set up to feed the rare birds

By Dharmendra Rataul, Columnist of India Express.com

Based on Nepal model, Dhar project aims to save the species almost extinct in South Asia

Taking a leaf out of efforts being made in Nepal to “bring back vultures”, Punjab’s wildlife department has set up three ‘vulture restaurants’ to feed the rare scavenger birds, sighted recently in large numbers here. On the verge of extinction in the whole of South Asia, the rare species, including Asian White-Rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), were spotted in the foothills of Shivalik hills, giving wildlife lovers hope that vultures have not entirely vanished from the subcontinent.

India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan had been home to vultures that feed on carcasses. But of late, the bird had been vanishing from the skies here, with scientists blaming the increasing use of Diclofenace, a pain-killer given to animals, for this. The birds eat carcasses and the chemical enters their body, causing liver and kidney failures, leading to a slow and painful death.

“The picture was dismal. We recorded that there were only 60-odd birds left in Punjab. But during routine activities by our field staff and some wildlife lovers, it was found that flocks of birds, numbering above 500-600, are not only moving in the skies here but were even nesting,” said Wildlife Ranger Ramesh Chander. He said they prepared a report and had finally set up “vulture restaurants” at three strategic places — Kathlore, Chandola and Chamraur — to provide regular feed to the birds. The aim of these restaurants is to provide Diclofenace-free carcasses to the birds.

Book Table Talk *with Kathy Criddle*

New books for the book table have arrived just in time for spring reading. The line-up includes:

Attracting Native Pollinators. Published by the Xerces Society, the focus is on protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies. This is a beautiful guide, chockfull of useful information for farmers, backyard habitat owners, and all of you who value a healthy and diverse food-production system and the future of the natural world.

The Practical Naturalist. Published by DK and the Audubon Society, this book explores the wonders of the natural world. Every page is filled with colorful pictures and loads of great ideas to help an individual or a family find lots of ways to get outside and explore the natural world.

Mountains of the Heart : A Natural History of the Appalachians. This is written by my favorite natural history author, Scott Weidensaul. I know the Appalachians aren't anywhere near Eastern Washington, but Scott has a way with words that just carries you into the wild along with him. You will feel like you have been there and seen and experienced all that he has when you are done reading this.

Life List: A woman's quest for the world's most amazing birds. Written by Olivia Gentile. This is the amazing story of Phoebe Snetsinger, a frustrated housewife, mother of four and amateur birdwatcher. Told she was dying of cancer, she decided to spend the rest of what was left of her life, seeing as many birds as possible around the world. A staggering story!

Backyard Birds. This Peterson Field Guide for Young Naturalists is just right for the new, young birder in your life. Vibrant color photography and easy-to-use design helps beginners succeed.

Pacific States Wildflowers. This Peterson Field Guide includes descriptions and illustrations of 1,492 species, almost all of the wildflowers that you might find from British Columbia down to Baja California and from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

Quantities are very limited so bring your check book to the next meeting. If a title sells out and you want it, let me know and I will order more. For those who want Sagebrush Country by Taylor, it is on backorder but I will try to find another source.

Check out our website:

<http://www.lcbas.org>

President Robin Priddy..... E-mail: grania0358@aol.com

Secretary Debbie Berkowitz. E-mail: cdandrb@charter.net

Treasurer Katie Harris..... E-mail: treasurer@lcbas.org

LCBAS LOCAL BIRDING TRIPS

Local field trips are back! Based in input received, the fourth Saturday of the month has been selected as the day for these local field trips.

The **February 26th** trip will be to the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain looking for wintering passerines and raptors
Check

<http://www.lcbas.org/fieldtrips.html> for a complete listing of proposed field trips for 2011. Trips are limited to 8-10 people (2 cars), so sign up early to reserve your spot!

Upcoming Programs 2011

Mar. 22 Chris Caviezel, Hummingbirds

Apr. 26 David Knibb, Author: Grizzly Wars: The Public Fight Over the Great Bear

May 24 Paul Hoffarth, WDFW District 4 Fish Biologist, Hanford Reach Salmonids

President's Message *from*

Robin Priddy

Greetings for February! The work of Audubon to create opportunities to see, share and save continues, as always.

Charlotte Reep has done a great job getting us organized for the Applebee's Breakfast fundraiser; coming up on the 26th of February. Tickets are still available; it's a good opportunity to come yourself, or give tickets as a gift that gives to LCBAS. Barb Clarke has gotten a viewing of the Ghost Bird just about organized, we'll be able to see that on the 2nd of April at Battelle; more information about tickets and sales to follow. Fundraising is hard work, and so important in supporting everything else that we do as an organization.

I want to take a moment to appreciate the work Katie Harris has done this year as treasurer; she's done a lot of work behind the scenes organizing our financial information and presenting it so clearly - it's nice to have such good "behind the scenes" management of this part of our organization. Heidi Newsome's work putting the Curlew together and getting out, month by month, is a steady dependable voice for LCBAS; pulling together and presenting what's going on with LCBAS and elsewhere.

Opportunities for seeing are many - Barb Clarke has got a couple trips organized; one warm weather cruise that will specialize in birding, and one trip to the San Juans! I just attended the Bateman Birdwalk this month, coordinated by Lisa Hill, and we were treated to Western and Clark's Grebes right next to each other so one could make a clear comparison. Later that morning I followed Rich Barchet and Chad Markley looking for the elusive (that day) Brown Creeper in Columbia Park. Those grebes reminded me of a day a couple years ago on the Bateman walk, with Bonnie Dunham and Jordene Lucas, an Eared Grebe and Horned Grebe provided a photo opportunity by appearing right next to each other.

Barb and Tom Clarke, Marilyn Hayes, and Cathy Smith will be leading a walk for the Great Backyard Bird Count on the 19th of this month;

providing yet another opportunity to see and share about birds. Cherie continues to do such wonderful work with Junior Audubon; reaching out to a new generation of birders is an important investment.

Saving remains a focus of much local effort, by LCBAS and others. Rick Leumont reported on the Odessa Subarea Special Study, look for his comments elsewhere in this newsletter. The Rivers to Ridges Open Space Network vision statement has been developed and sent to the cities and counties - watch for the roll out on Badger Mountain on February 24th.

Thanks to Scott and Pam Woodward, for sharing the experience of their trip to ANWR at our last membership meeting; it sounded like a life-changing trip; a testament to how precious wild places are, and how deeply they can stir our hearts.

Spring is on its way, and with it the return of many of our friends in flight. I've just heard a Red-Winged Blackbird for the first time this spring and the pair of Red Tailed Hawks behind my workplace have returned to their nest. For the past several years, they return as a pair just about Valentine's Day.

Thank you, as always, for the privilege of serving as President.

COME HAVE BREAKFAST! THE BIRDS WILL LOVE YOU!

The tickets are still available for LCBAS's Fundraising Breakfast!

On Saturday, February 26, between 8:00 to 10:00am at Applebee's on Road 68 in Pasco. For \$7.00 you get a short stack (3) hot cakes, two large sausages and beverage. LCBAS keeps \$5 for every ticket sold....So, reserve the date, purchase a ticket, and enjoy a lovely breakfast with friends.

Tickets will be sold at the next (Feb. 22) Membership meeting. We still need people to be servers, greet at the door, and other help that morning.

***For more information call Charlotte Reep
547-9087 or 366-0006***

Conservation Notes:

with Rick Leumont

Columbia River Basin Management Program:

The Columbia River Basin Management Program is a state program designed to assess, plan and develop new water storage, improve or alter operations in existing storage facilities and implement conservation projects. The program is administered by the Department of Ecology.

Both houses of the state legislature are considering amendments to the current law governing this program. The bills are in committee now. The Senate version, SB 5657, is in the Environment Water & Energy Committee chaired by Sen. Phil Rockefeller. The House version, HB 1803, is in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee chaired by Representative Brian Blake.

The Department of Ecology has wasted millions upon millions of dollars over the past ten years “studying” water storage and pump exchange proposals which have been found to be environmentally and economically disastrous. The Black Rock, Lower Crab Creek and Hawk Creek reservoir projects are prime examples. Our state is facing unprecedented revenue shortfalls. We are cutting basic services such as health, education and law enforcement to the bare bones. We cannot afford the luxury of expending scarce public funds on pie in the sky water proposals.

The proposed amendments focus on authorizing the sale of state bonds to fund the Columbia River Basin Management Programs. The wording of the amendments is confusing and misleading. The amendments would require legislative authority or appropriation for the expenditure of funds raised from these bonds or other sources and placed in the Columbia River Basin Water Supply Development Account. There is an exception to this rule – funds expended for new storage facilities and pump exchanges are exempt from this legislative requirement. These exemptions are not an insignificant loophole as these amendments would also require two thirds of the funds to be spent on new storage

facilities or pump exchanges. Black Rock, Crab Creek, and Hawk Creek were new storage and pump exchange projects and were estimated at over 15 billion dollars. Had these amendments been in place ten years ago, the Department of Ecology would have spent hundreds of millions on them without legislative oversight. These projects have been shelved because the economic benefits will not justify them. If the Department of Ecology can fund them without legislative oversight, I have no doubt we will see them revived.

These exemptions take legislative oversight out of the expenditure of 67% of these funds. We need more legislative oversight, not less. To sacrifice this oversight weakens the basic concept of separation of powers between the branches of state government. If these amendments pass the legislature will surrender the power of the purse strings for millions upon millions of tax dollars to unelected bureaucrats.

The Black Rock, Crab Creek and Hawk Creek proposals all had major environmental flaws that alone would probably have led to their doom. Taking legislative oversight out of the decision process would enable the Department of Ecology to ignore and trivialize environmental concerns which would inevitably lead to law suits and further waste of public funds.

Eastern Washington has serious water problems which must be addressed. These problems are so massive and critical that they can only be resolved by cooperation among all parties. These amendments will discourage cooperation, encourage waste and take attention away from conservation, which is the most cost effective and expeditious source of “new” water.

Please send a quick e-mail to Sen. Phil Rockefeller (Rockefeller.phil@leg.wa.gov) and Rep. Brian Blake (Blake.Brian@leg.wa.gov) and express your opposition to these ill-conceived amendments. Thank you!

The Curlew

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Society
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Audubon Membership Information

Please Note: LCBAS Chapter Benefits (includes a year's subscription [10 issues] to *The Curlew*) this is an additional cost to membership in National Audubon Society.

\$20. for annual membership benefits 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. This payment includes membership in the local chapter (LCBAS) but does not include a subscription to *The Curlew*

Please make check payable to **National Audubon Society**. Please do not send renewals for NAS 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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