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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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The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – a personal perspective from Scott Woodward

THIS PROGRAM WAS CANCELLED DUE TO WEATHER CONDITIONS BACK IN NOVEMBER! DON'T MISS IT THIS TIME!

Membership Meeting
Tuesday, January 25, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
Kennewick First Lutheran Church, corner of Yelm and Highway 395

All LCBAS members come to the November meeting to be there first hand to hear Scott Woodward's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) Presentation! Scott is a LCBAS member and a self professed full time volunteer and conservation activist. Scott and Pamela

Woodward wanted to see ANWR up close and personal to gain perspective on the big picture story of this threatened landscape.

The pair enlisted the guidance of an internationally recognized ANWR advocate who survived Vietnam, Chicago 1968 and Woodstock. The Woodwards were immersed in an intimate adventure down the Kongagut River through the North Slope of the Brooks Range in search of the truth about this amazing place. In Scott's words: "Be prepared for an educational and personal exploration of the Eastern edge of ANWR and a

side bar trip into Denali National Park at the height of the spectacular fall colors. Scott is a 60 year resident of the TriCities. He is a retired teacher/coach at Richland High School and Columbia Basin College. He currently serves as President of Tapteal Greenway Association and Ridges to Rivers Open Space Network.

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. Please bring a treat to help make this meeting a fun time to visit with friends and enjoy a tasty snack.

Bateman Island Bird Walk *with Lisa Hill*

On Jan 8, 2011 it was a rare day of beautiful blue skies that greeted the 12 participants of the January Bateman walk. We didn't quite match the high species

numbers from the last few months, but still ended up with 48.

With the ice on both sides of the causeway, there was not many waterfowl

until we got to the north end of the island and could look out on open water. There were LESSER SCAUP, CANVASBACK, RING-NECKED DUCK, three



"The Winter Wren is now the Pacific Wren having been split into two species, and Eastern North American form retains the name Winter Wren, while the Western North American form is now called Pacific Wren. Some Native American names for this species translate to "little bird with big song"."

Bateman Island Walk *Continued*

GREBE species – PIED-BILLED, HORNED and WESTERN, NORTHERN PINTAIL, HOODED MERGANSER, and 35 REDHEADS among the more common ducks. Two COMMON LOONS were in the Columbia River towards Pasco. All that ice was great for observing hundreds of loafing gulls. The GLAUCOUS GULL found on the Christmas Bird Count was still there along with our four common winter gulls – RING-BILLED, CALIFORNIA, GLAUCOUS-WINGED, and HERRING.

We easily found three GREAT HORNED OWLS in their usual Locust tree perches. Other raptors were; one each RED-TAILED HAWK, NORTHERN HARRIER, AMERICAN KESTREL, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, and BALD EAGLE.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH outnumbered all the other small birds we found. Most

people got good looks at a PACIFIC (WINTER) WREN. The Winter Wren species was officially split recently into two species. The eastern species remained with the name Winter Wren, while the western species became Pacific Wren. Cute little bird no matter what it's called!

The next Bateman walk will be Saturday, February 5. Meet at 8am in the parking lot at Wye Park near the causeway. Birders of all skill levels are welcome.

Christmas bird Count a chilling success!

The Tri-Cities annual Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday January 1, 2011 – New Years Day. Nationally this was the 111th Christmas Bird Count which we held on 1-1-11. There were over 50 participants in various states of awareness helping to tally birds on a crisp clear day with early morning temperatures in the single digits and afternoon highs not exceeding the mid 20s. One saving factor, making the day more tolerable, was the wind speed, for the most part, winds were calm and the sky clear. The count took place in the traditional count circle which is a 7.5 mile radius centered just off Road 68 in

the Columbia River. A **total of 105** different species of birds were sighted during the 24 hour official count period. This number is up from a 103 species last year.

Generally numbers of birds were at levels seen in previous years with some surprises, American Coot numbers were lower 3,700 down from 4,200; Canada Goose numbers were up 11, 200 from 7,500 last year; Wood Ducks were up 160 from 16 last year; American Robin was down with 861 last year to 470 this year; American Crow was down with 197 this year from 345 last year; American Bald Eagle was about the same, 47 as in years past; American Kestrel numbers were

up slightly from last year 70 compared to 65; White-crown Sparrows were up from 1353 to 1560 this year. Yellow-rump Warbler numbers were up from last year's 97 to 155 this year but down compared too many previous years.

There were some hardy folks out during the night to count owls and they had success so our owl species numbers were a little better than previous years. We had Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls sighted. Also we got cooperation from one Burrowing owl that had not gone south for the winter. Other raptors included two sightings of what is typically rare, a Golden Eagle and somewhat elusive Northern Shrikes. Hawks and falcons cooperated fairly well

McNary Environmental Education Center - Second Saturday Event- Great Back Yard Bird Count!

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

What: Great Back Yard Bird Count!

Join the fun and participate in citizens science while we learn, observe and count ducks, swans, geese, and other migrating birds. Bird lists, binoculars, and a spotting scope will be supplied. Weather permitting, visitors will enjoy banding birds too. Free & fun 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.

Christmas bird Count a chilling success! *continued*



One Orange Crowned Warbler was noted during the Christmas Bird Count. There were 105 total species recorded, which was up from last years total of 103!
Photo by Jane Abel

Upcoming Programs 2011

Jan. 25 Scott Woodard,
An Artic Trek: Autumn in ANWR
and the Sub-Artic

Feb. 22 Dr. Dan Roby, OSU
Fish-eating Birds in Eastern
Washington

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

with multiple sightings of Red-tailed Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawk and American Kestrels. A few Merlin were also sighted, as well as an elusive Rough-legged Hawk and a Northern Goshawk.

Ducks and geese were seen in abundance with some exceptions. There were very few Northern Pintails and Common Merganser numbers were relatively low compared to years past. Loons, grebes, cormorants and herons were found in good numbers. Even with the cold weather in November and in late December, there were still good numbers of Great Egrets which are always fun to see. Dunlin, Virginia Rail, Greater Yellowlegs were spotted during the day.

Warblers and sparrow numbers were variable. There were fair

Olympic BirdFest 2011

Dates: April 8-10, 2011, Location: Sequim, WA Website address:

www.olympicbirdfest.org E-mail address: opas.birdfest.info@gmail.com

Description: Visit the rain shadow of the *Olympic Peninsula* to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest—Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, dippers, Black Oystercatchers, Long-tailed Ducks, and more. Guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, silent auction, and a gala banquet at the Sunland Golf & Country Club. The festival with the most spectacular setting!

Immediately following BirdFest, join us for a three-day, two-night birding cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 10-12, 2011.

numbers of Yellow-rumps sighted, with one Orange-crown Warbler noted. White-crown Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos were in abundance which is to be expected but always nice to see and hear. The customary less common sparrows did not cooperate – Savannah, American Tree Sparrow, Lincoln's, and Harris's – were not seen during the day. Other interesting birds sighted during the day were Lesser Black-backed Gull (2), Mew Gull, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Evening Grosbeak, Pacific Loon, Greater White-fronted Goose (3), Brown Creeper (1), Townsend's Solitaire and Glaucous Gull (1).

I want to thank Ray, Tom, Barb and Ed, the team leads for the three count areas; as well as Jack, Murrel, Charlotte, Barb and Marilyn for helping with the pot-luck and Grange Hall.

Bird Sightings – December 2010

Angela Harding - (gela.harding43@gmail.com)

Hello Curlew Readers,

Hope you all had a wonderful Holiday Season. The LCBirds posts were low for December but I hope you still enjoy reading through the list!

Happy Birding

1. December 3rd, 2010. Columbia Point, Richland. Nancy L., Robin P., Kathy C.

Eleven duck species including Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked, Canvasback, Redhead, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Widgeon, Gadwall, Common Merganser and Coot. Canada Geese, American Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, Killdeer and a Tundra Swan. Gulls included Ring-billed, Herring Gull and California Gulls. 3 Wilsons Snipes feeding on the mud and a Tree Sparrow in a tree by the water. White-crowned Sparrow, Junco and a Flicker.

2. December 10th, 2010. McNary NWR HQ. Nancy L.

At the main pond there were thousands of geese; Canada, Cackling, and at least 1 Ross's Goose.

3. December 11th, 2010. E. of McNary NWR HQ. Bob Derting.

At least 2000 Snow geese and 3000 W-fronted geese.

At Two Rivers Park in Finley a Eurasian widgeon, Common and Hooded mergansers, Ringed-neck ducks, Gadwall, Mallards, grebes, cormorants, Belted kingfisher, Bald eagles, and a fly over of a huge flock of Snow geese of at least 1500 birds.

At Columbia Park, Family Fishing Pond, another

Eurasian widgeon (possibly two), several Hooded Mergansers, Am. Widgeon, Common Goldeneyes, etc.

4. December 10th, 2010. WE Johnson Park, Richland. Lisa Hill.

Two PACIFIC WRENS, two RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS (one had a large, brilliant ruby crown), one FOX SPARROW and two BROWN CREEPERS. Both of the Brown Creepers were working the same tree trunk. This is only the second sighting of them in Johnson Park in five years. The Kinglets, Creepers and one of the Wrens were seen from one spot.

5. December 16th, 2010. WE Johnson Park, Richland. Lisa Hill.

PURPLE FINCH in W.E. Johnson Park. Same place as the last two winters.

6. December 21st, 2010. Margaret Ford's yard.

A Brown Creeper in spruce tree. Also spotted a Nuthatch, White-crowned Sparrows (2), one Am. Goldfinch and two Am. Robins across the street.

7. December 21st, 2010. Base of Red Mt., Richland. Barb & Tom.

Moon eclipse-first day of winter and a new yard bird. A calling **Black-crown Night-Heron**, lost in the fog in a pine tree. He flew off through the vineyards toward the river.



Join the Great Backyard Bird Count February 18-21, 2011

The 14th annual [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (GBBC) is coming up February 18-21, 2011. The four-day event is free and is open to bird watchers of all ages and skill levels. Participants watch birds for any length of time on one or more days of the count and enter their tallies at www.birdcount.org. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. The GBBC is a joint project of the [National Audubon Society](#) and the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) with Canadian partner [Bird Studies Canada](#).

The 2010 GBBC was another record-breaker with more than 97,300 bird checklists submitted by an estimated 63,000 volunteers from across the United States and Canada. These volunteers found connecting with nature to be great fun.

“I enjoy being outdoors and birding is a source of relaxation and stress relief!” wrote one participant. “Looking and listening for birds forces me to focus on the environment around me at a higher level of intensity, and notice things I might otherwise miss.”

From reports of rare species to large-scale tracking of bird movements, the GBBC provides insight into the lives of bird populations. Mid-February is chosen as the time for the Great Backyard Bird Count because it offers a good picture of the birds

typically found throughout the winter months. It also coincides with migration for some species, such as the Sandhill Crane. That window of transition affords an opportunity to detect changes in timing for northward migration.

On the www.birdcount.org website, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. The site has tips to help identify birds and special materials for educators.

GBBC participant surveys have shown that people really enjoy exploring the data and say they learn more about their local birds. “I looked at data with my 9-year-old son to help him learn about birds in our area,” wrote one parent. “We talked about migration, bird flyways and compared bird counts for our area (coastal South Carolina) with where his cousins live (Wisconsin and Alabama). We found out our area has a much greater variety of birds in February than either of the other two.”

For more information about the GBBC, visit www.birdcount.org. Or contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473, gbbc@cornell.edu or Audubon at (202) 861- 2242 ext. 3050, citizenscience@audubon.org. In Canada, participants may contact Bird Studies Canada at 1-888-448-2473 ext. 134 or gbbc@birdscanada.org.

LCBAS LOCAL BIRDING TRIPS

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

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 first local field trip of 2011 is scheduled for January 22nd to Columbia Park and the Audubon Nature Trail to look for winter residents in the woods and on the river. Contact Rich Barchet (375-6074, wr.barchet43@frontier.com) to sign up for this trip.

The **February 26th** trip will be to the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain looking for wintering passerines and raptors. Contact Rich Barchet (375-6074, wr.barchet43@frontier.com) if you are interested in leading this trip.

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!

President's Message *from* *Robin Priddy*

I was generally aware of the LCBAS taxidermy program, but had no idea that the collection is so large! As Nancy LaFramboise explained more about the program to me, I was struck by just how much this collection supports our efforts to see, share, and save birds. This collection is housed at the McNary Education Center where thousands of visitors learn about the birds in our area. This collection and the education it supports is so important to our mission, and may well be vital in future efforts to preserve our landscape and everything that lives there.

As we support seeing and sharing about birds - come join our recently revitalized local field trips, with Rich Barchet leading a walk at the Audubon Nature Trail in Columbia park on the 22nd. Tom Clarke and Rod Coler look after this trail - in the last few weeks Kennewick has done a lot of brush and tree removal, so it's definitely a changed landscape.

Though I managed to sleep in the morning of the [Christmas Bird Count](#), I did get to enjoy the the company at the potluck, so wonderfully put on by Murrell and Jack and everyone who helped. They assured me they suffered in the nice heated Grange having coffee ready for us all day! For the CBC, and everything we do, the goodies that are always there sure add to the fun; as the work to make it happen goes on quietly in the background. Leader Dana Ward, and captains Barb and Tom Clark, Ed Rykiel and Ray Johnson got everyone organized and out for a successful count. The bird count itself had a total of 105; and lots of fun was had counting them up. It's always fun to be with a group of birders and experience the wonderful and quirky sense of humor.

Angela Harding has done a great job stepping in and taking care of the bird sightings. For someone like me, it's so helpful to have this list to use to study and go look for birds, another way we work to share our world of birds.

As I've learned and shared what I've learned about all the different things people to to contribute, I wanted to be sure to mention Debbie Berkowitz - her diligent work as secretary keeps us going and organized; the additional connections and perspectives she brings with her associations in other like minded organizations. Though her work sort of stays in the background, it's fundamental support for all of our efforts to see, share, and save the birds we all love, in one way or another.

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

COME HAVE BREAKFAST! THE BIRDS WILL LOVE YOU!

The tickets are now 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 (Jan. 25) Membership meeting. We need 15 people to be servers, greet at the door, and other help that morning. You may check out more tickets to sell to friends so we make sure all 250 tickets are sold to make the maximum money. A painless, easy way to earn big bucks for LCBAS environmental projects!

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

**You're invited to the Friends of Badger Mountain Annual Celebration....
Saturday January 29, 6:00 - 8:00 PM +**

[Goose Ridge Winery](#), 16304 N Dallas Rd in Richland, near the Badger Mt trailhead. **Wine, hors d'oeuvres** and, of course, **meeting friends and fellow hikers**. Learn what we've done, where we're going & help us in honoring the **Friend of Badger 2010**. Learn about all our **spring wildflower walks** prompted by **our beautiful new wildflower brochure...** And the new **Endurance Race Event (15 K, 50 K & a 100 miler!)** Plus, we'll have **exciting news about new land being preserved!**

To vote for the Board of Directors you can join or renew your membership by visiting the website
<http://www.friendsofbadger.org/joinus.html>

Conservation Notes:

with Rick Leumont

Industrial Land Use at Hanford:

The Department of Energy has once again postponed the public meeting on industrial development at Hanford. The meeting had been scheduled for January 28th but has been postponed. The meeting has been titled The Hanford Energy Park Forum – which would indicate the focus would be on energy development rather than industrial development in general. No reason has been given for the delay and no new date has been set at this time. The January 28th meeting was to be held in Kennewick and we assume the forum will take place in the Tri-Cities. I am concerned over the constant delays. Why can't DOE get its act together on this? Are the issues and parameters continually changing? Our main concern has been that industrial development be confined to the area designated for development in the 1999 Comprehensive Land-Use Plan. We will continue to this monitor closely.

Odessa Subarea Special Study:

The comment period for the Odessa Subarea Special Study has been extended to January 31st. I am repeating below my comments on this study from the December Curlew. Please send a brief letter to the BOR asking them to adopt the No Action alternative which will save shrub-steppe habitat, keep Columbia River water in the river for salmon and avoid wasting billions of tax dollars.

December rerun:

The Bureau of Reclamation has released its mammoth Odessa Subarea Special Study draft environmental impact statement. The document is huge and difficult to navigate. The study area is bounded on the south by Connell, east by Lind, north by Billy Clapp lake and by the East Low Canal on the west. The issue revolves around 102,614 acres of farmland that are irrigated by wells which are fast failing. The BOR wants to extend the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project infrastructure to deliver Columbia River surface water to irrigate part or all lands now dependant on well water.

The costs on the alternatives start at \$3.3 million for No Action, and then skyrocket to from \$841 million up to \$3.3 billion for the other alternatives. The cost benefit ratios (benefits gained for each dollar spent) range from 1.12 to a low of 0.523 with no cost benefit given for the No Action alternative. That means at best the private farmers/landowners will gain 12 cents for every tax dollar spent but more likely will lose 47 cents for each tax dollar spent. Not a good investment or subsidy.

Contaminates from mining, smelting, pulp mill effluents and other industrial uses which have settled in Lake Roosevelt over decades could be released into the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project as the lake level is drawn down to supply water for the additional acreage. These contaminates would threaten fish, wildlife and

even agricultural products.

I have real concerns over how these proposed water diversions would impact salmon migration in the Columbia River and particularly spawning in the Hanford Reach.

The proposed project would further fragment shrub-steppe habitat making it increasingly difficult for shrub-steppe dependent species to feed, mate, nest and successfully rear young and migrate. The Washington ground squirrel, a candidate species, would be particularly hard hit by loss of habitat. The project would also alter lands which could be utilized by the hard pressed Columbia Basin Pygmy rabbit and sage grouse.

The report lists eight possible alternatives but does not specify a preferred alternative – so the reader is left to wonder what does the BOR really want to do? I do not believe the draft EIS should have been submitted to the public without designating a preferred alternative.

The wildlife reports submitted by US Fish and Wildlife Service and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife lead me to believe far more information and basic on site data needs to be gathered before the true impacts to wildlife and habitat can be predicted.

I feel like the "No Action" alternative has been given far too little consideration. If surface water is not diverted to this area, what happens when the wells fail and land use has to shift back to dry land farming or grazing stock on open grasslands? The assumption seems to be made that this is just too catastrophic to consider; but what would the social, cultural, economic and wildlife impacts be. After all, these lands have only been irrigated for four decades or so and during this time the aquifer was ruthlessly mined as if it were an inexhaustible resource. It is time we started managing these resources as precious finite gifts that must be conserved and used sparingly.

I believe the No Action alternative is best at this time. The government should not be spending hundreds of millions to billions of dollars on a project which will break even at best and probably cost more than can be gained. The project threatens salmon recovery efforts in the Columbia River in which the tax and rate payers have invested hundreds of millions. Shrub-steppe habitat should not be destroyed or further fragmented. We should be moving ahead to protect these areas and improve their connectivity.

The draft report can be accessed online at http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ucao_misc/odessa/index.html

You can send your comments to:
Bureau of Reclamation
Mr. Chuck Carnohan, Study Manager
1917 Marsh Road
Yakima, Washington 98901-2058

You can also send your comments to Mr. Carnohan via e-mail to Odessa@usbr.gov

Comments must be received by January 31st.

The Curlew

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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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