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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Where the Wild Things Grow: Hidden Treasures of the Eastern Washington Shrub Steppe Flora

Special Interest Articles:

- Membership meeting new location this month!
- Rattlesnake Mountain Protection – Action needed page 3!
- Bird Sightings are back!

Individual Highlights:

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Membership Meeting
Tuesday, May 24th
7:00 p.m.

**NEW LOCATION: MID-COLUMBIA LIBRARY
KENNEWICK**

BRANCH

1620 South Union
Street
Kennewick

The May meeting of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society features Dr. Janelle Downs, Senior Research Scientist with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Dr. Janelle Downs is an ecologist with more than 25 years of experience working in shrub-steppe and arid ecosystems in the western U.S. She also leads native

plant field trips for the Columbia Basin Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society.

When you're out hiking to the spot where you'll use those binos to spy on the avian antics around town, have you ever wondered what that small purple flower is that smells so strong when you step on it? Or wondered what the spiny yellow flowered plant is? Do you ponder why some shrubs have flowers in the spring and other shrubs don't flower until fall?

Join the group for a presentation by Dr. Janelle Downs on "Where the Wild Things Grow: Hidden Treasures of the Eastern Washington Shrub Steppe Flora"— description and

identification of wildflowers and native plants and when and where you can find these on local and regional hikes in the Lower Columbia Basin.

The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. with a short business meeting. Following the business meeting those in attendance enjoy a brief social time with cookies and coffee/tea. The speaker usually begins around 7:45 p.m.



Bateman Island Bird Walk *with Lisa Hill*

May 7, 2011
Migration is in full swing! Plenty of singing warblers, YELLOW, WILSON'S, ORANGE-CROWNED, YELLOW-RUMPED, NASHVILLE, and

TOWNSEND'S, and five of the six possible swallows, TREE, CLIFF, BARN, BANK, and NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED, were a great start to a long list of 57

species for the day. Bright flashes of orange hailed the first-of-the-year BULLOCK'S ORIOLE and BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK. The last



"Bullock's Oriole"

Photo courtesy L. Umthun"

Bateman Island Walk *Continued*

wave of migrating WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS flitted about in small flocks while many SONG SPARROWS sang from every direction. The only other sparrows were one each GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW and SAVANNAH SPARROW.

The GREAT HORNED OWLS in the locust grove have successfully raised three owlets. They are nearly adult-sized, but still have a bit of gray fluff and stumble awkwardly from tree to tree. Even though the water at the delta was high, it did not bother four

AMERICAN AVOCETS poking around in the shallow areas. Two SPOTTED SANDPIPERS were seen along the shoreline on the west side of the island. A flock of about 15 graceful FORSTER'S TERNS put on a show while diving for small fish.

The last Bateman Island walk before the July and August break will be Saturday, June 4. We meet at the parking lot of Wye Park above the caueway to he island at 8am. Birders of all skill level are welcome!

Greetings from the President! With Robin Priddy

I apologize for completely missing last month! So much had gone on with the Ghost Bird movie; Barb and Tom did a great job organizing, Cathy managing the projectionist, Murrel, Marilyn, Katie behind the cookie counter and everyone else who contributed! I'm certain I have forgotten someone, please attribute it to my memory and not your contribution. Also of note is the work Kathy Criddle is doing with the Port of Pasco to do some work with native plants; she took this on and has made a difference!

At our May board meeting it was noted that as far as we know the Vice President position at this time has no candidate, and

the Conservation position only a tentative candidate. Our Membership committee could use some new membership itself (Rich Barchet has stepped up to manage the data, thank you!).

There's an interesting program sponsored by Audubon National called Together Green, which supports the development of volunteers. If anyone is interested in taking on Together Green, please talk to Ed Rykiel as he has researched the project and understands it quite well. We might also reach out to high schools and colleges/universities, perhaps some of our work could be done by an intern or student seeking a conservation or environmental project. A great task would be for someone who could talk with Audubon folks and write up "job descriptions" for work that someone could contribute; small

discrete packages that could be used for interning and other projects.

It's amazing to think that will all the work that currently is being done, there's still much more to do. I'm pretty sure everyone reading this is about as busy as they can manage - please think about someone you might invite in, who would like a place to contribute and to learn to enjoy birder humor :). Audubon can seem daunting, people thinking they need to be a bird expert to contribute - we can deliver the message that one doesn't need to be an expert (I'm a case in point!) but just to have a willing spirit interested in supporting ways that we can see, share, and save birds and the breathtaking local habitat they need to thrive.

Thanks as always for the privilege of serving.

McNary NWR Environmental Education Second Saturday Event- Bugs Galore!

When: Saturday, June 11, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

What: Bugs Galore!

Explore the wonderful world of small critters in the shrub steppe habitat & along the wetlands. Nets, jars, and microscopes will be provided. Who knows what you will find when you shake a shrub, part a flower, or turn over a rock?

Directions 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.

Conservation Notes: Rattlesnake Mountain *with Rick Leaumont*



Rattlesnake Mountain!
Photo courtesy Jane Abel

Rattlesnake Mountain: URGENT ACTION NEEDED!!!!

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC) has worked with the state legislation for over 20 years to acquire and protect wildlife habitat and recreational lands throughout Washington.

The Hanford Reach National Mountain boundary ends at the crest of Rattlesnake Mountain and only protects the northern half of the mountain. The southern face of the mountain or McWhorter Ranch is in private ownership. The McWhorter family wants to sell the 13,400 acre ranch to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for \$3,500,000. That's a real bargain for this ecologically unique shrub steppe habitat used by Ferruginous hawks, burrowing owls, long-billed curlews, Townsend's ground squirrels, American badger, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, elk and mule deer and other species. The acquisition would provide recreational access and protect the mountain from agricultural development, wind turbines or urban sprawl.

The capital budget for WWRC property acquisitions is normally \$100,000,000. The Washington State House of Representatives' have agreed to cut the budget 50% to \$50,000,000 due to the recession. Under the House budget, funds would be available to purchase the ranch. The Senate has

proposed cutting the budget to \$36,000,000 and disregards a long standing scientific selection process that would leave the ranch acquisition unfunded. The Senate cuts are far too drastic and to ignore a long standing selection process based on science and sound management would simply politicize the process and destroy public confidence and support.

We still have time to get the Senate to accept the House budget, retain the selection process and save McWhorter ranch.

Please contact Senators Linda G. Parlette and Derek Kilmer of the Budget Committee, and our local Senators Jerome Delvin and Sen. Mike Hewitt. Tell them:

1. Fund the Washington Wildlife and Recreation acquisition budget at \$50,000,000.
2. Retain the time honored ranking system used for these acquisitions over the past 20 years.
3. Support acquisition of the McWhorter Ranch to protect it's wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities for the entire state.

Best way to contact these senators is to go to the Washington State Senate web site, look for the roster of senators and pull up each of the above names and click their e-mail button. Time is of the essence – please send those e-mails today. Thank you!

Upcoming Programs 2011

Jun. 28 Picnic in the Park!

Please don't miss this end of season wrap up! We will be enjoying each other's company and presenting some special awards!

THANK YOU COLUMBIA CENTER ROTARY! NEW SPOTTING SCOPE!

Thanks to a generous donation from the Columbia Center Rotary, LCBAS is now the proud owner of a Vortex Razor HD 20-65 x 85 angled spotting scope. In addition, Eagle Optics gave us a generous discount on the scope since we're an Audubon chapter and are buying it for educational purposes. With the remaining funds resulting from the discount and with Columbia Center Rotary's approval, we are in the process of purchasing a new sturdy display board.

The primary purpose of the scope is for use with our Junior Audubon chapter to make sure all the kids have the opportunity to get a close up look at the bird that the leader is describing. The bent neck feature will allow it to be used easily by kids of different heights. The scope will be available for our Bateman Island 'First Saturday of the Month' bird walks and other birding field trips where many of the birds are too far away to be seen easily with binoculars. The display board will replace our current well-worn display board. We will use it for our presentations at schools and other community events.

LCBAS would like to say **"thank you very much!!"** to **Columbia Center Rotary** for providing us with the funds for the scope and the display board and thereby helping support our educational programs. Thanks also to **Eagle Optics** for allowing us to stretch this donation money further.

Debbie Berkowitz

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

Pick up your IMBD t-shirt!

International migratory bird day t-shirts have been ordered! Please remember to pick up your shirt at the May meeting or at the June Picnic! Bring your \$16 if you have not already paid. And remember to "Go Wild, Go Birding"! If you can't be at the May meeting OR the June picnic, please contact Heidi Newsome at heidi_newsome@yahoo.com or 967-3633 to arrange a pick up.

LCBAS LOCAL BIRDING TRIPS

Local Field Trip: April 30 Report from Walla Walla River Delta area

On a gorgeous April 30th spring morning the Walla Walla River delta area (Madame Dorian Park, White Tail Bay, the delta proper, and a bonus stop at Hood Park) yielded 43 species. Notables in the riparian area were Orange-crowned Warbler, and Bewick's and House Wrens. Most notable in the mud flats were Marbled Godwits, Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Great Egret, Western Sandpipers and many Caspian Terns. Lots of Green-winged Teal, a few Northern Pintails, and several Canvasbacks were lingering among the summer resident ducks. A few more eyes and ears could have added more species.

The next local field trip will be to Bennett Lake and Biscuit Ridge near Walla Walla on May 21st. Because of the distance and territory covered, this will be an all day outing, so plan on bringing your lunch along with water and snacks. Sign up early! Details will be posted to LCBIRDS2 and on the LCBAS.org web site.

Rich Barchet, LCBAS Local Trips Coordinator

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!

Spring Chicken Trek

Friday, April 13 to Thursday, April 19, 2012, Far Away Field Trips will travel to Burwell, Nebraska to see the Greater Prairie Chicken boom and the Sharp-tailed Grouse dance. We will stay at the Switzer Ranch, a working cattle ranch in the beautiful sand hills of Nebraska. The ranch is home to both Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. We will spend 3 nights in the lodge at the ranch.

Before we travel to Burwell, we will stop in Kearney, Nebraska for 3 nights. We will visit the Rowe Sanctuary Audubon Center to see the amazing spectacle of thousands of Sandhill Cranes resting and feeding on the Platte River during spring migration. We will also bird at other locations around Kearney with a local guide. Participants are limited to 8 and the cost of the trip is \$950.00. Airfare to and from Denver is not included in the trip. For more information visit LCBAS web page or contact Barbara Clarke at (509) 539-0857 cell or (509) 588-3362 home.

2011 State of the Birds Report

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Harris Sherman have released the 2011 State of the Birds Report, the nation's first assessment of birds on lands and waters owned by the American people. The findings indicate tremendous potential for bird conservation: these publicly owned habitats support at least half of the entire U.S. distributions of more than 300 bird species.

The report concludes that America's public lands and waters, ranging from national wildlife refuges to national parks to national forests, offer significant opportunities to halt or reverse the decline of many species. More than 1,000 bird species inhabit the U.S., 251 of which are federally threatened, endangered, or of conservation concern. The report provides a scientific tool to help public agencies identify the most significant conservation opportunities in each habitat.

"The State of the Birds report is a measurable indicator of how well we are fulfilling our shared role as stewards of our nation's public lands and waters," Salazar said. "Although we have made enormous progress in conserving habitat on public lands,

we clearly have much more work to do. The good news is that because birds so extensively use public lands and waters as habitat, effective management and conservation efforts can make a significant difference in whether these species recover or slide towards extinction."

The report assessed the distribution of birds on nearly 850 million acres of public land and 3.5 million square miles of ocean. It relied on high-performance computing techniques to generate detailed bird distribution maps based on citizen-science data reported to eBird and information from the U.S. Geological Survey's Protected Areas Database of the United States.

The 2011 State of the Birds report is a collaborative effort as part of the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative, involving federal and state wildlife agencies, and scientific and conservation organizations. These include the American Bird Conservancy, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Bureau of Land Management, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Department of Defense, the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The full report is available at
www.stateofthebirds.org.

Bird Sightings for April 2011

The local Chapter is fortunate that members continue to step up to help out! I am excited to announce that Lannie Smith has agreed to take over our bird sightings column each month! Please enjoy her debut here. And also please realize that this column depends on YOU reporting your sightings to Lannie for inclusion in these reports. Lannie will also use LCBIRDS so no need to double post, and for computer phobic you can leave sightings with Lannie at 545-4898. Please try to report only one time, either by email, post to LCBIRDS, or by phone that way Lannie doesn't get repeats! When sending information to her please include species of note, location seen and your name. Lannie can be contacted by e-mail at lanirock@charter.net.

April 1, while volunteering for US Fish & Wildlife, Keith, Jane, Chad and Rich counted 51 species including a pair of Osprey on the nesting platform at Ringold Road just before the hatchery and another Osprey near the McNary headquarters off HWY 12, two Loggerhead Shrikes, several Sage Sparrows (on the Wahluke unit), and, at the base of White Bluffs, a flock of 50 ducks with Barrow's Goldeneye, a few Bufflehead, Lesser Scaup and Common Goldeneye.

On April 4 Chad Merkley spotted 70 Sandhill Cranes on the Barker Ranch and another 80 in the air heading west toward Rattlesnake. He also reported a Say's Phoebe and 8 Wood Ducks in the area. On April 5 CM reported a Tundra Swan in the little pond on Snively Road next to the old corral. Marilyn saw about 200 Sandhills on Snively that same afternoon. Some appeared to be engaging in courtship displays.

On April 7 Nancy reported the Eurasian Wigeon was still at the Family Fishing Pond in Columbia Park along with 100-200 Tree Swallows, Violet-greens and Cliff Swallows. On April 13 Michael Barrett reported a pair of Spotted Towhees and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in his yard. Tony Greager reported Long-eared Owls calling near his house in Rancho Reata on April 15.

On April 16, Ragan reported their first yard Oriole in the Rancho Reata area. They have a pair of nesting Swainson's Hawks next door and a pair of American Kestrels nearby. Chad sighted 4 American Avocets on the sandbar west of Bateman Island. He reported 2 Caspian Terns and a couple of Lincoln's Sparrows as well as 35 other species. Kathy C. and Heidi saw a Cinnamon Teal on the Barker Ranch.

On April 21 three Cedar Waxwings joined 30 White-crowned Sparrows and a Dark-eyed Junco at JoJo's birdbath in Richland. Kris reported 3 American Avocets at the pond on the east end of Chemical Drive on April 23rd. April 25 Lisa Hill spotted a male Calliope Hummingbird at her feeder. A walk in Johnson Park revealed a Fox Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, a Hermit Thrush and 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets. A Great-horned Owl is on a nest in the park.

On April 26 Barbara Clark reported Yellow-headed Blackbirds at the pond on Keene Road. Also on April 26 Ron and Carole reported 3 Curlew, a Loggerhead Shrike, a Say's Phoebe, 12 Horned Larks, 3 Rock Wrens, a Brewer's Sparrow, 8 Meadowlarks and 9 Savannah Sparrows on a Smith Canyon Drive. Near Interstate 182 they saw 3 Burrowing Owls. Dennis Rockwell spotted a pair of American Avocets and a pair of Eurasian-collared Doves in 2 Rivers Park on April 27. That same day Regan had a pair of Nashville Warblers in their yard in Rancho Reata, Joel Tinsley spotted his first Western Kingbird in Richland, and Dennis Rockwell reported many Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Pine Siskin in Finley.

On April 28 Barb Clark reported 2 American Avocets, many Marsh Wrens and a Virginia Rail (voice only) on Snively Road. April 29, Margaret Ford reported a pair of Osprey on the Yakima Delta nesting poles and several Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Stevens Center Pond. April 30 Kathy Criddle spotted 25 species at Osprey Pointe in Pasco. The highlights: 3 Osprey, Black-capped Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Kingbird, Cliff, Violet-green, Barn and Tree Swallows and a Varied Thrush. On the same day, Rich and group tallied 43 species at the Walla Walla delta area. Most notable: Marbled Godwits, Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets and Western Sandpipers.

Thank You, Rick Leaumont

Someone had to break the news to you, so I guess it's me. Rick Leaumont is stepping down as LCBAS Conservation Chair. It's hard to think about, let alone write.

When you think of conservation in the Tri-Cities, it's Rick we first think of. How many years has he chaired the Conservation Committee? My fading memory says it's nearly as long as the 27 years I've been here. How many countless issues has he taken on for us? Hanford Reach, Palouse Falls, ALE, salmon, future Hanford Site uses, Blackrock Dam, and on and on.

All undertaken with his Southern gentlemanly demeanor and with a level of commitment that would make the uninitiated think he was being paid for what he does. No way. This is a man who does what he does for the sheer love and respect he has for the natural world and its inhabitants. It's a task taken on with gratitude, purpose, and resolve.

That's why he's been so effective. As Brock Evans, formerly of National Audubon, used to say "endless pressure, endlessly applied." But with Rick it was applied so thoughtfully and respectfully that even his opponents came to respect the man and honor his credibility, even if they couldn't embrace the point of view.

For all Rick has done (so far), I think his lasting legacy must be preservation of the Hanford Reach as a National Monument. All the tireless work, the negotiations, the planning, the lobbying – nearly all unseen by most – with a team assembled far wider than Audubon and far beyond the Tri-Cities, accomplished something that all of us and all our relations will be able to enjoy forever. Perhaps the finest moment of the campaign was when Rick walked to the podium with Vice President Al Gore to announce the National Monument designation. What an honor that his name appears in the Senate Congressional Record for June 16, 2000 (go ahead, Google it). "Mr. President, I want the Congressional Record to forever reflect the tireless work of people like Rick Leaumont..."

Rick, how can we possibly thank you enough? You've done so much for LCBAS, the Tri-Cities, the Nation. **Thank you, thank you, thank you.**

Mike Lilga and all of the members of LCBAS

Thank You, Nancy & Bill LaFramboise

As most members are aware, Nancy and Bill LaFramboise are starting a new adventure and moving away to sunny (and humid) Florida! We are very sad to see them go, their contributions to Lower Columbia Basin Audubon are numerous and substantial.

Bill tirelessly compiled the local area bird sightings for "the Curlew" every month for over 10 years. His columns featured information on species and numbers of birds using the area. These columns could be used to track patterns of bird use in the area due to their accuracy and attention to detail.

Through their hours of volunteering with the National Wildlife Refuge System, Bill and Nancy were responsible for gathering the information on bird diversity on the Hanford area, and that information on biodiversity was partially responsible for the area being deemed a National Monument! The data that Bill and Nancy collected has also been published in scientific journals documenting the impact of the 2000 wildfire on avifauna of the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve.

Nancy has helped Audubon in countless ways, from her bird identification lessons during our membership meetings, to starting and maintaining LCBIRDS our local bird sightings list serve, to conducting educational events at local schools, and managing our extensive collection of taxidermy. Nancy has served the board many ways and has managed our members data base and been responsible for you receiving your newsletter each month.

Nancy also came up with the concept of our annual Seed Sale and worked with Columbia Grain & Feed to arrange the donations to LCBAS from the seed sale and actually any time members purchase their bird seed from Columbia Grain & Feed! This fundraiser has been very successful annually and allowed us to increase our taxidermy collection with featured local species and shrub-steppe birds.

Nancy also helped create the "How to bird" portion of LCBASs website and worked hard on the local area birding maps and information that exists on the website. These are both invaluable for area residents that want to take up bird watching and get experience in our local area, but this information also gets used by people from outside our area looking for places to find specialty birds of Eastern Washington. I know I am forgetting things too, but **Thank you SO much** Bill & Nancy!

Heidi Newsome and all of the members of LCBAS!

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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