



February 2012  
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# the curlew

## Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

### The Photography of Alan Bauer

#### Special Interest Articles:

- Applebees Breakfast – Feb. 25!
- Sage Grouse rescheduled for September!

#### Individual Highlights:

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#### Membership Meeting Tuesday, February 28 7:00 p.m. Kennewick First Lutheran Church, corner of Yelm and Highway 395

This month's meeting will feature Alan Bauer, professional photographer and outdoor enthusiast/author. Alan Bauer has been a co-author photographer for Washington State titles with the Mountaineers Books for the past seven years. Among the works he co-authored several in a day hiking series: Day Hiking-Snoqualimie Region, Day Hiking-South Cascades, Day Hiking-South Cascades, Day Hiking-Mount Rainier, Day Hiking-Central Cascades. In addition he co-authored Best Desert Hikes-Washington. He will present a photo intensive program to share his love

for the adventures and stories he has had photographing and hiking while work on various projects.

Alan Bauer has presented programs for dozens of organizations, including most branches of various outdoor clubs and branches of The Mountaineers in Western Washington, The Mazamas in Portland, The Cascadians in Yakima, outdoor retailer locations, venues throughout Eastern Washington, local ski clubs and photography groups, and many libraries around the Pacific Northwest. To quote Bauer: "My presentations are rich with photography as you might expect, and full of informational tidbits regarding the areas as well as covering conservation issues facing our trails and

public lands."

Invite your friends to attend this interesting program. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. with a short LCBAS business meeting. Next on the schedule, one of our local expert birders will present a brief bird i.d. lesson followed by a 15 minute coffee/tea, cookie break. The speaker usually begins around 7:45 p.m. Members are encouraged to bring treats for the social portion of our meeting!

Also, fortunately we have **rescheduled** last month's program that was cancelled due to weather. **Dr. Mike Schroeder's** presentation on **Sage Grouse** for **September 2012** meeting so stay tuned for that!

**FUNDRAISING BREAKFAST AT APPLEBEE'S! DON'T FORGET!** On Saturday, February 25, the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society will again have a Fund Raiser Breakfast from 8:00 to 10:00 am at Applebee's on Road 68 in Pasco, WA. For \$7.00 you get a short stack (3) hot cakes, two large sausages and beverage! LCBAS keeps \$5.00 for every ticket sold. Support our Education and Conservation programs – all funds are used in our local community!



"Common loon" courtesy Larry Umthum\*

## **E-alerts**

The new LCBAS e-alert list came in handy in January when we had to cancel the general membership meeting because of the weather and icy roads. We were also able to announce the postponement due to weather of the Richland Parks Master Plan update meeting. Another e-alert announced meetings in West Richland and Richland about their parks plan updates; we didn't know if the January Curlew would be out in time for you to receive the information.

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**February 4, 2012**

A nice crowd of about 20 people came out for the Bateman walk. In the trees and shrubs near the entrance to the causeway was a large flock (100+) of CEDAR WAXWINGS. Their high-pitched trilling calls seemed to come from every direction. We looked through the flock for Bohemian Waxwings, but had no luck. The entire flock was gone when we left the island several hours later. Although it was quiet along the causeway and the waterfowl numbers were down from the last several months, we did see 46 species.

Several male and female COMMON MERGANSERS paddled around on both sides of the causeway with one HOODED MERGANSER, HORNED and PIED-BILLED GREBES, and a few BUFFLEHEAD. We flushed a BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON and got very good views of a female BELTED KINGFISHER. Along the trail we saw one SPOTTED TOWHEE, two HERMIT THRUSHES, and one FOX SPARROW. It appeared to be of the slate-colored race with a yellow bill and a reddish cast to the tail, rump and wings.

The best find of the day was an EARED GREBE on the north side of the island in the Columbia River. We studied it for a while, comparing it to a Horned Grebe diving nearby. The Eared Grebe had a slightly upturned, more slender bill than the Horned Grebe. The forehead was not as sloped and it seemed to ride higher in the water. Although not an identifying feature, the Eared Grebe leapt completely out of the water before diving. Two COMMON LOONS floated together near the Pasco shore.

The next Bateman Island walk is scheduled for Saturday, March 3, at 8:00am. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park. Come one, come all!

## ***Greetings from the President!*** *With Robin Priddy*

I hope that no one was too inconvenienced by the cancellation of our membership meeting at the end of January. We'd seen that the incoming weather was potentially icy, and even more so to the north. Our speaker Schroeder was coming from Bridgeport to speak about Sage Grouse and it just wasn't safe for him to make the trip. I'd like to thank Cathy Smith, Marilyn Hayes, Debbie Berkowitz,

and Ed Rykiel for their quick work with communication, notification, and E-alerts; an email about raining ice from Jack and Murrel Dawson confirmed the decision. It was a good test for the use of our new e-alert. Cathy has already rescheduled Dr. Schroeder for September; his presentation will start the 2012 – 2013 season. There is a lot going on right now in Conservation. Richland is working on their Parks Master

Plan revision, along with West Richland. Information on meetings and times that we can provide input is being provided through the LCBAS e-alerts. There are many local issues we may positively affect. Join us on the 25th at Applebee's, tickets can be purchased ahead or at the door. It's hard to beat \$7.00 for breakfast! It's a great fundraiser and a lot of fun; Charlotte Reep is doing a great job heading this up, and even has us convinced it's fun! *continued next page*

# Othello Sandhill Crane Festival!

**Where:** Columbia National Wildlife Refuge and greater Othello area

**When:** March 23-25

Experience the beauty and wonder of wildlife, highlighted by the return of Sandhill cranes to the Channeled Scablands. This three-day community event features a variety of activities from tours and lectures on the area's natural and cultural heritage to an art contest and children's activities. An admission fee is charged. For more information look online:

[www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/](http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/)

**Check out our website:**

<http://www.lcbas.org>

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After a Snowy Owl report (and photo) in Badger Canyon around New Years, several of us went out to look and only managed to find Winco bags in trees. With the recent irruption, we'd been hoping to see them here – and late last week we were blessed with six! Thank you for the privilege of serving as your President. - Robin

## Spring Migration at Malheur Wildlife Refuge

**Mother's Day Weekend, May 11 to 13, 2012**

LCBAS Far Away Field Trips will be traveling to Malheur Wildlife Refuge 60 miles from Burns, Oregon on Friday, May 11, 2012. You will need to provide your own transportation. Carpooling may be possible. Please be sure and fill your gas tank in Burns or Hines before heading for the refuge.

We will be staying in the newly refurbished "E" Dorm at Malheur Field Station. The dorm has rooms with 2 beds or more with 2 shared bathrooms. There is one side for the boys and one side for the girls with a large cooking and lounge facility in the middle. Since we will probably be arriving at different times, Friday evening dinner will be chili dogs, applesauce and cookies.

The real stars of the show at Malheur are the water fowl and shore birds. We will see **Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Sandhill Crane, White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Phalarope, Trumpeter Swan** and many more. **Sora, American Bittern** and **Virginia Rail** are often seen alongside the road. We will watch for **Turkey Vulture, Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, and Golden Eagle.**

**Saturday, May 12, 2012,**

We will have breakfast and make our picnic lunches. We will travel out into the refuge. Car Caravans are not the most desirable way to see



the birdlife, so we will break up into groups for the morning and meet for lunch at Page Springs around noon. Together we will bird the grounds at Page Springs for roosting **Common Night Hawk, House Wren, Yellow-breasted Chat, Cedar Waxwing, Say's Phoebe** and **Willow Flycatcher.** We can also hike up Juniper Canyon for other birds such as **Western Tanager, Chipping Sparrow,** and **Bush Tit.** The rest of the afternoon will be birding the spots not visited in the morning.

Saturday evening we will be dinner and a movie. We will have a Spaghetti dinner with all the trimmings. If you have a favorite DVD movie, bring it along. We will have "The Big Year" to select from also.

**Sunday, May 13, 2012,**

After breakfast and preparing our picnic lunches, as a group, we will travel to the Malheur Headquarters and bird the grounds. This is where we could find unusual species such as **Rose-throated Grosbeak, Blackburian Warbles, Cat Bird** or **Black and White Warbler.**

Sunday afternoon we will make our way back to the Tri Cities. Either coming or going from Malheur, a place not to miss is Idlewise Camp Ground north of Burns. This is the best location to see **White-headed Woodpecker, Red Crossbill** and **Evening Grosbeak.**

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## Conservation News

*Continued from page 3*

The flooded fields outside of Burns are a must also. Watch for **Curlew, Willet, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Marsh Wren, and Red-wing Blackbird**. You will need to bring a sleeping bag or bedding, pillow, towels and washcloths, warm clothes, sun screen, insect repellent, hat, flashlight and water bottle. Cost of this trip is \$100.00 per person and includes 2 nights lodging in dorm accommodations, breakfast Saturday and Sunday mornings (coffee, tea, juice, cereal, and toast), Saturday and Sunday picnic lunch makings (sandwich, fruit, chips, cookie and bottled water), Saturday evening dinner (Spaghetti with meat sauce, salad, vegetable, garlic bread, dessert, and a beverage), and a bird list for the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. Donations of cookies for Friday evening and lunches would be most appreciated.

\$50.00 deposit will hold your place. Full payment is due by April 24, 2012. Please indicate if you have special food requirements. \$50 deposit will hold your place. Full payment is due April 24, 2012. Tour cost does not include transportation to and from Malheur and personal items such as alcoholic beverages. Contact Barbara Clarke (509) 588-3362 or [barbaraclarke@frontier.com](mailto:barbaraclarke@frontier.com) for reservations.



The Conservation Committee has sent letters the cities of Richland and West Richland offering suggestions for updating their Parks and Recreation Master Plans.

Richland is proposing a plan for W.E. Johnson Park that includes adding an equestrian cross country course and a special events field range, although we don't know what that means. A disc golf course is proposed for James Lawless Park. Debbie Berkowitz represented LCBAS at the February 9 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting. The Committee voted to table both the W.E. Johnson and James Lawless plans and will take them up again at the March meeting.

Richland is also updating its overall Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Committee strongly urges all our members with an interest in Richland parks to attend the review meeting at the Richland Community Center at 6:30 PM on February 15.

The Committee also sent a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service opposing an elk hunt on the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve of the Hanford Reach National Monument. Since we did not receive a response from USFWS, we sent copies of the letter to our US Congressional representatives as well. If we do get a response, we will put a note in the Curlew and on our website.

Our letters will be posted on the LCBAS website as PDF files so our members can review them. As we monitor local conservation issues, we appreciate your support and participation. Please let us know of issues that are of concern to you.

### Volunteer Opportunity!

The Conservation Committee is seeking a volunteer who lives in Kennewick and one who lives in Pasco to review the Growth Management Master Plans and Critical Areas Ordinances of these cities. The volunteers would spend a few hours reviewing the plans with emphasis on the Environment section and then meet with the committee to discuss their findings. Please contact Ed Rykiel if you have an interest in what your city is planning and a few hours to investigate.

Ed Rykiel  
Conservation Committee Chair

## BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR JANUARY 2012

Although many people reported that they were seeing the same old birds in January, there *were* some special occasions. Two new observers reported their findings by way of the LCBAS website, several rare sightings occurred during our snowy weather, and two veteran birders reported sightings of birds considered "accidental" visitors to our area. Read on!

### North Richland

Keith and Jane Abel have hosted a flock of Pine Siskins all month. Marilyn Hayes saw a small bird at her thistle feeder as she pulled into her driveway. It was particularly cooperative Pine Siskin which perched on her rearview mirror allowing a positive ID. Chris Bower reported five Pine Siskins joining the Dark-eyed Juncos and House Finches on a snowy day, celebrating a near-miss by a Sharp-shinned Hawk. The Abel's also had a male Orange-crowned Warbler in their yard this month. A Varied Thrush and Spotted Towhee have been frequent visitors to the yard of Mary and Mike Lilga. New contributor Alisa Haller reported a Red-breasted Merganser and Hooded Mergansers in the Battelle fountain pond on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Jane was able to catch the pair of Hooded Mergansers there on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

### Leslie Groves Park

Keith Abel and Chad Merkley found five gull species at the north end of Nelson Island in early January: Ringbill, California, numerous Glaucous-winged, two Herring, and one immature Thayer's. Jane Abel reported a Lesser Black-backed Gull (considered an "Accidental" visitor) on the north end of Nelson Island visible from the fishing dock at the end of Saint Street. Later in the month the Abels saw a Glaucous Gull on the north end of Nelson Island and a Lesser Black-backed Gull near the shoreline between Saint Street and Snyder Street. A final kudo for Leslie Groves: Eurasian Collared-Doves have arrived.

### Johnson Park

Lisa Hill reported from their home overlooking Johnson Park. The snowy weather increased

the Red-winged Blackbird activity to about 100 birds flying from their feeders to the trees in the park. Among the flock were two male Yellow-headed Blackbirds and one female. In six years the only other Johnson Park sighting of a Yellow-headed Blackbird was a flyover! One White-crowned Sparrow was sporting a green leg band it received when Lisa and Nancy banded it last year as a juvenile.

### West Richland

Dennis Rockwell and Tony Greager both mentioned seeing Shrikes (one a Northern and the other a Loggerhead) along Badger Road. Also in the area was a Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk. In the Horse Heavens the Rockwells spotted a Rough-legged Hawk and a scattering of Horned Larks. Mark Gerber birded near the sewage lagoon saw his second ever Northern Goshawk (a rare winter sighting!!) and a Great-horned Owl there. Joel Tinsley reported one lonely American White Pelican near the dam at Horn Rapids. On one of our snowy days Heidi Newsome was eyeing her usual crowd of House Finches, American Goldfinches, Dark-eyed Juncos (including one Slate-colored variety) and White-crowned Sparrows when they were joined by two Western Meadowlarks. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> near the bridge east of West Richland, Barb Clarke saw an Osprey, feet extended in a hunting dive. Ospreys do not normally winter successfully in the Tri Cities.

### South Richland

The snow on the 19<sup>th</sup> brought in forty Red-winged and twenty Brewer's Blackbirds to keep company with the fifteen American Goldfinches at Lauren Hirsch's home in South Richland. The next day Lauren had a Lincoln's Sparrow under her feeders and the following day she had a Harris's Sparrow (the former rare in winter, and the latter uncommon)!!

### Rancho Reata Area

By the end of the first week of January Tony

Greager was reporting unusual behavior from Red-tailed Hawks in his woodlot. One was carrying nesting material and a pair was "behaving more like birds in May". (Ed Rykiel chimed in on a Red-tailed Hawk appearing to claim the Keene Road hawk nest in December. Cathy Smith reported on two Red-tailed Hawks sitting together on the Saturday birdwalk. Hmm.

The snow day at the Greagers revealed the "usual suspects in seemingly higher numbers." He also had a Pine Siskin, Spotted Towhee, about 60 Red-winged Blackbirds, a single Brewer's Blackbird, five Brown-headed Cowbirds, a Downy Woodpecker and adult Cooper's Hawk. A subsequent road trip through the Reata neighborhood revealed...raptor rendezvous: 6 Red-tails, 2 Coopers, 1 Sharp-shinned, 3 American Kestrels, a very probable Northern Goshawk, and a perched Ferruginous Hawk (a rare winter sighting)!!! Neil and Sharon Ofsthun submitted their yard list which included a Long-eared Owl, Spotted Towhee, Downy Woodpecker, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks, Song Sparrows and Fox Sparrows (which are uncommon winter visitors).

#### **Kennewick**

Deb Devine had a return visit from the Scrub Jays she photographed in December as well as a Red-breasted Nuthatch at her feeders. Chad Merkley birded Columbia Park with good results: a Mew Gull on the icy Fishing Pond and in the trees to the south, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-capped Chickadees, American Goldfinches, one Ruby-crowned Kinglet, one Brown Creeper and one Downy Woodpecker.

#### **Finley Area**

Tim and Sue Hayes visited our website to report seeing American White Pelicans in the river at Two Rivers Park. They live near the park and are accustomed to seeing them in

spring and summer but reported these winter sightings as unusual. Kris Keating reported an American Kestrel successfully hunting mice in her yard.

#### **Sacajawea State Park**

Kevin Black reported a Great Egret, and the following ducks: Common Goldeneyes, Redheads, and Canvasbacks.

#### **North Franklin and Pasco Area**

Kevin also birded Scootney Reservoir where notable species included a Gadwall, Mallards, Canada Geese and Common Mergansers. The Humane Society pond hosted four Black-crowned Night Herons, Green-winged Teal and numerous American Wigeons. During our snowy weather Kevin went to Chiawana Park and found a Glaucous Gull, Killdeer, Northern Pintail and, near Bateman but in Franklin County, three Common Loons.

#### **Walla Walla County**

Chad Merkley reported a female Long-tailed Duck (!) as well as about 150 Dunlin with a couple of Western Sandpipers mixed in at the Walla Walla Delta. Finally on January 29 a Snowy Owl! Ron Louderback snapped several photos of a Snowy Owl, that rare irruptive specimen so many have been seeking, on Dodd Road in Walla Walla County.

#### **West Benton County**

One of the last reports for the month was a highlight for Bob and Pat Woodley. They spotted an American Dipper (another "Accidental" visitor) just below the Yakima River Dam in Prosser. Of course he's seen many Dippers, but this is his only Benton County record for this species!

Thanks for posting your sightings on LCBirds2, e-mailing them to me ([lanirock@charter.net](mailto:lanirock@charter.net)) or calling them in (545-4898). Comments and suggestions are always welcome. -Lannie Smith

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If you haven't received e-alerts and would like to be included on our list, please contact [membership@lcbas.org](mailto:membership@lcbas.org). To opt out, either contact this address or reply to an e-alert requesting to be removed from the list. If you have any comments or suggestions about our e-alerts, please contact Debbie Berkowitz at 375-4740 ([secretary@lcbas.org](mailto:secretary@lcbas.org)).

## Education News

*With Cherie Beaurand*

The evening "Finding Your Wings" group will be starting a new book study March 14. The next book is titled *Living on the Wind* by Scott Weidensaul, about miraculous bird migrations. We'll meet at Kathy Criddle's home at 6:30. E-mail [cherie.baudrand@yahoo.com](mailto:cherie.baudrand@yahoo.com) for more information.

Junior Audubon had to cancel our outing in January because of snow and ice. We met at the Family Fishing Pond to look at ducks on Saturday, February 11, and took a short bird walk. Junior Audubon families are encouraged to attend the Great Backyard Bird Count at McNary Education Center on February 18. There will be an after school meeting in March.

Lucie Fritz, Marilyn Hayes and Barbara Clarke have stepped up the job of visiting classrooms with our taxidermy and information about birds. This is a job that Nancy LaFramboise did for many years. Lucie and Marilyn have teamed up to visit several elementary schools. Barbara Clarke's expertise was put to use in several classrooms. Second grade classes in Kennewick School District have a bird component to a new habitats science kit, so more teachers are asking for Audubon's education presenters this year. We are happy to get some nature into kids!

## Down and Dirty Birding

*by Joey Slinger reviewed by Lannie Smith*

I'm an enthusiastic birder, but not very experienced and not very good at it. I like books that help me improve or stimulate my interest. This selection was written around 1996, so lots of people have probably either read it, or decided not to, years ago. If you are like me, a beginning birder, you can pick up a ton of helpful hints and interesting facts.

There are six sections. The first one addresses the basics including binoculars and scope selection, birding etiquette, and pronunciation of names like "Jaeger". Section 2: Bird Behavior. It includes baby birds (altricial or precocial?), the whole courtship thing, hunting habits, migration, molting, songs and calls. In each section you'll find little nuggets that help sort out birds...things that you maybe knew but hadn't really catalogued yet. Examples: birds that walk and birds that hop. Or birds' flight patterns. It isn't rocket science, but such observations help consolidate and organize some of our birding experiences and observations. Section 3: Bird Parts includes terms like palmated, crest, crown, and front. "In bird lingo, the front is the forehead." (Greater White-fronted Goose? Who knew?) Section 4: Deep Background touches on field marks, feeders, endangered, extinct and introduced species and more. Section 5: The Hit List. (I loved this one) He provides strategies for sorting out which challenging bird is which. He begins with loons and goes through your bird guide all the way to the finches, tackling the toughies. "Western Grebe vs Clark's Grebe. Western is masked like Zorro. Clark's isn't." That might be too simple for an advanced birder, but I'm not above writing it in *my* guide book. The last section lists ten places in North America that you should go birding before you die.

The author has been compared to Dave Barry. Lots of times I laughed out loud. But some of his humor is crass. Be prepared. He has this footnote thing going that sometimes works and sometimes just annoys. Still, I picked up lots of new information, organized some I already had, and got some great laughs.

**The Curlew**

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\$20 annual LCBAS subscription (includes 1-year / 10 issues of the Curlew or eCurlew newsletter). (One subscription per address receiving the Curlew)

\$10. for full time students. (same benefits as above)

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