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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Celebrating our 50th Anniversary

Common Birds of the Columbia River Basin

**Tuesday, March 24th
7 pm
Kennewick First Lutheran Church
Corner of Hwy. 395 and Yelm**

This month's program is a presentation on the common birds of the Columbia River Basin by Mike Denny.

Mike Denny has been birding since he was 8 years old in southeast Africa and has lived and birded in the Walla Walla area since 1978. He has been working in conservation and habitat restoration for many years. Mike has co-authored 5 books on birds and natural history of the interior northwest. He and his wife MerryLynn of 28 years enjoy birding whenever they can.



Long-billed Curlew
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

Breeding Bird Survey Sites for 2015 and Beyond

Exceptional Opportunity to document Bird Status in Eastern Washington for Bird Population Studies Locally, Nationally, and Internationally. Six local routes are available starting at Scootney Reservoir, Wapato, Yakima, Odessa, Malden, and Ewan for birders with extraordinary capability to identify birds with both sight and sound. Each 25-mile long route is done once a year in June by car. Add to the 40-year old bird population database by choosing a route at the Breeding Bird Survey website or contact Ed Miller, 509 943-8538.

Bateman Island Bird Walk: March 14, 2015

The Bateman Island walk was again with nice temperatures, no wind and no rain. That all arrived later in the afternoon. Inclement weather often develops in the afternoons in our area, so the mornings are a great time to go birding. It was fun to have five new attendees at this walk. They all made the full loop around the island and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Many new life birds for them.

Spring-like weather in February and March may have pushed migration up a bit this year. There were virtually no waterfowl on the Yakima delta or the Columbia River. We did

see PIED-BILLED GREBE, WESTERN GREBE and one EARED GREBE, one COMMON GOLDENEYE and a handful of BUFFLEHEAD. A COMMON LOON bobbed close to the island in the slightly choppy water of the Columbia. The new birders in the group were thrilled to see such a magnificent bird so close in to the shore. It appeared to be just starting its molt into breeding plumage.

Although we didn't see the bird, a RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET sang little snippets of its lilting "see-see-see-tweedle-deedle-dee" song. We were surprised that no White-crowned Sparrows were seen or heard. We did get a glimpse of a GOLDEN-CROWNED

SPARROW. The BALD EAGLES are still present in and around the two large nests that are easily seen on the east side of Hwy 240. This could be the year they nest successfully and raise some eaglets!

The next Bateman Island bird walk will be Saturday, April 4. We meet at 8am in the parking lot of Wye Park near the causeway to the island.



Great Backyard Bird Count Sets New Species Record



New York, NY, Ithaca, NY, and Port Rowan, ON— Participants from more than 100 countries submitted a record 147, 265 bird checklists for the annual [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) and broke the previous count record for the number of species identified. The 5,090 species reported represents nearly half the possible bird species in the world. The four-day count was held February 13-16, the 18th year for the event which is a joint project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and the [National Audubon Society](#) with partner [Bird Studies Canada](#).

The information gathered by tens of thousands of

volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale made possible by using the [eBird](#) online checklist program. A sampling of species found by intrepid counters include [Ibisbill](#) in India, [Bornean Bistlehead](#) in Malaysia, and [Magellanic Plover](#) in Chile, complete with amazing photos. GBBC participants even reported two species, [Millpo Tapaculo](#) and [Santa Marta Screech-Owl](#) that have not yet been described in the official scientific literature.

Bitter Weather

The bitter cold, snowy weather in much of the northeastern United States and much of Canada was a major factor in this year's count. In much of the Northeast, Sunday was particularly frigid and windy, and the number of reports showed an obvious dip as some counters were forced indoors. As one participant in Quebec noted, watching birds came with a price as wind chill temperatures rarely topped -20 degrees Celsius (zero degrees Fahrenheit).

For those who did brave the cold, the GBBC data will help to better understand the impact of the cold on birds and bird populations. For example, scientists will be *Continued on next page*

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able to compare the abundance of some so-called “half-hardy” species, such as Carolina Wren and Yellow-rumped Warbler, to see if this cold winter has affected their populations.



Northern Flicker
Photo credit: Linda Izer, Arkansas

Snowy Owl Echo

Snowy Owls are one of the most charismatic and emblematic birds of winter. They breed in Arctic regions worldwide and drop south in some winters (“irrupt”), depending on food supplies and their breeding success in the previous summer. The winter of 2013-14 was a huge year for these owls which appeared in amazing numbers across the Great Lakes states, Northeastern U.S., Atlantic Coast, and southern Canada. GBBC reports for 2015 also show a surge in Snowy Owl sightings across the same range, though the frequency of reports is about half of last winter’s. This is a well-known phenomenon with Snowy Owls, with the year after a very large invasion often being referred to as an “echo flight.”

Winter Finches

Winter finches—such as Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, redpolls, and crossbills—are popular among GBBC participants. These birds also “irrupt” south of their usual haunts depending on food supplies, so their numbers in a given region may change widely from year to year.

2015 was a banner year for Pine Siskins which are reported on 10.5% of GBBC checklists so far.

Compare that to 1.2% of checklists in 2014 when most siskins stayed far north in Canada. Siskins will likely be hanging around through April and May, especially if the feeders are stocked with their favorite nyjer (thistle) seed.

GBBC Top 10 Lists

Surprisingly, a Eurasian species, the Brambling, appears on the Top 10 list of most reported species for the first time ever. Since November, some of these birds have been spotted on the West Coast and others strayed even farther by turning up in Montana, Wyoming, and Ontario, with one 2015 GBBC record in North America from Washington state. But the Brambling’s appearance among the Top 10 can be traced to one checklist from Germany reporting a flock estimated at one million birds. Up to three million Bramblings have been known to gather at that site.

In North America, California sits atop the leader board with the most checklists submitted and the greatest number of species, followed by Pennsylvania and New York. Ontario, Canada, is in the Top 10 for the second year in a row, nudging past Ohio and Georgia.

Outside of the U.S. and Canada, India was once again a star performer, nearly doubling the number of checklists submitted to more than 6,800 and reporting the greatest number of species so far with 717.



India Golden Oriole
Photo credit: Sumit Sen, West Bengal, India

In Memoriam: Greg Greger

By Murrel Dawson

The Audubon Society has lost one of its longtime members with the passing of Greg Greger on March 5.

I first met Greg in the 70s when he was a member of the Mid Columbia Archaeological Society. During that time he was interested in doing flint knapping, making beautiful projectile points and stone knives. He taught classes using the pressure flaking technique and was proud that some of his students were members of the Wanapums of Priest Rapids.

Greg was instrumental in establishing the educational classes at McNary Fish and Wildlife Refuge and they are still active today.

Greg's inquisitive nature was always in play. Because of his interests in local history he researched early church documents and other historic documents locating what he came to believe was the site of the first Catholic mission in the Columbia Valley.

Along with his wife, Margaret, they were avid kite flyers, organizing a spring "fly" each year in North Richland. They also were great gardeners who always shared their over producing garden with friends.

Greg was a very good friend that will be missed.

Upcoming events:

March 24th: Membership meeting

April 4th: Bateman Island Walk

April 6th: Board Meeting

Don't forget to check our website www.lcbas.org for up to date information. And remember we have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/lcbas> - you do not have to have a Facebook account to read our page, just put in the address above!

Note that prospective members get three complimentary issues of the Curlew. In order to receive more issue, you must become an LCBAS member.

Officers

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Bird Sightings for February 2015

By Lannie Smith

North Richland

Laurie Ness and Patrick Paulson have a pair of Western Screech-Owls (uncommon residents) checking out their new squirrel-resistant owl box (complete with camera).

Laurie also reported 2 Pine Grosbeaks (rare, winter) in their neighborhood, present with Yellow-rumped Warblers, Cedar Waxwings and one Bohemian Waxwing (uncommon, winter) on the 23rd. Bob Woodley reported a female Purple Finch (rare, winter) among his other birdfeeder visitors on the 13th.

West Richland

On the 15th Barb and Tom Clarke saw a flock of 60 Sandhill Cranes landing in the area of Snively and Grosscup Roads. Barb relayed that Biologist Heidi Newsome thought the cranes are about 2 weeks early this year. On the 21st Bob and Pat Woodley saw several small groups of Sandhill Cranes (about 20 total) along Snively and Grosscup Roads.



Red-winged Blackbird
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

Rancho Reata

Tony Greager reported on Rancho Reata owl activity on the 25th. The Great Horned Owls have returned to their nest in his backyard. (Faithful readers will recall the roughhousing that occurred between the owls and the Red-tailed Hawks over this same nest last year). Tony was fortunate enough to hear a Long-eared Owl call from

his front yard and a Western Screech Owl from the west. Also calling at dusk was a nearby Say's Phoebe. Neil and Sharon Ofsthun's Rancho Reata yard list included Ring-necked Pheasant, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Doves, Western Screech-Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, Spotted Towhee and Red-winged Blackbird.



Great Horned Owls
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

South Richland

On the 19th Jim and Kathy Criddle reported 50 calling Sandhill Cranes which flew over their south Richland neighborhood on their way to the Othello Crane Festival.

Columbia Park and far reaches of Benton County

Marilyn Anderson left a message in February that she had spotted a Pacific Loon (rare, winter) in Columbia Park in the river near the golf course. On the 25th Ivar photographed several Sagebrush Sparrows on Missimer Road on the western edge of Benton County.

Finley Area

Kris Keating reported on the 11th that her feeders and property were being kept busy by a variety of feathered visitors: White-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch, and House Finch, as well as Ring-necked Pheasant, California Quail, Northern Harrier, an occasional Bald Eagle, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Northern Flicker, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, American Robin, Western Meadowlark, and Spotted Towhee. By the end of the month, these species had been joined by American

Kestrel, a pair of Swainson's Hawks, Red-winged Blackbird, and a flock of Snow Geese at a distance over the river.

McNary National Wildlife Refuge

Heidi Newsome, biologist at the refuge, reported on the 26th that two neck-banded Tundra Swans (uncommon, winter) were seen at McNary National Wildlife Refuge Slough. The staff believe these are part of a program started in 2006 in Alaska and that these two birds were banded on the Northern Alaska Peninsula. They would be at least 9 years old. They are with a group of over 90 swans.

Pasco and Franklin County

On the first, Laurie and Patrick tried to locate the Hairy Woodpecker that was seen at Chiawana during the Christmas count. The Hairy Woodpecker was absent, but they spotted a Fox Sparrow (uncommon, winter) and a Pine Grosbeak (rare, winter). The following day Kevin Black tried to locate the Pine Grosbeak, but had to settle for hearing Evening Grosbeaks (rare, winter) and seeing a White-throated Sparrow (uncommon, winter), (plus 39 other species). On the 26th Kevin headed out to see if the Gray-Crowned Rosy-Finches (rare, winter) were still present. They were. They are located just west of the intersection of Devils Canyon and Pasco-Kahlotus Highway on Pasco-Kahlotus Highway. Other highlights on the trip were a Ferruginous Hawk (rare, winter), Golden Eagle (uncommon, winter) and Say's Phoebe.

On the 28th Dana Ward, Ed Rykiel, and Robin Priddy saw a mature Golden Eagle at Kahlotus.

Clarifications and corrections are always appreciated.

Please contribute *your* sightings to our newsletter!

Call them in to 545-4898, post them online at LCBirds2, or email to lanirock@charter.net.



Gray-crowned Rosy-finches

Photo credit: Ivar Husa

Conservation Report for March 2015

By Marcie Daines

An urban ecologist, John Marzluff, and others researched bird counts in national parks, industrial parks and suburbs in studying the loss of biodiversity caused by man's actions and found that we have a lot to celebrate! While high density city areas have fewer birds and wild reserves have more unique birds, it was expected that the suburbs in between would yield an intermediate number of species. What was not expected was the dawn chorus of 30 or more species each morning identifying a whole new set of birds along with the industrial city/protected forest mix. They had discovered "subirdia"!

For a decade John and his graduate students counted birds from Seattle's urban core to its fringing forests nearly every spring and summer morning. Compiling standard bird surveys from over 100 locations revealed a consistent, but unexpected relationship between the intensity of development and bird diversity which rose quickly from the city center to the suburbs and then dropped again in the extensive forest that eases Seattle into the high Cascades.

This area is not unique as woodlands of California and Ohio, grasslands of Arizona, forests of Japan, shrublands of Australia and throughout Britain have discovered *subirdia as well*. Natural vegetation constitutes one-third to two-thirds of subirdia. It is the place many of us call home or work, and offers a wide range of habitats in a small area. The diversity of plants found together is simply incredible.

As our modification of the land combines birds into new communities, we create interactions that have never before been seen and rekindle others that played out long ago. Human neighborhoods are good for birds.

Taken from *Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife*, by John Marzluff (2014).

From the American Bird Conservancy

FOREST CARBON UPDATES

Forest Carbon Report Card and Management Checklist Now Available

The U.S. Forest Service and other federal forest management agencies have yet to adopt policies, regulations, and practices to explicitly mitigate the loss of carbon and increase carbon stores nationwide. A new report by the Federal Forest Carbon Coalition (FFCC) calls on the Obama administration to rapidly modernize federal forest management to explicitly address carbon management or risk adding thousands of tons of carbon to the atmosphere and aggravating the climate crisis.

The FFCC has also developed a checklist forest managers can use to determine if they are addressing all of the issues required to conserve and increase forest carbon. The checklist can also be useful to conservationists engaging in forest plan revisions. The report is available here: <http://www.forestcc.org/report-card>

"I want the Forest Service to address the challenge of climate change head-on," stated Jim Furnish, Retired Deputy Chief of the Forest Service and FFCC Senior Advisor. "Our national forests represent an enormous opportunity to reduce the risks of climate change by protecting carbon-rich forests, and even increasing carbon storage over time. Forest carbon has been historically neglected and it needs to be an urgent priority going forward."

Seven Science Societies Back Effort Demanding Halt on Old-Growth Logging

Several groups—The American Fisheries Society, American Ornithologists Union, American Society of Mammalogists, Ecological Society of America, Pacific Seabird Group, Society for Conservation Biology, and The Wildlife Society—are calling for the Forest Service to accelerate transitioning logging away from old-growth forests into secondary forests that were originally harvested in the 1950s.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a plan for just such a transition in July 2013 but environmentalists say that sales of old-growth timber have actually increased to a level not seen in 20 years. The letter is available here: http://geosinstitute.org/images/stories/pdfs/Publications/FederalLandsManagement/TongassSocietyLetter_1_20_2015.pdf

Protecting California's Natural Lands is Key to Combating Climate Change

BY Andrea Tuttle, former director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, who is now an Arcata-based consultant on forest and climate policy. See: <http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/soapbox/article7842339.html#storylink=cpy>

The Social Cost of Carbon Estimated to be Six Times Higher than Current Policy

A new study finds that the cost of carbon emissions to future generations is six times greater than the current estimate being used by the Obama administration. The paper estimates the cost at \$220 a ton based on the potential economic losses to agricultural and industrial output caused by high heat. The Obama administration currently estimates the cost at \$37 a ton. The study, "Temperature impacts on economic growth warrant stringent mitigation policy," is available from E & E which reported on the story: http://www.eenews.net/assets/2015/01/13/document_cw_01.pdf

Re-evaluation of Forest Biomass Carbon Stocks and Lessons from the World's Most Carbon-dense Forests

By Heather Keith, Brendan G. Mackey, and David B. Lindenmayer. 2015. PNAS vol. 106 no. 28. 11635–11640, doi: 10.1073/pnas.0901970106. See: <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/28/11635.full.pdf>

Forest Carbon Webinar: Exceptional Carbon Value

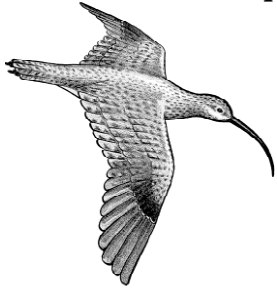
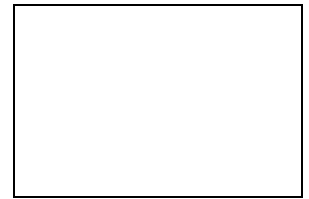
Presentations by Drs. Tom Lovejoy, Bev Law, Mark Harmon, and Dominick DellaSala. The webinar prominently features Pacific Northwest and Tongass forests as carbon sinks and the need to conserve these forests for their exceptional carbon value. <http://training.fws.gov/topic/online-training/webinars/safeguarding-wildlife.html>



Photo credit: Joseph Lelli

The Curlew

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon
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Send *The Curlew* to my email address listed below. All my dues will go towards supporting LCBAS in local education and conservation efforts. _____

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