



May 2015
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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Celebrating our 50th Anniversary

A presentation by Corky Roberts, Wildlife Avenger

Special Interest Articles:

- Hanford Reach Jet Boat Trip
- Wind Turbines in Sensitive Bird Areas

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**Tuesday, May 26, 2015
7 - 9 PM
Mid-Columbia Library,
S. Union, Kennewick
NOTE LOCATION**

This month's program is a presentation by Corky Roberts, Special Agent for U.S. Fish and Wildlife, discussing his work investigating the killing and commercialization of Bald and Golden Eagles, as well as other migratory birds. The title of the talk is "WILDLIFE AVENGER."

These magnificent birds are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American People.

Annual Election of Officers and Committee Chairs for 2015 - 2016

Slate of Candidates

- President -- Lori Nelson
- VP -- Joe Lelli
- Treasurer -- Madeleine Brown
- Secretary -- Debbie Berkowitz
- Birding Events -- Kathy Criddle
- Conservation -- Dana Ward
- Education -- OPEN
- Communications -- Joe Lelli
- Finance -- Madeleine Brown
- Fundraising -- Charlotte Reep
- Program -- Ivar Husa
- Membership -- OPEN
- Historian -- Carole Byrd
- Audubon Adventures -- Lannie Smith
- Book Sales -- OPEN
- Christmas Bird Count -- Dana Ward
- Hospitality -- Jack and Murrel Dawson
- Publicity -- Charlotte Reep
- Website -- Ed Rykiel
- Sagebrush Songbird Survey -- Robin Priddy

Bateman Island Bird Walk: May 2, 2015

Spring migration was the theme for the LCBAS education day at the REACH. The Bateman bird walk was the first activity of the day and there were plenty of migrants to fit the theme. Many new birders joined our regulars, and with nearly 50 pairs of eagle eyes, we found an amazing 63 species, plus two more near the REACH building. That is a near record number for a Bateman walk.

Many warblers returned in the last week of April so we were able to count six species: NASHVILLE, ORANGE-CROWNED, YELLOW, YELLOW-RUMPED (winter resident), TOWNSEND'S, and WILSON'S. The

MacGillivray's Warbler is usually the last to arrive and we did not see one. A brilliant yellow-orange BULLOCK'S ORIOLE sang its raspy territorial song on the causeway. BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAKS weren't ready to perform their full song, but chirped a few notes of their warbling, robin-like tune.

One of our more experienced birders identified a very uncommon PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER. Birds in the Empidonax genus of flycatchers (empids) are notoriously difficult to identify, usually requiring a combination of field marks and voice for a correct

identification. A WESTERN SCREECH-OWL, rarely seen on the island, was identified by voice.

A few other notable birds were CLARK'S GREBE, BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON, PEREGRINE FALCON, AMERICAN AVOCET, LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER and VIRGINIA RAIL.

The next Bateman Island bird walk is Saturday, June 6. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park at 8am.



Wilson's Warbler
Photo credit: Larry Umthun



Nashville Warbler
Photo credit: Larry Umthun

President's Column with Lori Nelson

I've just returned from a long weekend at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon – what a trip!

We saw so many wonderful birds, including many new life birds for me including Short-eared owls, Black terns, Evening grosbeaks, and Wilson's phalaropes. Many of the birds were in fresh breeding plumage, especially the Western tanagers, which fairly glowed in the trees.

Best of all, I was surrounded by fabulous birders who were eager to share their knowledge and their sightings. Sure, we were a little competitive, but not so much that we didn't delight in each other's success! We also had some new bird watchers on the trip. They might have started the weekend as novices, but as Rich Barchet pointed out, they were bona fide "birders" by the time they left Malheur on Monday.

Many thanks to Barb and Tom Clarke for organizing the trip, from the food to the lodgings, and to Kathy Criddle for helping with logistics.

As great as the birding was at Malheur, the conditions at the refuge illustrated the difficulties that the birds will face this summer. Usually the wetlands at the refuge are flooded with water from snowmelt by May, but record low snowfall this winter made for mile after mile of dry marshes. Northern ravens, Great horned owls, Swainson's hawks, and Bushtits were busy

building nests or tending to their young. These birds are likely to be in for a tough time this summer as the food dries up along with the water.

Of course many of the birds were just passing through, on their way north from their wintering grounds. These birds were busy refueling – feeding in the trees, shrubs, and marshes of the refuge.

Spring migration always reminds me that we share "our" birds with many other people around the world. I find that connection comforting – that someone in Costa Rica might have enjoyed watching that Warbling vireo as much as I did here in the Northwestern US. We are tied to our neighbors to the north and south through the peregrinations of our feathered friends.

I wish all of you a happy May!

Lori

Hanford Reach Jet Boat Trip

As part of the 50th year celebration, the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society is offering a jet boat trip up the Hanford Reach on Saturday, June 6. We have a special price of \$81.00 each. We will leave from the public boat dock near Anthony's Restaurant in Richland. We will leave at 8 AM sharp. Bring binoculars, sunscreen, a hat, water, a lunch in a small in a small cooler, and appropriate clothing for the weather. Remember it can be cool on the water. The Captain will do his best to show us as many birds as possible. We should be back between noon and 1 PM. Sign up is at the May meeting or before by calling Barbara Clarke at [509-588-3362](tel:509-588-3362).





Chukar
Photo credit: Unknown



Forster's Tern
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

Upcoming events:

May 26th: Membership meeting

June 1st: Board Meeting

June 6th: Bateman Island Walk, REACH event

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

President – Lori Nelson (president@lcbas.org)

Vice President – Vacant

Treasurer – Madeleine Brown (treasurer@lcbas.org)

Secretary – Debbie Berkowitz (secretary@lcbas.org)

Standing Committees

Birding Events - Barb Clarke (birdingevents@lcbas.org)

Communications - Joe Lelli (Curlew) (curlew@lcbas.org)

Conservation – Marcie Daines (conservation@lcbas.org)

Education - Cherie Baudrand (education@lcbas.org)

Finance –

Fundraising – Charlotte Reep

Membership – Kevin Black, Rich Barchet (membership@lcbas.org)

Program – Ivar Husa (programs@lcbas.org)

Special Committees

Audubon Adventures - Eileen Kennedy

Book Sales - Kathy Criddle

Christmas Bird Count - Dana Ward (christmasbirdcount@lcbas.org)

Friends of McNary Liaison -

Hospitality – Carolyn Jones

Publicity –Charlotte Reep

Website - Ed Rykiel (webmaster@lcbas.org)

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Bird Sightings for April 2015

By Lannie Smith

North Richland and Richland Columbia River Parks

Rich Barchet reported at least 20 Horned Grebes at the south end of Nelson Island on the evening of the 12th. On the same outing he also spotted Bufflehead, Lesser Scaup, Mallard, Cooper's Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, and American Goldfinch. Mary Lilga had a Red-breasted Nuthatch and Ruby-crowned Kinglet visiting her North Richland yard. She also reported a Western Kingbird perched on a wire around George Washington Way and McMurray Street.

Laurie Ness reported that their Western Screech Owl is incubating 4 eggs. Throughout the month Jane and Keith Abel (like many of us) heard and saw seemingly hundreds of White-crowned Sparrows in their yard. Other yard sightings for Jane and Keith during April: Downy Woodpecker, Bewick's Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, unusually large numbers of Cedar Waxwings, Lincoln's Sparrow (an uncommon migrant) and 3 Pine Siskins (the latter appearing on the 28th and 29th).

West Richland, Horn Rapids Area and Rattlesnake Mountain

Chad Merkley identified a Lincoln's Sparrow (uncommon migrant) below his West Richland bird feeder on the 12th. Sharon Watts had a brief visit from a Rufous Hummingbird in her backyard on the last day of the month.

Yakima Delta, Bateman Island and Columbia Park

Marilyn Anderson called in some sightings from the Yakima Delta. On the 26th she spotted 2 male Wood Ducks, 11 American Avocets, and 3-4 Forster's Terns. The next day in the same area Black-necked Stilts were present.

South Richland, Johnson Park and Badger Mountain

Larry Umthun located 2 Nashville Warblers in W. E. Johnson Park on the 20th. Lisa Hill spotted a Yellow-breasted Chat there on the 27th. (Previous early record is May 6). She also saw the first-of-the-year male Rufous Hummingbird in her yard on the same day.

Finley Area

Dennis Rockwell saw 2 Caspian Terns over the lagoon at Two Rivers County Park at daybreak on the 3rd. On the 5th he reported that the Osprey pair is back on their nest on the power line tower at the far northwest corner of the park. In Kris Keating's yard in the Finley area she had her first sighting of an Orange-crowned Warbler on the 20th. On the 25th her birds included Killdeer and a half-dozen Western Kingbirds.

Pasco and Franklin County

Kevin Black reported on Franklin County birds after an outing on the 19th. His highlights in the Mesa area: Western Kingbird, Cliff Swallows, and American Pipit (flyover). In the Merion Road area: 2 Swainson's Hawks, a singing Nashville Warbler, and 50 or more Savannah Sparrows; around Scooteny area: 12 Bonaparte's Gulls, Red-necked Grebe, Clark's Grebe, 25 Dunlin, 2 Caspian Terns, Horned Grebe, 25 Ruddy Ducks, 60 Northern Shovelers, and a Redhead. In the nearby reed-lake area: Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Snipe, Virginia Rail, Lincoln's Sparrow and Yellow-headed Blackbird. On the 20th he reported American Avocet in the ponds on Taylor Flats Road just north of Pasco. Charlotte Reep noticed a large flock of Cedar Waxwings in her neighbor's west Pasco yard.

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.

From the American Bird Conservancy



AP: Wind Turbines Being Installed in Sensitive Bird Habitat on Massive Scale

New research supported by American Bird Conservancy (ABC) shows that more than 30,000 wind turbines have been installed in areas critical to the survival of federally-protected birds in the United States and that more than 50,000 additional turbines are planned for construction in similar areas. More than 27,000 of these turbines exist in or are planned for federally identified or designated areas, including 24,000 turbines in the migration corridor of the Whooping Crane, one of the nation's rarest and most spectacular birds, and, almost 3,000 turbines in breeding strongholds for Greater Sage-Grouse, a rapidly declining species recently considered for Endangered Species Act protection.

“Attempts to manage the wind industry with voluntary as opposed to mandatory permitting guidelines are clearly not working,” said Dr. Michael Hutchins, Director of ABC’s Bird Smart Wind Energy Campaign. “Wind developers are siting turbines in areas of vital importance to birds and other wildlife, and this new data shows that the current voluntary system needs to be replaced with a mandatory permitting system.”

The Associated Press (AP) independently calculated data on which the ABC based its report and reached a similar conclusion that large numbers of turbines are being built in important bird habitats. The AP

report is available at http://www.bostonherald.com/business/business_markets/2015/05/advocacy_group_wind_turbine_rules_needed_to_protect_birds.

The analysis was based on an interactive Wind Development Bird Risk Map produced by ABC that identifies specific areas across the United States where birds are likely to be particularly vulnerable to impacts from wind energy development. These include major migratory routes, breeding areas, and other sensitive bird habitats. Key areas on the map are colored red or orange to indicate the level of potential risk to birds, with red areas regarded to be of “Critical Importance”—the highest level of risk. According to ABC, these red areas have high potential for negative impacts on federally protected birds, but comprise less than nine percent of the total U.S. land area.

Locations of wind turbines analyzed in the study were derived from data supplied publicly by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for proposed turbines, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for existing turbines. These data sets provide specific locations for individual wind turbines in GIS format.

In February 2015, ABC updated and re-filed an earlier petition with the federal government requesting that it regulate the wind industry with regard to bird impacts. It now appears that they are beginning to see the shortcomings in the current federal guidelines for the wind industry. In December 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) solicited comments on the government’s efforts to manage the wind industry and stated: “We are currently in the process of evaluating the efficacy and use of the Guidelines, and the Service is considering regulatory options.” Additionally, FWS commented that the current guidelines, in some cases, have not been “...successful in preventing wind energy facilities from being constructed in areas of high risk to wildlife.”

Continued on next page

Conservation Report for April 2015

By Marcie Daines

Have you heard... a newly discovered species is now our oldest-known example of Ornithuromorpha, the evolutionary branch that hosts all living birds. This fossil has more in common with a modern bird than any found from such an early stage in their evolution. The new old bird is named *Archaeorinthura meemannae* and lived about 130.7 million years ago during the Early Cretaceous in what is now the Sichakou basin of northeastern China. The previous eldest member of modern bird lineage was just 125 million years old.

“The new bird is quite derived and has many advanced features of modern birds, and thus is far away from the transitional history of dinosaurs-birds,” said the lead author Min Wang of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. “The most primitive bird of Ornithuromorpha is most likely from older deposits than what we discovered now.” With a common Ornithurae ancestor a few million years back, there would be time for multiple branches of lineage to emerge, with some adapting modern qualities more quickly than others.

Two specimens were found and even though imagination was used in the reconstruction of the bird, Wang and his colleagues are sure it was an adept flyer. Intact plumage, skeletal features and the anatomy of its legs and feet indicate it was a shorebird that waded into the water to feed. Hope is that an older-yet ancestor in common is waiting to be discovered. Stay tuned for future revelations!

Initial source of information taken from the Tri-City Herald, May 10, 2015. NatureCommunications published the paper by Min Wang and his colleagues the week before this article, May 5, 2015.

Continued from previous page

Because of the threat of rising bird mortality and the explosive growth of the wind industry, ABC and a coalition of more than 70 conservation organizations earlier requested that the U.S. Department of the Interior develop a National Programmatic Wind Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify appropriate areas for wind energy development, as well as areas where development should be avoided completely to conserve federally protected birds and especially sensitive habitats. However, in a letter dated July 31, 2014, Interior responded that they “currently do not have the resources to undertake the nationwide process.” Such resources, however, could be made available under a paid permitting system already proposed by ABC.

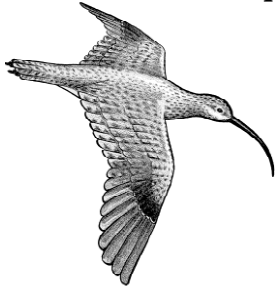
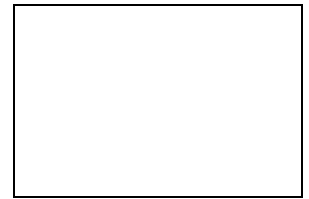


This Google Earth image shows the intersection of existing and planned wind turbines with areas of importance to birds. Areas of white represent planned turbines, while colored areas are those with elevated bird risk. See the [Wind Development Bird Risk Map](http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/release/s/120503.html) (<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/release/s/120503.html>) for an interactive version

By 2030, it is estimated that more than 1.4 million birds could be killed annually by wind turbines, not including losses at associated transmission lines and towers. There is currently a once-only opportunity to minimize this mortality through mandatory permitting, leading to proper siting and mitigation for bird fatalities before tens of thousands more turbines are built. Read more about the study at http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions/wind_siting.html.

The Curlew

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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. _____

- LCBAS has an e-alert list (for last minute activity changes, important issues, volunteer opportunities). If you want to opt out, check here. If you opt out, you will not receive e-alert emails (Your e-mail address will not be shared in any case).

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*

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