

The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia
Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see
www.lcbas.org

November 16: Native Plant Planting Party at LG Park. See page 4

November 19: LCBAS Chapter Meeting at 7:00 PM

December 3: LCBAS Board Meeting

December 7: LCBAS First Saturday / Bateman Island Walk. See page 2

December 7: Native Plant Planting Party at LG Park. See page 4

December 28: Christmas Bird Count See page 3

LCBAS events are always open to the public. Please join us!

LCBAS Seeks Member Input and Assistance

Get involved in the good work we do and help us continue as a vibrant and viable Audubon chapter!

Please consider volunteering to bring your great ideas and help us continue into the future. We still need Membership and Publicity Chairs, and welcome assistance with other areas including Education, Birding Events, and Curlew ideas / articles.

We provide guidance, training, and moral support!

A Brief Glance at Marvelous Midway Atoll

LCBAS Chapter Meeting:
Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 7:00 PM
First Lutheran Church, 418 N. Yelm, Kennewick, WA

With Lindsey Hayes, USFWS Biologist, retired



Photo by Jon Brack, 2023

Midway Atoll is the second to the last island in the Hawaiian Archipelago. It has never been part of the state of Hawaii. For a long time controlled by the US Navy, the atoll is currently managed by USFWS. At various times over many years and for various reasons Lindsey was lucky enough to spend some time on Midway Atoll. In his presentation you will get a look at the interesting history and wildlife of the atoll, both pre- and post-war. You will also learn about the various ventures and projects on the island since it became part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. There are volunteer opportunities on Midway Atoll NWR but they are very limited and have various time and financial commitments.

Lindsey Hayes worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for 21 years. He started out in Alaska as a seabird biologist spending four years there; his first field season was in the remote Semidi Islands south of the Alaska Peninsula and the next three were in Prince William Sound (1993 - 1996). Next he transferred to Johnston Atoll National Wildlife Refuge serving as wildlife biologist and then refuge manager (1997- 2003). Any of you who may have met Lindsey have no doubt heard him enthusiastically (and often) proclaim "Best job I ever had!" when referring to his time on Johnston Atoll. He finished the remainder of his career with USFWS at the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (2004 - 2014).

First Saturday / Bateman Island Bird Walk November 2, 2024

By Lisa Hill

The island was so quiet at the beginning of the walk that we thought it was going to be slim pickings and meager fare throughout, but by the time we returned to the causeway we had 57 species with a couple of “rarities” on the list, too! If we had managed to see or hear about ten more of the typical winter birds like Spotted Towhee and Hermit Thrush, we would have had a spectacular day. Knowing they were there somewhere was heartening. Several new folks were on the walk which is always delightful.

Typical waterfowl were on the Yakima delta, NORTHERN SHOVELER, NORTHERN PINTAIL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, COMMON MERGANSER and BUFFLEHEAD. On the north end of the island in the Columbia River was a scoter which was later identified by photo to be a SURF SCOTER. Hanging out with



Slaty-backed Gull and foot detail photos
Photos by Elke Davis

the scoter was a COMMON LOON, an EARED GREBE and a couple of RUDDY DUCKS. There were no owls visible in the locust grove, but other raptors on the list included AMERICAN KESTREL, COOPER’S HAWK and RED-TAILED HAWK. Although it behaves a bit like a raptor with the way it hunts prey, the gorgeous adult NORTHERN SHRIKE we saw is actually a songbird. A few other wintering songbirds included RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, VARIED THRUSH, DARK-EYED JUNCO and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW.

On the roof of the marina was the infamous, rare SLATY-BACKED GULL, returning to the region for the 10th winter in a row! First seen on November 15, 2015, the bird has been sighted many times each winter since then. Where it spends the summer is unknown, but there is no doubt that this is the same individual taking up residence here in the winter.



It has remarkably odd feet with almost no webbing between the toes as all gulls do. Its feet resemble those of an American Coot. Since both feet are equally affected, it could be a genetic anomaly or there was a disruption in the egg when the feet were developing. Injury could be ruled out since it would likely appear on only one foot and be uneven.

The next Bateman Island bird walk will be Saturday, December 7th, beginning promptly at 8:00 AM.

Please come a few minutes early to sign in. The main parking lot for Wye Park was closed when we arrived for the November walk--so give yourself a couple of extra minutes to arrive in case you need to park further away.

Please join us! Both the public and LCBAS members are always welcome. Binoculars are available, first come, first served. No registration is required.

Christmas Bird Count – December 28, 2024

The annual Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 28, 2024. The goal is to establish bird population trends within the attached count circle. Count teams are being formed and anyone can help. So, join in on the fun and contribute to science. If you are within the count circle, you can simply count birds coming to your feeders, walk around your block, or survey an entire area. Coordinate with the below team leaders.

Our count circle has abundant water where a variety of water birds and shorebirds can be found. We also have many open park areas that support a good population of upland birds. The count has been conducted in the Tri-Cities count circle since the 1960s and is a significant contributor to the local, regional, and national bird population database.

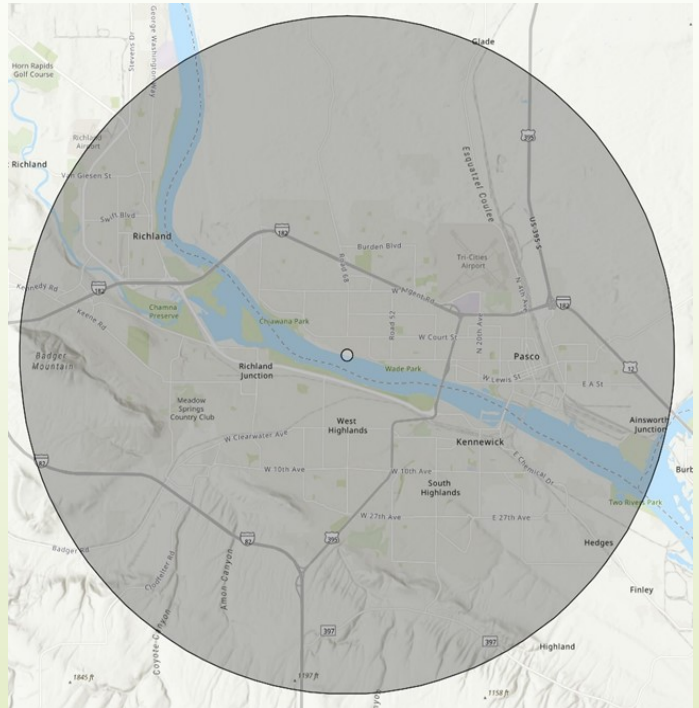
The count circle is divided into three sections, with three leads:

- Richland:** Lisa Hill (509-869-6715),
- Kennewick:** Rich Barchet (509-430-0053)
- Pasco:** Dana Ward (509-430-3363)

Bill LaFramboise (509-531-3768) is the overall coordinator and can be reached by phone or email. Please coordinate your efforts with one of the team leads to prevent overlap within the area, or any one of us if you have questions about participating. Please contact any lead with questions.

Thank you for considering participating.
 Bill LaFramboise, Christmas Bird Count Coordinator

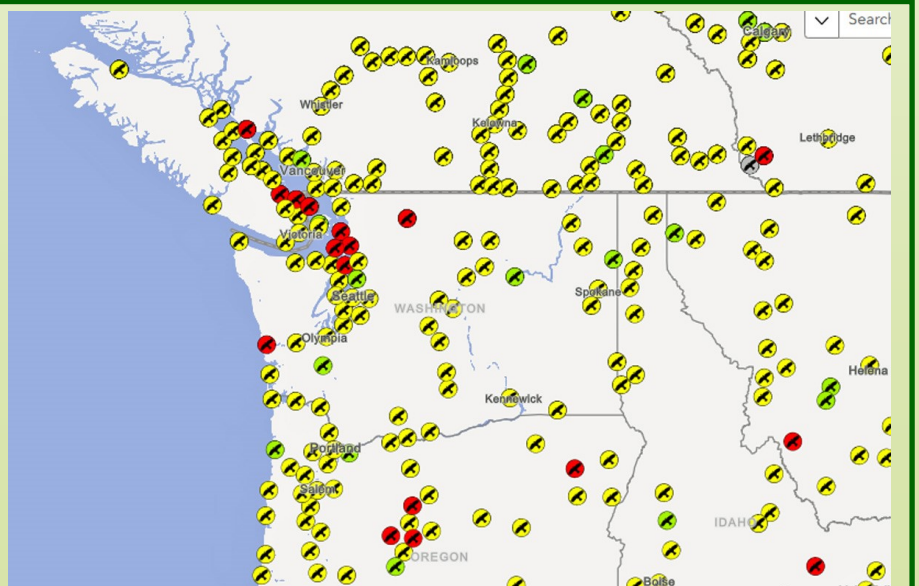
All are welcome to participate!
 As usual, we plan to have a meeting and potluck after the CBC. Details will be provided in the December Curlew.



The Tri-Cities Count Circle #58223

If you are out of town during the LCBAS CBC, you may be able to participate in a count in the area you're visiting. The count occurs between December 14th and January 5th each season. Some of us participate in more than one each year--fun to join new birders and see new locations!

If you'd like more information, National Audubon has everything you need to join a count here:
www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count



An example of how many count circles there are in our part of the PacNW.

Native Plant Planting Party at Leslie Groves

We will be planting native plants at Leslie Groves North (LGN) as part of our ongoing restoration project. Planting dates are:

- ◆ Saturday, Nov. 16 and from 1 PM until about 3 or 4 PM
- ◆ Saturday, Dec. 7 from 1 PM until about 3 or 4 PM.

The ~300 plants were grown by Lindsay Gailey's 4th grade class at Wiley Elementary School (West Richland) from seeds they harvested at LGN last winter.

Meeting place: the east end of Snyder St., at the bike path (in Richland).

Please bring:

- ◆ a digging tool (small trowel works best since the plants are in 5" deep containers);
- ◆ a weeding tool (like a dandelion puller, for clearing a small area for each plant).

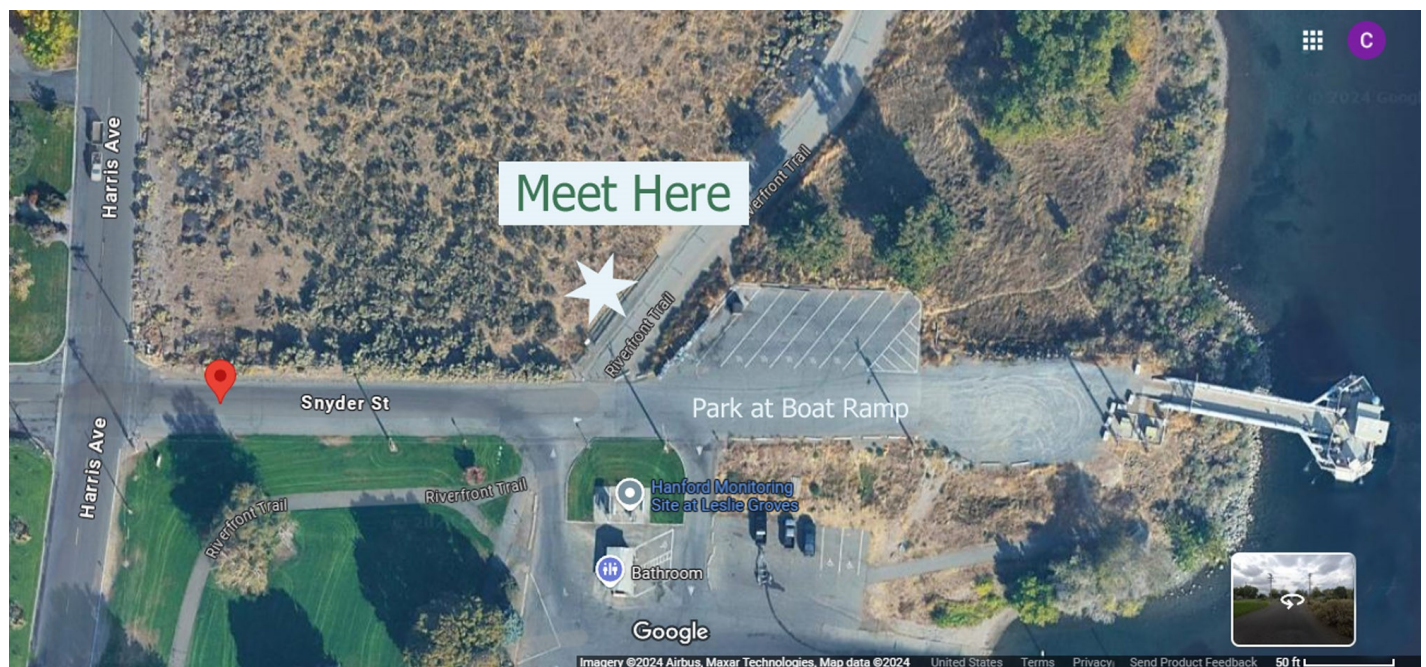
Also recommended are:

- ◆ garden gloves (that can handle getting wet and muddy);
- ◆ drinking water;
- ◆ long pants;
- ◆ closed-toe shoes (boots, sneakers);
- ◆ knee pads can also be useful.

We will have a few extra tools available and will also supply the water needed for planting.

Contact info: Debbie Berkowitz, secretary@lcbas.org.

RSVP to Debbie is requested (but not required) for either or both work parties in case of changes in plans. We'll be planting rain or shine, as long as it's not pouring too hard and the winds aren't blowing a gale.



Conservation: A Letter from the National Audubon Society

We recognize that the outcome of this election brings a new set of challenges and it's more important than ever that we stay united in our commitment to protect birds and the natural habitats they depend on.

A new administration under President Trump may bring renewed attempts to roll back the environmental protections we have fought so hard to secure. We understand that this news may feel daunting, but it also strengthens our resolve to fight for what we know is right: the preservation of our natural world for birds—and for all of us.

We have faced challenging times before, and each time, with your support, we have risen to the occasion. We will not let potential setbacks derail the progress we've made. Instead, we will double down on our efforts, working tirelessly to protect birds, their habitats, and the environmental laws that safeguard them.

Here's How We'll Continue the Fight:

- **Vigilance Against Rollbacks:** We will closely monitor and respond to any attempts to weaken critical environmental regulations. Our policy experts are prepared to advocate fiercely in Washington, D.C., and across the nation to ensure that hard-won protections for birds and their habitats remain intact.
- **Strengthening Local and State Initiatives:** While federal policy may shift, our commitment to local and state conservation efforts remains steadfast. We will work with communities to build resilience, ensuring that conservation continues regardless of changes at the federal level.
- **Rallying for Resilience:** We know that many of you share our concerns about the future, and we see this as an opportunity to come together like never before. In the coming months, you'll hear about ways you can take immediate action to support our work. Your voice, your involvement, and your donations will be more critical than ever.

We understand the urgency of this moment, **and we're prepared to act.**

(<https://www.audubon.org/about/welcome-flight-plan>)

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the birds we love and the places they need to survive.

In gratitude,

Dr. Elizabeth Gray
CEO, National Audubon Society

National Audubon Society Subscribers:

We would like to encourage National Audubon members to consider joining LCBAS and get involved in all we have to offer in your local area—ten months per year of meetings, The Curlew newsletters, and bird walks and field trips! Joining LCBAS is fast, easy, and secure at our website:

www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/join-renew-donate

Please join us!

Community Science Opportunities

By Charlene Burge

Audubon's long-running (since 1900!) Christmas Bird Count, or CBC, is a community science project that members of LCBAS have participated in for many years. LCBAS members have also been involved with Climate Watch, The Great Backyard Bird Count, eBird, Sagebrush Songbird Survey with Washington Audubon, Winter Raptor Surveys through East Cascades Audubon Society, and various WDFW projects.

LCBAS's annual Christmas Bird Count is fast approaching on December 28 (see page 3 for information on how to participate). If you won't be in the area, but would still enjoy participating, you may be able to join an Audubon CBC elsewhere (see page 3).

I was privileged when I first arrived in the area to join some of these community science projects, as well as the Western *Asio flammeus* (Short-eared Owl) Landscape Study (WAfLS) through the Intermountain Bird Observatory, and numerous WDFW projects.

As I started the first round of Winter Raptor Surveys this week, I thought about how much fun these projects are, and the important data being added to our understanding of birds and how they are surviving in a changing world.



From these projects I have priceless memories: the first time I observed a male Short-eared Owl courtship display, as it plummeted towards the earth clapping it's wings, a burrow full of young Burrowing Owls vigorously imitating the sound of rattlesnakes, a quintet of immature Red-tailed Hawks sparring in the sky, a Great Horned Owl chased by two Rough-legged Hawks through a narrow desert canyon, etc. So many fun observations and memories!

If you would like to participate in a Winter Raptor Survey, routes are still available this year, with some very important routes yet unclaimed in our area. Contact Jeff Fleischer: raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com



A few species observed during previous Winter Raptor Surveys, from top, counter-clockwise: Rough-legged Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Red-tailed Hawk
Photos by Charlene Burge

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ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send address changes (postal address or email address) to www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact so that your subscription is not interrupted. You can also mail address changes to LCBAS, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA 99352.

NEW NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERS: We hope you will support Lower Columbia Basin Audubon by joining the local chapter, which is locally funded. We have been sending you complimentary issues of The Curlew newsletter to keep you up to date on local happenings. After three issues, the complimentary emails end. To continue to receive The Curlew newsletter without interruption, please become a paid subscriber. Doing so is fast, easy, and secure at our website <https://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/join-renew-donate>

The **LCBAS Privacy Policy** is available at our website. Find out more at www.lcbas.org or

LCBAS OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>
President	Dana Ward	president@lcbas.org
Vice President	Chuck Hedel	—
Treasurer	Dan Hansen	treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com
Secretary	Debbie Berkowitz	secretary.lcbas@gmail.com
Birding Events	Jason Fidorra	—
Communications Chair	Charlene Burge	—
Conservation Co-Chair	Dana Ward and Rick Leaumont	conservation@lcbas.org
Education Chair	Kelly Doyle	—
Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com
Fundraising Chair	Marcie Daines	
Membership Chair	OPEN	To contact anyone without a dedicated email address, please use the contact form on our website:
Program Chair	Lori Nelson	
Director at Large	Robin Priddy	https://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact
OTHER CONTACTS:		
Curlew Editor	Charlene Burge	
Membership Database	Rich Barchet	
LCBAS Website	Lori Nelson and Lisa Hill	
Publicity Chair	OPEN	

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society**PO Box 1900****Richland, WA 99352****Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Membership Form**

LCBAS membership benefits include a year's subscription (10 issues) to The Curlew and priority registration for space-limited field trips. LCBAS is a 501c(3) organization and dues are tax deductible.

_____ Regular membership (Individual or family at one address) (\$20)

_____ Full-time student membership (\$10)

_____ I would like to make an additional donation of _____.

Total: _____ (Make check payable to **LCBAS**)

Mail your form and dues to: Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA. 99352

I want to save resources and postage and receive my newsletter by email

I do not want to receive e-alerts for last minute activity changes, important issues, and volunteer opportunities (check for opt-out).

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Membership in LCBAS is separate from membership in the National Audubon Society.
To join the National Audubon Society, please go to www.audubon.org