

The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia
Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see
www.lcbas.org

March 22: March LCBAS membership meeting at 7:00 PM

April 4: LCBAS Board Meeting

April 26: April LCBAS membership meeting with Lisa Hill.

Other Events:

March 25-27: Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

March 29: Ebird training with Jason Fidorra and Scott Downes. Join the Zoom Meeting on March 29 @ 6:30 PM See the February Curlew for more information.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87365770838?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87365770838?pwd=MzRDSk50WHZIRXZuVct2dEdiNjF1dz09)

[pwd=MzRDSk50WHZIRXZuVct2dEdiNjF1dz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87365770838?pwd=MzRDSk50WHZIRXZuVct2dEdiNjF1dz09)

April 9: Columbia Basin Native Plant Society outdoor meeting at the Master Gardeners Heritage Gardens on Union in Kennewick. For more information:

<https://www.cbwnps.org/newsletter>

LCBAS is Recruiting a New Webmaster!

If you are creative and interested, please contact Ed Rykiel or Sheri Whitfield for more information.

Sheri: president@lcbas.org

Ed: webmaster@lcbas.org

Journey Into Wildlife Photography and Conservation

Membership Meeting: Tues, March 22, 2022 at 7:00 PM via Zoom

Join 19-year-old photographer Izzy Edward's owl adventures as she describes her journey into nature photography and wildlife conservation.

Isabelle Edwards (Izzy) is a 19-year-old photographer with a passion for owls and wildlife. She has devoted the past four



years to locating, observing, and documenting America's 19 unique owl species. During this time she has contributed to conservation projects and shares and teaches about the lives of the owls she photographs. Izzy is an ardent networker and has met a dozen or more biologists and wildlife technicians who have introduced

her to their world of wildlife and environmental conservation. These experiences have been eye opening for Izzy and she plans to follow the path of conservation as a career.

Join Zoom Meeting (or go to www.lcbas.org for a clickable link).

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89637637188?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89637637188?pwd=MkFPblpnRURLZ1FMRkt1ZEFtUfo3dz09)

[pwd=MkFPblpnRURLZ1FMRkt1ZEFtUfo3dz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89637637188?pwd=MkFPblpnRURLZ1FMRkt1ZEFtUfo3dz09)

Program starts at 7:00 PM

Dial in for sound only:

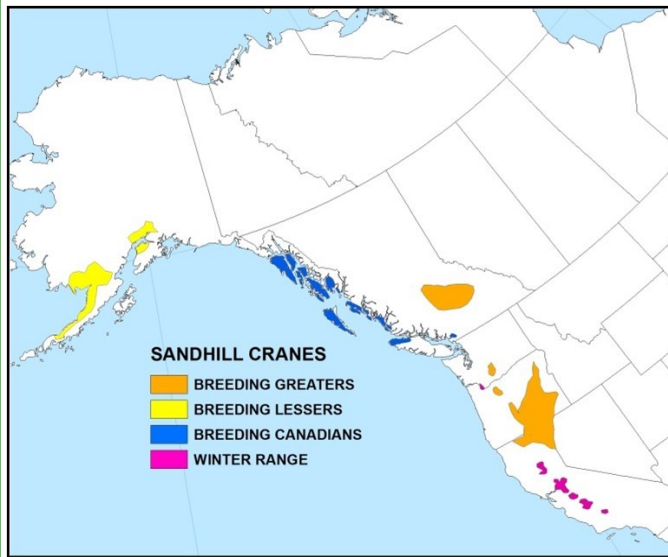
Meeting ID: 896 3763 7188
Passcode: 104913

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Take Yourself on a Field Trip—Cranes and Snow Geese

By Jason Fidorra, Birding Events

We are in the best place in Washington to enjoy the natural phenomenon of migratory staging. Two species that do this spectacularly are Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese. We can view thousands of sounding Sandhill Cranes and tens of thousands of calling Snow Geese as birds stage in our area in March on their northward migration!



Sandhill Cranes in Washington belong to three sub-species that breed in different areas. They all winter in the Central Valley of California, and the ones that pass through the Columbia Basin are mostly the Lesser population which breed in SW Alaska (see map). There are a few Greater Sandhills Cranes that breed in interior California, Oregon, and British Columbia, and they also comprise the endangered Washington breeding population with less than 100 birds nesting around Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. A third, “Canadian” population breeds in coastal BC and Alaska, and some winter near Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Western Washington. In 2020 a pair bred and produced a colt (baby cranes are called colts); the first successful breeding in Western WA in over 100 years! It’s speculated that reduced human disturbance from Covid-19 stay-home orders may have assisted in this event.



Sandhill Cranes dance—bowing, wing flapping, jumping, and tossing vegetation to attract a mate. The loudest and most noticeable call they make is during pair bonding, and it’s believed that “unison calling” is performed when the cranes are bonding. They pair-bond during spring migration, and stay with their partner for life.

Photo by Charlene Burge

The Lesser subspecies migrate through WA from February-April. Lesser Sandhill Cranes primarily follow an inland route, stopping in large numbers at staging areas in the Columbia Basin. Lesser Sandhill Cranes tagged with GPS transmitters at breeding areas of Bristol Bay and Upper Cook Inlet, Alaska, spent an average of 25 days in Washington during spring, and six days during fall, more time (up to six weeks), than at any other locations along the 2,500 mile migration corridor. Stops by cranes during spring in British Columbia and Alaska were infrequent, suggesting that foraging opportunities are limited further north (Petrula and Rothe 2005). Sandhill Cranes pair for life and can live over 40 years.

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**The Othello Sandhill Crane Festival is back in person:
March 25, 26, 27th, 2022 in Othello, WA.**

<https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/festival-updates>

Nature Guys Podcast Review

By Robin Priddy, Director at Large

In the last year or so I've started listening to podcasts and have made some fun discoveries. I'm hoping to find time each month to share something in the Curlew. Podcasts are mostly for listening, though many (including this one) have websites that contain a lot more information and links.

This month I found "Nature Guys". It's not always about birds, but is always about nature and tends to focus on what is local; more or less in the neighborhood.

Here's the link to the entire show: <https://natureguys.org/> A podcast earlier this year focused on Kingfishers. It was fascinating! Here's the link: <https://natureguys.org/kingfishers/>

Interesting facts about the Belted Kingfisher:

- Kingfishers are fun to watch with their aerobatic antics as they hover over the water, looking for fish, then dive headfirst to snatch their prey with a dagger-like bill. They are often seen perched above water, watching their territory or looking for food.
- They can hold their head steady while making all the adjustments to hover while looking for fish. In order to do this they have a very developed ability to sense air movement and their body position.
- Once the Kingfisher has captured a fish, it flies back to a perch. It will often whack the fish against a branch to stun it a bit for easier swallowing. Once stunned, the fish is flipped up in the air and swallowed whole.
- They swallow food whole, and will cough up indigestible material as pellets, like an owl.
- They have been seen to swallow a big fish part way, letting the head digest until they can fit the rest of it down.
- Kingfishers are very territorial and will voice their displeasure at the slightest disturbance. Often their loud rattle call alerts you to their presence before you've seen them!
- Kingfishers are sexually dimorphic and, unusually, the female displays brighter colors than the male with bright rufous sides and rufous band across the lower breast.
- Males will often stay on their territory all winter while females migrate. It is thought that the brighter marking of the female helps the males distinguish them from other males challenging their territory.
- They build nests in the banks of waterways by building a cavity. They fly into the bank, ramming it with their beak, in order to start the cavity.
- Their diet consists of shallow water fish, mollusks, crustaceans, insects, amphibians, reptiles, young birds, small mammals – they have been seen eating bats! For a sweet alternative, the Kingfisher will occasionally eats berries!
- The Belted Kingfisher inhabits areas close to rivers, lakes and estuaries. It breeds from Alaska eastward across southern Canada and south throughout most of the US. It winters on the Pacific coast down from southern Alaska, from the Great Lakes southward through the southern state, and is found along the Atlantic coast south of New England. Some northern populations winter as far as Central America, the West Indies and northern South America.
- Though they are fairly common, their numbers are in decline. A factor in this decline is thought to be the loss of nesting sites – their need for soft banks to excavate their nesting burrows is specific. These banks are being lost to development, water course management, and dams.



Belted Kingfishers
Watercolor by Kathy Criddle

Leslie Groves North Native Plant Habitat Restoration Project Work Parties

By Debbie Berkowitz, Secretary

The Leslie Groves North (LGN) native plant/habitat restoration project in the area along the Columbia River north of Snyder Street continues to make progress. With the help of the Benton Conservation District, WA Dept of Fish & Wildlife, and the Columbia Basin Chapter of the WA Native Plant Society, we have started a long-term plan to accelerate this restoration project. Meanwhile, the weeds continue to grow (along with the native plants), so we're planning several weeding work parties at LGN this March/April (more to come in May/June):



Saturday, March 26, from 10:00 to 11:30 AM.

Sunday, April 3 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM.

Saturday, April 9 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM.

Wednesday, April 13 from 9:30 to 11:00 AM.

Saturday, April 16 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM.

Sunday, April 24 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM.

Saturday, April 30 from 10:00 to 11:30 AM.

If you can come to one or more work parties, please bring gloves, a hand weeding tool, and a bucket or pail. Long pants, long sleeves, sunscreen, a hat, and water are recommended. We will meet at Snyder St. and the bike path along the Columbia River.

Please let Debbie Berkowitz know if you plan to come to any of the work parties (secretary@lcbas.org or 509-308-0219) – mainly so she can let you know in case there's a change in plans.

We will be having smaller weeding work parties throughout March/April/May/June, so if one of the listed times doesn't work and you're interested in helping at another time, please let Debbie know.

If you would like to learn more about Leslie Groves North, please see <https://lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/lgn.html>

LCBAS Conservation Action on Leslie Groves Vegetation Removal

Below is the presentation made to the Richland Parks and Recreation Commission on February 24th concerning removal of trees, shrubs, and general vegetation in a section of Leslie Grove Park. Three minutes were allowed for each presenter.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk. And thank you for your service to the City of Richland.

I (Dana Ward) am the Co-Conservation Chair for Audubon.

The local Audubon Society has been made aware by our members of the recent removal of vegetation, and tree trimming activities in Leslie Groves Park. The Audubon Society is concerned about the welfare of native birds and the habitat that they depend on for food, nesting, and protection. The destruction of habitat is of vital concern, since in the last 50 years over three billion birds have been lost in the United States due to habitat destruction and pollution. This loss is continuing to this day. No area is too small to provide a benefit to our birds.

We understand that there may be a need for some vegetation control in Leslie Groves Park, as has been done in a more limited way in the past. But using large scale equipment to wreak wholesale destruction of the vegetation is not the environmentally sound way to tackle the action. The birds have used this area for many years as a seed source, nesting area and for shelter from natural and domestic predators such as feral cats and unleashed dogs. Opening up the area will eliminate plant diversity to create a monoculture of grass or grass like species which will attract little more than Canada Geese with the droppings they leave behind.

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An Introduction to Nests and Nesting Birds

By Charlene Burge, Communications / Curlew

Have you ever glanced into a leafless tree or shrub and noticed a bird nest, and wondered who raised babies there?

Breeding season for some of our largest, and smallest, birds starts in winter and early spring. Deciduous trees are still missing their leaves, so it's a great time to keep your eyes open for bird nests. It's also a great time to pay attention to where nests are, so that you can make certain you don't disturb nesting birds while working in your yard as the trees and shrubs leaf out.

Be careful to avoid disturbing nesting birds; some species are very sensitive and quick to abandon a location they deem risky due to our presence and activities. Those can include approaching too close or spending too much time near a nest, using bird calls, or pishing.

Anna's Hummingbirds, now a year-round resident, is already building a nest or brooding eggs west of the Cascades. They've already been practicing their best territorial moves through the winter to ensure they have the resources necessary for a successful nesting season. A tiny bird requires only a tiny nest—hummingbird nests are about the diameter of a silver dollar and the eggs the size of a TicTac!

Many of our resident raptors are also setting up territories or actively nesting. Have you seen the giant stick nests of raptors in the tops of trees, or on platforms in the area? One of those raptors, the Bald Eagle, uses the same stick nest year after year, and they get huge — up to 20' deep!

Some birds are still migrating back to the Lower Columbia Basin and may not start nesting until early summer. For now their nests of years past still decorate our trees. While some species use a nest only once, some return to their territory, and sometimes the same nest, year after year.

Bird nests come in all shapes and sizes. People often think of the classic "nest", the one which is cute and cup shaped, constructed of twigs, leaves, and feathers. Birds create an amazing array of constructs, using all types of habitats and materials. They can be nothing that we discern at all, on a roof, in a tree, or in rocks. It can be a few twigs on a ledge, or something reminiscent of a lost sock dangling from twigs. Some are within cavities, either found or of their own making. Some of those cavity nesters bring virtually nothing to create a nest inside, yet others build elaborate ones. Some nests are on the ground, or even under it in burrows. Others are a covered nest cavity created with mud, floating islands of plant material, or largely constructed of spider webs!

Female robins, hummingbirds, and orioles (among other species) construct their nest alone, with no assistance from the male. For other species, like some wrens, multiple nests are built by the male, and the female chooses which nest she prefers. For yet other species, like Red-tailed Hawks, Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, and many woodpeckers, it's a cooperative effort. Raising young can also be cooperative, or a single parent effort.

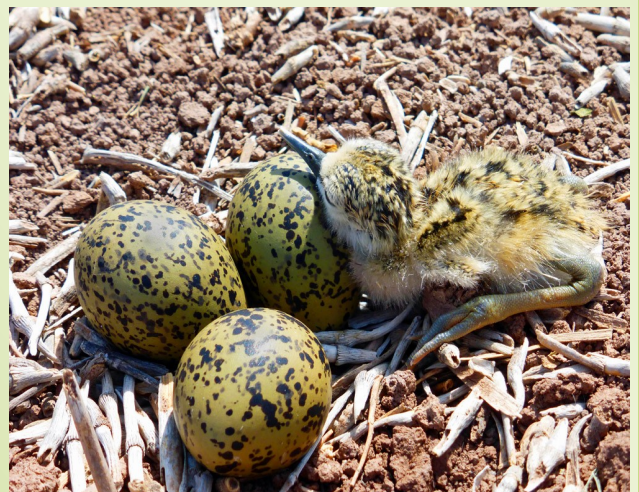
Look up your favorite birds to find out more about who does the work, what their nest looks like, and where and when they nest!



Anna's Hummingbird nest
Photo by Tim Batog



Above: Many grebes nest on floating vegetation
Below: Black-necked Stilt nest
Photos by Charlene Burge



Continued: Take Yourself on a Field Trip—Cranes and Snow Geese

The nearest place to see Sandhill Cranes is Barker Ranch near West Richland, along Snively Road. Please do not block the road, cross/climb fences, or trespass! Park wisely and watch for passing vehicles. Barker Ranch and locals have been supportive of public viewing so please protect this valuable opportunity.

The Windmill Ranch Wildlife Area Unit, farmland around Basin City, and Scootenev Reservoir are also good for viewing cranes. Sitting, listening, and watching the cranes fly into the north roost at Scootenev Reservoir at sunset is a special experience!



A massive flock of Snow Geese:

eCurlew subscribers — see if you can find the goose with a red neck collar!

Photo by Charlene Burge

Overwintering Snow Goose populations in our area have rapidly increased. Washington and Oregon winter roost counts have doubled almost every year in the past five winters, to over 180,000 geese! This is due to more geese staying here instead of continuing south to their usual California winter sites, as well as increases on the breeding grounds on Wrangel Island, Russia, the last breeding site in Eurasia for the species.

If you are lucky you may find one with a red neck collar. If you do, report the code on the neck band to find that bird's location history!

www.reportband.gov

Consider yourself lucky if you can identify a Ross's Goose in the flock!

The peak number of birds in our area still occurs in March, as wintering birds further south stage here before completing their flight north. Large roosting flocks can be found on open bodies of water with good viewing at Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, or along the sloughs at McNary National Wildlife Refuge (try driving Humorist Road if you don't see them near headquarters). Good luck!

BirdNote Shorts:

Leaping with Sandhill Cranes on
<https://www.birdnote.org/listen/shows/leaping-sandhill-cranes>
Geese Aloft: Flock Voices of March:
<https://www.birdnote.org/listen/shows/geese-aloft-flock-voices-march>

Continued: LCBAS Conservation Action on Leslie Groves Vegetation Removal

Bird banding studies over the years have demonstrated that the thin ribbon of river-side vegetation is a unique natural resource in the city. The riparian vegetation extends to both sides of the pedestrian path.

A number of bird species have been observed that occur nowhere else in Richland. That is especially true during spring and autumn migration because that relatively narrow ecosystem along the river is a natural migratory pathway. The destruction of riparian vegetation greatly decreases the numbers of sparrows, warblers, pheasants, and wrens, to name just a few.

There is a common misperception that birds and other wildlife can simply move elsewhere. They can't when other areas are bird populated. When you destroy their habitat, you effectively end the lives of the resident wildlife.

- Before destruction of habitat, consult with organizations or individuals that can give good advice as to what vegetation should be saved and what can be sacrificed.
- Audubon is available to help the city.

National Audubon Society Subscribers:

New members of the National Audubon Society receive a complimentary three-month subscription to the Curlew, the newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (LCBAS). After the first three months, the complimentary issues end. 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, Curlew newsletters, and (hopefully returning soon) bird walks and field trips! Joining LCBAS is fast, easy, and secure at our website: <http://lcbas.org/JoinLCBAS.html>

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Consider receiving the eCurlew instead of a paper copy! See all the photos in color, receive your Curlew sooner, and save paper and other resources. To switch to the eCurlew, contact subscriptions@lcbas.org and include your name and email address.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send address changes (postal address or email address) to Rich Barchet at subscriptions@lcbas.org so that your subscription is not interrupted. You can mail address changes to LCBAS, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA 99354.

NEW NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERS: 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 mailings 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 <http://lcbas.org/JoinLCBAS.html>

The **LCBAS Privacy Policy** is available at our website.

Find out more at www.lcbas.org or www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org

LCBAS OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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President	Sheri Whitfield	president@lcbas.org
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Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	treasurer@lcbas.org
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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

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Richland, WA 99354

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 (\$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