Umatilla Tribal History and Culture in the TriCities Area

Wenix Red Elk
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

April 24, 2018 at 7:00 PM
First Lutheran Church
US 395 and Yelm, Kennewick

Join us for a presentation by Wenix Red Elk, the Public Outreach and Education Specialist for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Department of Natural Resources. She has a Master's Degree in Organizational Management and a background in Museology/Museum Studies and Environmental Science in Plant Restoration and Native American Studies.

Wenix will introduce us to tribal history and culture in the TriCities area, including past, present, and future tribal uses of Columbia Point and the Hanford Site. As a First Foods specialist, she will discuss how tribal members have used natural resources in this area, especially the shrub steppe plants and animals.
Upcoming LCBAS Field Trips

April First Saturday Field Trip (Bateman Island)
On April 7th, we will bird on Bateman Island by special permission from the Army Corps of Engineers. Meet at Wye Park at ~7:45 AM; we will be escorted on and off the island by USACE Biologist (and LCBAS President) Jim Castle. Latecomers cannot be accommodated.

Shrub-Steppe Birds Trip - April 14
Join us on April 14 for a trip to the Thornton Unit of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area to see shrub-steppe birds. New volunteers for the Sagebrush Songbird Survey are especially encouraged to attend so we can practice using GPS units. Meet at 7:30 AM in the Park and Ride on Columbia Park Trail (near the intersection with Queensgate) in Richland and carpool to the field site. Time permitting, we will visit additional sites on the slope of Rattlesnake Mountain. For more information, contact Lori Nelson at wollerman.nelson@gmail.com.

Yakima Training Center Trip - April 21
Our April 21 field trip will be to the Yakima Training Center to see Greater Sage Grouse displaying on their lek! Preregistration was required for the trip, which has already filled. Advertisements for the trip were sent through e-alerts, LCBirds, and our Facebook page. If you missed out on this trip, sign up for e-alerts (see the membership form at the end of every Curlew), join the LCBirds email list, or Like our Facebook page so you get the latest news about LCBAS events!

Have a trip suggestion or want to lead a LCBAS trip? Email fieldtrips@lcbas.org and share your passion!

A Greater Sage Grouse on the Yakima Training Center by Tatiana Gettelman (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)
LCBAS Awards Given at the Mid-Columbia Regional Science and Engineering Fair

by Dana Ward, Conservation Chair and Science Fair Judge

The 63rd annual Mid-Columbia Regional Science and Engineering Fair was held March 5th at the Columbia Center Mall. There were a couple hundred students presenting science projects and posters. LCBAS participated by sponsoring and judging two special awards in the area of ecological sciences. Two $50 awards were presented for the best project in grades 6 - 9 and grades 10 - 12. It is always difficult to determine the two winners, given the number of good entries, and this year was no different.

The 6 - 9 grade winner was Zoe Gotthold from Richland High School for her project investigating how to protect aquatic wildlife titled, “ADELIE: A Novel Method for Predicting Emulsion Stability.” Oil spilled in water forms mixtures called emulsions. Zoe is interested in understanding how to break down emulsions to benefit aquatic life and Adelie Penguins in particular after oil spills. She gave a very complete and well-presented poster.

The 10 - 12 grade winner was Linda Huang from Eisenhower High School for her project involving ocean acidification titled, “What Impacts Do Ocean Acidification and Iron Supplementation Have on Thalassiora” Thalassiora is a diatom, a kind of marine plankton. Ocean acidification occurs because higher levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere also increases how much CO₂ is dissolved in the world’s oceans. This lowers ocean pH, making it more acidic, much like carbonated water is more acidic than regular water. Linda studied the ability of elemental iron to stabilize the pH of ocean water and how that affected Thalassiora. Diatoms and other marine plankton form the basis of all marine food chains and so her work could help reduce the impact of climate change on birds and other wildlife.

It is always fun and enlightening to see what the young scientists are doing in our schools and the variety of topics presenting at the fair. I recommend that you visit the mall next March during this annual event. You will not be disappointed.
Field Trip Report

First Saturday Bird Walk: Bateman Island
Saturday, March 3, 2018
by Dana Ward

We had a nice winter day with bright sun, calm winds and not too
cold temperatures. It took some time to get off the causeway –
water birds held the attention of our group of 24 mostly novice
bird watchers. It was unusual to see about 12 WOOD DUCKS
setting in one tree some distance up the shoreline. We had good
looks at familiar species too, including MALLARD, BUFSIZEHEAD,
AMERICAN WIGEON, COMMON LOON, PIED-BILLED GREEE.
There was a flyover of 2 GREAT BLUE HERONS, along with many
CANADA GEESE and a few DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS.

On the island, we had a flock of about 30 CEDAR WAXWINGS with
AMERICAN ROBINS in the tops of the trees next to the trail. The
morning sunlight lit up their feathers and all were transfixed
watching and listening to these beautiful birds. We had flyovers of
RED-TAILED HAWKS, SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS and a lone
NORTHER HARRIER.

We saw a number of mule deer that seemed to be more curious
about us than usual, maybe because the island remains closed to
the general public. We had a not-too-close encounter with a
skunk; luckily the skunk went on one way and we went the other.
This is classic situation where one small individual has the power
over a group of 24.

At the gravelly beach we were lucky enough to see an immature
BALD EAGLE perched on a log. A real treat was the sighting of a
SLATY-BACKED GULL. This gull has been regularly seen most of
the winter, but you have to be lucky to see it and have enough skill
to recognize it when you do.

On the Columbia River side of the island we had a close up look at
a HORNED GREBE and 2 LESSER SCAUP. As we were walking back
to the causeway we had a nice look at a single DOWNY
WOODPECKER and glimpses of BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES,
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS and a lone HERMIT THRUSH. The
calls of a multitude of RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS greeted our
return to the causeway. We totaled 42 bird species during the
walk.

The next Bateman Island bird walk is Saturday April 7. We’ll be on
the lookout for more spring migrants like TREE, CLIFF and BANK
SWALLOWS, YELLOW WARBLERS and maybe OSPREY or late
SANDHILL CRANES.
Helping Monarch Butterflies Survive - by Observation

by Ivar Husa

In February, biologist David James (WSU Dept of Entomology) gave a presentation to LCBAS on butterflies. His talk was beautiful, educational, and even inspiring. I was so moved that I want to invite you all to help James’ research by searching for, and reporting on, tagged Monarch Butterflies. This is a pretty easy “ask”, as birders love butterflies, and Audubon loves “citizen science”.

I’d like to share with you the very basics about this important task. If you see a Monarch Butterfly, look for a tag. This is a pretty easy “ask”, as birders love butterflies, and Audubon loves “citizen science”.

When you get the shot, email the number, or preferably the photo, to the address on the tag: monarch@wsu.edu. Be sure to let them know where you took the photo.

Expect to see Monarch Butterflies beginning reliably the first week of June (I am told) and they may be observed the rest of the summer. They could be observed along any riparian corridor, and these are the most likely travel routes for butterflies. They are often concentrated along Crab Creek, north of the Saddle Mountains.

If you do get a photo of a tagged Monarch, do also share it with club members via the lcbirds2@yahoogroups.com email list.
Conservation Updates

Farm Bill Could be a Win for Grassland Birds

Every 5 years or so, the US Congress updates the Farm Bill, a piece of federal legislation that covers everything from food assistance to crop insurance. The Farm Bill also contains significant funds for conservation on private lands - the working lands on which so many birds depend. About 50 million acres are enrolled in at least one Farm Bill conservation program.

The current Farm Bill will expire this year and updates are being drafted now. The National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (https://bringbackbobwhites.org) is spearheading efforts to include provisions that promote the use of native species over non-natives in Farm Bill supported conservation efforts. Native plants provide higher quality habitat for wildlife, are generally more resilient to damage, and produce high-quality livestock forage, making the move a win-win for wildlife and for agricultural producers.

Contact your elected representative and encourage him or her to support a “natives first” approach to conservation.

Climate Change, National Parks, and Birds

National parks represent critical habitat for plants and animals throughout our nation. A recent study by National Audubon and the National Park Service suggests that bird communities in our national parks could change dramatically in response to changing climate. National parks in Washington could gain as many as 22 species over the next century, but stand to lose nearly as many species over the same time period, including iconic mountain species like Clark's Nutcrackers and Mountain Bluebirds.

For the full report, visit http://www.audubon.org/climate/national-parks

The Horned Lark is a common, but declining, species in grasslands.

by Ivar Husa

Local Earth Month Activities

Wye Park Clean Up

Give Mother Earth a little love on April 7! Join the WSU-TC Environmental Club in cleaning up Wye Park at the entrance to Bateman Island. Meet at 9 AM. Everything will be provided, but volunteers are encouraged to bring work gloves.

Celebration of Science

On April 21 from 11 AM to 3 PM, head over to John Dam Plaza for an afternoon of fun, food, and science! This 2nd Annual Celebration of Science will include food trucks, hands-on science activities, and speakers - something for everyone in the family! For more information, check out threeriversscience.org.

West Richland Clean Up Day

West Richland residents can dispose of household garbage, yard waste, and electronic waste. LightRecycle Washington will accept light bulbs for recycling. The event is 8 AM - 2 PM on April 21 at Enterprise Middle School.

For a complete list of activities in the TriCities during Earth Month (and every month), go to the Go Green TriCities website at http://www.gogreentricities.org
News from the World of Ornithology

by Lori Wollerman Nelson

Fewer Bugs = Fewer Insectivorous Birds

Insect-eating birds, especially migratory species that catch their prey in the air (like the Eastern Whip-Poor-Will and the Common Nighthawk), are declining at alarming rates. One possible explanation for this decline is that there are fewer bugs for these birds to eat. Studying how bird diets have changed over time is challenging, but researchers can rely on the chemical composition of bird feathers and claws to better understand the kinds of prey birds eat. Researchers have used these chemical signatures to show that today’s Whip-Poor-Wills eat smaller insects today than they did 130 years ago.

The biologists measured levels of stable nitrogen isotopes in samples of feathers and claws from existing populations of Whip-Poor-Wills and museum specimens. Their results indicate that the insects that modern-day Whip-Poor-Wills eat are smaller and are less likely to be predators than the insects eaten by historical populations. The big juicy predatory bugs that Whip-Poor-Wills used to eat have been replaced with smaller, less nutritious fare. This suggests that declining food supplies could be an important cause of declining insectivorous bird populations. No one has put their finger on the cause of insect declines, but climate change, increased insecticide use, and changing land use patterns are all possibilities.


Previously unknown nesting colonies of Adelie Penguins found

Using a combination of ground surveys and images from satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles, researchers have located previously unknown colonies of Adelie Penguins in the Danger Islands near the Antarctic Peninsula. More than 750,000 pairs of penguins were counted; two of the colonies represent the 3rd and 4th largest Adelie Penguin colonies in the world. This discovery is good news, given declining Adelie Penguin numbers elsewhere in their range.

Just in case you’re wondering how you find penguin colonies in pictures taken from space - you look for the poop!

Nature Scientific Reports, 2018; https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-22313-w
Field Trip Report

Third Saturday Bird Walk: Amon Basin Natural Preserve Saturday, March 17, 2018
by Jason Fidorra

Tapteal Greenway conducts a bird walk at the Amon Basin Reserve each 3rd Saturday of the month at 9 am. See their other events at www.tapteal.org. In March, LCBAS joined 19 participants in the Tapteal bird walk, completing a 1.5 mile loop and recording 33 species. Several waterfowl and resident birds made appearances, including SAY’S PHOEBE, the earliest returning flycatcher in WA. An Adult COOPER’S HAWK gave everyone great looks as it perched to finish some food, and even more experienced birders enjoyed side-by-side scope views of female MALLARDS and GADWALL, showing the black and white wing patch on Gadwall hens that distinguish them from Mallard hens.

Upcoming Birding Festivals

Do you like the challenge of identifying shorebirds? Then the Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival on the West Side is for you! It is April 27-29 and features some of the greatest migrants in the bird world. More information is at www.shorebirdfestival.com

For “zero cost and maximum fun” head to the American Falls Family Bird Fest! The event is May 12 in American Falls, Idaho. The event is smaller than some of the other birding festivals, but it looks like a great family-friendly event! More information is at http://afbirdingfestival.us/

Registration opens on April 2 for the 8th Annual Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival in Sisters, Oregon. The trips fill fast, so you should rush to the website as soon as you get your Curlew! The event is May 31 - June 3 and it features 20 guided tours in search of 11 (ELEVEN!!) species of woodpeckers in central Oregon. www.eaudubon.org/dean-hale-woodpecker-festival

See previous editions of the Curlew for other April and May birding festivals!
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**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

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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
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