Upcoming Events

See inside for more details!

Feb. 15: 8th Annual Winter Birds 9—1 at McNary NWR, Burbank.

Feb. 20: Junior Audubon, 3:40-4:45 P.M. at Fuerza Elementary.

Feb. 25: Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

March: Board Meeting, 6:15 P.M. at the Richland Public Library.

March 7: First Saturday Bird Walk, 8:00 A.M. at Bateman Island. Meet ~7:45 at Wye Park to sign in.

March 14: Annual Flapjack Fundraiser at Applebee’s, in Pasco.

March 14: Barker Ranch private tour. RSVP Required.

March 24: Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

March 25: Scootene evening bird walk. Meet @ CBC 5:30 P.M.

Save the Date:

May 8-11: LCBAS Malheur NWR Field Trip. See Page 5 for more details and how to sign up!

Birds of Northern Peru

Larry Umthun

Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.
First Lutheran Church, US 395 & Yelm, Kennewick

In January 2019, Larry and his wife Lisa went to northern Peru. They started their birding adventure in the Pacific coast city of Chiclayo. Over the next three weeks, they traveled a loop route that took them up 11000 feet into the cloud forest of the Andes Mountains. During their travel they saw over 450 bird species. Larry will share photos of birds and other wildlife of Peru, and scenic landscapes.

Upcoming Birding Festivals

Did you know that every month has a bird festival or count?

For more information on upcoming WA events:

https://wa.audubon.org/bird-festivals-0

Sandhill Crane Festival: March 20-22, 2020, Othello, WA
Registration is open! https://www.othellosandhillcrane festiv al.org/

Wings Over Water: March 20-22, 2020, Blaine, WA.
Registration is open! https://www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com/

Olympic BirdFest: April 16-21, 2020, Sequim, WA.
https://olympicbirdfest.org/
Upcoming LCBAS Field Trips — Come Birding With Us!

The March “First Saturday” Bateman Island Bird Walk will be on Saturday, March 7, 2020. We’ll meet in the usual place (Wye Park, 1600 Columbia Park Trail, Richland. Please start gathering at 7:45 A.M. so we can start at 8:00 A.M., Expect the walk to take 2-3 hours. This is a great opportunity for families and beginners; birders of all experience levels are welcome. We’ll have binoculars to borrow, and bird lists. Open to the public.

Barker Ranch Tour, March 14, 2020. This will include access to the private ranch wetlands for ducks, cranes, and land birds. The Barker Ranch is a world class duck hunting club with a history of wetland and upland conservation. Start time is after the Applebee’s Flapjack Fundraiser. It will be a 4-5 hour trip. RVSP with Jason Fidorra at fieldtrips@lcbas.org for the meeting location.

Scooteney Reservoir Evening Tour and Walk, Wednesday Evening, March 25th, 2020. We’ll be targeting our search for Short-eared owls, and should enjoy a variety of waterfowl and Sandhill Cranes, as well as upland species. We will depart the front CBC parking lot (Argent Rd., Pasco), at 5:30 P.M. Expect to carpool. Contact Jason Fidorra at fieldtrips@lcbas.org for more information.

Other Area Nature Related Events:

The Reach Museum is hosting an event on February 29, 10-1, on Animal Allies. For more information go to: visitthereach.org

The Columbia Basin chapter of Washington Native Plant Society will have their next meeting at Columbia Basin College, room T238 on March 4, 7 - 8:30 P.M. Speaker Ken Gano will present: Bats, our Misunderstood Friends. Ken has worked for years on the Hanford Site, and will discuss the amazing adaptations of bats, their importance, and threats they face. For more information go to: http://www.cbwnps.org/calendar

Still Seeking Membership Chair!
Please talk to any board member for more information and/or come to a board meeting to check it out. Meetings are always open to the public.
First Saturday Bateman Island Bird Walk — Jan 4, 2020

By Lisa Hill

2020! A new decade of exciting birding in the Mid-Columbia region has begun! In spite of the strong winds, the January Bateman Island walk was another high-count adventure: 53 species, including three rarities. Waterfowl were in high numbers as is typical in winter in the region. It was a treat to find a dozen TUNDRA SWANS at the west end of the dike road. A small flock of DUNLIN careened around in a tight murmuration, alighting and lifting off from the mudflat. There were plenty of COMMON MerganseR, northern Pintail, American Wigeon, northern SHOVELER, Gadwall and Bufflehead. American White Pelicans were present along with four Common Loons. We found quite a few raptors: Red-taIeD hawk, Cooper's hawk, northern Harrier, bald eagle, American Kestrel and a Peregrine falcon. It has been several years since we’ve seen a Peregrine perched on dead wood in the delta during winter.

Purple Finch are becoming a regular winter visitor to the area and can often be found in and around green ash trees. A small flock has been present for several weeks near the single ash tree on the island near the west beach. The tree was nearly devoid of seeds and the birds were feeding on the ground. Another Bateman “rarity” seen was a Brown Creeper. Their high-pitched peeps and trills are often beyond the range of human hearing, and they are difficult to spot as they creep up and down coarse-barked tree trunks. The Brown Creeper is the only representative in North America of the genus Certhia, or treecreepers, and the only one referred to as a “creeper”.

Cedar waxwings, a very social bird, are often found in large flocks of 50+ birds in winter. They do breed in small numbers in this area. Another bird with distinctive high-pitched trills, they were not seen, only heard. Waxwings are so-named because they literally have small waxy appendages on the tips of their secondary flight feathers. It is thought that these showy wingtips are status signals that influence mate selection. Older birds, both male and female, have larger, more numerous red tips and are preferred mates. Nearly all waxwings have yellow-tipped tail feathers, but a few birds have orange-tipped ones. It is believed that these birds eat non-native honeysuckle berries during tail feather molt which increases certain orange pigments. The “cedar” in the name mistakenly refers to the bloomy blue juniper berries of the Eastern Red Cedar (not a true cedar, which is a story for another time!) and is an important part of the birds’ fruit diet.

Join the next Bateman Island bird walk on Saturday, March 7. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park above the causeway to the island. We begin promptly at 8am. Dress for the weather!

Do you have a great idea for future bird walks or outings? Great story ideas for upcoming Curlew?

We always appreciate your ideas and input. Please contact Jason Fidorra at fieldtrips@lcbas.org with your great ideas for walks and events.

Contact Charlene Burge at communications@lcbas.org with your ideas for the Curlew.
Second Saturday Bird Walk: Big Flats HMU: February 8, 2020

By Rich Barchet

Eleven hardy birders braved the stiff breeze on another Second Saturday Bird Walk on February 8, 2020 at the Big Flats Habitat Management Unit (HMU). Four carpooled from the Red Lion parking lot near Roasters Coffee to Big Flats HMU where we met the others at slightly after 8:30 AM. Jim Castle provide us with US Army Corps of Engineers brochures about the HMU and provided much insight into the history of the HMU. Jason Fidorra brought along his spotting scope and was quick to line it up for looks at waterfowl and perching birds.

Even though there had been lots of rain over the prior few days, the trails and graveled paths were in good condition. Wind was clearly the biggest obstacle to seeing lots of smaller birds. Once we were into areas with taller vegetation, it was quite comfortable birding. American Robins were everywhere and in large numbers. We estimated 700! Waterfowl were on the pond but in low numbers, except for a large raft of American Coots on the river: Canada Goose (flyover), Gadwall, Am. Wigeon, Mallard, N. Pintail (flyover), and Hooded and Common Mergansers. Only a few gulls flew over us: Ring-billed and Herring Gull. A few Double-crested Cormorants and one Great Blue Heron braved the wind. Several Bald Eagles cruised along the Snake River shoreline and kept the coots bunched up. Raptor numbers were low: a pair of Red-tailed Hawks, a Great Horned Owl (posed nicely for everyone to see), and an Am. Kestrel beating into the wind. Kathy Criddle’s sharp eyes spotted a Belted Kingfisher; with Jason’s scope everyone saw it. Besides the ubiquitous robins, other tree-top birds included a Varied Thrush, a good number of Cedar Waxwings and N. Flickers, and a paltry number of House Finches. A male Downy Woodpecker perched and fed on a Mullein stalk for everyone to see. We figured the wind kept sparrow numbers low but there were good looks at Song Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and White-crowned Sparrows. Spotted Towhees were hard to spot. a large flock of Red-winged Blackbirds greeted us when we arrived and a Raven soared overhead during the walk. According to Jason’s eBird list, we saw 30 species. We also saw mammals including deer, river otters, and a surprise badger sighted in the farmlands on the way out.

Our nearly three hour, three mile walk covered only a small part of the HMU. One could easily spend an entire day wandering the many path and trails through Russian Olive hammocks, Cottonwoods, Ash, Choke Cherry, and Hawthorns loaded with colorful red berries that were being eaten by the robins and waxwings. Check the LCBAS web site for the dates and locations of future outings beyond Bateman Island.
Do you like Burrowing Owls?
Want to learn more about them?
Would you like to help them succeed in the Tri-Cities / SE Washington Area?

LCBAS is partnering with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to assist in habitat enhancements for Burrowing Owls around the Tri-cities. Volunteers are needed for long-term assistance in weeding and burrow repair each year. Volunteers must be physically capable of strenuous work in adverse conditions, but the reward will be contributing to conservation and the chance to assist and attend owl trapping and banding at occupied sites. WDFW will offer a tour for members to observe banding at sites in June or July, so keep an eye out for future field trips!

Contact Jason Fidorra @ Fieldtrips@lcbas.org

Join us for the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip, May 8 – 11, 2020

Please join fellow LCBAS members for a fun weekend field trip to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. The birds will be amazing and plentiful. We usually see close to 100+ species. Last year we saw fledging baby Great Horned Owls, White-faced Ibis, Short-eared Owls, a nesting Golden Eagle, and dozens of song bird, warbler, and fly catcher species. Over the course of a year there are over 320 species of birds and 58 mammals seen on the Refuge. The dates for this trip are May 8th through May 11th.

Each day we plan to visit a different part of the Refuge. Highlights will include a visit to the Refuge Headquarters and a Picnic Lunch at the beautiful Page Springs Campground near the Steens Mountains.

Malheur NWR is near Burns, Oregon. We travel there on a Friday and depart on Monday morning. All food will be included except some special diet needs. There will be Gluten Free options. The cost for 3 nights lodging and all meals is $140 per person. We begin the event at dinner starting Friday evening. Breakfasts will be provided each morning, including Monday. Lunches will be brown bag. There are 2 - 4 twin size beds in several different rooms on each side. We usually divide the place into the men’s side and the women’s side. You will need to bring your own bedding and towel. There is a large bathroom with showers on each side, as well as a central meeting room with kitchen, dining, and sitting room. Participants will be asked to help with one dinner and clean-up each evening and on the final day. If you’re already signed up, it’s time to pay. If you haven’t already signed up, it’s time! Checks may be mailed to LCBAS Malheur, P.O. Box 1900, Richland WA, 99352. For more information, or to sign up please contact Kathy Criddle at kcriddlebirds@yahoo.com. Once the list is full at 20 people, we will start a waiting list if more folks are interested. Participants are encouraged to car pool.
Conservation Updates:
Migratory Bird Treaty Act Under Attack

By Dana Ward

The current administration recently proposed to roll back key protections against the unintentional killing of migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

The proposed rule would codify a controversial legal opinion issued by the Department of the Interior in 2017 declaring the act does not prohibit unintentional killing of birds.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act has been the safeguard against the extinction of nearly 1,000 species of birds in North America. The administration’s rule would break the current protections under the MBTA, replacing it with an ill-conceived approach that throws out years of bipartisan assurance to balance industrial activity with protections for birds.

Passed by Congress in 1918, the act is one of the United States’ oldest wildlife conservation laws and has a long and successful track record of protecting species such as the Snowy Egret, Wood Duck, Sandhill Crane and Red-tailed Hawk. For more than 5 decades, both major parties’ administrations have applied the act to prohibit, without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, both intentional and unintentional killing of covered species.

Unintentional killings has driven common-sense standards such as requiring oil and uranium producers to put nets over liquid waste pits to prevent birds from landing in them, as well as improved siting and operation of wind turbines such as will be constructed on Horse Heaven Hills. If these proposed changes are instituted, companies will no longer face legal consequences or have incentive to use best management practices to avoid activities that are deadly to migratory birds.

Bird populations are already facing threats from climate change and subsequent habitat loss. This is not the time to weaken the MBTA protections. This rule change will only lead to more bird killings. LCBAS supported National Audubon by signing on to a recent letter to the administration that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act works – and withdraw its proposed change.

Columbia River Treaty Roundtable Forum — Seeking LCBAS Representative

As you are probably aware, the U.S. and Canada are currently negotiating changes to the 1961 Columbia River Treaty. The original treaty negotiations were about flood risk and hydropower operations. As of 2024, the current flood risk management provisions change to a less-defined approach; 2024 is also the earliest date at which the Treaty can be terminated with 10 yrs written notice from either signatory. The modernized treaty negotiations consider these same two issues but also consider improving the Columbia River ecosystem.

LCBAS is looking for somebody in our chapter who might be interested in joining a group called the Columbia River Roundtable. This is a forum of citizens, businesses, and other organizations from the U.S. and Canada who have joined together to stay informed on the negotiations. The group has agreed to a set of common principles related to protecting ecological health and ecosystem functions. They have monthly phone calls from 11 -12 PST on the third Thursday of every month that includes an update from each country and a featured speaker.

If you are interested, you would need to agree to the set of common principles, be available most 3rd Thursday mornings, and be willing to inform the LCBAS board and chapter of developments in the treaty negotiations. In addition to affecting the overall ecosystem health of the Columbia River system, the treaty renegotiations could impact the Hanford Reach National Monument and could give us additional talking points on the discussion of reconveyance of the shoreline in the bi-county area.

If you are interested in joining this Columbia River Roundtable, please contact Debbie Berkowitz at secretary@lcbas.org or 509-375-4740 (leave a voice message) for more information.
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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

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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
- [ ] 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