The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events

See pg. 2 for additional details on birding events.

Oct. 15: White-crowned Sparrow Project banding at McNary N.W.R. in Burbank. Start 9:00 A.M. Rain or high winds may cancel.


Oct. 22: Membership meeting at 7 P.M., First Lutheran Church.

Oct 24: Junior Audubon at Fuerza Elementary School 3:20 - 4:20 PM

Oct. 27: McNary Wildlife Ponds half-day trip (McNary Dam) with Dana Ward and Elke Davis.

Nov. 2: First Saturday Bird Walk; 8:00 A.M. at Bateman island. Meet at Wye Park ~ 7:45 A.M.

Nov. 2: Native Plant Society Sale at C&M Nursery, Richland. Native plants are for the birds! 9-12 P.M.

Nov. 19: Membership meeting at 7 P.M., Kennewick Library on Union.

The Hidden Lives of Owls

A Naturalist’s Introduction to the Unseen World of Owls

Naturalist and Author Leigh Calvez

October 22, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. First Lutheran Church, US 395 & Yelm, Kennewick

Join a naturalist on adventures into the world of owls, owl-watching, avian science, and the deep forest—often in the dead of night. Whether you’re tracking Snowy or Great Gray Owls, these birds are a bit mysterious, and that’s part of what makes them so fascinating. Owls are iconic, and there are lots of them in the Western states, even though we hardly ever see them.

Leigh Calvez pursues eleven different owl species—including the Barred, Flammulated, Northern Saw-Whet, Northern Pygmy, Northern Spotted, Burrowing, Snowy, and Great Gray. Calvez makes the science entertaining and accessible through the stories of the people who are obsessed with these birds and her own avian adventures in the field. The thuggish behavior of Barred Owls puts the Spotted Owl at risk, so the federal wildlife agency is actually shooting them in Washington and Oregon. The highly unusual appearance of arctic Snowy Owls in the Lower 48 directly reflects the state of the vole population in the Arctic. Along the way, the author entertainingly explores the questions about the human-animal connection, owl obsession, habitat, owl calls, social behavior, and mythology. Hoot!

Leigh Calvez is a scientist and nature writer whose work has been published in American Nature Writing 2003, Between Species: Celebrating the Dolphin-Human Bond, Ocean Realm, the Ecologist, the Christian Science Monitor, and the Seattle Times. In 2013 she published her first book entitled Whale Watching Adventures on the Pacific Coast. She has been involved in whale research and observation projects in Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Zealand, and the Azores.
Join Lauri Ness and Lori Nelson on Saturday, October 19 for the eBird Big Day with a focus on our rivers. We will be joining forces to tally as many birds as possible with a focus on Columbia water birds and migrant land birds. Meet at 7:30 A.M. in Richland at Fred Meyer on Wellsian Way, near the gas pumps. Bring food, water, and scopes if you have them. We will carpool, so be prepared to join another vehicle, or drive. Expect to be out all day, with a return around 4 P.M. Contact Lauri Ness for more information at pennifurs.mom@gmail.com.

Join Dana Ward and Elke Davis on Sunday, October 27 for a half day exploration of the McNary Wildlife Ponds (Army Corps of Engineers). Meet at 8:00 A.M. near the McNary Dam on the Oregon side of the river. Travel west on 3rd Street from the Fish Viewing Room at the base of the dam to the West Parking Area approximately ½ mile away. We will ramble the prepared trails and visit many of the nine ponds. We should see a variety of water birds, raptors, sparrows, warblers and migrants in the varied habitats created in the Nature Area. You will be able to walk as long as you like and leave when you want to. Maps are available of the trails and ponds at the parking areas.

The November Bateman Island Bird Walk will be on Saturday, November 2. We'll meet in the usual place (Wye Park, 1600 Columbia Park Trail, Richland, across from Sage Port Grill and Anything Grows). Start gathering at 7:45 A.M. so we can start at 8 A.M., and expect the walk to take between two and three hours. This is a great opportunity for families and beginners; birders of all experience levels are welcome. We’ll have binoculars for newcomers to borrow, and bird lists for you to take home. Open to the public.

Please Donate!
We will have a Silent Auction Fundraiser at the November membership meeting.

Help us raise money by donating item (s) for the silent auction. Please call or email Marcie Daines, 509-627-4854 or mdthd@frontier.com. Pick up can be arranged if needed.

Be sure to bring your holiday money to the silent auction fundraiser and see what you can pick up for your loved ones.
Field Trip Reports

Mesa Lagoons Half Day Field Trip
Friday, September 20, 2019
By Jason Fidorra

Ten birders joined Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Biologist Jason Fidorra on the Friday morning trip to Mesa. The party first stopped at the restricted Mesa Sewer Lagoons access site through coordination with the City of Mesa. Many were hopping for Pectoral Sandpipers but none were present when we arrived, although shorebirds were plentiful. Long-billed Dowitchers and Lesser Yellowlegs were abundant along with killdeer. Migrating American Pipits were soon heard calling and before long were spotted walking along the mud flats with at least a dozen seen well. The first peeps seen turned out to be Western Sandpipers but soon we started noticing a few Baird’s Sandpipers as well and suddenly Pectoral Sandpipers seemed everywhere! No one saw where they came from but it was prime time for this species to move through the Basin. Great looks at some foraging Wilson Snipe were enjoyed with the similar but less colorful dowitchers for comparison. Seven species of shorebird isn’t bad for a Franklin County stop! The group moved on to the Mesa Lake Wildlife Area, managed by WDFW for year round public access. Many ducks of several species were on the upper ponds but the highlight was a swooping Peregrine Falcon called out by young birder Rowan Young-McMurchie just before we were startled by a shearing swoosh noise as it banked up right in front of us! A great trip!

Junior Audubon Bird Walk, Bateman Island
Thursday, September 26, after school.
By Cherie Baudrand

A new Junior Audubon family took a bird walk with Kathy Criddle, Tom Clarke, and myself on the Bateman Island causeway after school. Barb Clarke checked out binoculars. The new birders caught on quickly. There were Yellow-rumped Warblers in the trees in Wye Park. Tom had his scope set up on ducks and geese. On the causeway, a beautiful Wood Duck hid under a tree out of view from the eager new members. Elias pointed to a bird flying over. I saw the pointy tail and Kathy identified it as a jaeger. We think it was a rare Parasitic Jaeger! The boys enjoyed watching a Northern Flicker and a variety of ducks. A Great Blue Heron flew over and we spotted two Osprey for these Seahawk fans. Kathy helped them with a view through the scope. We hope that more families will join us on future walks, as we had a great time. For more information, contact Cherie at education@lcbas.org

Tentative Schedule for upcoming Junior Audubon Meetings, which will take place at Fuerza Elementary School from 3:20 - 4:20 PM:
Oct. 24: Thursday
Nov. 21: Thursday
Dec. 19: Thursday

In-house Fundraising

LCBAS has a table at each meeting with books for sale. We are happy to take donations of any bird or nature related book. Please bring them to the meeting and add them to our fundraising collection, or give them to Robin.

The hospitality table (treats and drinks) at the LCBAS meetings has received your generous donations, which has in turn continued to provide for the refreshments without drawing money from the chapter’s budget.

Thank You!

Tamie Barajas and grandsons, Junior Audubon members Elias and Noah.
Photo by Kathy Criddle.
To My Audubon Friends

By Teri Warner
(contact: Twarner104@aol.com)

For me, a novice birder, going on an Audubon field trip is a remarkable experience. It is both inspiring and humbling.

I am inspired by the dedication and knowledge of the “expert” birders that go along to guide and educate us “neophytes”. The experts are constantly on the lookout for movement in the skies above our heads, and beside us in the trees, bushes, and grasses as we move slowly and quietly along the trail. Besides watching, they are also listening for bird calls; ever aware of what is happening around them.

One of the first times I went on a walk with an expert, she suddenly stopped, brought her binoculars up to her eyes and exclaimed: “It’s a Yellow Warbler!” When I returned home and checked my field guide, I was astonished to find that there are 39 varieties of warblers, and most of them have some sort of yellow markings! Another time there were several swallows flying swiftly in circles overhead, and a few minutes later, our guide told us that he saw four out of five varieties of swallows. To my untrained eye, they just looked like little brown silhouettes darting about.

Instead of idly chatting or conversing about some past event or plans for the future, these birders are usually fully aware of what is happening in the present. Present moment awareness seems to come naturally to them.

I find that I learn, not only about the sights and sounds of the birds, but how to be more fully present and engaged in the here and now.

Volunteers needed for Winter Raptor Survey!

A long term Winter Raptor Survey Project sponsored by the East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS) chapter in Bend, OR, is expanding further into Eastern Washington this winter. They now have several hundred survey routes in four states. You don’t have to be an expert raptor birder; you can participate by driving, or going along to do paperwork, and learn as you participate. Most birds counted in this project have been Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, and Rough-legged Hawk. If you can ID these species, and / or feel as though you can learn them, you can do these surveys! If you would like to get involved in this project, contact Heidi Newsome heidi_newsome@yahoo.com

COMING SPEND THE AFTERNOON WITH THE BIRDS

at Blue Mountain Wildlife’s OPEN HOUSE Saturday, Oct. 19 from 1-4pm.

Blue Mountain Wildlife, located in Pendleton, Oregon, is a wildlife rehabilitation and education center that specializes in raptor care. Nearly a thousand birds visit the center each year. Most of the animals have had negative encounters with humans, such as collisions with vehicles, gunshot wounds or poisoning. Learn how they are cared for, rehabilitated, and released back to the wild.

On October 19, you can tour the grounds, watch a falconry demonstration, enjoy live bluegrass music, and construct and paint a birdhouse. You’ll see eagles, hawks, owls, vultures, ravens and many other birds up close. This is a family friendly event. Blue Mountain Wildlife is located at 71046 Appaloosa Lane, Pendleton, Oregon

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Yellow Warbler
by Keith Williams

American Kestrel
Charlene Burge

Bald Eagle
By Charlene Burge

American Kestrel
Charlene Burge

Blue Mountain Wildlife's OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, Oct. 19 from 1-4pm.
Juniper Dunes

On behalf of the LCBAS, Dana Ward attended a public meeting sponsored by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on Juniper Dunes. The purpose of the meeting was to get citizens input to what impacts the new road to the dunes could have. The meeting was attended primarily by off road vehicle enthusiast but other users were present.

Juniper Dunes is a large area covering 11 square miles of old growth juniper trees, shrub-steppe habitat and active sand dunes. It is located about seven miles east of Pasco and is divided into three designated operational units: off-road vehicle, wilderness and a section called, “critical environmental concern”. The dunes, historically, have been a nesting area for Ferruginous Hawks and Swainson’s Hawks. Both species numbers have been declining in Washington State and in other neighboring states.

The primary concern for long term management of the dunes is to protect the area from wildfires, especially in the wilderness area where 150 year old junipers thrive, along with the birds and other wildlife they support. BLM was asked to provide wildfire safety actions that could prevent or lessen the extent of a fire, such as posted phone numbers / response system, a water well capable of filling tank trucks or a lined holding pond for helicopter pickup.

Noxious weeds are also a concern in the Juniper Dunes. Noxious weeds compromise native plant ecology, endanger native animal species, and should be eradicated. A system for monitoring and reporting noxious weeds should be developed.

It was also suggested that a well-marked and constructed fence should be maintained between the off-road vehicle area and wilderness area to prevent accidental and deliberate intrusion into the ecologically sensitive wilderness area. The off-road enthusiasts were concerned with over use, liter and human waste. Currently there are no bathrooms or waste receptacles. LCBAS agreed with these concerns.

Letter to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Columbia Park Land Disposal

LCBAS wrote a strong letter on the proposed Environmental Assessment (EA) concerning the potential impacts of the transfer of 72 acres of land owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to the city of Kennewick. The 72 acres is located just up river from the blue bridge.

In summary, the letter was concerned about: 1) the impact to young salmon migrating down river, 2) preserving adequate shoreline lands for public recreation, 3) maintaining wildlife habitat in its totality as related to the 1,223 acres within the Tri-Cities, 4) Native American rights, 5) deed restrictions to prevent commercialization of the land.

Finally, LCBAS strongly recommended, due to the complexities of management of these lands, that the USACE upgrade the EA to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS would contain the “no action alternative” which an EA does not address. Thanks to Rick Leaumont for drafting and submitting this important letter.

Conservation continues on page 6
Surveys of Trees in Columbia Park for the City of Kennewick

During the early summer, the City of Kennewick requested assistance from LCBAS to survey trees slated for removal in Columbia Park. This action was the result of a death last year when a falling tree limb killed a visitor to the park. To remove and trim trees in the park the city needed to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and potentially the Endangered Species Act. The Army Corp of Engineers directed the city to hire or acquire the qualified assistance of biologist(s) or other qualified surveyors, in our case, LCBAS, to review and document in writing trees that were to be trimmed or removed. The city selected LCBAS.

June 18, 2019, Hill, Ness, Rykiel and Ward surveyed a large number of dying or compromised trees that were slated for removal or heavy pruning. The trees in question were numbered on paper, marked and maps were provided showing the location and type of tree to be surveyed. No nesting birds or birds exhibiting breeding behavior were noted during the survey. The information was summarized and given to the city representative. The city was asked to leave a few specific trees in place as snags as wildlife trees. These trees would be cut down to a tall stump with some containing hollows, holes or small limbs that could be used by birds or animals for nests, roosting or perching. The city agreed, but due to poor communication the trees were inadvertently removed.

July 15, 2019, Hill, Rykiel and Ward surveyed a second large group of trees. It was determined that there were no nesting birds or birds exhibiting breeding behavior for the list of trees provided. It was noted that one tree, a large maple, was a strong candidate as a wildlife snag. It was located in an out-of-the-way part of the park where visitors rarely walked. The city was notified that this tree should be trimmed down but the stump saved. The city agreed. The tree was saved and at last observation it was still there. The city will be asked if a plaque describing the benefits of the tree could be placed near or on the tree.

It is rewarding to partnership with the city to manage the trees for the benefit of birds and other wildlife. We hope that the city will continue to seek our services in the future as other sections of the park’s trees are managed.

Sagebrush Songbird Surveys

Christi Norman, program director for Audubon Washington.

Thank you to the 285 volunteers who logged 14,645 hours traveling across rural Eastern Washington near dawn searching the shrub steppe for that melodic drift from these tiny denizens of the sage.

I as well as the rest of us at Audubon WA have gratitude to you all for successfully completing 5+ years of Sagebrush Songbird Survey field work. Our work is recognized in print, “Ending on a High Note” in Audubon Magazine summer issue, page 19.


These volunteers include members of LCBAS, who were honored at the LCBAS Annual Potluck Picnic in June.
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ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send address changes (postal address or email address) to Rich Barchet at (PENDING) 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](http://lcbas.org/JoinLCBAS.html)

The LCBAS Privacy Policy is available at our website.

Find out more at [www.lcbas.org](http://www.lcbas.org) or [www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org](http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org)

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- Membership Database: Rich Barchet, PENDING
- LCBAS Website: Ed Rykiel, webmaster@lcbas.org
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

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Richland, WA 99354

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society 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 _____________________________________________________

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To join the National Audubon Society, please go to www.audubon.org