



The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see www.lcbas.org

December 30: Christmas Bird Count

January 2: Board meeting at 6:30 PM

January 6: First Saturday Bird Walk at 8 AM. See page two

January 23: Monthly membership meeting at 7 PM

February 24: Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser is back! Stay tuned for more information.

Digital or Printed Curlew

Should the Curlew become a completely digital newsletter?

The LCBAS Board wants to determine whether eliminating the printed Curlew would be a hardship to any members of our group. This topic will be discussed during the CBC potluck, and the January meeting. If you are unable to attend either event, you can also use our contact information on page five to provide feedback in writing via mail or the LCBAS website.

Transitioning the Curlew to a 100% digital newsletter would be an environmentally sound decision and an solid economic choice for LCBAS. Saving money on printing and mailing costs would allow LCBAS to use more money to benefit both people and the birds/habitat.

Christmas Bird Count - December 30, 2023

Audubon's longest running community science project

Have you signed up yet? Contact a team leader or Bill LaFramboise for more information on how to bird for science during the holiday season.

Richland: Lisa Hill (509) 869-6715

Kennewick: Richard Barchet (509) 430-0053

Pasco: Dana Ward (509) 545-0627

For more information on the Tri-Cities Christmas Bird Count, please contact Bill LaFramboise: billnan321@gmail.com

If you have been on the fence about participating, or perhaps unconvinced that you have the skills to do so, you can conduct a feeder watch (see page four), or tag along on a route with a friend with more experience. Take a walk, or drive a designated route, and see what you might see. You too can count birds for science, and see or hear birds both common and rare!

For example, last year we observed 112 different species. Some of the uncommon species observations included an Eared Grebe, Lesser Black-backed Gull, five owl species, Western Bluebird, American Tree Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak.



The Tri-Cities (WATC) count circle, #58223

From Audubon at:

<https://audubon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=ac275eeb01434cedb1c5dcd0fd3fc7b4>

We will have a potluck dinner after the count to go over results. We have reserved a meeting space at the LDS Church in Richland, at 1321 Jadwin, in Richland. Enter from the back parking lot. We will have music from the Dulcimer Players from 2-to-4 PM, and provide hot cocoa and cookies. During that time we will also collect data from teams. The potluck dinner will start at 6 PM, with dinnerware and beverages provided.

First Saturday / Two Rivers Park Bird Walk Dec 2, 2023

By Lisa Hill

It was a dark and stormy...well, not dark, but it was stormy with wind and rain as we wandered through the western portion of Two Rivers Park in Finley in search of winter birds. Over a dozen birders braved the blustery damp and we found a good list of 38 species. Waterfowl are usually found in high numbers in the lagoon area, but the crowds were slim that day. RING-NECKED DUCKS, GADWALL and AMERICAN WIGEON topped the numbers along with LESSER SCAUP, COMMON GOLDENEYE, HOODED MERGANSERS, PIED-BILLED GREBE and HORNED GREBE. Two COMMON LOONS were easily observed in the Columbia River, diving and displaying a running/flapping locomotion on the surface of the water. We even heard a few seconds of the loon's eerie call.

An adult SHARP-SHINNED HAWK captured a HOUSE FINCH and retreated to an inner branch of a conifer where we were able to look up between the twigs and get great views. A young birder called our attention to a MERLIN perched in the open.

We were hoping to find some of the rarities seen in the park recently and we did find three CALIFORNIA SCRUB-JAYS, but there was no sign of a White-breasted Nuthatch or Red Crossbill. There was a nice mixed flock of RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS (GCKI) and three BROWN CREEPERS (BRCR). All of these small songbirds are winter residents here. The GCKI and BRRCR have very similar high-pitched calls that are sometimes hard to differentiate. Not everyone can hear the high frequency trills and chirps.

Brown Creepers are always present here in winter, but in low numbers. We were excited to find three of them working the trees searching for insects and insect eggs in the furrows of bark. They are a unique bird that behaves like a woodpecker in the way it clings to trunks and branches, using their stiff tail feathers to brace and support vigorous pecking activity. The BRRCR is the only species in North America in the genus *Certhia*. There are nine species worldwide, all with very similar appearance and behavior, and a few are named treecreepers. They breed in wooded areas and nest almost exclusively in dead snags where slabs of bark have separated from the trunk wood. A sling-like nest is built in the shallow space behind the bark and is almost completely invisible.



Brown Creeper
Photo by Larry Umthun

The next First Saturday bird walk will be January 6, 2024. Great news! Bateman Island has reopened to the public and our walks will resume there. Please meet in the parking lot at Wye Park, above the causeway to the island. We will kick off a new year of birding promptly at 8 AM!

Avian Influenza Update

With large, congregating flocks of overwintering waterfowl in our area, it's important to remember that Avian Influenza is still a concern. CDC and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife warn people to be aware and take precautions. If you visit areas with waterfowl, clean your shoes when leaving. Avoid touching birds, especially if they appear ill. More info: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/bird-flu>

Songbirds are much less likely to contract the disease, but you should still be cautious. Always wash thoroughly after coming into contact with bird feeders or birds to reduce the risk. For more information, check out the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, or applicable state/CDC sites.

Conservation Report by Allen Gibbs, from the Pilchuck Audubon PROFILE

Reprinted with permission from Allen Gibbs of Pilchuck Audubon Society

To the reader: All quotes in this article are from The Seattle Times. Dates of articles and writers: July 20 and November 15-Isabella Breda, November 21-Jim Brunner and Claire Withycombe.

Audubon Washington and other conservation and climate change groups began advocating for carbon pricing years ago. The result was passage in 2021 of the Climate Commitment Act which established a carbon tax. Washington State began a program this year that puts a price on each metric ton of emitted gases that cause climate change. "It caps overall emissions and puts a price on pollution for some of the state's biggest emitters in an effort to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement..."

Initiative-2117 - The petroleum industry is gathering signatures in Washington State for an initiative to the State Legislature to repeal the 2021 Climate Commitment Act. The Act funds clean energy and fights climate change by making polluters pay a carbon tax.

"Supporting Initiative 2117 are the Washington State Republican Party; Tim Eyman; an initiative expert; conservative think tanks, industry trade associations, and nonprofit groups funded by the industry...." The campaign casts blame on the state's new climate change policies.

Opponents of WA climate law file signatures to repeal it. A minimum of 324,516 valid signatures must be filed at the Secretary of State's office in Olympia by Friday, December 29th. More than 400,000 signatures have already been delivered. The validity of the signatures must then be verified.

The Legislature has some options.

"[The Legislature] can adopt and pass the proposal into law as written. If it takes no action or rejects (the initiative), the initiative goes on the ballot for voters to decide in the November 2024 statewide election."

"Inslee, lawmakers turn up heat on oil companies as WA gas prices top nation" Governor Inslee and some state legislators have spoken about the oil industry's record profits. Washington State Senator Joe Nguyen, chair of the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology Committee, and House Majority Leader Joe Fitzgibbon said they are drafting legislation "... to force oil companies to open their books and create a mechanism to penalize the companies if they are gouging consumers."

"The state's carbon-pricing program is the centerpiece of the 2021 Climate Commitment Act." The proposed legislation "is modeled after a similar law that went into effect in California last month....It can penalize oil companies...if it is found they are making excessive profits, and a penalty would not cause a rise in prices for consumers.

"WA raises \$260 million in most recent carbon pricing auction" "About 31.9 million carbon allowances have been sold this year" in Washington State, bringing in \$1.5 billion. "Lawmakers this year budgeted about \$2 billion in anticipated revenue from the auctions to reduce emissions and improve air quality over the next two years."

Where is that money to go? According to Senator Marko Liias of Everett, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, "without the climate law, critical investments in the state's transportation infrastructure were at risk." This result would be more people spending "more time stuck in traffic or blocked by a failing bridge, and our kids breathing polluted air."

More information about the I-2117 campaign to repeal the Climate Commitment Act will be in the January 2024 PROFILE. No doubt Audubon Washington and supporters of the Climate Commitment Act will be busy defending and strengthening it in the 2024 legislative short session.

Christmas Bird Count Feeder Watch

December 30, 2023

Bird feeder watchers are strongly encouraged to participate, but you need to live within the count circle, which is 7.5 miles out from the center of the Columbia River between Chiawana Park and Bateman Island. Not sure if you are? Check out the small map on the front page, and/or contact Bill (info below) to help make that determination.

If you don't have a feeder, consider buying some bird seed and making a feeding area in your yard. You can spread the seed on the ground and many birds will feed there. Whether you count only a few species, or many, the information will help in our overall bird data collection.

For feeder watchers, the count protocol is outlined below:

- ◆ Spend 5 to 7 minutes counting each time you observe the feeder. You could do this once, or many times during the count day.
- ◆ Keep a log of each species and number of birds seen for each species during your 5-7 minute count.
- ◆ The greatest number of individuals of any one species seen during any one of the 5-7 minute counts will be the only number you record.
- ◆ For example, 12 different species were observed. Record and submit and the greatest number of each species.
- ◆ Do not add all the numbers from each 5-7 minute count period together, and do not average the numbers.
- ◆ Keep track of the total time spent watching the feeder and record that for submittal.

Please contact Bill LaFramboise for more information:

billnan321@gmail.com

Adapting to the Cold



Photo by Keith Williams, shared through Creative Commons
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/keithmwilliams/5727282051/>

What can birds teach us about staying warm in the cold?

Shared from the US Fish and Wildlife Service: www.facebook.com/USFWS

Have you ever wondered how birds can stay warm through the cold months? Birds of all shapes and sizes have special adaptations for living in cold climates.

Just like people, birds shiver to stay warm. Birds have much higher metabolic rates and burn more energy to stay warm than we do. Black-capped chickadees weigh less than half an ounce and can maintain a body temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit - even when the air is 0 degrees! They do this by having great insulation, being very active and remembering where they store their food. A steady supply of food is essential, because chickadees eat more than 35% of their weight every day!

Whether fat, fur or feathers, insulation matters for most cold-weather animals. All cold-climate birds pack on body weight in the late summer and fall in anticipation of the long, cold winter, but feathers also play an important role. All birds stay warm by trapping pockets of air around their bodies. The secret to maintaining these layers of air lies in having clean, dry and flexible feathers. Preening helps birds keep a water resistant top layer and a toasty warm inner layer.

Similar to people who may cuddle for warmth, small birds like tree swallows crowd together in shrubs, vines and evergreen trees to share body heat. They can also slow down their metabolic rate to conserve energy. Cavity nesters like nuthatches, titmice and downy woodpeckers use tree cavities and nest boxes to stay warm.

Have you ever wondered how birds keep their legs warm? Waterfowl species circulate blood through a countercurrent heat exchange, isolating the blood that flows in their legs rather than circulating it throughout their entire bodies. This helps to keep their body temperatures higher. Birds also have specialized scales on their feet and legs that help minimize heat loss. Many ducks, geese, pelicans, gulls and swans further conserve body heat by standing on one leg or even sitting down.

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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 <https://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/join-renew-donate>

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

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>
President	Dana Ward	president@lcbas.org
Vice President	OPEN	—
Treasurer	Dan Hansen	treasurer@lcbas.org
Secretary	Debbie Berkowitz	secretary@lcbas.org
Birding Events	Jason Fidorra	—
Communications Chair	Charlene Burge	—
Conservation Co-Chair	Dana Ward and Rick Leumont	conservation@lcbas.org
Education Chair	OPEN	—
Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	treasurer@lcbas.org
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	OPEN	
Director at Large	Robin Priddy	
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 (\$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