

# The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

## Upcoming Events:

For more information see [www.lcbas.org](http://www.lcbas.org)

**Dec. 18:** LCBAS Christmas Bird Count

**No December Membership Meeting.**

The CBC and potluck usually replace the December meeting, but this year we will not be able to hold a potluck due to Covid-19. However, the CBC is ON! See who to contact in the article to the right.

**Jan. 3:** LCBAS Board Meeting at 6:30. Contact any board member for more information.

**Jan. 15-Feb. 15:** Climate Watch Nuthatch Count

**Jan. 25:** January membership meeting.

**Have you found an injured or sick bird?**



**Contact Blue Mountain Wildlife:**

<http://bluemountainwildlife.org/>  
(541)278-0215

## Christmas Bird Count

**Count Day is December 18, 2021**

**Audubon's Ongoing Citizen Science Project**

**Have you signed up yet? Contact a team leader for more information:**

**Richland:** Lisa Hill (50) 869-6715

**Kennewick:** Richard Barchet (509) 430-0053

**Pasco:** Dana Ward (50) 545-0627

**Or email Dana Ward:** [dcarlward@gmail.com](mailto:dcarlward@gmail.com)

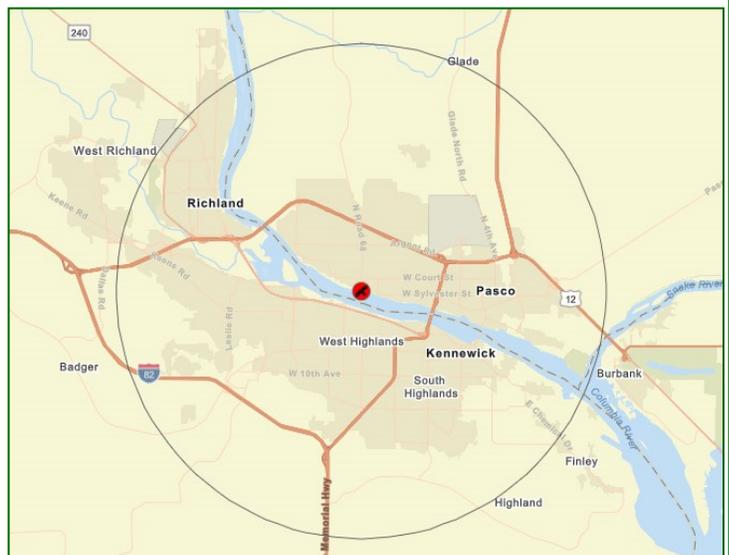
**For more information on the Tri-Cities Christmas Bird Count, please contact Dana Ward.**

Participants will bird only with family members or close friends that are Covid-19 aware, with proper social distance and masks as directed by National Audubon. All bird count data will be sent by email, phoned, mailed or dropped off with the team leads. Please contact Dana Ward if you would like to participate but are not signed up for a route yet.

Thanks, Dana Ward Christmas Bird Count Coordinator.

The count will be conducted under strict Covid-19 Virus restrictions. There will be no potluck at the end of the day.

**For more information on the CBC, see the November issue of the Curlew, page 4 of this issue. For Feeder Watch information, see page 3. Information is also available at [lcbas.org](http://lcbas.org)**



The Tri-Cities (WATC) count circle.

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

# Grebes: Easier to Identify in Summer, but What About Winter?

By Lisa Hill, photos by Larry Umthun

Horned Grebe



Horned Grebe 14"

- Strong demarcation between white cheek and black head
- Front of neck white and back of neck black, usually with strong demarcation
- Forehead sloped about 45 degrees
- Bill thicker than Eared Grebe
- Dark red eye
- Overall stockier than Eared Grebe
- Can appear as miniature version of Western Grebe when neck is stretched out although the bill is quite different

Eared Grebe



Eared Grebe 13"

- Vague dusky gray ear patch
- Thin neck is grayish front and back with little or no demarcation
- Forehead sloped very little – nearly vertical
- Bill slimmer than Horned Grebe
- Yellowish orange eye
- Rear of the bird often fluffed out and appears puffier than Horned Grebe
- Overall more delicate appearance than Horned Grebe

Pied-billed Grebe



Pied-billed Grebe 13"

- No discernable white on the head or neck
- Overall a warm brown with paler feathers on flanks and rear
- Forehead sloped about 45 degrees
- Bill very thick and short with a dark ring near the center of upper and lower bill making a "pied" or two-colored bill, unlike Horned or Eared Grebe
- Black eye with white eye ring
- Overall squat, big-headed appearance

## Christmas Bird Count Feeder Watch December 18, 2021

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.

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 period.
- ◆ The greatest number of individuals of any one species seen during any one of the 5-7 minute counts will be the only number to record for submittal.
- ◆ For example, 12 different species were observed and the greatest number of each different species is recorded and submitted.
- ◆ 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.



Winter resident Anna's Hummingbirds crowd a feeder.  
Photo by Bruce Conard

**For more information on the Tri-Cities CBC Feeder Watch, please contact Dana Ward:**  
[dcarlward@gmail.com](mailto:dcarlward@gmail.com)

## LCBAS Red-breasted Nuthatch Count

"According to Audubon's 2019 climate change report, *'Survival By Degrees.'* up to two-thirds of North American birds are vulnerable to extinction due to climate change. The good news is that there are plenty of opportunities to protect birds from this existential threat, and Audubon members have been leading the way for years. In 2014, after the publication of Audubon's first climate change report, thousands of people asked how they could help make the world a better place for birds, and Climate Watch was born. You can join us in this fight by observing birds in your area, using our specific protocol, and helping us learn about how birds are responding to the changing climate. Learn more below.

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch#>

LCBAS joined the Climate Watch study in the fall of 2017. We identified nine 10x10 km squares with 12 points each, containing habitat for Red-breasted Nuthatches. Volunteers conduct 5-minute point counts following protocol set by the Climate Watch scientists. All the birds seen and heard are recorded on e-Bird.org.

The next survey will take place between January 15 - February 15. See the link above for more information. If you would like to participate contact [cheriebaudrand@yahoo.com](mailto:cheriebaudrand@yahoo.com).



Red-breasted Nuthatch  
Photo by Betsy Bass

## Last year we had 60 participants in our local CBC, and saw 113 species! How will this year compare?



**Hooded Merganser**  
Photo by Larry Umthun



**Birding until the sun went down on a past CBC.**  
Photo by Judy Gallagher, from flickr.com

- ◆ People of all ages and skill levels participate in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count.
- ◆ The CBC started in 1900 with 27 people, who wanted to start a new conservation tradition. That's twelve decades!
- ◆ More than 72,000 people counted birds in North and South America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere last year.
- ◆ More than 44 million birds were counted last year!
- ◆ The CBC takes place from December 14, through January 5, although each survey circle has one, shorter, survey period.
- ◆ Researchers and enthusiasts alike can track the long term health and status of bird species and populations through the CBC and the Breeding Bird Survey. More than 300 peer reviewed papers have used this long-term data, which is in essence the only data of its kind.
- ◆ The long term data help us develop plans for the protection of these species in the future, and track changes in populations, and the ranges of birds. These surveys are providing a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past twelve decades.
- ◆ The CBC includes a feeder watch! See page 3 for more information if you'd like to count birds from your feeder.
- ◆ The information that all Christmas Bird Counts generate is reviewed and placed in a database that is available on the internet. The database can be accessed through [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org), then select the Christmas Bird

Count icon. The Tri-Cities count code is WATC.

- ◆ You can register to participate in more than one CBC at:  
<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

### **Please Consider Subscribing to the e-Curlew!**

Have you ever thought about subscribing to the digital version instead of print? If not, you should! There are many benefits: You can see the photos in color, receive your eCurlew sooner, and save paper and other resources. Due to increased print and mail expenses, we ask you to consider going to a completely digital subscription!

To switch to the eCurlew, please let us know at [subscriptions@lcbas.org](mailto:subscriptions@lcbas.org) include your name and email address.

### **LCBAS is Still Seeking Volunteers for the Vice-President and Membership Chair**

LCBAS welcomes your help! You could work with a dedicated group of people to help run LCBAS. It doesn't require a great deal of time, but you can have a great deal of impact! Training, smiles, and cookies provided (ok, kidding about the cookies, but one day, again, we will have cookies). No job is too small, and all volunteers are greatly appreciated. You don't have to be an expert birder or expert in the area, if you are interested in volunteering. To volunteer please contact any board member on page 7 for more information.

## Conservation: Leslie Groves Park Tree Removal

Some of you may have seen the tree/shrub removal that has occurred at the south part of Leslie Groves park in Richland, between the bike path and pedestrian path east of Gaillard Place and Hunt Ave./Hunt Point. Jane Abel has been walking the path along the river regularly for a number of years, photographing plants, birds, and insects along the way. She wrote an excellent letter to the head of the Parks & Rec Dept., Joe Schiessl, which is included below. This is an ongoing issue with additional correspondence since this was submitted to the Curlew. If you want more information, please contact [conservation@lcbas.org](mailto:conservation@lcbas.org).

Mr. Schiessl,

Decisions to substantially change or remove vegetation from our city parks, should not be made lightly. Richland residents and park users deserve to know about these large-scale projects well before they are implemented, so that we all understand why this is necessary, and how best to accomplish the goal. If the City doesn't have staff familiar with issues of biology or ecology, local groups such as the Audubon Society and the Native Plant Society could be consulted about how removing large swaths of woody plant material from the park would impact the existing wildlife. Apparently, the crew sent to Leslie Groves recently was given very few guidelines other than leaving small islands of woody plants and clear the rest of the vegetation to the ground.

Globally, pollinators and birds face increasing threats and declines because of a loss of habitat, yet this project appears to have been initiated without serious thought about the impact to the ecosystem. I doubt that any of the crew knew a desirable native plant, that should be spared from removal, from a non-native plant that may have less value in the ecosystem. There are many bird species that spend the winter in this area feeding on berries, seeds and insects and use the underbrush for safety when threatened. Several bird species use the underbrush for nesting. Spring blooming Golden Currant and Oregon Grape provide nectar for early emerging native bees, including at least three species of bumblebees, and several species of butterflies. Later in summer, these same plants provide food for birds.

Non-native Weeping willows, (planted by a resident) were carefully and neatly pruned, while Peach-leaf willow and Coyote willow, natives that support a long list of pollinators, were bashed and ripped apart by heavy equipment. Golden Currant and Oregon Grape were cut down at ground level and plowed over by a bobcat. The lower branches of Sycamore trees (Cooper's Hawks nest here in spring) were removed, as were the lower branches of almost all trees left standing. These were not trees in poor health, so this was not done for safety measures, nor could this be considered "fall clean-up".

According to an employee operating the equipment, "the residents along the river were concerned about homeless people sleeping in the park at night". I walk from Ferry St. to Hains Ave. nearly every day of the year and I have never met anyone living in the underbrush between the walking path and the bike path at the south end of Leslie Groves. I see people in the park that I surmise are homeless, but they are simply passing through the park, which they have every right to do. Several years ago, someone erected a tent in this area and last spring there was a blanket left in the area, both have been removed. I am well aware of people living in other areas on the edge of the river. People have lived in the heavily wooded area below the dike for years, people have lived east of the Hains parking lot and there is, or was, someone north of Snyder living in the wooded riparian area, but no one has been living in the area east of Gaillard/ Hunt/Hunt Point between the bike and walking path.

If the city was convinced that homeless people were living in this area, did city employees go to this area to make an observation for themselves? Was this documented with photos? Or was this a report from one or two residents? Are there plans to continue this practice in other wooded parks, such as Bateman, Johnson and Chamna?

Continued on page 6



**Before and after photos from Leslie Groves Park.  
Photos by Carole Byrd**

Homelessness is a complicated issue that affects us all, but I don't believe homelessness was truly at the heart of this particular issue.

The Park Department should be aware that in the past, residents in this area have taken it upon themselves to remove trees and vegetation to improve the view from their homes. I met one resident applying an herbicide on park property to keep an open path from his house to the walking path. He told me that the City had given him permission to do so. Oddly this is exactly the area that has now been extensively opened up with heavy equipment. If this entire project centered around reports of homeless people, living between the two paths, then the City was given half-truths, failed to confirm the facts and saved the nearby residents the time and effort of doing the job themselves.

Richland residents deserve to be informed, rather than surprised, about major projects affecting our public parks and be given reasonable time for comment. It would be very easy to post signs about future projects along the bike and walking path in the park. The new city park planed in south Richland shows a map and is asking for community input—why was Leslie Groves not handled in a similar manner?

Another issue which I informed you about this summer, is the rare native plant (*Malvella leprosa*) growing in the center of the field south of the Park St. parking lot. This is not a federally listed plant, but it is a species of concern in Washington and has been given a conservation status of "Review group 1" by WANHP. This plant has rarely been reported in Washington state since the 1950s, and to my knowledge never reported in Benton County, thus the review status. What can we do to protect the 25-30 plants that grow in the field? The City mowed this field last week and ran over the plants repeatedly. The adult plants may survive, but what appeared to be seedlings were flattened. The easiest solution would be to keep vehicles out of the center of the field. I'm opposed to marking the plants with flags, because that would just make them more obvious to the wrong people. On the other hand, because they are not obvious to anyone, City vehicles drive over them. Let's figure out a way to protect the plants.

Would you consider replacing the Oregon Grape and Golden Currant that were destroyed and possibly adding a few other native woody plants (Red-twig dogwood and rose) in the southern end of Leslie Groves? How about some corrective pruning to the native willows with ripped jagged edges? Our parks are a perfect place to give much needed help to pollinators and birds and have a positive impact on the ecosystem.



**Golden currant from Leslie Groves Park, summer, and the aftermath of cutting. Photos by Nancy Doran and Jane Abel**



**Native plants provide habitat for the wildlife species which evolved with them, and should be selected for and maintained in our parks and along the rivers.**



**Left to right: wild rose with bumblebee, Oregon grape with White-crowned Sparrow, and golden currant berries. Photos by Charlene Burge**

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**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Please send address changes (postal address or email address) to Rich Barchet at [subscriptions@lcbas.org](mailto: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](http://www.lcbas.org) or [www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org](http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org)

### LCBAS OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>
President	Sheri Whitfield	president@lcbas.org
Vice President	<b>OPEN</b>	---
Treasurer	Dan Hansen	treasurer@lcbas.org
Secretary	Debbie Berkowitz	secretary@lcbas.org
Birding Events	Jason Fidorra	fieldtrips@lcbas.org
Communications Chair	Charlene Burge	communications@lcbas.org
Conservation Co-Chair	Dana Ward and Rick Leumont	conservation@lcbas.org
Education Chair	Cherie Baudrand	education@lcbas.org
Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	treasurer@lcbas.org
Fundraising Chair	Marcie Daines	fundraising@lcbas.org
Membership Chair	<b>OPEN</b>	---
Program Chair	Kathy Criddle	programs@lcbas.org
Director at Large	Robin Priddy	
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LCBAS Website	Ed Rykiel	webmaster@lcbas.org
Publicity Chair	Charlotte Reep	

**Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society****PO Box 1900****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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership in LCBAS is separate from membership in the National Audubon Society.  
To join the National Audubon Society, please go to [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)