

The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see www.lcbas.org

Feb 24: Applebee’s Breakfast Fundraiser--see page two for information on buying tickets, and join us for a great fundraiser and an opportunity to enjoy each other’s company!



Feb 24: Winter Birds at McNary See friendsofmcrwr.org/events

Feb 27: LCBAS Monthly Member Meeting at 7:00 PM

March 2: First Saturday / Bateman Island Bird Walk. Meet at Wye Park at 8:00 AM. See page two for more information.

March 5: Board meeting at 6:30 PM. Contact any board member for more information.

March 26: LCBAS Monthly Member Meeting at 7:00 PM

Lemurs and Vangas! Wildlife and Ecology of Madagascar

**February Membership Meeting:
Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 7:00 PM**

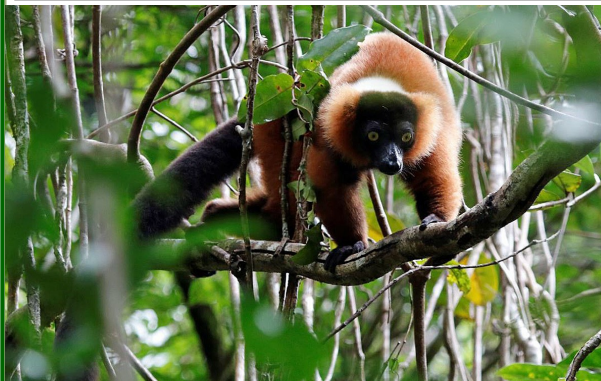
In person at: First Lutheran Church, 418 N. Yelm, Kennewick, WA

With Jason Fidorra, WDFW Wildlife Biologist and LCBAS Birding Events

Madagascar is a fascinating destination for the naturalist, and a must for world birders and mammal watchers. The “8th Continent” hosts many endemic families of plants and animals, including five endemic bird families, and is famous for its lemurs, chameleons, and baobabs. Jason will present on the biogeography of this island nation, with stories and photos from his month traveling from the lush coastal rainforest to the desert spiny forests of the island.



Helmet Vanga (above, right) and red-ruffed lemur (below) Photos by Jason Fidorra



Jason Fidorra is a Wildlife Biologist for the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife in the Tri-Cities. Jason is working on the front lines of shrub-steppe conservation, which is critical habitat for many of Washington’s species of greatest concern. He conducts surveys for a variety of wildlife from

elk to monarchs, and has contributed to research on Burrowing Owls, raptors, and game birds over the past eight years.

First Saturday / Bateman Island Bird Walk February 3, 2024

By Lisa Hill

Another great crowd of eager birders scoured Bateman Island and came up with an impressive 53 species. Surprisingly, there was still a lot of ice on both sides of the causeway so waterfowl were only visible with a scope in the light fog. A long list of species were seen on the Yakima delta: WOOD DUCK, NORTHERN PINTAIL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, REDHEAD, BUFFLEHEAD, COMMON GOLDENEYE, HOODED and COMMON MERGANSER, and RUDDY DUCK.



Tundra Swans
Photo by Larry Umthun

A flock of SNOW GEESE flew overhead and 14 TUNDRA SWANS were sleeping and dabbling near Columbia Point. Tundra Swans are becoming a fairly common sight in winter in the delta. They breed in the arctic tundra and pockets of them overwinter in the western U.S. and along the east coast. With the loss of wetlands for winter feeding, many swans now forage in grain fields. Tundra Swans, *Cygnus columbianus*, used to be called Whistling Swans. *Cygnus* is from the Latin for swan and *columbianus* means "of or near the Columbia River". A juvenile Trumpeter Swan was reported off the north end of Bateman a few days later.

BEWICK'S WRENS and SONG SPARROWS were numerous, but we had to wait until the end of the walk as we checked out the asphalt trail to the boat launch to find DARK-EYED JUNCO, HERMIT THRUSH, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER and a singing ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER. Spring is on the way!

The next Bateman Island bird walk is Saturday, March 2. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park above the causeway to the island. We begin promptly at 8:00 AM.

Please join us! Both the public and LCBAS members are always welcome. Binoculars are available, first come, first served.

Join LCBAS at the Flapjack Fundraiser

****February 24, 2024****



Join us for breakfast on Saturday, February 24, 2024 at Applebee's in Pasco at 5305 N. Road 68. Breakfast will be served from 8-10:00 AM.

The breakfast includes PANCAKES, eggs, bacon, sausage, and beverage. The price is \$12, with a portion of that to be used for LCBAS efforts to care for and educate the public about birds.

Tickets can be purchased by contacting Marcie Daines through treasurer@lcbas.org, mdthd@frontier.com, or by phone at: 509-579-6514 (cell) or 509-627-4854 (home). Please contact Marcie if you're interested in purchasing ticket(s), helping to sell tickets, or volunteering to help serve pancakes at the event.

The Science Behind ‘Jizz’ or ‘Giss’

Is Birding Good for Your Brain?

By Carl Berkowitz, derived from a Spring’23 Audubon Magazine article by Joanna Thompson

Birders use the term ‘jizz’, or ‘giss’ to describe an overall impression based on a just a quick glance of a fast moving or hidden bird. A bird’s jizz is based on a vague sense of shape, size, behavior ... and often just a sixth sense of what was briefly seen.

These features, when mashed together, allow experienced birders to quickly identify many species based on just a glance as the critter of interest flits from a shady bush into an adjacent tree, giving the viewer only the shortest time to form an impression of what was seen.

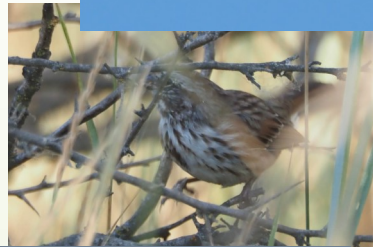
Recent work at Vanderbilt University has now linked the development of jizz with neuroplasticity of the brain. Birding, along with similar activities that require multiple detailed observations, can produce a quantifiable rewiring of the brain producing enhanced observational skills and improved memory. Using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), investigators have also established that not one, but many regions of the brain are involved in these learning processes.

The net result helps explain the physical processes within the brain that allow experienced birders to not only spot birds in a way that seems magical to novices, but to also identify the species of interest with just a glance.

Not surprisingly, more birding leads to better skills in birding. This in turn is good for more than just leading bird walks or building a longer life list. Birding was shown to be correlated with an increase in that part of the cerebral cortex associated with hearing and seeing, making it easier to assimilate many similar types of information and to improve overall memory.

Putting these results to practical use, a professor at Harvard Medical School used bird identification to improve the observational skills of students in her Practice of Medicine Class.

The upshot of this research is that birding can do more than satisfy our curiosity about the natural world. Spending time along McNary’s Quail Trail or other birding spots with binoculars and a field guide is good not just for your psyche. It may also be good for your brain.



All terrible bird sightings that may require a well developed birding sense of “jizz” For identification. Terrible photos by Charlene Burge

Upcoming Birding Festivals

March 15-17: The 21st Annual Wings Over Water NW Birding Festival in Blaine, Birch Bay, and Semiahmoo. wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com

March 22-24: Othello Sandhill Crane Festival Celebrate their return and learn why nearly 35,000 cranes choose Othello, WA. as a spring migration stopover. www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org

April 11-14: Olympic Bird Fest <https://olympicbirdfest.org/>

HawkWatch -- California's Swainson's Hawk Spring Migration

By Charlene Burge

Swainson's Hawks are a common summer resident in open spaces from the West to the Great Plains. Each fall they gather into flocks and engage in one of the longest raptor migrations in the world. The northern-most nesting birds may fly up to 6,000+ miles south, to southern South America. In the spring they migrate north again, in loose flocks which can number in the hundreds.

Borrego Springs, CA., adjacent to Anza Borrego State Park, has likely long been a spring stop-over for Swainson's. It became a Hawkwatch location in 2003 when large numbers of Turkey Vultures and Swainson's Hawks were noticed roosting overnight during spring migration. This is one of two Hawkwatch locations in CA., and the best Swainson's Hawk spring migration viewing location in the nation.

Date palms in a defunct date farm, as well as wind-rows of tamarisk trees, a golf course, citrus farms, and native palms and other vegetation provide good overnight roosting habitat, and during wet spring conditions, there is often ample food available.



A kettle of Swainson's Hawks ride a thermal near Borrego Springs, CA. Photo by Charlene Burge



Swainson's Hawk
Photo by Tom Koerner/USFWS

If there is a good spring wildflower bloom in the desert (and resulting insect hatch) Swainson's Hawks can eat all the sphinx moth caterpillars, flying ants, and grasshoppers they can hold, and will sometimes spend up to a week refueling before continuing their migration. While they will eat the "three - R's" during nesting season (rodents, reptiles, and rabbits), their preferred food is insects.

Swainson's Hawks begin arriving in Borrego Springs in Mid February, and by April the majority have moved through this Hawkwatch location. Mid-to-late March is usually the height of their spring migration, and while some evenings may be quiet, on others, hundreds or even a thousand or more hawks will flutter in at dusk to settle into roosts. In the morning, if food is available, hundreds may settle into the wildflower fields to hunt, while others await warm thermals to start climbing into the sky to continue their journey north.

When they climb into the sky on the warm thermals, a kettle of hundreds of hawks and turkey vultures can form. Once they've arrived at the best elevation to fly, they begin slipping away, one or two or ten at a time, to soar northward up Coyote Canyon and onward towards their summer nesting territories.

Most Swainson's Hawks begin arriving in Eastern Washington in early April. Most will continue north, but some stay in our area as summer breeding residents.

To learn more about Swainson's Hawks and their amazing migration, check out Audubon's Bird Migration Explorer. Then move on to check out the migration of some of your favorite birds!

<https://explorer.audubon.org/explore/species/945/swainson-hawk/migration>

<https://explorer.audubon.org/explore/species>

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ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send address changes (postal address or email address) to <https://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact> so that your subscription is not interrupted. You can also mail address changes to LCBAS, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA 99352.

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 Leaumont	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