

# The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia  
Basin Audubon Society

## Upcoming Events:

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

**February 28:** Monthly Membership Meeting at 7:00 pm via Zoom

**March 4:** Bateman Island Birdwalk at 8:00 am (see page 2)

**March 7:** Monthly Board Meeting at 6:30 pm via Zoom

**March 11, April 8, May 13, & June 10:** Tapteal Greenway/LCBAS jointly hosted birdwalks. The first is at Amon Creek. See page 2 for information on this and the other upcoming dates.

**April:** Intermountain West Shorebird Survey Community Science opportunity (see pages 4 & 6)

## Other Events:

### Winter Birds at McNary NWR

**February 25:** Winter Birds 2023 celebration will take place at McNary NWR in Burbank from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. For more information on events available and how to participate: [www.friendsofmcrwr.org/](http://www.friendsofmcrwr.org/)

### Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

**March 24-26:** For more information and to register: [www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org](http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org)

For upcoming meetings and walks with the Columbia Basin Chapter of the WA Native Plant Society please check: [www.cbwnps.org/](http://www.cbwnps.org/)

## Bird-Window Collisions on the WSU Tri-Cities Campus

**Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 7:00 pm via Zoom (link below)**

**With Lori Nelson,  
LCBAS member and  
Assistant Professor of Biology at WSU Tri-Cities**

When birds look at a window, they don't see glass - they see trees or sky. Birds are fooled by this "solid air," fly into windows, and often die of their injuries. Bird mortality from window collisions could be as high as 988 million birds/year in the US alone.

In this talk, I'll share the results of my three-year study of bird-window collisions on the WSU Tri-Cities campus and how I hope this work will help make campus a friendlier place for the birds we love and enjoy.



WSU Tri-Cities campus --a window reflecting the landscape

Go to [www.lcbas.org](http://www.lcbas.org) for a clickable link, or use this link to join the Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86538718274?pwd=d09aSzIRa2hTNHRBTfHXS0dvRlcvdz09>

Meeting ID: 865 3871 8274    Passcode: 666986

## Bateman Island Bird Walk February 4, 2023

By Lisa Hill

Another beautiful day in the Bateman Island neighborhood! Calm and dry, but still very cool with lots of ice on the Yakima River delta and flanking the causeway to the island. It was wonderful to have so many new birders join the group for their first-ever Bateman walk. We hope they enjoyed the introduction to birding and will return soon for another adventure.

While walking the trail, it seemed that there were very few birds, which can make a birder worried. Where are all the birds? Shouldn't we be seeing lots of winter species? I reviewed the species numbers for Bateman Island walks on the first Saturday in February from 2008-2023. Tossing out the high and low numbers of 29 and 60, the average number of species was 45, which is two less than the count we had for this walk. So, it was a reminder that we shouldn't assume there is something wrong until we check some data figures. This walk is just a moment in time with specific conditions.

We saw many of the typical waterfowl and raptors for this time of year. Two species seen that are not found often, or only in very low numbers, were PACIFIC WREN and NORTHERN SHRIKE. Both are winter residents here and breed in northern Canada and Alaska, and in the case of the Pacific Wren, along the west coast of WA, OR and CA. The wren is secretive and hangs out low to the ground except when disturbed, then it pops out, chattering loudly with its tail sticking straight up.



**Pacific Wren**  
Photo by Larry Umthun



**Northern Shrike**  
Photo by Larry Umthun

The Northern Shrike is mostly silent and sits out in the open scanning for prey, usually from the very top of a spindly tree. Behaving like a raptor, it actively hunts prey including insects, rodents and birds. Shrikes have been called “butcher birds” because of their habit of caching larger prey and impaling it on thorns or sharp twigs to hang, or wedging the food in a fork of twigs. They are songbirds, not raptors, and therefore do not have strong feet and talons capable of holding down prey to be eaten. The caching methods allow them to tear the prey into small pieces with their hooked bill. Shrikes are fairly small birds and do not have a crop nor a large enough digestive system to consume an entire mouse or bird at once. They usually visit the cache multiple times and eventually eat the entire prey.

**The next Bateman Island bird walk is Saturday, March 4, at 8:00 am sharp. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park above the causeway to the island.**

## Birding the Taptéal Greenway with LCBAS and Taptéal Greenway

Join LCBAS and the Taptéal Greenway in a series of joint bird walks in 2023. The walks will be once per month, February through June, in five of the pearls along the Taptéal Greenway necklace. The first walk in the joint venture was February's LCBAS Bateman Island walk (see article, above).

The rest of the walks will occur on the second Saturday of each month. All walks will start at 8:00 am because birds don't sleep in! See [www.tapteal.org](http://www.tapteal.org), the LCBAS Calendar at [www.lcbas.org](http://www.lcbas.org), or email [mike.lilga@gmail.com](mailto:mike.lilga@gmail.com) for more information about the start locations. This is a great opportunity to not only learn some birds, but also to see some of the interesting habitats and destinations along the Taptéal Greenway.

**Amon Creek Natural Preserve**  
2nd Sat., March 11, 8 am  
S. Entrance off Leslie Rd

**Chamna Natural Preserve**  
2nd Sat., April 8, 8 am  
main parking lot

**W.E. Johnson Park**  
2nd Sat., May 13, 8 am  
S. Entrance on  
Tanglewood

**Horn Rapids Park**  
2nd Sat., June 10, 8 am  
kiosk parking lot

## LCBAS Conservation Committee Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Horse Heaven Hills Project

**Proposal summary:** Scout Clean Energy is proposing to construct up to 244 turbines and three separate solar arrays on the Horse Heaven Hills south of Kennewick. The total project incorporates a leased area of about 112 square miles. The proposed project is the single largest project of its type planned in Washington. Scout Clean Energy submitted a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) of over 1000 pages for review. Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) will determine a go-, or no-go option for the Governor. Governor Jay Inslee will have the final approval.

**Written comments:** LCBAS submitted seven pages of comments to EFSEC for consideration. The comments pointed out weaknesses and total failures of the DEIS. The DEIS did not address alternatives; this is a total failure. All well written DEIS should have at least one alternative beyond the “no action alternative”. The DEIS does not contain enough information to fully review environmental impacts. The DEIS should have contained more specificity on turbine locations, therefore, analysis of impacts could not be done. Mitigation measures were not fully addressed for habitat loss and for specific avian species such as Ferruginous Hawks.

The review of the DEIS focused only on the biological sciences with a focus on birds and habitat. No comments were sent concerning such important topics as the viewshed, work force, dusting, blade flickering or recycling of spent components.

**Verbal Comments:** Approximately 75 people commented on the project. The following are the verbal comments made on behalf of LCBAS to the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council on Wednesday evening, February 1, 2023.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Horse Heaven Hills Project DEIS. The seriousness of climate change and resulting impact to human life, the environment and the welfare of the earth relies on intelligent actions to limit carbon emissions from fossil fuels and other sources. The construction of solar arrays and wind turbines are important steps to slow or even reverse global warming. The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society supports well planned solar and wind turbine projects, BUT they must be sited responsibly, and must take into account, as a minimum, the biological habitat and biological resources that would be impacted. From our review, the DEIS falls well short of attaining this goal.

To allow for adequate environmental review, the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Horse Heaven Hills must include a specific site design, identification and analysis of reasonable alternatives that minimizes or eliminates impacts to the environmental resources such as disappearing shrub-steppe habitat, avian species such as Ferruginous Hawks and Burrowing Owls, as well as prey species such as ground squirrels.

In a broader sense, the EIS must address the likely environmental impacts associated with specific siting decisions, and specific mitigation measures with associated performance measures that address the regional impacts to birds, mammals, and plant populations, and their habitat connectivity.

Thank you,  
Dana Ward

## FIELD TRIP to RINGOLD SPRINGS

On Jan 8<sup>th</sup>, seven birders joined Jason Fidorra for a field trip to Ringold Springs. The rainy morning deterred others, but the group enjoyed dry weather most of the time onsite! The first highlight of the morning was relocating two AMERICAN DIPPERS previously found in December, which are uncommon in Franklin Co and only seen every few years during the winter. Near one of the springs in the cattails, a MARSH WREN was found, then Rowan Young-McMurchie heard a chip note and promptly identified it as SWAMP SPARROW. The Swamp Sparrow was very confident, and allowed several people to have good looks of this life bird. Other highlights included a BARROW'S GOLDEN-EYE, WILSON'S SNIPE, and great looks at many of the 47 species detected. Check out the full list at: <https://lebird.org/tripreport/105162>



Swamp Sparrow  
Photo by Santa Best

Sometimes field trips don't have much lead time, so please watch for them through our website, [www.lcbas.org](http://www.lcbas.org), and Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/lcbas>, and/or Tri-Cities Birders <https://www.facebook.com/groups/151054868748760>

We hope to have more field trip(s) announced soon! If you would like to participate in the planning and/or lead one or more field trip(s), please contact Jason Fidorra via our website contact page.

Also, be sure to read about the combined Tapteal Greenway and LCBAS field trips on page 2!

## Bateman Island Walking Access: Will it End?

By Dana Ward

The US Army Corp of Engineers (ACE) in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has filed a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the removal of the Bateman Island causeway. The FONSI states clearly in the first few pages of the report that the entire length of the causeway, 550 feet, may be removed and no bridge is planned to allow foot traffic to the island, leaving only boat access to the island. There is also a no-action alternative, but at this time the preferred alternative is to remove the causeway without providing a bridge for foot access.

The causeway was built in 1939 according to aerial photos. It appears that it was built by private funds. The causeway has totally blocked any movement of water on the south side of the island, and when the McNary Dam and the Tri-Cities Levees were constructed, the backed up water created warm water pools, which effectively slowed and even stopped migrating salmon and other native species from migrating up and down the Yakima River. Further, the warm water has been a boon for predatory fish that forage on juvenile salmon, and for causing dangerous algal blooms.

It is clear from the analysis within the FONSI that removal of the causeway would eliminate the warm water pools and greatly eliminate predatory fish. Removing the causeway is also a critical part of restoration for the upper reaches of the Yakima River, where significant actions have been taken in recent years to assist the recovery of dwindling numbers of listed fish species.

On Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, a meeting was held on the causeway with WDFW personnel and members of the public along with members of LCBAS. LCBAS members understand the overall benefits to improve salmon numbers and Yakima River ecosystem function. However, we were passionate and near the point of distress to hear that no walking access will be provided to the public under the current FONSI alternatives.

The preferred alternative funding requirement from ACE and WDFW is \$12.9 million. There is no funding allotted in the plan for a bridge. A few alternatives to removing the entire causeway were presented but each had unacceptable consequences on cold water flow for salmon and elimination of predatory fish.

This is a very short summary of what is going on with the removal of the Bateman Island causeway. I recommend that readers visit the ACE website to read the FONSI and provide public comment. The link to review the FONSI and leave comments can be found at:

[www.nww.usace.army.mil/missions/projects/yakima-river-delta-ecological-restoration/](http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/missions/projects/yakima-river-delta-ecological-restoration/)

You can also attend an open house at the Reach Museum: February 23<sup>rd</sup>, from 12-2:00 pm, or 3-5:00 pm. 1943 Columbia Park Trail, Richland

## Intermountain West Shorebird Survey



**Shorebird populations globally and across North America have declined for the past 40 years or more, and they need our help.**

**April 24th - 30th , 2023** - Volunteers Needed to Survey Migratory Shorebirds. Please considering participating!

We want to share the news about a new community science opportunity coming to Eastern Washington this spring. The Intermountain West Shorebird Survey began last year with great success, ~200 volunteers surveyed over 110 sites in 8 of 11 western states - and the project is now seeking to expand to remaining states like Washington. **Spring surveys will occur from April 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>!** Please consider joining this monumental effort as we expand the network across the region and advance wetland and water conservation at over 200 sites.

It's been 30 years since the last region-wide surveys. National Audubon Society, in partnership with Point Blue Conservation Science, The US Fish & Wildlife Service, and state agency partners need volunteers to help in 11 Western States. Please consider joining a network of biologists and volunteers advancing shorebird conservation across the Pacific Flyway!

**Volunteers should:**

- Have the ability to identify all shorebird species that are commonly observed in the Pacific Flyway, or be willing to record survey data or provide transportation.
- Bring their own optics (binoculars and/or spotting scope) or be associated with a team whose primary observer has optics.
- Consider transportation to the site and request assistance if needed.
- Be willing to follow a written protocol and enter survey data online or on a smart device.
- Have enthusiasm for the conservation of migratory shorebirds!

**Time Commitment:** 1-3 days each migration season, 2023-2025

- **Training:** Before your survey, become familiar with the survey protocol and datasheet by taking 1-2 hours to attend a virtual training session or watch online training videos.
- **Scouting:** Visit the site prior to your survey to become familiar with your site, make sure you know your survey route, including important access and viewing points, and to estimate the time needed to complete the survey.
- **Survey:** 1 day each season and data entry.

**Interested in Volunteering for Shorebirds?**

**Contact information and more details on page 6!**

## An Unusual Place to Eat and Rest; *Birdnote* Podcast, Threatened Series

Podcast review / discussion by Robin Priddy

February 7, 2023: [www.birdnote.org/podcasts/threatened/unusual-place-eat-and-rest](http://www.birdnote.org/podcasts/threatened/unusual-place-eat-and-rest)

This is the first time I'd found this series, so you'll probably hear more about this Threatened podcast series as there are many episodes.

When we hear about the effect of human activity on the environment it is often about negative impacts. But this isn't always the case. Here's a story from Puerto Rico about the positive impacts that people can have on the birds in their communities.

The Salt Flats in Cabo Rojo, or Las Salinas de Cabo Rojo in Spanish, is beautiful and has a fascinating history. It is an important place for birds on the island and migratory birds in North, Central, and South America. It is an area of saline lagoons, salt flats, and mangrove swamps where humans have extracted salt for over 500 years. The indigenous people of the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico, the Taínos, had a system established to remove salt before the Spaniards arrived in the 15th century. Thirty years ago, a group of residents from the municipality of Cabo Rojo organized to protect the natural area, which includes 1800 acres of coastal land. The process has been ongoing ever since. In over 500 years, the salt flats went from being used by the Taínos, to being managed by the Spanish government, to American companies, and today by a local company.



**Puerto Rican Parrot**  
Photo by Tom MacKenzie,  
USFWS, from Flickr.com

The salt flats represent an interesting case, because what is at stake is not a specific animal species but an entire ecosystem that migratory birds now depend on. And what makes it possible to conserve the natural area is actually the commercial production of salt. Though not originally "natural", the birds and wildlife have come to depend on this artifact of salt extraction. Keeping the salt flats in their current and human-affected state now supports birds.

A very charismatic bird that has brought attention to these efforts is the Puerto Rican Parrot. In 1973 there were only 13 of these parrots left on the planet, but today there are more than 800 in Puerto Rico. Thanks to an effort between Puerto Ricans and mainland North Americans, and lot of conservationists, biologists, and other scientists who really, really love the Puerto Rican Parrots, their population is rebounding. The parrot is now part of their lives and nobody's gonna touch a Puerto Rican Parrot!

In addition, these salt flats support migrating shore birds. They come from Canada and stop there to eat. They eat and rest for two or three weeks. A special brine shrimp in the flats is a favorite food. There are two lagoons that are very, very shallow and they come and eat at their leisure. This is a protected forest and they know it and nobody will bother them. So they're very quiet and eat very well, and then they fly to Argentina.

Birds Caribbean, an organization supporting birds, installed a monitoring tracking station this year. It's part of a collaboration with partners on the northeastern coast of North America. This is part of a MOTUS (a largely automated wildlife tracking system, <https://motus.org/>) collaboration and with this station, we can track shorebirds or other migratory birds that have special tags. More can be learned about migration patterns of these birds at the links:

[www.fws.gov/refuge/cabo-rojo](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/cabo-rojo)

[www.whsrn.org/cabo-rojo-is-ready-to-receive-you-a-refuge-for-both-birds-and-community/](http://www.whsrn.org/cabo-rojo-is-ready-to-receive-you-a-refuge-for-both-birds-and-community/)

[www.birdscaribbean.org](http://www.birdscaribbean.org)

Be sure to listen to the *Birdnote Podcast*, as there's so much more fascinating information about Cabo Rojo!



## Intermountain West Shorebird Survey

Continued from page 4:

Laurie Ness will be taking the reins as our LCBAS chapter coordinator and would love to talk to you about helping with this community science project. Contact her for more details and to coordinate at: [pennifurs.mom@gmail.com](mailto:pennifurs.mom@gmail.com). Please help us spread the word, sign up as a lead observer for counting shorebirds or as support for a lead observer; any contribution helps ensure that shorebirds count!

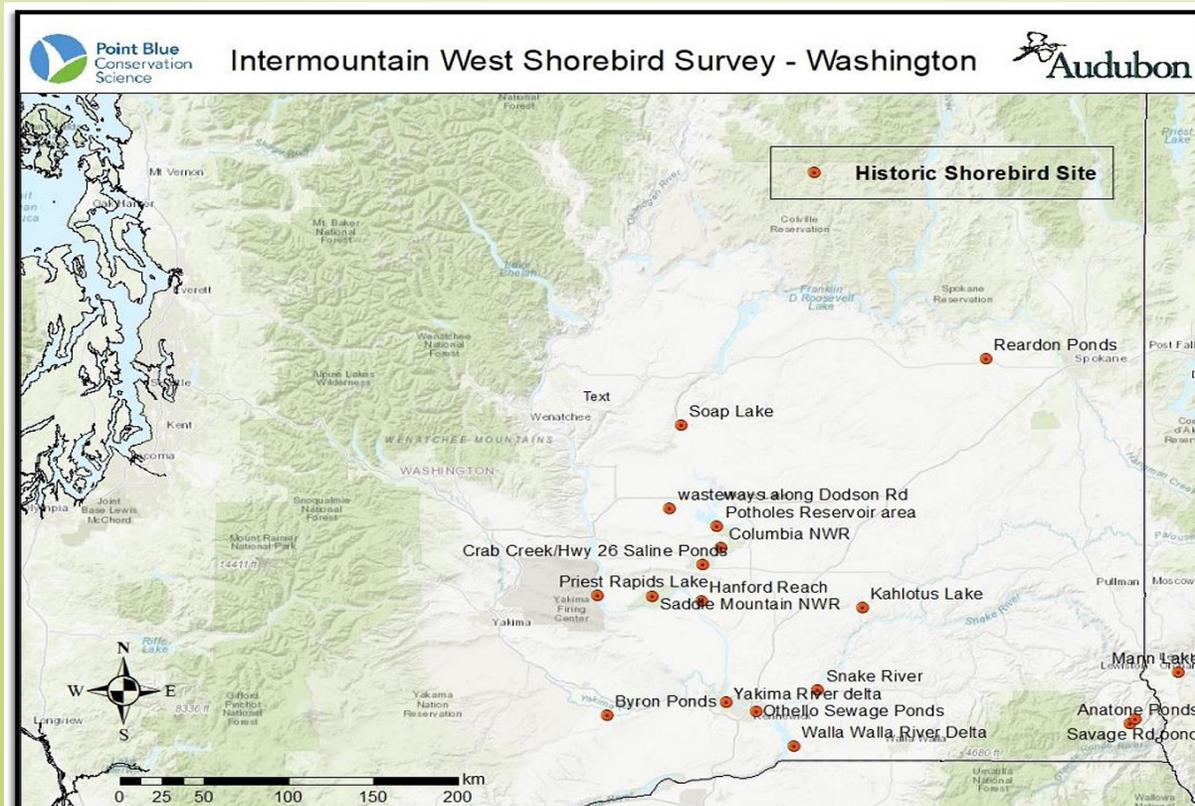


New and Interested Volunteers need to fill out this form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7kETFhSzxkna-zKY4ID0wgjqNqL3A3IEUoaLKT1PFzqVamq/viewform>

- **Save the dates!**
- **April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Shorebird Site Reconnaissance Webinar**
- **April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Survey Protocol and Training Webinar**
- **April 24<sup>th</sup> - April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Spring 2023 Peak Shorebird Survey Window – get out and count shorebirds.**

Mileage reimbursements may be available.

The map below shows the sites proposed for the survey.



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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>

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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	<a href="mailto:president@lcbas.org">president@lcbas.org</a>
Vice President	Michael Henao	—
Treasurer	Dan Hansen	<a href="mailto:treasurer@lcbas.org">treasurer@lcbas.org</a>
Secretary	Debbie Berkowitz	<a href="mailto:secretary@lcbas.org">secretary@lcbas.org</a>
Birding Events	Jason Fidorra	—
Communications Chair	Charlene Burge	—
Conservation Co-Chair	Dana Ward and Rick Leaumont	<a href="mailto:conservation@lcbas.org">conservation@lcbas.org</a>
Education Chair	OPEN	—
Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	<a href="mailto:treasurer@lcbas.org">treasurer@lcbas.org</a>
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	
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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).

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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)