

The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia
Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see
www.lcbas.org

Feb 21: Gull-a-Palooza on the Snake River - see page 3

Feb 24: Monthly chapter meeting at 7:00 PM

Mar 3: LCBAS Board Meeting

Mar 7: LCBAS First Saturday Bird Walk - see page 2

Mar 24: Monthly Chapter meeting at 7:00 PM

Save the Date!

March 14: Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser - see page 3 for more information

March 20-22: 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/

March 28: 4th Saturday Bird Trip to Snively Rd & Hanford Rte 10

In this Issue of the Curlew:

- Details on upcoming walks, events, and meetings
- Results from February's walk
- LCBAS Conservation Activities
- Community Science

AND MORE!

The Lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest: Stories of Salmon in the Columbia Basin

LCBAS Chapter Meeting:
Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 7:00 PM
First Lutheran Church, 418 N. Yelm, Kennewick, WA

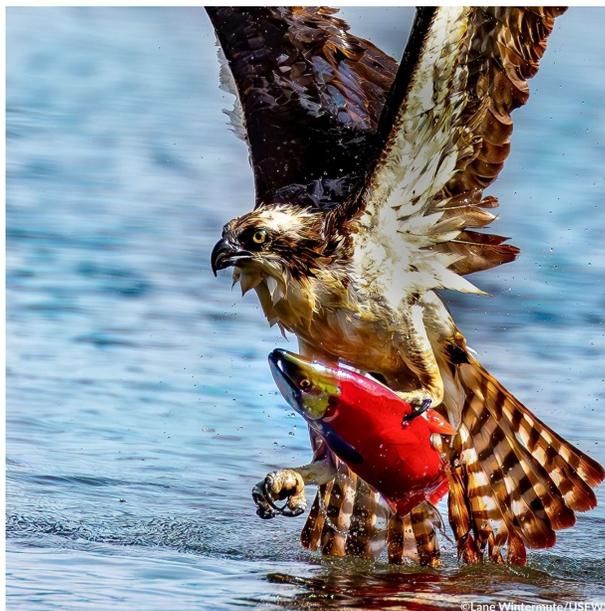
With Abby Saks

Salmon are an ecological and cultural keystone species, playing a crucial role for ecosystems across the Northwest and holding a deep significance for many Northwest Tribes.

However, salmon runs across the Columbia Basin are in peril: 11 of the 16 historic stocks migrating above Bonneville Dam are either threatened, endangered, or extinct, and none are anywhere close to healthy or to harvestable numbers.

This month's talk will discuss the critical importance of salmon, how they're doing across the Basin, the threats they face, and what centerpiece actions can be taken to restore their populations.

Abby Saks is the Inland Northwest field organizer for Save Our wild Salmon, a non-profit dedicated to Columbia Basin salmon recovery. She lives in Spokane, where she enjoys running and biking along the river.



Osprey with Salmon
Photo by Lane Wintermute, USFWS

First Saturday Bird Walk - Two Rivers Park, Kennewick February 7, 2026

By Heidi Newsome

Our recent birding trip to Two Rivers County Park on February 7, just east of Kennewick near Finley, turned into one of those quietly satisfying winter mornings that remind you why it's worth getting out early, even when the weather looks unremarkable. Lori Nelson led eight birders on the adventure.

We ended the walk with a solid 41 species, helped along by open water and relatively mild temperatures. Waterfowl were the clear stars of the day. Several Hooded Mergansers put on a show, the males flashing their bold black-and-white crests as they dove and resurfaced in good light. Nearby, Ring-necked Ducks loafed and fed in small groups, giving us those classic field-guide views—more ring-billed than ring-necked to the eye, as usual.

One of the more notable counts was the Pied-billed Grebes. They seemed to be everywhere, scattered across the water in ones and twos, and sometimes in loose groups. Our final tally of 18 was impressive for the location and season, and a nice reminder of just how well this species can use the sheltered water and back channels at Two Rivers.

But while some birds were surprisingly numerous, one regular winter resident was conspicuously missing: the Brown Creeper. This species has been notably absent from our local low-elevation haunts this season, and it's hard not to connect that absence to the weather we've had.

That brings us to altitudinal migration—a pattern that doesn't always get as much attention as the long-distance migrations we all know and love. Rather than traveling hundreds or thousands of miles north-south, some species move mainly up and down the mountainsides with the seasons. In our region, a number of birds that breed in higher-elevation conifer forests will move downslope in winter, showing up in parks, riparian corridors, and neighborhoods at lower elevations.

Brown Creepers are a good example. They typically breed in mature forests, often higher in elevation, where they glean insects and spiders from bark. In colder, snowier winters, food becomes harder to find up high, and creepers (along with other montane species) are more likely to move down into our river corridors and lowland woodlots. That's when we tend to detect them more regularly during local walks.



Male Hooded Mergansers
Photo by Larry Umthun

Continued on page 5

The next First Saturday Bird Walk is Saturday, March 7, 2026, at W.E. Johnson Park in Richland. Meet at the south entrance near 619 Tanglewood Dr. There is plenty of parking along the street. We begin promptly at 8:00 AM. Please come a few minutes early to sign in.

Check our website at www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/birding for updates before the walk. The park does experience occasional flooding, thus we may need to adjust our plans.

Please join us! Both the public and LCBAS members are always welcome. Binoculars are available, first come, first served. No registration is required.

Join LCBAS at the Flapjack Fundraiser

March 14, 2026, 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Join us for breakfast on Saturday, March 14, at Applebee's in Pasco, at 5305 N. Road 68.

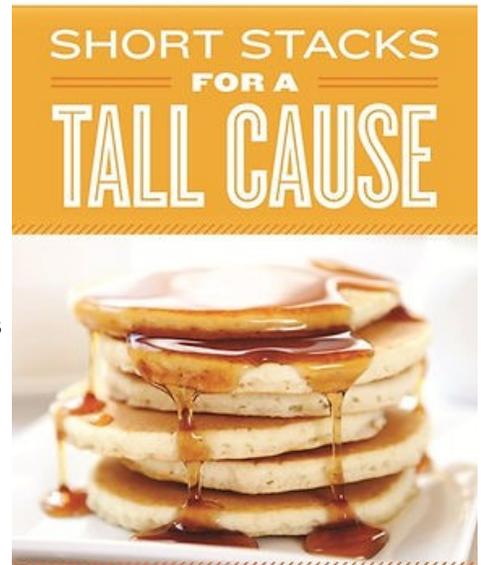
Breakfast is served from 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM.

Tickets: \$15 Breakfast includes pancakes, bacon or sausage, eggs, and beverage. A portion of the ticket price goes to LCBAS to support education about wildlife conservation and environmental issues. Tickets can be purchased with cash or check at:

- February 24th LCBAS chapter meeting
- At the door at Applebee's
- By contacting Marcie Daines at 509-627-4854
- On our website using PayPal (follow the instructions at this link):

www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/donate

We need to sell a minimum of 100 tickets to participate in this fundraiser. Please bring your family and friends and join us for a fun morning!



Third Saturday Bird Trip Gull-A-Palooza

With LCBAS Birding Events Chair
Rowan Young-McMurchie

Join LCBAS for a birding trip to the Snake River dams at Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental. The trip will focus on gulls and waterfowl.

Meet Saturday, February 21, at 7:45 AM at Columbia Basin College south parking lot. We will carpool from there. No registration needed.

Questions? Contact Rowan at
lcbasbirdingevents@outlook.com
or 509-438-7239

All are welcome, and binoculars are available on a first come, first served basis.

Come prepared to spend a few hours in the cold, interspersed with driving.

GULL-A-PALOOZA

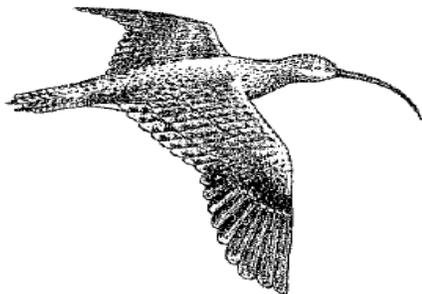
Did you know that Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties have recorded 18 different species of gulls? That's 18 different kinds of seagulls! Come join LCBAS for a winter driving field trip as we explore the region's best gulling hotspots and attempt to find as many of our winter gull species as we can. We will pursue close studies to guide us as we learn about the many different ages and plumage types we see in this diverse group of birds. Come prepared to spend a few hours in the cold, but interspersed with regular bouts of driving. Member and non-member participants welcome!

Where:
Meet promptly at 7:45am at the Columbia Basin College south parking lot (we will carpool from here) 46°15'00.7"N 119°07'04.1"W

When:
Saturday 02/21 from 8am-11am

Questions?
lcbasbirdingevents@outlook.com
(509) 438-7239

Saturday, February 21



Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1900 • Richland, WA 99352

January 14, 2026 (published in the Tri-City Herald on January 18, 2026)

Letter to the Editor, Tri-City Herald

Re: Bateman Island Access

Bateman Island is a Tri-Cities gem for many reasons. As many local citizens can attest, it is a favorite place to take a walk away from the hustle and bustle of a busy metropolitan area and see and enjoy nature on its own terms. Quietness and solitude are getting harder and harder to find, but on a typical day you can find relief on the island. But because the Bateman Island causeway is coming out (editor's note--removal is now complete), future access to the island will be limited only to those with boats. No bridge is planned to be built.

This brings up a second concern for the resulting lack of general access. The lack of a bridge will also hinder fire response, first aid response and police response for those individuals still able to access the island. And the protection of cultural resources will also likely be compromised due to the lack of citizen vigilance.

Yet another reason to allow limited access is because Bateman is recognized as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. This designation was obtained because of the unique and vanishing habitat on the island along with the waters of the Yakima delta which support a thriving population of resident and migratory birds. This designation can only be obtained under strict national criteria which this area meets. Bateman Island is one of a very few areas so designated in the state.

As an IBA, the local chapter of the National Audubon Society has been conducting and maintaining monthly or annual counts of bird species and numbers on the island since the 1960s. The data is extremely important in understanding the changing dynamics of bird species and numbers of birds, and is another measure of how climate change is affecting world ecosystems. With the loss of the causeway and no bridge, continued data will be compromised or possibly totally lost. For example, understanding bird numbers and trends, such as waterfowl, is important to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in setting waterfowl hunting regulations.

The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society supports removal of the causeway. We anticipate that the removal of the causeway will allow the free flow of cool waters of the Yakima River and the migration of salmon up the river. Much has been done on the mainstream Yakima to improve salmon movement and spawning; removal of the causeway will support these efforts and improve the survival of salmon. But for the reasons noted above, we urge the jurisdictions to look for alternative ways (other than private boats) to maintain some equitable public access to the Island.

Dana Ward,
President, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

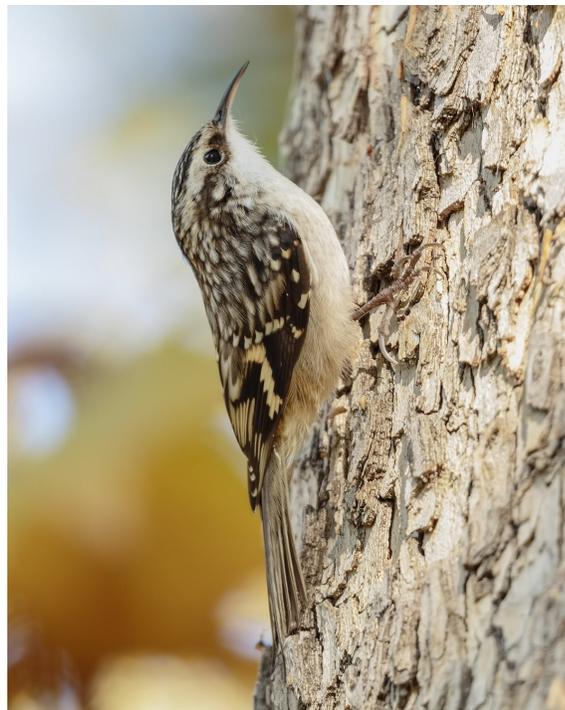
Continued from page 2: First Saturday Bird Walk - Two Rivers Park, Kennewick

This year, though, we've had a relatively warm winter, with less persistent snow at mid-elevations. If food has remained available higher up, Brown Creepers may simply not have had as much reason to descend into the valley. In other words, their "migration" may have been shorter and more subtle—still shifting around in elevation, but not coming down far enough or in large enough numbers for us to see them at places like Two Rivers.

Of course, it's difficult to pin any single observation on weather alone, and bird movements are influenced by a mix of factors: food resources, habitat conditions, competition, and broader climate patterns. But our local field observations—what we see and don't see on trips like this—can offer useful clues. A warm winter with good high-elevation foraging might mean fewer creepers, kinglets, or crossbills showing up in town. A harsher winter might bring an influx.

So, while we missed the Brown Creeper on this outing, it gave us a chance to think a bit more about how birds move through our landscape in three dimensions, not just north and south. In the meantime, Two Rivers Park delivered a satisfying mix of waterfowl, a standout grebe count, and enough variety to keep everyone engaged.

If this winter pattern continues, it will be worth keeping an eye (and ear) on our usual "creeper trees" in coming seasons. Are Brown Creepers genuinely less common down here, or just shifting their timing and haunts? As always, your eBird checklists and trip notes will help paint that bigger picture—for our chapter, and for anyone trying to understand how birds are responding to a warming world, one quiet winter walk at a time.



Brown Creeper
Photo by Larry Umthun

Please Report Color Banded American Kestrels



American Kestrel
Photo by Charlene Burge

A concerted effort was made to band fledgling American Kestrels (AMKE) in north central WA this past summer in conjunction with a very active nest box study that has been going on in that area for several years. Around 350 AMKE were banded with a US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) silver numbered metal band, and with a blue colored leg band on the left leg.

Hopefully those blue bands will be visible to folks looking at them with binoculars or spotting scopes. You don't have to be able to read the numbered band, just be able to see the colored band. If you happen to find one of these birds, and this might be a good winter to get lucky, report it to Jeff Fleischer (information below). In addition to these birds, about a dozen or so were banded with a green leg band instead of blue in the Skagit region of Northwest WA. The odds of seeing one of those birds will be challenging but please keep your eyes open. Both of these banding efforts were new in 2025.

Contact Jeff Fleischer to report banded birds at:
raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com Please include in your subject line: Color banded kestrel (or AMKE) observation.

Bateman Island Causeway Removal

The Bateman Island causeway removal was completed this month and there is no longer walking access to the island. For more information:

www.nww.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/Article/4355941/bateman-island-causeway-removal-moves-forward/

Photos showing causeway removal progression.

Top, work begins. Middle, the causeway is breached, allowing water to begin flowing through.

Bottom, causeway removal is complete.



Volunteer to Help LCBAS

Would you like to get involved with running LCBAS and/or contribute to outreach, education, events, publications, Curlew articles, or other areas?

We would love to have you! Please inquire through the LCBAS website contact page:

www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact, OR inquire at a chapter meeting, through a board member, or come to a board meeting (always open to the public). You can help us, our local communities, and the birds and their habitats which we love and protect.



Coming Soon!

Upcoming Bird Festivals: There are many birding festivals and events throughout the state. For more information on bird festivals and events in WA state, visit: wa.audubon.org/bird-festivals-0

This is a sampling of upcoming festivals, but you should visit the above link to learn about others.

March 13-15: Wings Over Water NW Birding Festival.
www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com

March 20-22: 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 16-19: Olympic Peninsula BirdFest
olympicbirdfest.org

May 1-3: Gray's Harbor Shorebird Festival
www.shorebirdfestival.com/

May 14-17: Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest
<https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/bird-fest/>

LCBAS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: The Curlew digital newsletter subscribers are alerted to the impending expiration of their subscription by email. Please renew your subscription on or before the month your subscription expires to continue to receive the newsletter without interruption. Renewing online is easy, quick and safe: www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/join-renew-donate or you can use the form included with this newsletter.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send address changes (email address) to 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 hope you will support Lower Columbia Basin Audubon by joining the local chapter, which is locally funded. Please become a paid subscriber and add your voice to our bird protection, conservation, and education efforts. Doing so is fast, easy, and secure at our website: 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@gmail.com
Vice President	OPEN	---
Treasurer	Dan Hansen	treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com
Secretary	Debbie Berkowitz	secretary.lcbas@gmail.com
Birding Events	Rowan Young-McMurchie	lcbasbirdingevents@outlook.com
Communications Chair	Charlene Burge	---
Conservation Co-Chair	Dana Ward and Rick Leumont	---
Education Chair	OPEN	---
Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com
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	Lori Nelson	
Director at Large	Robin Priddy	www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact
Director at Large	Kelly Doyle	
OTHER CONTACTS:		
Curlew Editor	Charlene Burge	
Membership Database	Rich Barchet	
LCBAS Website	Lisa Hill & Lori Nelson	
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 our digital newsletter “The Curlew” and priority registration for space-limited field trips. LCBAS is a 501c(3) organization and dues are tax deductible.

_____ Regular membership (Individual or family at the same permanent address) (\$20)

_____ Full-time student membership (\$10)

_____ I would like to make an additional donation of _____.

Total: _____ (If paying with a check, please make check payable to **LCBAS**)

Register and pay online via PayPal at www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/join-renew-donate

-OR- Mail your form and dues to: Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA. 99352

____ I do not want to receive e-alerts for last minute activity changes, important issues, and volunteer opportunities (check for opt-out).

Name _____

Email (required to receive newsletter) _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Membership in LCBAS is separate from membership in the National Audubon Society.

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