



The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see www.lcbas.org

Jan 23: Monthly membership meeting at 7:00 PM

Feb 3: First Saturday Bird Walk at 8:00 AM--see page two

Feb 6: Board meeting at 6:30 PM

Feb 24: Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser is back. See page two for information on how to purchase tickets, and enjoy a good breakfast!

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

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 meeting, and you can also use our contact information on page five to provide feedback in writing via mail or the LCBAS website. Please provide feedback!

Transitioning to a 100% digital Curlew newsletter is an environmentally sound, 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.

Mongolia is a Whole Lot of Something

January Membership Meeting:

Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 7:00 PM.

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

With Scott and Pamela Woodward, adventure travelers

Mongolia is defined by endless steppe, oceans of dunes, and desert framed by rugged mountains occasionally housing thinly veiled forests. A once proud culture composed of nine tribes brought together by Genghis Khan who built the greatest empire the world has ever known is now struggling to maintain its identity. Stripped of its soul by the Soviets in the 20th Century, the 21st Century now challenges Mongolia with climate change and a nose neighbor, China.



One bird does indeed fly across the great chasm of all the centuries from the great Khans to the present. The Golden Eagle is the ultimate Mongol symbol of a once-great empire. That symbol is on full display at the annual Super Bowl of eagle hunting in the NW region near the borders of Siberia and Kazakhstan. The costumes, the horsemanship, and the traditional games all remain in a vacuum from the 21st Century. We want to show you a lot of something about Mongolia and finish with the amazing Golden Eagles and their human families.

Scott and Pamela Woodward consider themselves adventure travelers pursuing their childhood View-Master fantasies from continent to continent. Scott is the former President of the Tapteal Greenway and the Ridges to Rivers Open Space Network. Pamela and Scott are local products, long-time educators, and lifetime conservationists. They enjoy sharing their stories and hope there is something to interest you.

First Saturday / Bateman Island Bird Walk January 6, 2024

By Lisa Hill

The Bateman Island Bird Walk is back and the crowd was excited to get going! The island was recently reopened to the public and we were able to scout the area for winter birds. A major storm was brewing and the weather was unsettled. A brisk breeze was a portent of high winds which arrived two days later. We scrounged around for the 44 species we tallied, although numbers of birds were low. A few birds we expected to see were hidden away, like Dark-eyed Junco and Spotted Towhee – nary a one.

Near the causeway, a couple of sub-adult BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS flushed from the trees along the shore. According to Birds of the World, “the Black-crowned Night Heron is the most widespread heron in the world, breeding on every continent except Antarctica and Australia, where the genus is represented by the Nankeen (or Rufous) Night Heron.” A good number of COMMON MERGANSERS and AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS fished in the shallow water nearby.



American Kestrel
Photo by Larry Umthun

The interior of the island was very quiet. Even WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS, SONG SPARROWS and YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS were scarce. A sure sign that we have turned the corner towards longer days, the RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS were

singing. Near the black locust grove, a stunning male AMERICAN KESTREL perched high for great views.

Out on the Yakima Delta, a flock of TUNDRA SWANS mostly slept near Columbia Point. A week can make a lot of difference when it comes to bird numbers. One week ago on the Christmas Bird Count, no NORTHERN PINTAILS were found, but there were plenty bobbing around near the margins today.

The next Bateman Island bird walk is Saturday, February 3, beginning promptly at 8:00 AM. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park above the causeway to the island.

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

Flapjack Fundraiser

**The LCBAS Flapjack
Fundraiser is Back!**



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 at the January membership meeting, or by contacting Marcie Daines through treasurer@lcbas.org.

Silent Auction Fundraiser

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the November membership meeting silent auction. Participants raised \$531 which will be put to good use!

Christmas Bird Count Results December 30, 2023

By Bill LaFramboise, Christmas Bird Count Coordinator

Thanks to the over 60 participants including feeder watchers, the annual Christmas Bird Count was a big success. There were 111 species seen on count day. There were an additional 10 species seen on the three days before and the three days after the count day, which are known as count week birds.

The dense fog that lasted most of the day presented challenges to observe and count many species. As a result, numbers of several species, especially waterfowl, were lower than normal. Otherwise, the weather was pleasant for a day outside with temperatures in the 30s, no precipitation, and calm winds.

This has been an especially good winter to see mountainous species that have irrupted to our area because of poor cone crop conditions in the mountains. These species were represented on the count including a Steller's Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Grosbeak, and Red Crossbill. Any one of these species are great finds in the Lower Columbia Basin. Of special note, a Townsend's Warbler was well documented in North Richland for the only winter sighting of this species in the Lower Columbia Basin. Other species of note were Trumpeter Swan, Dunlin, Iceland Gull, Blue Jay, and Swamp Sparrow.

It was great to return to our tradition of having a potluck after several years of missing it because of the pandemic. It was a nice opportunity to share in some good food, see friends new and old, and review the birding adventures of the day. I want to thank Marcie Daines for hosting and organizing the potluck and to the LDS Church of Richland for providing the facility. I also want to thank the Team Leads Lisa Hill, Richard Barchet, and Dana Ward for coordinating the efforts in their respective areas and making the count run smoothly.

2024 National Audubon Climate Watch

By Cherie Baudrand

January 15 - February 15 are the count dates for the 2024 National Audubon Climate Watch.

I am grateful for all of the faithful volunteers in this long-time study. Our five-minute point counts provide data for an important study, even if we don't find any Red-breasted Nuthatches.

Leaders of the Richland, West Richland, and Kennewick squares will contact their volunteers with their planned dates.

Count square leaders, please let me know your planned count date and when your count is completed.

Let me know if you have questions and thank-you for your help

For more information on Climate Watch, and why Audubon is running this long-term community science project:

nationalaudubon.app.box.com/2n15ql5qjeeoihg1gr5zk1d5zde4a26x

<https://vimeo.com/232521437>

Upcoming Birding Festivals

February 24: McNary Winter Birds
friendsofmcrrw.org/events

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/>

Canceled this year: Klamath Basin Winter Wings Festival

How do Birds Respond to Extreme Wildfire Haze? Project Phoenix Aims to Find Out

Harnessing the power of community science can help birds as smoke pollution from blazes becomes more extreme.

By Alice Sun, Reporter, reprinted with permission from Audubon Magazine

Each summer and fall, as orange-tinged smoke fills skies around Los Angeles, questions of concern flood Olivia Sanderfoot's inbox: Why are birds so quiet? Do they need birdbaths? How can I help?



Smaller fires like this Yakima Delta fire in 2021 don't create a lot of haze, but still have detrimental effects on birds / wildlife.

Photo by Charlene Burge

An ecologist at UCLA's La Kretz Center for California Conservation Science, Sanderfoot specializes in studying how wildfire smoke and air pollution affect birds. But even she doesn't have great answers: Scientists know surprisingly little about how birds behave in extreme haze.

In 2023, Sanderfoot started Project Phoenix, a collaboration between UCLA and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, to empower people to help researchers dig into these questions. During peak fire season from August through October, more than 300 volunteers conducted 10-minute weekly surveys in California, logging birds they saw or heard in their neighborhoods. "Although 10 minutes might not seem like a lot, if we pool everybody's observations together, we'll actually be able to start answering

questions about how smoke is shaping where birds occur on the landscape," she says.

Smoke is a growing threat to human and avian health as climate change fuels more extreme blazes. This spring, for example, smoke from wildfires in Canada caused poor air quality across the Midwest and East Coast, creating breathing difficulties for vulnerable people and forcing many indoors. "Birds have lungs just like humans," says Andrew Stillman, a Cornell Lab of Ornithology conservation ecologist. But unlike people, birds can't take shelter inside.

Scientists especially want to know how haze affects species during migration, when birds are at their physiological limits. "Any extra disturbance on top of that can have really severe and long-term impacts," Stillman says. But because plumes are expansive and ever changing, large surveys are difficult to pull off. One of the few studies on the subject occurred by chance: In 2020, smoke in the Pacific Northwest appeared to derail the flight paths of four Tule Geese that happened to be wearing GPS trackers. But data from a single species reveal little about how larger avian populations cope, says Cory Overton, a U.S. Geological Survey wildlife biologist who co-authored the study.

That's where Project Phoenix comes in. With its simple protocol, the volunteer data, submitted to eBird, could provide insight into how species distributions change through the fire season. By learning about whether birds move away from smoky areas, seek out birdbaths, shelter within foliage, or exhibit other unusual behaviors, Sanderfoot hopes to provide better advice for helping birds during hazardous smoke events.

With the first season wrapped, Sanderfoot is analyzing data and planning a potential expansion to Washington and Oregon in 2024. No birding experience is necessary; in fact, she especially wants to recruit volunteers from communities that have been traditionally excluded from such efforts. That's why Project Phoenix offers plenty of guidance and will even answer identification questions. The only prerequisite to participate? Curiosity.

**Community Science:
Project Phoenix coming
soon to the
Pacific Northwest**

For more information on Project Phoenix, and to sign up (it only takes ten minutes per week to participate): <https://www.project-phoenix-investigating-bird-responses-to-smoke.org/>

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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: https://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact |
| 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