



# The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia  
Basin Audubon Society

## Upcoming Events:

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

**May 27:** Monthly LCBAS Chapter Meeting @ 7:00 PM

**June 3:** LCBAS Board Meeting -- contact any board member for more information or to attend

**June 7:** LCBAS First Saturday / Bateman Island Walk. See page 2

**June 24:** LCBAS Picnic at Leslie Groves Park

**July & August are LCBAS summer hiatus months. We will start up again in September.**

**LCBAS events are always open to the public. Please join us!**

## PICNIC IN THE PARK WITH LCBAS

**Tuesday June 24th @ 6:00 PM**  
**Begin setup at 5:30 PM**  
**Leslie Groves Park, Shelter #2**  
**Richland**

Come and renew old acquaintances and meet new friends. We will have a potluck and/or you can bring your own food and skip the potluck. Please bring a main dish, dessert or side to share if you're participating in the potluck, and your own dinnerware and utensils. Water will be provided.

## Using Modern Technologies to Conserve and Understand Blue Mountains Birds

**LCBAS Chapter Meeting:**

**Tuesday, May 27, 2025 7:00 PM**

**First Lutheran Church, 418 N. Yelm, Kennewick, WA**

**With Dr. Ben Vernasco**

The Blue Mountains host an incredible amount of biodiversity. Important information gaps exist in our understanding of the ecology of many species and how land management practices influence bird populations. In his talk, Dr. Ben Vernasco will describe multiple efforts being taken to fill these knowledge gaps. Ben will start by focusing in on one group of birds in particular, North America's Rosy-finches. He will describe their ecology and zoom in on the Wallowa Rosy-finch, a subspecies that only breeds in the Wallowa Mountains of NE Oregon. Ben will conclude his talk by introducing the group to the bioacoustic monitoring efforts being conducted across the entire Northern Blue Mountains Region by US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station and the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.



Photo by Larry Umthun

Ben is originally from the North Bay Area. He received his undergraduate degree from the Wildlife Department at Cal Poly Humboldt in 2013, where he discovered his passion for birds through field trips with the Redwood Region Audubon Society and while volunteering at Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory. After a year of seasonal field jobs, Ben joined the Biology Department at Virginia Tech as a PhD student and the Interfaces of Global Change Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Program as a Fellow. After Virginia Tech, he worked with Dr. Heather Watts as a Postdoctoral Researcher in the School of Biological Sciences at Washington State University. Currently, Ben works with the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station and as a Research Scientist and Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at Whitman College.

## First Saturday / Bateman Island Bird Walk May 3, 2025

By Lisa Hill

Clouds and rain couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of a great group of birders who doggedly worked their way around the island and down to the boat launch to find 56 species. There were enough waterfowl near the causeway and out on the Yakima delta to bring the total number up over our projected 50 species. Late stragglers included CINNAMON TEAL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, AMERICAN WIGEON, NORTHERN PINTAIL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, BUFFLEHEAD, WESTERN GREBE and CLARK'S GREBE. Raptors made a good showing, too, with OSPREY, COOPER'S HAWK, BALD EAGLE, NORTHERN HARRIER and RED-TAILED HAWK.

We got great views of elegant FORSTER'S TERNS flying by at eye level. A couple of CASPIAN TERNS made their presence know with their raucous calls.

With the unsettled weather, we hoped to find migrants pushed north, but very few were found. One NASHVILLE WARBLER and plenty of male YELLOW WARBLERS were singing all over the island. There was no lack of BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS which could make it a tough year for small songbirds.

Cowbirds are brood parasites that do not build nests, instead laying eggs in the nests of other birds which raise the young cowbirds. Before European colonization, the birds' natural habitat was open grasslands of central North America, following herds of buffalo and parasitizing a limited number of grassland species. They began spreading eastward and into the south by 1800 as forests were cleared creating open habitat. By 1900 they had spread throughout California and by 1950, were established in Washington and Oregon.

Expanding their range to such an extent meant that cowbirds parasitize many more species than they did 200 years ago. Of the top 17 cowbird hosts (out of about 220 known hosts), Yellow Warbler is the most frequently targeted. Other birds affected by cowbirds in our area in the top 17 include Song Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat and Red-winged Blackbird. Many hosts have strategies to reject the cowbird eggs including pushing the eggs out of the nest, building a new nest lining over all the eggs, or completely abandoning the nest.



Brown-headed Cowbirds (F) above, (M) below  
Photos by Larry Umthun

**The next Bateman Island bird walk is Saturday, June 7, beginning promptly at 8:00 AM.  
Please join us! Both the public and LCBAS members are always welcome.  
Binoculars are available, first come, first served. No registration is required.  
Please come a few minutes early to sign in.**

## 2025 - 2026 LCBAS Upcoming Elections

It's that time of year again - we need you to vote for LCBAS Officers and Standing Committee Chairs! All current, dues-paying members are encouraged to vote.

Additionally, any LCBAS member who is interested in a position is welcome and strongly encouraged to volunteer or be nominated for a position. More information about elections and open positions is provided below.

LCBAS elections will be held during our May 27th meeting. If you would like to volunteer for a position or nominate someone else (with their permission), you can contact Debbie Berkowitz at: [secretary.lcbas@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.lcbas@gmail.com) or volunteer at the meeting.

### Please consider volunteering to keep our chapter running!

We welcome your assistance with any position, but we especially need help in our current open positions. Here is a description of the major duties for each of those positions:

**Vice President:** Assist the President at the membership and board meetings and cover when the President is absent; other functions as appropriate.

**Communications Chair:** Prepare communications with members and non-members. Communications shall publish, at a minimum six (6) times a year, a bulletin or newsletter for the members of LCBAS. Communications is separated out into Newsletter, Publicity, Webmaster / Website, and Social Media. While the Communications Chair may at times assist with those other duties, the main responsibility is publishing the Curlew newsletter.

**Fundraising Chair:** Developing activities and actions that will produce funds for LCBAS projects. Help run current fundraising activities, and develop new potential fundraising opportunities.

**Membership Chair:** If you are interested in meeting people and spreading the word about the good work that LCBAS does, you might be a perfect fit for the position. This person helps recruit new members and motivate existing members to be more involved.

**Publicity Chair:** The main responsibility is to get the word out about monthly programs, the Bateman Island Birdwalk, and any special events we hold including fundraisers and the Christmas Bird Count. This may include coordinating with the Curlew editor, website, and social media, and publishing information in outside sources.

All positions with LCBAS are listed on page four, and we welcome assistance in other areas, including outreach events, Junior Audubon / Education, providing material for communications / Curlew newsletter and helping with publicity. Perhaps you would like to lead birding walks or develop a new bird or conservation event, or help with education outreach. If you have skills or a desire to volunteer, we'd love to have your help! If you would like to nominate, or be nominated for any position, please stand up at the meeting.

Think of LCBAS as your favorite mixed flock of birds - the larger it is and the more diverse the individuals within it, the stronger and more sustainable LCBAS will be.

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### We are looking for help!

**We have several critical positions open:**

- ◆ Vice President
- ◆ Communications Chair
- ◆ Fundraising Chair
- ◆ Membership Chair
- ◆ Publicity Chair

Get involved in the good work we do and help us to be a vibrant and viable Audubon chapter! We'll provide training, guidance, and moral support to new board members. The time commitment for the positions varies, but is very flexible.

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## 2025 - 2026 LCBAS Upcoming Elections

### Elected Positions:

- President: Dana Ward
- Vice President: **OPEN**
- Secretary: Debbie Berkowitz
- Treasurer: Dan Hansen

### Standing Committee Chairs:

- Birding Events: Jason Fidorra
- Conservation: Dana Ward & Rick Leaumont
- Communications: **OPEN**
- Education: Kelly Doyle
- Finance: Dan Hansen
- Fundraising: **OPEN**
- Membership: **OPEN**
- Programs: Lori Nelson
- Director at Large: Robin Priddy

### Appointed Positions:

A number of positions are filled by appointment, rather than via election. These people have agreed to serve LCBAS in appointed positions for 2025 - 2026:

- Bateman Bird Walks: Lisa Hill
- Book Sales: Robin Priddy
- Christmas Bird Count: Bill LaFramboise
- Curlew Mailing: Jack and Murrel Dawson
- Social Media: Heidi Newsome
- Hospitality: Marcie Daines
- Junior Audubon: Kelly Doyle
- Publicity: **OPEN**
- Taxidermy Collection: Sheri Whitfield
- Website: Lisa Hill & Lori Nelson

## Help Needed for the Avian Transport Program

Photos and Article by Kelly Doyle, Education Chair

As many of you know, Blue Mountain Wildlife Rescue in Pendleton has served S.E. Washington state for years. Unfortunately, last year the H5N1 Avian Flu changed all that, and injured birds from Washington can no longer be transported to Oregon. In an effort to help during BMWR's absence, the March Curlew shared information regarding abandoned or injured birds, but did you know the Tri City area also has a small group of volunteers who transport injured birds to the WSU Veterinary Clinic in Pullman?

It's a fairly simple operation; the WSU clinic notifies the coordinator, the bird is collected, evaluated, and held overnight at one of four local vet clinics. Finally, the bird is boxed up and sent on to Pullman.

This avian transport program is working well, but as with many volunteer programs, the group could use a few additional helpers. The level of commitment for this program is minimal as volunteers are on a rotation. On average, a volunteer driver is called to transport a "box o' bird" from the Tri Cities to Pullman once every two months. That's it. Most drivers make a half-day trip of it by traveling with a buddy or spouse to share a relaxing drive through the Palouse and visit the Wazzu campus. If you're interested in this project or would like more information, please text Kelly at 509-366-2616.

And remember, if you find an injured or orphaned animal, refer to the March issue of the Curlew [lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/lcbas-curlew-newsletters](http://lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/lcbas-curlew-newsletters), check out Spokane Audubon's website [audubon-spokane.org](http://audubon-spokane.org) or call the direct line to the WSU Veterinary Clinic wildlife ward at (509) 595-7006.



Great Horned Owl young (above) found in an industrial area with no sign of adults. Red-tailed Hawk young (below) blew out of a tree during a windstorm near Washtucna and were abandoned by their parents.

All three were transported safely to WSU by volunteers.



## Leslie Groves North Volunteer Opportunity

By Debbie Berkowitz

The weeds at Leslie Groves North Native Plant/Habitat Restoration Project (LGN) are getting ahead of us and we could use some more help. LGN is located at the north end of Leslie Groves Park, north of Snyder St. and east of Harris Ave. in Richland. For the May work parties, we'll meet along Harris Ave. Look for my blue Subaru Outback which will be parked north of Snyder along Harris, between Snyder and the first house on the east (river) side of Harris.

### Work Party Dates

**Saturday, May 17: 9:00 AM**  
**Sunday, May 18: 9:00 AM**  
**Saturday, May 24 : 9:00 AM**  
**Sunday, May 25: 9:00 AM**  
**Friday, May 30: 9:00 AM**  
**Sunday, June 1: 9:00 AM**

All work parties last from 2 to 2 ½ hours but you can come for shorter or longer times.

Please bring a hand weeding tool (a dandelion puller works well), sturdy garden gloves, and drinking water. If you have a bucket for collecting the weeds, that would be useful (the city supplies garbage cans). Long pants, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, and hat are recommended, and knee pads can be make the work more comfortable.

Other work parties may be scheduled on weekdays; if that works better for you, please let me know. If you're interested in getting emails about work parties, please contact me at [secretary.lcbas@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.lcbas@gmail.com) and I'll add you to my LGN email list.

An RVSP is appreciated, but not required

## LCBAS Earth Day Outreach

By Kelly Doyle, Education Chair

Last month Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society celebrated Earth Day at the Hanford Reach Museum. The event was well received by the community, attracting roughly seven hundred visitors to enjoy displays from forty local clubs and businesses. Globally, Earth Day 2025 now includes a wide range of events coordinated through [earthday.org](http://earthday.org), involving one billion people from more than 193 countries. This year also happened to be the fifty-fifth anniversary of Earth Day.



**LCBAS volunteers at the LCBAS outreach booth for the Tri-Cities Earth Day at the Reach Museum.**

**Pictured L-R are Marcie Daines, Kathy Criddle, Kelly Doyle, and Dana Ward**

**Photo provided by Kelly Doyle**

I remember the first Earth Day, back in 1970. A few friends and I cleaned up an unofficial dump site near the current Beaver Bark Garden Center in Richland. Back then it was an ugly stretch of wasteland outside the city, where it was not uncommon for people to dump their trash. I also remember many of my friends thought I was an idiot, because, "Who cares, it doesn't matter anyway." But it did matter, and folks slowly began to understand the importance of the environment, and ecology. Over the years this new mindset has changed how we live, how we work and how we plan for the future. So "Happy Earth Day" to us all, a community of environmentalists.

**Remember: Treat every day like Earth Day!**

## How Fast Can a Merganser Fly?

By Charlene Burge, Communications Chair

We were driving down Yakima Canyon recently when we noticed a Common Merganser flying down canyon, keeping pace with our vehicle (or perhaps we were keeping pace with him!). We were driving at a steady 45 MPH and had the rare opportunity to keep pace for several winding miles. That led me to wonder about their maximum speed in flight.

Most of us know that Peregrine Falcons are the fastest birds when in a dive. They're technically the fastest animal on earth. But what about other birds? Do you know how fast or slow they are? A shallow dive into some bird flight facts yielded some surprise numbers. For example, the Common Merganser we were pacing in Yakima Canyon can fly faster in horizontal (level) flight than the Peregrine Falcon!

Here's a few fun bird flight speed facts. All speeds listed are horizontal flight, top speed.

Common Merganser:	80 MPH
Golden Eagle:	80 MPH
Vaux's Swift	80 MPH
Peregrine Falcon:	68 MPH
Wilson's Snipe:	60 MPH
California Quail:	58 MPH
Mourning Dove	55 MPH
White-crowned Sparrow	40 MPH
Snow Goose:	40 MPH
American Robin	36 MPH
Anna's Hummingbird:	35 MPH
Burrowing Owl	33 MPH
Great Blue Heron	30 MPH
Red-winged Blackbird	28 MPH
Northern Flicker	26 MPH
Yellow Warbler	25 MPH

**Dim the  
Lights  
for Birds  
at Night**

Help migrating birds have a safe migration: turn off, cover, or dim the lights at night. For more information, see Audubon's Light's Out Program:

[www.audubon.org/our-work/cities-and-towns/lights-out](http://www.audubon.org/our-work/cities-and-towns/lights-out)



**Common Mergansers in Flight**

Photo by Earl Bye, shared under Creative Commons from [Flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/earlbye/)

There is also a limit to how slow most birds can fly before they stall out. However, not all -- here's a few who can fly very slowly, or even fly backwards! The American Woodcock can fly as slow as 5 MPH during courtship flights, and the White-crowned Sparrow has been clocked at minus 2 MPH in a wind tunnel, actually flying slightly backwards in order to maintain it's position. Hummingbird species are well known for their ability to fly backwards, and hover in place, due to the unique structure of their wings, which move in a figure-eight.

Some birds are more adept at running than flying. While they can fly short distances, the Greater Roadrunner is best known for it's footwork and can run at a sustained pace of 15 MPH, and sprint to 26 MPH! California Quail have been clocked at 12 MPH.

Speed sources: [AllAboutBirds.com](http://AllAboutBirds.com), [ABCBirds.com](http://ABCBirds.com), [Audubon.org](http://Audubon.org), [BirdsandBlooms.com](http://BirdsandBlooms.com) (reviewed by Ken Kaufman), and peer reviewed research articles.

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**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](http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/join-renew-donate)

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	Dana Ward	<a href="mailto:president.lcbas@gmail.com">president.lcbas@gmail.com</a>
Vice President	Chuck Hedel	—
Treasurer	Dan Hansen	<a href="mailto:treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com">treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Debbie Berkowitz	<a href="mailto:secretary.lcbas@gmail.com">secretary.lcbas@gmail.com</a>
Birding Events	Jason Fidorra	—
Communications Chair	Charlene Burge	—
Conservation Co-Chair	Dana Ward and Rick Leumont	—
Education Chair	Kelly Doyle	—
Finance Chair	Dan Hansen	<a href="mailto:treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com">treasurer.lcbas@gmail.com</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	Lori Nelson	
Director at Large	Robin Priddy	<a href="http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact">www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org/contact</a>

#### 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](http://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 \_\_\_\_\_

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](http://www.audubon.org)