

The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia
Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see
www.lcbas.org

Jan 17: Winter Waterfowl half day trip / walk at McNary NWR. See page 3 for more information.

Jan 27: Monthly chapter meeting at 7:00 PM

Feb 3: LCBAS Board Meeting

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

Feb 21: Gull-a-Palooza on the Snake River. Stay tuned for more information in the February Curlew and on the LCBAS website: www.lcbas.org

Feb 24: Monthly Chapter meeting at 7:00 PM

Save the Date!

March 14: Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser is back! See page 3 for more information.

In this Issue of the Curlew:

- Details on upcoming walks and meetings
- Christmas Bird Count results
- LCBAS Conservation Activities
- Birds of a Feather, an adaptable program provided by Reach Museum educators
- Information on reporting color-banded Kestrels

AND MORE!

Reflections of my East Africa Adventure

LCBAS Chapter Meeting: Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 7:00 PM
First Lutheran Church, 418 N. Yelm, Kennewick, WA

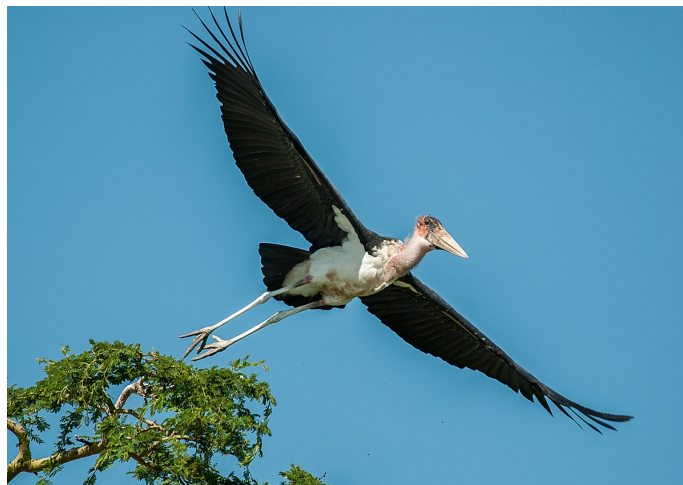
With John Duresky

John will share his reflections on a recent photo safari to Kenya and Tanzania. He will talk about birds, including sunbirds, starlings, rollers, bee-eaters and storks. He will also reflect on African efforts to preserve their natural resources.

John is an LCBAS member who is interested in bird photography, bird-watching, and conservation.

**Scarlet-chested
Sunbird, photo by
Nik Borrow.**

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**Marabou Stork,
photo by David
Scholenfeld**

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First Saturday Bird Walk - W.E. Johnson Park, Richland January 3, 2026

By Lisa Hill

Ring in the New Year with a lovely walk in W.E. Johnson Park!

It stopped raining a few minutes before we began and the sun came out, with no wind either. Six birders scoured the north end of the park and found 41 species which is an excellent number for this location with 3.5 hours of effort. My high total in 20 years is 50 species. The recent flooding of the Yakima River impacted the park and we had to tramp through mud and skirt around water on the trail. It was evident that the water had been about 4ft deep in a few places.



Small songbirds were abundant and vocal. BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES were friendly and came in close. BEWICK'S WRENS were curious, but not so friendly. As is typical, they mostly scolded us. It was a good day for wrens and we also had a PACIFIC WREN and MARSH WREN. There was a good showing of thrushes; many AMERICAN ROBINS, a few HERMIT THRUSH, and a gorgeous VARIED THRUSH, which are a lot easier to find at the south end of the park. We heard a PURPLE FINCH calling and we eventually got a peek at it. Purple Finch have been regular winter visitors in W.E. Johnson Park for more than 10 years. They eat ash seeds and those trees have proliferated throughout the park. Another bird that is now a regular year-around resident in the Tri-Cities area is the LESSER GOLDFINCH. Years ago, birders had to go to Walla Walla County to see one. We had several bright males showing off in the sun with lemony plumage and black caps.



We crowded onto a small overlook point on the bank of the Yakima River and got a good list of waterfowl. We were surprised to see an immature male BARROW'S GOLDENEYE. Rounding out the ducks were COMMONER MERGANSER, HOODED MERGANSER, COMMON GOLDENEYE and BUFFLEHEAD.

It was a treat to find a trifecta of Zonotrichia sparrows; lots of WHITE-CROWNED, and one each of GOLDEN-CROWNED and the hard-to-find WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. It would have been a real feather in our caps if we had also seen a Harris's Sparrow, the fourth member of that genus. Maybe next time!

Varied Thrush (above, right) and
White-throated Sparrow (below, left)
Photos by Larry Umthun

The next First Saturday Bird Walk is Saturday, February 7, 2026, at Two Rivers Park in Kennewick. Meet in the parking lot west of the lagoon. We begin promptly at 8:00 AM. Please come a few minutes early to sign in.

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

Field Trip to McNary NWR

When: Saturday, January 17th, at 7:45

Where: McNary NWR Headquarters, 64 Maple St., Burbank

Join LCBAS on a field trip and birdwalk to experience the masses of waterfowl which call this area their winter home. Land based habitats will provide ample opportunity to see upland species including sparrows, wrens, blackbirds, and plenty of quail.

Be prepared for a chilly, casual, morning walk along the Quail Trail. The trail is mostly flat and paved. Round-trip distance is about 1.5 miles, but you can turn around at any time.

Optional - please RSVP and ask questions via text to 509-438-7239 or email lcbasbirdingevents@outlook.com. If you RSVP, you will be notified if there are changes to the trip.

The public is always welcome to join LCBAS events.



Winter Birdwalk!

Winter is here, and our cold-weather residents are back! Join us for a morning of birding at the McNary National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters. We will be looking for a diverse array of wintering waterfowl, including Snow Goose, Swans, and more! Come prepared to walk for a few hours in the cold. Member and non-member participants welcome!



Where:

Meet promptly at 7:45am at the McNary NWR HQ parking lot (64 Maple St, Burbank, WA 99323)
46°12'04.0"N 118°59'35.1"W

When:

Saturday 01/17 from 8am-11am

Questions?

lcbasbirdingevents@outlook.com
(509) 438-7239



Saturday, January 17

Join LCBAS at the Flapjack Fundraiser

March 14, 2026

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

SHORT STACKS
FOR A
TALL CAUSE



Breakfast served from 8AM-10AM.

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:

- January 27th and February 24th LCBAS chapter meetings
- 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 with friends!

Christmas Bird Count Results

December 27, 2025

By Bill LaFramboise, Christmas Bird Count Compiler

Thanks to the many participants—including our feeder watchers—the annual Christmas Bird Count was a big success. Special thanks to Team Leads Lisa Hill, Rowan Young-McMurchie, and Dana Ward for coordinating efforts in their respective areas and helping ensure the count ran smoothly. Marcie Daines did a wonderful job hosting and organizing the potluck dinner after the count. The potluck is a long-standing tradition of our count, and it provided a great opportunity to share a meal, see friends, and swap stories from the day's birding adventures.

There were 112 species recorded on count day—five more than last year. One additional species was found during count week (the three days before and after count day). Relatively warm fall and early-winter conditions may have contributed to low counts of some waterfowl species that likely remained farther north, as well as a reduced American Coot count. In contrast, record-high totals were tallied for Snow Goose, Cackling Goose, and Trumpeter Swan. Mild conditions may also have contributed to a late Barn Swallow, only the second occurrence of the species on our count. Common Loon, Anna's Hummingbird, Western Scrub-Jay, and Savannah Sparrow were also recorded in record numbers.

Other highlights included Eurasian Wigeon; a Spotted Sandpiper; five owl species, including a Long-eared Owl (uncommon on the count); a Slaty-backed Gull; and a very rare wintering Blue Jay.



Blue Jay
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 Washington 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, reported it to Jeff Flescher (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 Flescher to report banded birds at raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com. Please include in your subject line: Color banded kestrel (or AMKE) observation.

Birds of a Feather:

An Adaptable Program by the REACH Museum

By Pauline Schafer, REACH Education Manager

Up-close encounters with wild birds are a powerful thing but can be rare in the daily school experience of many third graders. A visit from museum educators with bins full of feathers, skulls, and wings can help make a school lesson much more memorable.

REACH Museum's Education team has a new program to bring to schools, camps, and childcare centers that allows students to get a close look at what makes birds special. Using a teaching collection of bird biofacts, some of which are on loan from LCBAS's collection at McNary National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center, we can bring science and art enrichment along with an authentic nature experience to learners throughout our region.

With this collection as the centerpiece, we can adapt our program to different audiences and needs. For visits to summer camps, we include bird-inspired, hands-on STEAM activities such as weaving a nest or making a turkey caller. And for classroom visits during the school year, we can target science standards for particular grade levels.

Local school districts are implementing the CKLA Language Arts curriculum that uses science and social studies content along with literature to teach reading and writing skills. Third graders reading about animal classification get a chance to put these concepts into local context by exploring the bird parts we bring. After having the students articulate birds' unique characteristics, we give them a chance to look closely and do some scientific drawing of what they observe. This inevitably leads to inquiries that we can discuss together.

One important lesson that we aim to impart is how to respectfully coexist with birds in our neighborhoods and help protect bird habitats. Many students express curiosity about how these birds died and had their parts donated to science. This is a great chance for us to encourage empathy for other living things and also explain that there are laws to protect many species as a result of the work by Audubon and others. We are so grateful to be able to put this great collection to work!

This is one of many educational programs that the REACH Museum offers. Learn more at <https://visitthereach.us/education-programs/>



White Bluffs third graders get ready to sketch some wings while educator Andrea Constance provides instructions.



The Great Backyard Bird Count

Connect to Birds, to Nature, and to Each Other on February 13-16

Sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon, and Birds Canada, the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great opportunity to participate in community science. It provides data to help scientists better understand and protect birds, and the results help scientists understand birds and their global populations before one of the annual migrations.

All you have to do is watch birds for in one of your favorite places, and then tell us about them. It takes as little as 15 minutes within that four-day window. Or you can submit multiple lists, and if you already use eBird or Merlin, your lists will automatically count.

Get out and about and spend some time in your favorite birding spots, check out a new location, or count in your own back yard.

For more information: www.birdcount.org/



Pacific Wren
Photo by Larry Umthun

Bateman Island Causeway Removal

The Bateman Island causeway removal started this month and there is no longer walking access to the island. The causeway was breached this week and water has begun flowing through the breach. For more information:

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



Coming Soon!

For more information including registration:
www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/



LCBAS Conservation

Regarding the Hanford Reach National Monument

This letter was recently developed by LCBAS Conservation, approved by the Board, and sent to Senators Murray and Cantwell, and Representative Newhouse.

Dear Senator Murray:

Recently, there has been a suggestion by some in the Tri-Cities that the National Park Service (NPS) is better equipped than the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to manage the Hanford Reach National Monument (HRNM). Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (LCBAS) strongly disagrees and opposes this proposed change in management. These land management agencies have different missions, and we strongly feel the mission and past experience of the USFWS will continue to best serve the HRNM by managing for salmon and natural resources rather than for visitor access.

In 1992, NPS agreed that USFWS was a more competent manager for the natural resources in the Hanford Reach than NPS itself. After extensive public involvement and comment, the NPS published the "Comprehensive River Conservation Study and Environmental Impact Statement" for Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. The preferred alternative was National Wildlife Refuge with National Wild and Scenic River Overlay managed by USFWS because the desired management focus was to protect salmon and cultural resources and to enhance wildlife habitats and populations, while allowing refuge-compatible visitor access. NPS management as a National River with enhanced visitor access was deemed to provide insufficient resource protection.

Consequently, Energy Secretary Richardson set aside the North Slope as a National Wildlife Refuge under USFWS management. The inability to secure legislative protection resulted in administrative action in 2000 to create the HRNM protecting the river and designated adjacent lands. These actions were consistent with agency and public sentiment reflected in the preferred alternative in the 1992 EIS.

Washington State is blessed with natural and cultural resources throughout the state. We are particularly blessed in south-central Washington State with the HRNM. This resource incorporates much of the Department of Energy's surplus lands along with many unique biological and geological features within the 586 square miles of the Hanford Site.

Since its establishment by Pres. Clinton in 2000, the HRNM has been well managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It contains the last free flowing section of the Columbia River within Washington State which in turn contains the last spawning grounds for the fall Chinook salmon. The uplands and shoreline next to the river are home to a host of native plants, some of which are only recently discovered such as the White Bluffs Bladderpod and the Umptanum Buckwheat. New insects are being found with studies needed to determine their role in local ecosystems.

Our Monument hosts the largest population of elk in the state east of the Cascade Range. At least several thousand of these majestic animals roam over the HRNM. The HRNM also contains significant Native American cultural and village sites that need to be protected from intrusion and overuse by visitors. Some sites of considerable cultural significance are already vandalized although only those with a need to know have location information. The geology of the region is unique due to the impact of the ice age floods which is reflected in the glacial erratics and the white bluff escarpment in the HRNM.

The above mentioned features need to be saved for future generations, and isolation has been a key factor in saving them so far. Continued preservation of both natural and cultural resources will be best managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Continued on the next page

Conservation, Hanford Reach NM, continued from page 7:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with their experienced and professionally trained biologists, archeologists and geologists know how to manage vanishing or sensitive resources now and into the future. While we are strong supporters of the National Park Service, their work is better suited for managing the heavy visitation in places such as Olympic or Mt. Rainier National Park. These parks have been managed to have relatively easy access with an abundance of roads and trails. While some public access is needed, the biological, geological and cultural resources of the HRNM would be compromised or destroyed if public access were to be prioritized over habitat preservation.

The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon was a key player in championing the designation of the HRNM, and continues to keep a watchful eye on the Monument. We sincerely hope you understand the importance of continued protection and management of the resources of the HRNM under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They are the best agency for the task.

Sincerely yours,

Dana C. Ward
President
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society



Hanford Reach National Monument
Photo by Kathy Criddle

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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