



The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia
Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see
www.lcbas.org

June 23: Picnic in the Park and last get-together before the summer break

Sept 1: LCBAS Board Meeting

Sept 5: LCBAS First Saturday Bird Walk - see page 2

Sept 22: Monthly Chapter meeting at 7:00 PM

July & August are summer hiatus months. Regular activities will resume in September.

If You've Found an Injured, Sick or Baby Bird:

We just received notification that Blue Mountain Wildlife can again rescue Washington birds! We have had a long history with them and are thrilled with the news.

bluemountainwildlife.org/
541-278-0215

Additional rescue resources:
Washington State University
Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in
Pullman, 509-335-0711, and
Central Washington Wildlife
Hospital in Ephrata
509-450-7016

LCBAS Annual Picnic in the Park

Tuesday, June 23, 2026
Shelter #2, Leslie Groves Park
Park Street Entrance, Richland

Come and renew old acquaintances and meet new friends. This is our last get-together until we reconvene in September. We will start gathering around 5:30 PM, and likely start eating around 6:00 PM.

We invite everyone to join in the potluck, or you can bring your own food and skip the potluck. If you're participating in the potluck, please bring a main dish, dessert, or side to share.

Please bring your own plates and utensils. Water will be provided. Lawn chairs are nice for sitting around and visiting.

Directions: In Richland, take George Washington Way to Newcomer Ave., and turn east, toward the river. Turn north onto Harris Ave., and then east on Park St. towards the river. This is the Park St. entrance, with parking to the left of the entrance.

Make a Difference - Volunteer with LCBAS!

Last month we elected the LCBAS Board. We still have important positions unfilled on the Board, in the Standing Committee Chairs, and the Appointed Positions. Please see page four! In recent years, we've had difficulty finding people to help out.

Most positions don't take a lot of time, but our chapter depends on volunteers to keep our group vital and current. Please consider volunteering for a position to keep LCBAS strong and active.

We know everyone in our community is different in their own specific way. And that's precisely why we know you can help us help birds. You have unique talents and experiences, and we would love to have your help! We offer many ways to volunteer that ultimately help us protect and advocate for birds. It doesn't matter whether you're an expert birder or are new to birding, we have plenty of opportunities for volunteers.

First Saturday Bird Walk Trip Report Horn Rapids County Park, June 6, 2026

Celebrating Birds, Community, and Discovery Along the Yakima River

By Heidi Newsome

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon kicked off June with a fantastic First Saturday bird walk at Horn Rapids County Park along the scenic Yakima River. With 22 enthusiastic birders joining the adventure, the event was a wonderful mix of camaraderie and keen observation. The weather couldn't have been better with mild temperatures and slightly overcast skies set the stage for a pleasant morning.



Bird Sightings: Highlights and Unique Encounters

Our group was thrilled to spot a range of birds, totaling 36 species. Among the stars of the morning were the Common Nighthawk, seen gliding overhead with its distinctive zigzag flight pattern, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher, perched high and alert, scanning for insects.



The majestic Great Horned Owl made an appearance, drawing quiet awe from the crowd. The owls were spotted because there were songbirds, especially American Robins, “mobbing” the owls with many squeaks and calls. Eastern Kingbirds delighted us with their bold black-and-white plumage and energetic foraging. The elegant Great Egret waded serenely near the riverbank, standing out with its striking white feathers. We also spotted a Double-crested Cormorant perched in a tree.

Lark Sparrows and Horned Larks were observed enjoying the open fields, each demonstrating unique behaviors—Lark Sparrows with their musical songs, and Horned Larks fluttering close to the ground.

Behavior and Migration: Fascinating Journeys and Patterns

Many of the birds we observed are known for their long migrations. Common Nighthawks migrate thousands of miles from North America to South America each fall, then back again, making their presence here truly special. Olive-sided Flycatchers are also long-distance travelers, heading to Central and South America for the winter. Great Horned Owls, on the other hand, are year-round residents, adapting to a range of habitats.

Mostly Crepuscular, Common Nighthawks are typically found perched in the trees sleeping during the day. It was an unexpected treat to see several begin hunting as we finished the walk.
Photos by Charlene Burge

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The next First Saturday Bird Walk is September 5, 2026 at Wye Park in Richland, where we used to start begin the Bateman Island walks.

Please see page four for more information.

We will begin promptly at 8:00AM. 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.

Murrel V. Dawson

April 26, 1935 - April 13, 2026

Murrel was bonded to the area she lived in. As a young girl she grew up with her family in the Priest Rapids area alongside the Columbia River, which was a very different river before the dams changed the area. Her interest in Native American culture was a part of growing up near the Wanapum Village, knowing the people and integrating with the culture. She and her family were a part of early Hanford and it's surge of growth. Murrel and her family were part of two historical events during these early days. They were at the Long House when Colonel Lesley Groves came to speak to the tribal elders concerning the Hanford Project. She also saw the downed balloon that was part of a Japanese attempt to burn the Pacific Northwest with Hanford as a possible target during WWII. As a young woman, she flew to Hawaii to get married. Her husband-to-be, Rex Comfort, was a sailor in the navy stationed at Pearl Harbor. It was quite an adventure for a girl from Priest Rapids to go to Hawaii and she made it work. As a young mother of two sons, Jon and Scott, they traveled with her husband Rex as they looked for work and saw a lot of the continental United States, although it was a fast paced trip and really a bit of a blur! Eventually the family settled in the Tri-Cities. It appeared to be the best place to live.

Murrel worked as a teacher's aid, which gave her the summers off to pursue her blossoming hobbies. She became an active volunteer (a dirt bum) for archaeology in the Northwest as well as her other love, studying native plants of the Columbia Basin. Two passions that never left her. Her interest in native plants led to art and water-color painting. Her eye for detail and color produced colorful depictions of our seasonal arid landscapes. All the while her home was a center of activities for Jon and Scott and their important friend, Doug Hagerman. Murrel's "third son". A very busy time in her life.

Murrel and her second husband, Jack Dawson, retired and proceeded to wear out two Ford pickups, primarily traveling to the southwest visiting historic sites and natural wonders. Her new extended family has many layers of grandkids and great grandkids. Murrel and Jack lived on a hill top outside of Benton City, which was an active place for many family events and gatherings. Later years saw a move back to Richland with new interests which included the Audubon Society and saving the Hanford Reach. Murrel and Jack had a love of music and were very active in the dulcimer community.

Murrel, along with Jack, were a real asset to the Tri-Cities community. Volunteering countless hours to help make the community a better place to live. She will be greatly missed by her family and countless friends.

Rest in Peace Murrel



Murrel was a very active participant in LCBAS activities for many years, with the Save the Reach Committee, as a member of the board in various capacities, and as a dedicated volunteer at the Leslie Groves restoration project. She was always delightful to work with and talk to, regaling many of us with her stories of growing up in this area. She was a good friend to many LCBAS members and will be missed.

LCBAS Elections, and We Still Need Your Help!

Members of LCBAS who attended the May 26 meeting voted to approve the LCBAS officers for another year. However, we still need help with several open positions.

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 these positions varies, but is typically very flexible.

Please contact any board member for more information, and/or send a message through the contact tab at www.lcbas.org.

We have several critical positions open:

- ◆ **Vice President**
- ◆ **Birding Events Chair**
- ◆ **Communications Chair**
- ◆ **Education Chair**
- ◆ **Fundraising Chair**
- ◆ **Membership Chair**
- ◆ **Publicity**

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First Saturday Bird Walk Trip Report

Missed Species: Where Were the Woodpeckers?

One notable absence was woodpeckers. Despite searching, none were seen or heard during the walk. Perhaps they're enjoying quieter spots or taking a seasonal break, but their absence was noted.

Looking Ahead to September

As we wrap up before the summer break, the anticipation for future walks is already buzzing. These outings are more than birdwatching—they're opportunities to connect, learn, and share our passion for nature. We look forward to reuniting on the trails and discovering even more wonders together.

In September we will have a nostalgic First Saturday Bird Walk! We'll get as close as possible to Bateman Island without getting in the water! We'll walk the path heading west from the location of the former causeway, go past the boat launch and continue along the dike road. We should encounter a great variety of late summer and migratory birds in the trees and on the Yakima Delta.

Fun Facts: Did You Know?

- The Common Nighthawk is not a true hawk but belongs to the nightjar family, known for their cryptic plumage and nocturnal habits.
- Great Horned Owls have a powerful grip, strong enough to take down much larger prey. They nest early in the season and now the parents are teaching their young to hunt.
- Double-crested Cormorants often spread their wings to dry after fishing because their feathers are less waterproof than other water birds, which helps them when diving for prey.
- Horned Larks are named for the tiny feather tufts, or "horns," on their heads. These are for display and communication between individuals rather than for hearing.

Thanks to everyone who joined the walk and contributed to such a vibrant morning of discovery. Stay tuned for our next adventure!

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