



The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

Upcoming Events:

For more information see www.lcbas.org

September 20: Birds and Brews Walk at Leslie Groves Park at 6:30 PM. See below, right.

September 26: Monthly Membership Meeting at 7:00 PM -- please note the meeting is in person.

October 3: Monthly Board Meeting at 6:30 PM at the Richland Community Center

October 7: First Saturday Bird Walk at 8:00 AM. Please note location change. See page 2

October 24: Monthly Membership Meeting at 7:00 PM

In November--a silent fundraising auction to benefit LCBAS! See page 4

National Audubon Society members:

Joining LCBAS supports local conservation efforts, meetings, bird walks, and other events! Please consider joining. See page 7

Columbia Basin Chapter of the WA Native Plant Society

The local native plant society is a great resource to learn more about our native plants, and they can help you choose natives to support birds, pollinators and other wildlife in your garden. For upcoming meetings and walks, and other information: www.cbwnps.org/

September Membership Meeting

Tuesday, September 26th, at 7:00 PM, in person meeting
First Lutheran Church, 418 N. Yelm, Kennewick, WA

Please join the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society for a mystery program by Mike Denny. Mike, born in Klamath Falls, Oregon, took up birding at age eight while living in southeastern Africa, where he was in awe of all things living.



Photo by Daniel Biggs

Back in the US, he studied Biology, met his wife MerryLynn, and now lives, works, and birds in Walla Walla, Washington. He is the author of *Birds of the Inland Northwest* and *the Northern Rockies* and one of the creators of the film series which includes the *Secret Life of the Forest*, *the Northern Blue Mountains* and the *Secret Life of the Desert*, produced by Blue Mountain TV.

Join us for an in person meeting, with local birders, cookies, and comradery. We don't know what he will talk about but we know it will be entertaining, fascinating, and fun!

Updates on the program will be posted on the LCBAS website.

Birds and Brews Walk - Leslie Groves Park

Join Jason Fidorra for the next Birds and Brews walk / event at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, September 20, 2023. Meet at Leslie Groves Park Tennis Court parking lot on Saint St. in Richland.

We will walk south along the park and river-shore for an hour and then move to Bombing Range Brewing off Hwy 240 and Logston Blvd. People welcome to join for either or both parts of the trip. No RSVP needed.

Bateman Island Bird Walk September 2, 2023

By Lisa Hill

A few clouds, a little bit of rain, and eventually, plenty of sun set the stage for the 2023-24 season kick-off of the Bateman Island bird walks. With the recent unsettled weather, we had hoped for a good variety of fall migrants, but it was rather quiet overall. We did manage to eke out 41 species. Waterfowl have not begun to move in big numbers yet, so there was little to see on the water which was high enough to conceal the mudflats. It was a joy to have several children on the walk who were prepared for adventure with binoculars and cameras. They were thrilled to see new birds and get photos of a DOWNY WOODPECKER.

The best find of the day on the water was a flock of about 15 RED-NECKED PHALAROPES. *Phalaropus lobatus* comes from the Greek words for "coot-like", referring to the toes of phalaropes that are lobed like those of an American Coot. Along with some webbing between the toes, the lobes help the birds with their unique method of gathering food. Using their feet in shallow water, Phalaropes float and spin in tight circles causing water to swirl upward bringing small invertebrates and plankton within reach of their bills. Birders get a chuckle out of watching them feed because they look like wind-up toys gone haywire.

Unlike nearly all other birds, Phalaropes are polyandrous in which males and females reverse their typical roles. Females are larger with more colorful plumage and they compete fiercely for mates. Males incubate the eggs and care for the chicks which leave the nest and begin feeding soon after hatching. Phalaropes are surprisingly diminutive, smaller than Killdeer.

It was fun to watch an OSPREY bathing in the shallow waters of the Yakima delta. Flocks of WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS and YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS are arriving to spend the winter here. One ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER and a WESTERN TANAGER were the only other migrants observed.

The next First Saturday Bird Walk is Saturday, October 7. Due to the recent fire on Bateman Island and the current closure, the walk will be relocated to W.E. Johnson Park in Richland. Meet at the south trailhead near 619 Tanglewood Dr., Richland. We will begin promptly at 8 AM. Check the LCBAS website, the LCBAS Facebook page or the Tri-Cities Birders Facebook page for updates.



Red-necked Phalarope
Photograph by Jane Abel

Bateman Island Fire

On Wednesday, September 6th, another fire ignited on Bateman Island. The fire burned approximately six acres on the southwestern tip of the island, and the island is now closed to public access. At this time, there is no information on when the island may re-open. For this reason, we have rescheduled our First Saturday Bird Walk (please see the bold text in the article directly above). For more information, and/or to inquire about the island re-opening, please contact the city.

www.richlandparksandrec.com/parks-facilities/trails

Bateman Island Fire--Photo by Lynne Harrison



2023-2024 Elections for Officers and Standing Committee Chairs:

LCBAS Election RESULTS

By **Debbie Berkowitz**

Twenty-five members voted in the 2023-2024 election for Officers and Standing Committee Chairs at the June picnic and membership meeting. This qualified as a quorum of the membership. Members voted unanimously to approve the Slate of Officers and Standing Committee Chairs that were presented by the board. No nominations were received from the floor for new officers.

LCBAS cannot continue without a president, so at the September board meeting, Dana Ward agreed to step up and fill the position. Charlene Burge agreed to continue as Communications Chair. In accordance with LCBAS bylaws, it was moved to appoint these individuals to the positions and a quorum of the board voted unanimously to appoint these individuals to the positions.

Elected Positions:

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

Standing Committee Chairs:

Birding Events: Jason Fidorra
 Conservation: Dana Ward and Rick Leaumont
 Communications: Charlene Burge
 Education: **OPEN**
 Finance: **OPEN**
 Fundraising: Marcie Daines
 Membership: **OPEN**
 Programs: **OPEN**
 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 2023-2024:

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

Come on out and give us a hand!

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

We have many critical board positions open:

- ◆ Vice President
- ◆ Education Chair / Junior Audubon
- ◆ Finance Chair
- ◆ Membership Chair
- ◆ Programs Chair
- ◆ Publicity



The Flamingo Mystery of 1991 Finally Solved!

By Nancy and Bill LaFramboise

With all of the interest in flamingo sightings in the southeast after Hurricane Idalia, it brings to mind our own local invasion of one on the Yakima River Delta in Richland. Early in February 1991, Mark Gerber was birding there and found a big pink bird, surely shocked to realize it was a flamingo. It was written up in the local newspaper. Many folks saw it over the next few days including us on February 16. However, no one was ever able to find out where the bird originated.

We remember hearing that zoos had been contacted with no answer to the source of this bird. A flurry of plastic flamingos ended up in birder's yards over the next few days.

On September 6, we were pleased to read a post sent to Tweeters, the Washington list serve for bird sightings, that contained a possible solution to the **John James Audubon, Public domain** Flamingo Mystery of 1991.



American Flamingo

Posted by Michael Price and used with permission: "Some years back, on a very brisk, clear January day, I was birding Blackie Spit, which is at the eastern end of Boundary Bay, BC. The tide was low, so extensive mudflats. I was scoping along the opposite shore when I spotted a pink dot among what looked like a flock of Canada Geese. Cranked up the zoom: it's a flamingo. Jeez, I thought, some silly knothed has planted a lawn flamingo at the water's edge. Then it began feeding.

Its provenance was no mystery. There'd been a Great Escape of flamingos at Vancouver's Stanley Park zoo (now closed). Well, they'd all been pinioned, so the next day the workers simply had to collect all the flamingos aimlessly wandering around the zoo grounds wondering what to do next. But when they did a head-count, they were one short. A few days later, the missing flamingo showed up on the shores of Boundary Bay. The explanation? When the zoo techs were pinioning the birds, they had somehow missed this guy and it had simply cashed in its 'Get out of Jail' card and flown off.

It had attached itself to the *Canada Geese* flock (they were Pacific Flyway migrant geese, not the local '*canadensis*' layabouts imported from Back East in the Fifties). And for the next several years, it apparently trundled up and down the Pacific coast, earning double-takes from Alaska to Oregon."

Thus, a likely solution to the local Flamingo Mystery!

LCBAS Fundraiser Silent Auction

We will hold a fundraising silent auction at the LCBAS November Membership Meeting.

There will be several framed bird pictures and other items available for you to bid on!

Anyone wishing to donate an item for this fundraising auction please contact Marcie Daines at 509-627-4854 or via email at mdthd@frontier.com



An example of a few items available for the silent auction. There will be lots of great stuff for you to bid on!

Photo by Marcie Daines

It's been a slow couple of years for fundraising, so we hope you'll all come out to help support LCBAS!

Other fundraising opportunities:

At this time we are unable to have a seed sale, as Columbia Grain and Feed closed last spring. We are hoping to have a new partnership soon--stay tuned!

We are also hoping to schedule a flapjack fundraiser.

Red-tailed Hawk

From “The Science of Birds” podcast by Ivan Phillipson.

<https://www.scienceofbirds.com/podcast/red-tailed-hawk-buteo-jamaicensis>

Podcast review / discussion by Robin Priddy, Director at Large

This episode is a fascinating podcast on Red-tailed Hawks, all the more because we see them so often. They are very common in North America, a “standard feature” of highways, light posts and fence posts. The current population is between two and three million. Red tails are generalist predators and can thrive in many environments. Along with many rodents, they eat birds, insects, and sometimes carrion. Red tails, unlike many other large birds, can face into the wind and soar – a behavior called “kiting”. While kiting they scan the ground looking for prey.

Buteo jamaicensis is their scientific name. The ending “ensis” means “from Jamaica”. These birds were first described in 1781, and the first specimen was from Jamaica. This specimen became the “type specimen” used for the description of a new species, making Jamaica the “type locality”. It was originally called the Cream-Colored Buzzard in the 13th Edition of Linnaeus’ Book Systema Naturae: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systema_Naturae

Red-tailed Hawks are large, with broad wings perfect for soaring. The tail is relatively short and wide with a reddish or rufous coloring. The bill is dark grey and the cere is yellow. The eyes of a mature hawk are a soft brown, though immature hawks have yellow eyes. The legs are yellow and talons black. The plumage and patterning – there are so many variations! The majority of adults do have rusty red tails. Juvenile tails are not red, they are pale brown, with obvious banding. Dark patagial marks are also very common; the patagium is the wings’ leading edge. There are dark and light morphs and many variations in between. Dark morphs can be so dark that the classic markings don’t stand out for ID.

The voice of the Red-tailed Hawk is one of the most iconic bird sounds in the world. It’s so often substituted for other birds in movies, I suspect most folks reading know exactly what I’m talking about!

The Red-tailed Hawk belongs to the family Accipitridae, genus *Buteo*. There are about 27 other birds in this genus. Red tails are one of the largest Buteos in North America.

There’s an interesting section in the podcast on bird speciation and different methods which are used to determine speciation. There are many sub-species; the specific number is under debate. Most sub-species correspond to a distinct geographic region – for example, the Florida Red-tailed Hawk and the Cuban Red-tailed Hawk. Subspecies have three names in the scientific convention; *Buteo jamaicensis umbrinus* is the name of the Florida Red-tailed Hawk.

Ornithologists have been subdividing where red tails live, and their physical features. Biologists call this morphometric data, such as wing length and toe size. Genetic information can also be used to define subspecies. The Red-tailed Hawk Project is a group of scientists working on just this: <https://redtailedhawkproject.org/>

Two subspecies get a lot of attention – one is the Kryder’s Red-tailed Hawk which is a very pale hawk. The tail feathers are very washed out with a bit of rusty pinkish coloring. It’s found in the north great plains of the United States and southern Canada. Whether or not this is a separate genetic subspecies, or a pale morph of an existing subspecies, is an ongoing debate.

Another subspecies, Harlan’s Red-tailed Hawk, is a very dark version of the species. Dark brown overall, with whitish flight feathers, and a whitish tail with a dark tip. No red tail! It’s the most dramatically distinct of all the subspecies. In the past it has been considered a separate species. It’s a long-distance migrant that breeds in Northern Canada.

The high degree of variability is an aspect of great interest for this species. Information about the species including some sub-species can be found at the link: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-tailed_Hawk/id#



Red-tailed Hawk
Photo by Charlene Burge

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Red-tailed Hawk

Continued from page 5

This is a very widespread species – they have become more common as ecosystems have been altered across the country. They prefer open or semi open habitats with elevated perching sites. Human-caused changes, like removing and adding trees in different parts of the country have increased the range of Red-tailed Hawks. Most birds are resident, and don't migrate. Those that breed farther north do migrate – making this species a partial migrant. Sometimes migrants and residents end up in the same habitats during the winter, causing extra competition for food and territory.

Great Horned Owls are rivals of the Red-tailed Hawk. These species share many habitats and food sources though they do hunt at different times. Great Horned Owls use old Red-tailed Hawk nests, or sometimes take them by force. Great Horned Owls will attack red tails at night, often nestlings but sometimes adults.

Ivan describes the Sky Dance, a spectacular mating behavior. You can find many videos on YouTube. A pair bonds for life, and often reuses nests from year to year. They have two-to-three eggs, and the babies are called an eyass – this term is used for hawks of all kinds, as well as falcons. Generally, the female stays with the nest and the male hunts. The nestlings fledge in about 45 days and stay with their parents for four-to-six months. Red tails typically live 10-to-20 years in the wild.

Perhaps the most famous Red-tailed Hawk was named "Pale Male". He lived in Central Park from 1990 to May of 2023, when he passed away at 33-years-old! He had quite a following during his life.

I hope you enjoy this podcast, I found it fascinating to learn more about a bird we see so often.

Citizen Science: Winter Raptor Surveys

If you can identify raptors in our area and enjoy having another reason to spend time out birding (but, seriously, who needs reasons?), you should consider joining the Winter Raptor Survey.

The 20th season for the East Cascades Audubon Society's Winter Raptor Survey Project will get underway November 1st for optional surveys, and December 1st for the main survey season.

The project, thus far, has recorded 31 species of raptors, and all data collected is provided to The Peregrine Fund to include in their raptor database for research and population monitoring purposes. This data, as well as data from eBird and research projects, are painting a picture of raptor use and population trends in our western states. More than 450 people are involved each year, covering 551 routes in six states as of last winter, while surveying more than 32,000 miles of transects! Last year, as usual, RTHA, AMKE, NOHA, BAEA, and RLHA continued to be the main species observed, accounting for 91.8% of the total raptors observed.



While uncommon, Burrowing Owls have been observed during Winter Raptor Surveys in our area.

Photo by Charlene Burge

At least three great driving routes near our area are available for this year's survey. There may be more, but there is not a final tally yet. At this time Touchet North, Walla Walla East, and Prosser South are available in this area.

Contact Jeff Fleischer to get involved: raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com

Editor's Note: Several members of LCBAS have conducted Winter Raptor Survey routes the last few winters and found it an enjoyable opportunity to get out and birdwatch while contributing to an important, and long running, citizen science project. Routes are driven slowly to thoroughly search appropriate habitat, with stops that you choose for safe viewing of the area.

You do not need to be an expert in survey techniques, just know your raptors, have good attention to detail, take your time, follow the simple directions provided for the surveys, and accurately fill out simple survey forms. Easy peasy and lots of fun!

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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>

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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 Leumont	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:
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