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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Annual Picnic Event – Everyone is Welcome, Bring your family and friends!

Special Interest Articles:

- Annual Picnic in the park!
- Osprey Point!
- Help Common birds in decline page 6 !

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June Chapter PICNIC - Public Welcome Tuesday, June 28, 2010 6 - 9 pm South Leslie Groves Park, Shelter 2 Richland, Washington

The annual picnic is a wonderful time to come socialize with Audubon friends, like an extended cookie break at our regular meetings! Come and bring a friend to share in food and fun. Learn what the local Audubon chapter has accomplished over the past year. We will also be honoring several long standing members with

special awards! Don't miss this chance to say congratulations and thanks to some of our hardest working members. We all do our work as volunteers of the organization and this is the one chance we get to appreciate each other's contributions to the advancement of conservation and appreciation of nature in our local area. Come out and SEE, SHARE and SAVE! But at this event – especially SHARE, Share in good times, wonderful accomplishments, and food!

Non-members welcome to attend.

You bring: A main dish and either dessert or salad. Your own plates, silverware, etc. Your own chairs if possible.

LCBAS provides lemonade. No liquor license so nonalcoholic beverages only, please.

Directions: Turn east off George Washington Way onto Newcomer Ave, Turn north on Harris Ave Turn east on Park St..... and there we are!

See you there!

Bateman Island Bird Walk *with Lisa Hill*

June 5, 2011
High water on the Columbia River! A heavy snowpack, rain and a late spring melt contributed to unusually high water on the Columbia River. Most of the walking trails on Bateman Island were

impassable due to flooding. The Bateman bird walk group of about 25 people could only go a short distance beyond the causeway before turning back due to flooded trails. Hoping to add to our meager bird list, we walked

westward along the bike/walk path toward the boat launch. With very few water birds to increase our list, the total species found was 35.



*"Cedar Waxwings"
Photo courtesy L. Umthun*

Greetings from the President! *With Robin Priddy*

The May meeting came and went, and I find myself grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve another year as President.

Junior Audubon has had a great year, thanks to Cherie and everyone who shows up to support her. Rich is moving forward with Membership work and local field trips; two groups are studying Finding your wings and The Singing Life of Birds. The Curlew goes out like clockwork thanks to Heidi. Debbie got the Rotary grant application done, which resulted in a new scope for children; and a bonus due to an unanticipated discount – thank you Katie! Ed has figured out, with lots of input, a new display board and as I write this the details and art are being sorted out with Lisa. We were at the Sandhill Crane Festival and Barb and Debbie gave a talk to Rotary about

our program and the scope. Rick is continuing work with McWhorter Ranch; there seems to be a real possibility there for something wonderful. Cathy has done a great job working out programs, and Marilyn has gotten Audubon Adventures out to many schools – along with rescuing lots of birds. Tom is continuing to work with Kennewick to sort out what's going on with the Nature Trail "pruning" – thanks for being patient and persistent. Kathy stepped out and has made a real difference in Osprey point. Murrell and Jack, and Dana and Carole, and probably others I'm not aware of, show up every membership meeting early, and get it set up for the rest of us. Audubon members also make huge contributions to other local efforts with the Burrowing Owls, Fish and Wildlife, McNary, Blue Mountain Wildlife - and there's much I'm certain I have missed.

Speaking of missed – we will miss Nancy LaFramboise as she heads off to Florida, and Rick

Bateman Island Walk *Continued*

Plenty of CEDAR WAXWINGS trilled among the mulberry trees along the causeway. Some were seen to be carrying nesting material. Many waxwings overwinter in our area and a few do breed here. BULLOCK'S ORIOLES were easy to find in the treetops. BANK SWALLOWS nested in the clay bank across the water from the boat launch. Three beautiful WESTERN GREBES dived and preened out on the water, and both the EASTERN KINGBIRD and the WESTERN KINGBIRD

were seen. Warblers were scarce, but several singing male YELLOW WARBLERS and one ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER caught our attention. A large, carrot-shaped orange bill identified a CASPIAN TERN as it soared overhead. A SWAINSON'S HAWK and an OSPREY were the only raptors seen. The next Bateman Island Bird Walk will be at 8am on **SEPTEMBER 3, 2011** after a two-month summer break. We meet in the parking lot of Wye Park near the causeway. Birders of all skill levels are welcome!

Leaumont as he steps down from Conservation Chair. Thank you for all you have done; you will be missed.

Sometimes, at board or planning meetings, we come up with a long list of things we'd like to do. Being the people we are, we're aware of the constant threats to the environment for which we care so deeply - and it's easy to think we're not doing everything we "should" or "could".

I would invite you, however, to take a long look at everything we do accomplish. Think for a minute, how different our Columbia Basin would be without the steady, dependable efforts and voice of each of us and the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon. I invite each of you to consider and appreciate what you add. After my first year, I find that I am awed by the people, and the organization I am privileged to serve.

Thank you. And see you at the Picnic!

McNary NWR Environmental Education Summer 2 nd Saturday Events

When: Saturday, July 9 th, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

What: Nature Crafts and Fairy Houses!

Shhh! Fairies & gnomes tiptoe through McNary National Wildlife Refuge. Let's see what you can do with sticks, leaves, cattails, rocks or milkweed pods. Maybe you'd like to craft a fairy home, a bunny hut, make a toy or even weave a tiny raft to float on the wetland. Bring your imagination & your creativity!

When: Saturday, August 13 th, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

What: Greenwing Day!

Discover how to band a duck, identify waterfowl, call geese and ducks, retrieve ducks with a Labrador, and much more. Members from Ducks Unlimited and the Richland Rod and Gun Club will be on hand to teach youth of all ages about wildlife conservation through a variety of outdoor activities. Join us for our most popular annual event!

When: Saturday, September 10 th, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

What: Geocaching and Hunter Blind Preparation Day!

Virtual Geocaching! Let's learn how to geocache with GPS units. We will teach you how, then walk the nature trail and find special items on your list. Turn in your list for a prize. Everyone's a winner!
Hunter Blind Preparation Day - Spruce up the waterfowl hunting blinds! Bring gloves, boots, waders, and tools to work on the blinds. Meet at the McNary Environmental Education Center for a brief orientation.

Directions The Education Center is located off Highway 12 near Burbank. From Tri-Cities take Highway I-182 East/Highway 12 East to Burbank. Turn left onto Humorist Rd. at the second stoplight after the Snake River Bridge. Turn left onto Lake Rd. Look for Education Center on the left. Questions call the Friends of McNary Refuge at 509-546-8352 or the Refuge Office at 546-8300.

Conservation Notes: Osprey Point

with Kathy Criddle



Osprey Point trail!

Work along the waterfront pathway at the Port of Pasco is nearly complete and ready to be enjoyed by birdwatchers and the community! Earlier in the year the Port of Pasco began a Shoreline Improvements Project that included removing two thirds of the trees and all the understory bushes from the shoreline so that it would be transformed into a park like setting. Individuals and groups indicated that such a severe loss of habitat for Bald Eagles, raptors and wildlife was unacceptable. The Port of Pasco halted work and listened to suggestions from the public. The result is a fairly decent compromise with opportunity for habitat improvement in the future.

Among those offering suggestions were the Friends of Mid-Columbia

River Wildlife Refuges, the Columbia Native Plant Society and the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society. Together we were able to persuade the Port of Pasco Board of Commissioners to consider changes to the original plan. Suggestions included "planting islands of habitat" around existing trees left in place and leaving some of the understory shrubs and dead trees for cavity nesting birds in the "Natural Area." Originally the Natural Area was planned to be cleared of all shrubs and dead trees. Wildlands, the contractor came up with a modified plan with an added cost of just over

Continued on page 4

\$35,000. During March and April the Port of Pasco Commission considered and ultimately agreed to most of the changes and added cost during their April board meetings. Wildlands resumed work on April 26th and have now completed all the improvements except for continued eradication of the knapweed areas. Wildlands will continue a combination of applications of appropriate herbicides, physical removal, mulching and eventually new plantings to control the knapweed in affected areas. I was personally amazed at the

willingness of the Port of Pasco Commission to consider changes and a significant increase to the project budget. The Port of Pasco has been pleased with our participation in the planning process and they look forward to providing opportunities for future volunteer participation. There will be opportunities for Eagle Scout projects as well as habitat restoration projects. Sometime during the next year, probably spring of 2012, I will be planning some work parties for volunteers to add native plants and riparian

shrubs back into the area to enhance the wildlife habitat for song birds and other wildlife critters. For now, I invite you to visit and see what a pleasant area this is to share with your family and visitors. Don't forget to bring your binoculars! To access the trail you can park at either the Osprey Pointe parking area on Dock St or you can park in the new Port of Pasco Office parking lot at 904 East Ainsworth, Pasco WA.

LCBAS LOCAL BIRDING TRIPS

Local Field Trip: Bickelton Blue Birds

The local trip to the Bickelton area to search for bluebirds and other birds of this unique high plateau will be lead by Don Bihl. The trip will leave the WalMart (Richland) shopping center parking lot (NE corner) at about 7 AM on Saturday morning, **June 25**. Car pooling is desirable; trip limit is 12. Plan on an all-day outing, so bring lunch, water, snacks and don't forget sunscreen, hat, wind/rain jacket – in other words, be prepared! Don will post additional details on LCBIRDS2 as the date nears. Please also check out the Local Field Trips page on the LCBAS.org website for more on local field trips. Sign up for this trip by calling or emailing Don Bihl at 375-0660 or donbihl@charter.net.

Field Trip Report Walla Walla Trip May 21 st

Our trip into Walla Walla County was a lot of fun. We had six people attend, and managed to find approximately **70** species of birds. At Bennington Lake, some other birders directed us to a juvenile Northern Saw-Whet Owl. It was right next to the trail and posed very nicely for photos. Another stop on the lower (paved) part of Biscuit Ridge Road produced at least two male Lesser Goldfinches in a flock of American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins. At the top of Biscuit Ridge, it was windy and surprisingly cold. In spite of the weather, we got an excellent look at a Green-tailed Towhee. Our final stop of the day was back down Biscuit Ridge Road at Tom Lamb's home where his dozens of hummingbird feeders produced dozens of hummingbirds—mostly Calliope, but with a few Black-chinned and Rufous mixed in. Thanks to all who participated and made this trip a success. – Chad Merkley

Rich Barchet, LCBAS Local Trips Coordinator

Check <http://www.lcbas.org/fieldtrips.html> for a complete listing of proposed field trips for 2011. Trips are limited to 8-10 people (2 cars), so sign up early to reserve your spot!

Bird Sightings for May 2011

Thanks for posting your sightings on LCBirds2, or emailing them to me (lanirock@charter.net) or calling them in (545-4898). Please let me know if I made errors with your names.

On May 1st, Jane and Keith Abel, noted their first spring warblers in their Richland yard: Nashville, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped. Lisa Hill had a male Rufous Hummingbird at their feeder and on May 2nd a male Calliope Hummingbird. Michael and Janet Barrett had a Lazuli Bunting and many Red-winged Blackbirds at their feeders on May 3rd. That was the earliest local sighting of the Lazuli Buntings this year. Jordene Lucas also had a Lazuli Bunting at her feeder that day.

On May 4th Jane and Keith had a Golden-crowned Sparrow hanging out with the White-crowns. Kevin Black had a great day at Two Rivers Park. He saw or heard a Lazuli Bunting, Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned, Nashville and Yellow Warblers. He saw a Warbling Vireo, Western Wood-Pewee, and Lincoln, Chipping and Golden-crowned Sparrows. He also reported a Horned Grebe, Common Loon and family of Great Horned Owls. On May 5th Chad Merkley spotted Yellow-rumped, Nashville and Orange-crowned Warblers at Horn Rapids Park. He saw a possible Willow Flycatcher and two male Bullock's Orioles. On the Snively Road pond he saw four American Avocets, four Least Sandpipers and two Cinnamon Teal. On May 6, Lisa Hill spotted a Lewis's Woodpecker in the same area, as well as four Avocets.

On May 7 a Western Tanager was spotted at the Vernita rest area, along with some Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Western Kingbird by Kevin Black. At Snively and Twin Bridges Road he reported Swainson's Hawks, the Avocets and two Western Kingbirds. Ron Louderback reported three Long-billed Curlew, a possible Vesper Sparrow and numerous American Pipets on Smith Canyon Road. He reported six Burrowing Owls in Franklin County. On the back side of Rattlesnake Ron and Carole spotted a pair of Sage Thrashers and a Loggerhead Shrike. On Missimer Road they saw

three Western Kingbirds, two Sage Sparrows and a nesting Swainson's Hawk.

Mother's Day, the 8th, was productive. Lisa Hill found a pair of Townsend's Solitaires in Johnson Park. Nancy LaFramboise spotted two Least Sandpipers near the corral and two Cinnamon Teal across the street from the corral on a trip to Snively and Twin Bridges Roads. Jane and Keith Abel had their first ever Pine Siskin at their feeder. Tony Greagor reported various migrating birds (seen and/or heard): Bullock's Orioles, Western Kingbird, Western Tanager, Townsend's Warbler, Pine Siskin, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warblers, and, inevitably, among the Mourning Doves, a Eurasian-collared Dove.

On May 10 Kevin Black and Karen and Jerry Klein had Lazuli Buntings in both their yards. Karen and Jerry also have male and female Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds at their feeders. Dennis Rockwell reported a flock of over 30 Pine Siskins, a lone Snow Goose, Yellow Warblers, Cedar Waxwings and Western Kingbirds in Two Rivers Park. Bob and Pat Woodley found two Avocets and a Sandpiper in the pond at the beginning of Snively Road. A Lewis's Woodpecker was seen there and at Horn Rapids Park. Also at HRP: two Great Horned Owls and one Bullock's Oriole. On HR Road they found their first Lark Sparrow of the year.

On May 15, Joel Tinsley reported a pair of Evening Grosbeaks and Black-headed Grosbeaks at his feeders. On the 16th Dennis reported his first Forster's Terns of the season and heard Yellow Warbler and Chipping Sparrows in the trees at Two Rivers Park. Ron and Carole found Lark Sparrows on Smith Canyon Road. On Overturf Road they spotted a Loggerhead Shrike, ten Meadowlarks and a few Horned Larks, a Townsend's Solitaire, two Burrowing Owls, a baby Rock Wren, two Long-billed Curlews and a Swainson's Hawk. On the 18th Tony Greagor reported finding a Cooper's Hawk nesting near his home in Rancho Reata.

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Bird Sightings Continued from page 5

May 19th: Lots of people posted sightings of Eurasian Collared Doves in April and May. Ron Linz, however, reported that he's had them since early last spring (2010) and they raised 3 batches of young last year. They are back nesting again this spring. On May 23rd, Kris Keating reported on a yardful of birds including a Bullock's Oriole, House Finch, Goldfinches, Red-winged Blackbirds, an American Kestrel, a nesting Killdeer and nesting Say's Phoebes next door. Also on that date Chad Merkley birded a flooded Bateman Island and reported two Gray Catbirds, two Hermit Thrushes and a Dusky Flycatcher.

On May 28th Barb Clark reported on fledging American Robins, House Finches and House Sparrows in her yard. Killdeer, Brewers Blackbirds and Starlings are gathering food for young. Bullock's Orioles are gathering nesting materials. Doves, Goldfinches and an occasional Cooper's Hawk are regulars. Nancy reported a friend's findings: a Blackpoll Warbler at HRP and returning Common Nighthawks. Her friend reported Common Yellowthroats at the marsh on Snively Road. On May 29th Kris reported a Grasshopper Sparrow and a Sage Sparrow in her yard. Larry and Lisa birded the south slope of Rattlesnake Mountain and saw American Pipits, Sage, Brewer's, Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows, a Sage Thrasher and Loggerhead Shrike. On May 30th and 31 Lannie Smith and Rocky Ross had a Townsend's Warbler in their yard.

All in all a wonderful month for migrants and breeding species!

The next column will feature the highlights of summer sightings, and will be in the September issue of "The Curlew" – so keep your binoculars at the ready for the summer months and continue to send sightings, Thanks!

Lannie Smith

**Check out our website:**

<http://www.lcbas.org>

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Alarming Declines Among Many Common Birds

From National Audubon Society

Audubon's unprecedented analysis of forty years of citizen-science bird population data from our own Christmas Bird Count plus the Breeding Bird Survey reveals alarming declines for many of our most common and beloved birds. Since 1967 the average population of the common birds in steepest decline has fallen by **68 percent**; some individual species nose-dived as much as 80 percent. All 20 birds on the national Common Birds in Decline list lost at least half their populations in just four decades. The findings point to growing impact from the many environmental challenges our birds face, from habitat loss from development, deforestation, and conversion of land to agriculture, to climate change.

Which Species? Why? The wide variety of birds affected is reason for concern. Populations of meadowlarks and other grassland birds are diving because of suburban sprawl, industrial development, and the intensification of farming over the past 50 years. Greater Scaup and other tundra- breeding birds are succumbing to dramatic changes to their breeding habitat as the permafrost melts earlier and more temperate predators move north in a likely response to global warming. Boreal forest birds like the Boreal Chickadee face deforestation from increased insect outbreaks and fire, as well as excessive logging, drilling, and mining. The twenty species selected for Common birds in decline include; American bittern, Black-throated sparrow, Boreal chickadee, Common grackle, Common tern, Eastern meadowlark, Evening grosbeak, Field

Oil spill pelicans are having babies on Ga. coast

BY RUSS BYNUM: ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAVANNAH, Ga. -- First they survived being covered in oil from the BP spill in Louisiana and settled into a new home on the Georgia coast. Now those brown pelicans are surprising scientists again by laying eggs and hatching babies. After hundreds of pelicans were scrubbed clean and relocated to states far from the disaster, wildlife experts questioned whether many would survive, let alone reproduce.

Tim Keyes, a coastal bird biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, is reporting what could be the first known successful nesting of those birds at Little Egg Island Bar, a state-protected wildlife area about 60 miles south of Savannah. Keyes said Wednesday he has counted 17 brown pelican chicks since May spread among eight nests tended by a parent that survived the oil spill. He could tell the birds' origins because Gulf pelicans released in Georgia had numbered bands placed around their legs.

"It was surprising and exciting to see them back here and raising chicks," said Keyes, who noted several nests still have eggs that haven't hatched. "You hate to think of the birds just going back out and either dying or not being able to actively breed."

More than 600 oiled pelicans were plucked from the Gulf oil slick last year after a BP Deepwater Horizon-leased oil rig blew up off the Louisiana coast in April 2010. Nearly 400 were flown to new homes with similar habitats on the coasts of Georgia, Florida and Texas. Still, experts were unsure how many would nest again, if they even survived. While the birds' oily feathers were scrubbed clean with dish soap, they had almost certainly ingested oil. And there were questions of whether the sheer stress of the pelicans' ordeal might inhibit their ability to reproduce.

In a study of brown pelicans that were cleaned and traced after a 1990 oil spill in Southern California, scientists found the rescued birds showed no signs of breeding afterward. "Definitely what we're seeing in Georgia is very good news," said Steve Alexander, a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service ecologist serving as a deputy wildlife branch director in New Orleans. Still, it's still too soon to say how well the surviving Gulf pelicans are reproducing overall. Alexander said the report of pelican chicks hatching in Georgia is the first he's heard of any formerly oiled

Gulf pelicans having babies. And the number of nests Keyes has counted is small compared to hundreds of rescued birds.

"Among those birds, there were various levels of exposure to the oil, and some were captured sooner than others," Alexander said. "You're going to see probably varying success. But until we have more data, I don't think you can say more one way or another."

Read more:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/06/15/2268113/oil-spill-pelicans-are-having.html#ixzz1POCnZjHq>

sparrow, Grasshopper sparrow, Greater scaup, Horned lark, Lark sparrow, Little blue heron, Loggerhead shrike, Northern bobwhite, Northern pintail, Ruffed grouse, Rufous hummingbird, Snow bunting, and Whip-poor-will.

One thing these common species all share is the grim potential to become uncommon - unless we all take action to protect them and their habitat. Fortunately, there are many things you can do for the birds and for our future. In addition to suggestions provided in individual species profiles please explore website below to find out what you can do to help birds:

TAKE ACTION

Contribute to our understanding -count birds and report your observations... Audubon has great citizen science programs that call upon people like you to help count birds for ongoing analysis.

Christmas Bird Count – add to over 100 years of data, participating in this count that runs from December 14 to January 5 each year.

Great Backyard Bird Count – this once a year count occurs every President's Day weekend in February.

Important Bird Areas - Organize or participate in a bird survey at a nearby Important Bird Area. Contact your state IBA coordinator for information.

Check out **eBird**, a project of Audubon and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. You can enter your observations anytime in eBird, in some cases for Important Bird Areas.

Participate in Habitat Restoration and Healthy Practices... Whether in your own backyard or at an Important Bird Area or other priority site, you can make a difference.

Advocate for Policies... Lawmakers care about your views and opinions. As a constituent, you have a unique ability to convey your concerns about issues affecting birds, wildlife and their habitats — and **be heard** like no lobbyist in Washington, DC. See more ideas at <http://birds.audubon.org/what-you-can-do-birds>

The Curlew

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Please Note: LCBAS Chapter Benefits (includes a year's subscription [10 issues] to *The Curlew*) this is an additional cost to membership in National Audubon Society.

\$20. for annual membership benefits dues or
 \$10. for full time students.

Please make check payable to **LCBAS**. I can help with an additional donation of \$_____

Send *The Curlew* to my email address listed below. All my dues will go towards supporting LCBAS in local education and conservation efforts. _____

I want to be on your Environmental Alert e-mail list to receive timely notices about issues/work parties. (Your e-mail address will not be shared.)

National Audubon Society Membership (includes annual subscription to *Audubon Magazine*)

\$20. for one year new membership in the NAS. This payment includes membership in the local chapter (LCBAS) but does not include a subscription to *The Curlew*

Please make check payable to **National Audubon Society**. Please do not send renewals for NAS to LCBAS.

For any of the options above check the appropriate boxes, clip the form and mail it with your check(s) to:

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