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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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THE PLIGHT OF NORTH AMERICAN BUMBLE BEES

Sarina Jepsen, the Xerces Society

Membership Meeting
April 23, 2013
7:00 p.m.
Kennewick First Lutheran
Church, corner of Yelm and
Highway 395

The April meeting features a presentation by Sarina Jepsen, Endangered Species Program Director at the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Jepsen will discuss the plight of North American bumble bees and provide steps that individuals can take to counteract alarming trends of bumble bee decline, from becoming involved in citizen monitoring projects to conserving or restoring habitat specifically for bumble bees.

Sarina Jepsen directs the Endangered Species Program at the Xerces Society. She holds a Master's degree in Entomology from the University of California, Davis, and has extensive experience in applied invertebrate ecology. She has worked with the Xerces Society since 2006 on numerous endangered species protection campaigns, including developing status reviews and petitions to protect imperiled bumble bees, freshwater mussels, butterflies, and other species. Sarina oversees the Xerces Society's Project Bumble Bee, which aims to understand and conserve North America's declining bumble bees.

The Xerces Society protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. Butterflies, beetles, worms, starfish, mussels, and crabs are but a few of the millions of invertebrates at the heart of a healthy environment. These animals build the stunning coral reefs of our oceans; they are essential to the reproduction of most flowering plants, including many fruits and vegetables; and they are food for birds, fish, and other animals. Yet invertebrate populations are often imperiled by human activities and rarely accounted for in mainstream conservation.

Our speaker begins her relevant and interesting presentation at 7:45. She is preceded by a brief business meeting at 7:00 p.m. followed by a bird i.d lesson and a brief break and social. Members are encouraged to bring cookies or other snacks.



Bateman Island Bird Walk *with Lisa Hill*



"Eared Grebe"

Photo courtesy
www.allaboutbirds.org

April 6, 2013

A very breezy morning kept many Bateman Island birds under cover. Maybe they sensed the rough two-day windstorm that was brewing up. Consequently, we found 38 species after walking the entire island. That might be one of our lowest counts in the last several years.

Large flocks of swallows were out over the high water on the Yakima Delta – TREE, VIOLET-GREEN, CLIFF and NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED. An EARED GREBE in breeding plumage had been reported near the causeway the day before. We found the bird

again in the same area. Even if the bird had not been in breeding plumage, the very thin, slightly up-turned bill, and the steep forehead were clearly visible.

The locust grove was swarming with YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS; many of the males in bold breeding plumage. We are so used to seeing them in drab winter plumage that we forget they are one of the most beautiful North American warblers. No Great Horned Owls were present.

The waters of the delta and the Columbia River were nearly devoid of any birds. One CASPIAN TERN, a small "water dance" of WESTERN GREBES, and a raft of LESSER SCAUP were the only birds of interest.

The next Bateman Island walk will be **Saturday, May 4 at 8am**. We meet in the parking lot of Wye Park above the causeway. Birders of all skill levels are welcome.

President's message *with Robin Priddy*

Thanks to Barb Clarke's persistence, we do have a trip to Malheur scheduled for May 10 - 12! There is still space available so if you want to go, contact Barb.

Cherie Beadrand and Chris Simonen, along with Barb and Tom Clarke taught Junior Audubon about different kinds of birds nests and how they are made and used, including hummingbird nests! Debbie Berkowitz has continued to keep us apprised of many local issues regarding conservation and planning, and Marjorie Kaspar gave us a detailed update on the Benton County shoreline management plan. Many thanks to Rod Coler for submitting the bird and butterfly report which is now included.

Washington Audubon is hoping to re-connect with one another and to help develop a shared Audubon mission and goals for protecting sagebrush steppe habitat for birds and other wildlife. The first gathering of all eight eastern Audubon Chapters

on **Saturday, April 27th, from 11:00 – 3:00 PM at the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge HQ office**. As National has moved its organization to the flyway concept, this will be a great opportunity to continue to develop our understanding of how this construct works and how our area fits.

The highlight of the day will be chapter reports and sharing what is happening at the Flyway level in our region. Christi Norman and chapters have been working on the Sagebrush Steppe Initiative, an effort to ensure bird and bird habitat health for the entire Columbia Plateau. We will learn about the role of citizen science through bird population monitoring and other important efforts. I'm planning to attend, and if others can come, please do!

Thank you for the privilege of serving as president - Robin

**Barn Owl
Boot Camp
Saturday
April 20, 2013
12 - 2 pm
Richland Community
Center
Howard Amon Park
Fun for the Whole Family!
"Adopt" an Owl!
Live Birds of Prey!
Refreshments!
And More!**

New Sage Grouse Conservation Report

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is making available a final report that is designed to help guide the efforts of the States and other partners to conserve the Greater sage-grouse with a landscape level strategy that will benefit the species while maintaining a robust economy in the West. The report, prepared by state and federal scientists and sage-grouse experts, identifies the conservation status of the Greater sage-grouse, the nature of the threats facing the species, and objectives to ensure its long-term conservation.

The final report is a collaborative state and federal effort to evaluate species conservation before the Service is required to make a decision in 2015 on whether to propose protecting the species under the Endangered Species Act. The draft report was submitted for scientific peer review, and the Service addressed those comments in the final version.

The intent of the report is to provide State, Federal, local and private entities with permitting or land management authority information to support conservation actions for the sage-grouse. Such actions might involve modifying or amending regulatory frameworks to ensure the long-term conservation of the species by avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating the threats to the species, or focusing voluntary conservation efforts in ways that will benefit the species the most.

The final Conservations Objectives report is based on scientific principles of conservation biology and uses information and conservation strategies provided by the States to identify key areas of habitat across the species' range, as well as the threats operating within each population that need to be mitigated to conserve the species over the long term. Download full report at:

<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/>

Super Awesome Science Fair!



Mid-Columbia Science and Engineering Fair Judging

LCBAS participated in the 58th Mid-Columbia Science and Engineering Fair which was held March 7-9 at the Columbia Center Mall. LCBAS's Dana Ward reviewed over 300 science project displays from participants within grades 6 through 12. LCBAS traditionally gives out two 50 dollar awards to one student in grades 6 through 9 and one student in grades 10 through 12. Science project posters are selected for judging which emphasis conservation themes, or ecological sciences and if possible with a focus on birds and wildlife. The individual poster are judged for presentation content, understandability by the reader and contains information that could be a stepping stone to greater knowledge by the student to the health of the natural world.

For grades 6 through 9, a 7th grader, Maisy Robinson was selected as the best participant with a poster titled, "How do Different Temperatures Affect the Life Span and Growth of Painted Lady Butterflies."

For grades 10 through 12, a 10th grader, Gabriella Estrada was selected as the best participant with a poster titled, "How Does Fire Affect Plant Growth."

Both students were present at their posters and presented enthusiastically about their projects. Each poster met the criteria of content and understandability. Also, the students present their projects to all that are interested in listening. Please consider walking through the mall next year to support these enthusiastic young people.

Come Experience Spring at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Join LCBAS for a Mother's Day Weekend, arrive Friday, May 10, Saturday, May 11 and depart Sunday, May 12 at Malheur Wildlife Refuge, one of the hottest birding spots in the Northwest.

We will be staying at a dorm at the Malheur Field Station. Accommodations are quaint or rustic whichever sounds best to you. The guys are on one side of the dorm and the gals on the other side. Meals will be prepared in the dorm. Cost is \$100 transportation to and from Malheur and while at Malheur not included. For more details check the LCBAS website, www.lcbas.org. Call Barbara Clarke at 509-588-3362 to reserve your spot. All funds due at the April meeting.

Conservation Issues

Birds, Bees, and Aquatic Life Threatened by Gross Underestimate of Toxicity of World's Most Widely Used Pesticide

from American Bird Conservancy

(Washington, D.C. March 19, 2013) As part of a study on impacts from the world's most widely used class of insecticides, nicotine-like chemicals called neonicotinoids, American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has called for a ban on their use as seed treatments and for the suspension of all applications pending an independent review of the products' effects on birds, terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, and other wildlife.

"It is clear that these chemicals have the potential to affect entire food chains. The environmental persistence of the neonicotinoids, their propensity for runoff and for groundwater infiltration, and their cumulative and largely irreversible mode of action in invertebrates raise significant environmental concerns," said Cynthia Palmer, co-author of the report and Pesticides Program Manager for ABC, one of the nation's leading bird conservation organizations.

ABC commissioned world renowned environmental toxicologist Dr. Pierre Mineau to conduct the research. The 100-page report, "[The Impact of the Nation's Most Widely Used Insecticides on Birds](#)," reviews 200 studies on neonicotinoids including industry research obtained through the US Freedom of Information Act. The report evaluates the toxicological risk to birds and aquatic systems and includes extensive comparisons with the older pesticides that the neonicotinoids have replaced. The assessment concludes that the neonicotinoids are lethal to birds and to the aquatic systems on which they depend.

"A single corn kernel coated with a neonicotinoid can kill a songbird," Palmer said. "Even a tiny grain of wheat or canola treated with the oldest neonicotinoid -- called imidacloprid -- can fatally poison a bird. And as little as 1/10th of a neonicotinoid-coated corn seed per day during egg-laying season is all that is needed to affect reproduction."

The new report concludes that neonicotinoid contamination levels in both surface- and ground water in the United States and around the world are already beyond the threshold found to kill many aquatic invertebrates. Data on surface water contamination from surveys to date, most notably from California and from the Canadian Prairies, indicate that concentrations of several of the neonicotinoid insecticides are high enough to be causing impacts in aquatic food chains. Data from other jurisdictions such as the Netherlands show even higher levels of contamination.

The report also identifies procedural deficiencies in how the US Environmental Protection Agency assesses aquatic impacts. "EPA risk assessments have greatly underestimated this risk, using scientifically unsound, outdated methodology that has more to do with a game of chance than with a rigorous scientific process," the report says.

First introduced in the 1990s in response to widespread pest resistance and health concerns linked to older pesticides, the neonicotinoid insecticides quickly became top sellers in global pesticide markets. Now the most widely-used insecticides in the world, it is difficult to find pest control commodities that do not contain one or several of the neonicotinoid insecticides. California alone has registered nearly 300 neonicotinoid products.

EPA scientists have repeatedly documented serious concerns about the persistence, mobility and toxicity of the products, and yet the Agency continues to grant registrations allowing the chemicals to be used for an ever-widening range of crops and non-agricultural use sites.

EPA and other regulatory agencies worldwide have underestimated the toxicity of these compounds to birds partly because the risk assessment methods fail to account sufficiently for interspecies variation in toxicity. For example, risk assessments underestimate acute risk by up to 10 fold for bird species beyond mallard ducks and bobwhites, the two usual test species. As for aquatic invertebrates, EPA has underestimated the toxicity of the neonicotinoid imidacloprid by over an order of magnitude because of the

Agency's failure to consider data from the peer-reviewed literature. EPA has grossly underestimated the toxicity of the other neonicotinoids as well, in part due to the Agency's reliance on their standard test species, *Daphnia magna*, a freshwater flea which happens to be uniquely insensitive to neonicotinoids.

Given that a single neonicotinoid-coated seed can kill a bird, it is also important that seeds marketed for home bird feeders remain free of these chemical treatments. In response to sporadic wild bird seed contamination incidents, ABC has monitored bird seed sold by Walmart, Home Depot, Lowes and Target. To date, ABC's independent bird-seed testing efforts have focused on older products such as the organophosphorous and carbamate pesticides. The neonicotinoids are a candidate for future testing.

The report also charges that there is no readily available biomarker for neonicotinoids as there is for cholinesterase inhibitors such as the organophosphorous pesticides.

"It is astonishing that EPA would allow a pesticide to be used in hundreds of products without ever requiring the registrant to develop the tools needed to diagnose poisoned wildlife. It would be relatively simple to create a binding assay for the neural receptor which is affected by this class of insecticides," said Dr. Mineau. The ABC report calls on EPA to require that registrants of acutely toxic pesticides develop the tools necessary to diagnose poisoned birds and other wildlife.

Neonicotinoids' toxicity to bees and other insects has brought them the most attention thus far and has dominated recent concerns of regulatory institutions worldwide. The serious risk to bees should not be understated, as one-third of the U.S. diet depends on these insect pollinators. The ABC assessment makes clear, however, that the potential environmental impacts of neonicotinoids go well beyond bees. The report urges EPA to expand its registration review of neonicotinoids to include birds, aquatic invertebrates, and other wildlife.

BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MARCH 2013

March is probably the last month we'll see the rare irruptive species that have made the winter months remarkable. But, as an indicator of spring, March is also the month when our shorebird migrants began to appear.

North Richland and Leslie Groves Park

On March 4th Laurie Ness reported 10 Bohemian Waxwings in a flock of about 100 Cedar Waxwings feeding on Mountain Ash trees near the corner of Snyder Street and Davison Avenue. On the 8th Laurie reported a Townsend's Solitaire, the Waxwings and a Merlin in the same area. On the 6th Jane and Keith Abel reported 18-20 Common Redpolls in the 100 block of Spring Street in a Birch tree. Sue Painter reported a pair of Black-crowned Night Herons in Howard Amon Park, as well as a Western Grebe, Buffleheads, Lesser Scaup, American Coots and Mallards on the 10th.

On the 17th the Abels came across 2 Long-billed Curlew at the PNNL fields, a Yellow-headed Blackbird at the MSA Pond in the Garlic Professional Center (off Stevens and Spengler), and a Western Bluebird in Leslie Groves just south of Newcomer. Bob and Pat Woodley also saw the Long-billed Curlew. Lisa Hill located those three species as well as a male Eurasian Wigeon at the MSA pond. She pointed out that the Western Bluebird is uncommon in Benton County and some years there are actually no reported sightings.

The Abel's feeders have been hosting Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Juncos and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Late in the month a pair of Western Screech Owls was showing up in the evening. On the 11th, Bob and Pat Woodley welcomed back a female Downy Woodpecker to their Suet feeder after a lengthy absence. A Pine Siskin joined her on the 21st.

While kayaking near the end of March, Jane has seen White Pelicans sporting "big, huge breeding knobs," Black-necked Stilts,

American Avocets, Killdeer, Common Loon, 4 Common Goldeneye, many Wigeons, Bufflehead and Scaup, and an early spring sighting of a Red-necked Grebe. They are a rare migrant for which no March sightings have been reported.

West Richland and Horn Rapids Area

Bob and Pat reported a Loggerhead Shrike along Snively Road on the 3rd and on the 12th a Say's Phoebe. Mark Gerber birded the West Richland Sewer on the 3rd. He reported a Varied Thrush, 6 Ring-necked Ducks, several Wood Ducks, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, 2 Barn Owls, and overhead, 50 Sandhill Cranes. On the 8th he was back in the same area and found a Spotted Towhee, Northern Shrike, 3 Barn Owls and an immature Golden-crowned Sparrow.

Yakima Delta and Bateman Island

Bob and Pat Woodley found 3 Clark's and 2 Western Grebes on the Yakima Delta on March 3rd. On the 17th they saw 2 Horned Grebes, about 7 Long-billed Dowitchers, a few Killdeer and many Tree Swallows. On March 25 their first American Avocet of the year appeared on the Delta. It was accompanied by several Killdeer, 2 Greater Yellowlegs and a variety of ducks. Two days later they spotted a pair of Cinnamon Teal, an adult Bald Eagle, 8 Killdeer, 5 Great Blue Herons and one Belted Kingfisher. From her kayak Jane added to the Woodley's species list: Dunlin, Wilson's Snipe, Caspian Terns, Black-necked Stilts, Black-crowned Night Herons, and a nesting Great Horned Owl. James Cleaver reported a pair of Cinnamon Teal, Marsh Wrens, Tree Swallows and a lone Canvasback on the 28th.

Rancho Reata Area and Amon Creek

On March 2 Tony Greager found at least 13 singing Varied Thrush, several Hermit Thrush, 4 Golden-crowned Sparrows and 2 Purple Finch on a short walk. Returning home he found a new yard bird—a Say's Phoebe. He's had a calling Western Screech Owl in his yard. The Ofsthun yard list included

Spotted Towhee, Varied Thrush, Winter Wren, Pine Siskin, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Great-horned Owl and Long-eared Owls.

W.E. Johnson Park, South Richland and Badger Mountain

Kevin Black heard a Chukar from the Badger Mountain Trail on the 2nd. Both Laurie Ness and Kathy Criddle reported Say's Phoebes on the 6th—at the trailhead and nearby area. Lisa Hill spotted a flock of over 50 Tree Swallows and Violet-green Swallows at her home near Johnson Park on the 17th. On the 29th she found a flock of about 20 Evening Grosbeaks at the north end of the park. With them, in a Russian Olive tree, were Fox Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Hermit Thrush and Varied Thrush.

Finley Area

Dennis Rockwell had an interesting sighting in the Finley area. He witnessed a Red-tailed Hawk knock down a feral pigeon in flight! He surmised that the hawk must have had Peregrine foster parents. Other Finley sightings from Dennis: a Common Loon at Two Rivers Park and a Great Horned Owl living in the pines along the disc golf course in the park, and in his yard on the 28th: 2 Slate-colored Dark-eyed Juncos and a Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker.

Kris Keating reported (and photographed) some mystery birds which were visiting her feeders on the 24th with Dark-eyed Juncos and Black-capped Chickadees. Lots of discussion was sparked with the specialists weighing in on Boreal, Gray-headed or Chestnut-backed Chickadees or leucistic Dark-eyed Juncos. The last I heard, no consensus was reached, but it's a good reminder to take LOTS of shots of mystery birds that show up at *your* feeders.

McNary NWR and West Walla Walla County

James Coleman reported several flocks of

Greater White-fronted Geese at the Burbank Slough on the 18th. On the 25th Kevin Black reported 2 Tri-colored Blackbirds at the Boise Cascade Compost Heaps. Bob and Pat observed 1 Osprey and 1 Orange-crowned Warbler at McNary NWR on the 29th. At the overlook pond at Wallula Junction they saw their first-of-year Black-necked Stilt and 3 or 4 Least Sandpipers.

North Franklin and Pasco Area

Kevin Black reported a Townsend's Solitaire at Mesa early in the month. At Scootney Reservoir he reported many species of waterfowl including one European Wigeon. At White Bluffs on the 19th he reported 15 Violet-green Swallows, 2 Barn Owls, Rock Wrens, and an early adult light morph Swainson's Hawk. On the 25th at Ice Harbor Dam: Caspian Terns and 1 male Barrow's Goldeneye; at Windust Park area: Canyon and Rock Wren, Say's Phoebe, Spotted Towhee; on Hwy 261 he saw 1 soaring Ferruginous Hawk; Lyons's Ferry area: Golden Eagle, 2 Lesser Goldfinch, 3 Mountain Chickadee and 1 Hairy Woodpecker.

Mid-month Gaylord Mink announced that the Burrowing Owl cam for the Department of Fish and Wildlife was up and running after repair of the collapsed burrow. The owls appeared to have immediately set up housekeeping. Toby Cochran installed 4 Wood Duck boxes on the Bailie Ranch. When checking them this year he photographed a Northern Saw-whet Owl residing in one of them.

On the 28th Laurie Ness birded the very west end of Chiawana Park. She tallied up an impressive 22 species including 3 Pacific Wren, 2 Bewick's Wren, 4 Golden-crowned and 3 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 22 Yellow-rumped Warblers, and 24 Red Crossbills.

Rattlesnake Mountain Area and West Benton County

Kevin Black reported from the Walhuke Boat Launch and Ponds on the 24th: Green-winged

Teal, Gadwall, Ring-necked Ducks, Northern Shrike, Horned Grebe, Bald Eagle and Violet-green Swallows. On hwy 240 he spotted 6 Long-billed Curlew. Mary Lilga reported Scrub Jays carrying nesting materials near the park on Grant Avenue in Prosser. Mike Livingston and daughter Audrey reported about 100 Sandhill Cranes flying over Prosser on Easter Sunday.

Thanks for posting your sightings on LCBirds2, e-mailing them to me (lanirock@charter.net) or calling them in (545-4898). Comments, suggestions, and corrections are always welcome. – Lannie Smith

A Brief Listing of Local Upcoming Festivals

Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival: April 26-28. Grays Harbor County; find details at <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>

Leavenworth Spring Birding Festival: May 16-19. Leavenworth; find details at <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/>

Annual Washington State Audubon Wenas Campout: May 25-27 (Memorial Day weekend). Wenas Creek Campground (between Ellensburg and Yakima). Find details at <http://www.wenasaudubon.org/>

AUDUBON CONVENTION

JULY 12-15, 2013

“Taking Flight Together”

REGISTRATION IS OPEN:

<http://www.audubonconvention.org/>

<http://www.audubonconvention.org/#!registration/clv1>

Join Audubon’s amazing network of dedicated leaders to celebrate One Audubon! Recognize our history of achievement as we launch into an exciting and challenging future. Unite around flyways for hemispheric impact. Turn passion into action!

Four full days of exciting field trips, inspiring speakers, in-depth hands-on workshops, and tens of program options highlighting strategic conservation successes from the four flyways. And the camaraderie only Audubon can provide.

Skamania Lodge, Stevenson, WA, in the heart of the spectacular Columbia Gorge!

Mark your calendars for a Joint Conference of Western Field Ornithologists and the Washington Ornithological Society hosted by Black Hills Audubon Society

Date: August 22-25, 2013

Location: Red Lion Hotel, Olympia, WA

This conference will feature:

- Workshops to enhance your field skills
 - Fall Warblers: **Jon Dunn** and **Kimball Garrett** (includes both classroom and field sessions)
 - Sapsuckers – ID challenges and research update: **Steve Shunk**
 - Gull Identification: **Mike Donahue**
 - Dragonflies: **Dennis Paulson** (includes both classroom and field sessions)
 - Wilderness First Aid: **Heath Wakelee**
 - Making full use of eBird: **Brian Sullivan**
- Keynote talk by **John Marzluff** on those amazing Corvids
- A full set of field trips (including Pelagics)
- Photo and Bird Sounds ID sessions
- Two sessions of talks on recent research in the region with a plenary talk by **Dennis Paulson**

Registration will open in early May. Check for information at the WFO web site: www.westernfieldornithologists.org.

Don't forget to check our website www.lcbas.org for up to date information. And remember we have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/lcbas> - you do not have to have a Facebook account to read our page, just put in the address above!

The Curlew

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Audubon Membership Information

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 E-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 included 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:

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1900, Richland, WA 99352

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