

## Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

### Sage Spirit: The American West at a Crossroads

*Special Interest Articles:*

- Elections upcoming: candidates needed!
- Bateman Island Cleanup

*Individual Highlights:*

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**Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm**  
**REACH Museum**  
**1943 Columbia Park Trail,**  
**Richland**  
**NOTE DATE AND LOCATION**

Join Audubon Washington, the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society and REI on March 18 to hear renowned conservation photographer Dave Showalter, author of **Sage Spirit: The American West at a Crossroads**. Through his stunning photography, Showalter presents a vision for an American West where people and wildlife thrive side by side, replete with birdsong and the sweet aroma of sage. His images carry you through the vast terrain of the American West that is inhabited by burrowing owls, sage grouse, cranes and other wildlife. Sage Spirit promotes an inclusive approach to conservation—one that seeks to preserve economic livelihood and treasured lifestyles as well as a priceless ecosystem—and highlights the solutions that Westerners are already advancing, from sustainable ranching to renewable energy development.

Showalter will present photos and stories to inspire conversation about the importance of shrub steppe habitat and public lands in Eastern Washington. The gradual disappearance of sagebrush habitat in the West is having a profound effect on a wide variety of wildlife species such as the Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, pygmy

rabbit, and mule deer.

The Bureau of Land Management is currently in the midst of a planning process that will affect the future of our iconic shrub steppe habitat for the next 30 years. Audubon Washington and its active chapter network in Eastern Washington are sponsoring a series of presentations by Dave Showalter to help protect the Greater Sage-grouse, a keystone species for the health of the Sagebrush Sea.

Showalter will present on March 18, 2016, 7:00pm at THE REACH museum; 1943 Columbia Park Trail, Richland, WA. There will be books for sale and signing at the event.

**Admission is free.**



## Bateman Island Bird Walk: March 5, 2016

A little rain did not discourage at least 34 birders from showing up for the Bateman Island Bird Walk in March. Several enthusiastic children joined the adults for the 3 hour bird walk. It was great to be able to welcome quite a few new folks who came to participate. Several people borrowed LCBAS binoculars and hopefully had fun seeing some new species. We accumulated a modest list of 39 species. High water kept the shorebirds away except for the reliable KILLDEER. RED-WINGED BLACK BIRDS filled the air with lots of noise, song and calls. A few waterfowl were on

hand including: RUDDY DUCK, COMMON GOLDEN EYE, WOOD DUCK, BUFFLEHEAD, MALLARD and COMMON MERGANSER. On the water were also: PIED-BILLED GREBE, WESTERN GREBE, HORNED GREBE and a COMMON LOON. A pair of BELTED-KINGFISHER silently flew circles over the water. Perhaps they were practicing some courtship displays. One of our younger birders found the bird of the day, a GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW. Only a few WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS and SONG

SPARROWS were seen and one very indignant BEWICK'S WREN sternly lectured us for disturbing him.

Gulls seen were the CALIFORNIA GULL and THE GLAUCUS-WINGED GULL. Raptors seen were a BALD EAGLE, RED-TAILED HAWK and a SHARP-SHINNED HAWK.

The next Bateman Island Bird Walk will be Saturday, April 2nd at 8am. Meet in the parking lot of Wye Park near the causeway to the island. Be ready for lots of migrants coming through including warblers and shorebirds!

## President's message from Lori Nelson

Election season is upon us. LCBAS elections.

Every spring one of the last things that we do before we go on our summer hiatus is to elect officers for the upcoming fiscal year. This year, we'll hold elections at the May membership meeting. But first, we need candidates.

Many of the current board members wish to continue, some in the positions they currently hold and others in new positions. But without new faces and voices on the board, we can't do everything we'd like to do. Last year we muddled through with four empty positions on the board. LCBAS members still did much of that work: we went to local schools to talk about birds, we paid our bills, we registered new and renewing members. But it was hard. Very hard.

Without a full board, it's difficult to do more than tread water. To make progress, to move ahead, we need to have leadership. And that leadership must come from our members. That's why we need you to think about how you can contribute to LCBAS. Maybe you're in a position to be a board member – to hold office, to chair a Standing or Special Committee. Maybe you'd prefer

to work in the background, as a member of a committee. Maybe you can commit to working at some times of year, but not others. Maybe you would like to help with a specific event, but not have year-round obligations. Any of these levels of commitment are wonderful and welcome.

Think about what LCBAS means to you. Do you value the programs at our membership meetings? The First Saturday bird walks on Bateman Island? Helping with the Christmas Bird Count? Visiting with friends during our social times? Let your interests guide how you invest your time.

LCBAS will be what its members make it. Right now we need more people in leadership positions to continue our efforts to educate children and adults, to conserve natural areas for people and birds, to conduct meaningful community science, and to offer high quality and fun birding activities for members and the public. Are you going to join me and help these programs continue? I hope so!

Happy Birding to you all,  
Lori

## From the National Audubon Society

### Is Climate Change Making It Harder for Finch Families to Get Along?

*Scorching temperatures in Australia are turning up the heat for Zebra Finch chicks, causing them to hatch out of order.*

By Purbita Saha

We already know that climate change isn't making things easy for birds—it's led to a recent upswing in [disease](#) and [starvation](#) among avians all around the world. And now we can add another danger to that list: sibling rivalry in Zebra Finches. Normally this isn't a problem with these finches, as all the chicks are supposed to hatch at the same time. But in Australia, a steep rise in atmospheric temperatures is leading some Zebra Finches to emerge early and gain an elder-sibling advantage, according to recent research published in [Royal Society Open Science](#). This slight edge allows bigger first-borns [to get more food from their parents](#), lowering the odds that other chicks in the nest will survive.

Because the speed of embryo development is tied to heat—more heat equals faster development—it's up to adult Zebra Finches to carefully control the temperature of their eggs via incubation. The female will typically lay five eggs over the space of five days, so to make up for the early start that some eggs get, she and her mate will hold off on incubating the embryos (and triggering development) until all of them are snug in the nest. Sometimes, though, parents have to leave the nest unattended, and when that happens, the eggs are at the complete mercy of their surrounding climate—a state known as “ambient incubation.” In most cases, ambient incubation doesn't seem to affect finches—under normal conditions adults can keep their embryos cool by sitting on them and shading them. But add global warming to the mix and . . . well, you can see where this is going.

To study the effects of scorching temperatures on Zebra Finch eggs, biologists from Macquarie University in Sydney set up camp in an area of southeastern Australia that was hit by abnormal heat waves (defined as five or more days in a row when temperatures hit 104 degrees

Fahrenheit or hotter) in 2010 and 2012. They kept tabs on local finch nests during the heat waves, some of which were positioned in the shade, and some of which were positioned in the direct sun (the researchers also removed the roofs of these nests to amp up the effect). What they found was that in the sunny nests, which ran about 6 degrees warmer, eggs hatched in less time than the shaded nests—and the eggs within a single sunbaked nest hatched at different times. Since the trigger temperature for finch eggs to start developing is around 100 degrees, it's likely that the intense sunlight caused the embryos to start incubating right away, says Simon Griffith, an ecologist at Macquarie University in Sydney and lead author of the study. That means that during the heat waves, the eggs that are laid first get a major head start—and previous research suggests that that means the younger chicks may not make it out of the nest.

This is bad news for the Zebra Finches, since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that even in the most optimistic global warming scenarios, we're bound to see an increase in [prolonged heat waves all over the world](#). Scientists have already [established a direct link](#) between climate change and record-high temperatures in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and Europe, and their projections show that [it's only going to get worse](#).

In the meantime, what can a Zebra Finch do to keep its chicks in synchrony? It's possible that the birds will adapt, Griffith says, either by not breeding during heat waves, or by [shifting more resources and testosterone](#) to the younger eggs during incubation to help bring them up to speed. But they'll definitely have to catch on in time.



*Zebra Finches*

*Phot credit: Simon Griffith*



*Belted Kingfisher*  
Photo credit: Ivar Husa



*Harlequin Ducks*  
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

If you have bird or nature photographs that you would like published in the *Curlew*, please e-mail them to [curlew@lcbas.org](mailto:curlew@lcbas.org).

Don't forget to check our website [www.lcbas.org](http://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!

**Note that prospective members get three complimentary issues of the Curlew. In order to receive more issue, you must become an LCBAS member**

#### Officers

President – Lori Nelson ([president@lcbas.org](mailto:president@lcbas.org))  
Vice President – Joe Lelli  
Treasurer – Vacant  
Secretary - Debbie Berkowitz ([secretary@lcbas.org](mailto:secretary@lcbas.org))

#### Standing Committees

Birding Events – Kathy Criddle ([birdingevents@lcbas.org](mailto:birdingevents@lcbas.org))  
Communications - Joe Lelli (Curlew) ([curlew@lcbas.org](mailto:curlew@lcbas.org))  
Conservation – Dana Ward ([conservation@lcbas.org](mailto:conservation@lcbas.org))  
Education - Vacant  
Finance – Vacant  
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Program – Ivar Husa ([programs@lcbas.org](mailto:programs@lcbas.org))

#### Special Committees

Audubon Adventures – Lannie Smith  
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Website - Ed Rykiel ([webmaster@lcbas.org](mailto:webmaster@lcbas.org))  
Sagebrush Songbird Survey – Robin Priddy  
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# Bird Sightings for February 2016

By Lannie Smith

## North Richland and Richland Columbia River Parks

I missed this in January: On New Year's Day, Bob and Pat Woodley had 5 male Varied Thrushes (uncommon, winter) in their yard. In February, Laurie Ness reported a Mew Gull (uncommon, winter) over Davison Avenue and Sierra Street. Throughout the month across North Richland, Betsy Taylor spotted an assortment of waterfowl, California Quail, Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Varied Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird and Western Meadowlark.



*Yellow-rumped Warbler*  
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

## West Richland, Horn Rapids Area and Rattlesnake Mountain

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> Jason Fidorra reported 3 Evening Grosbeaks (rare winter irruptive) feeding and calling from Russian Olives on North Snively Road. He also saw 4 Western Screech Owls in the area. Jane and Keith Abel reported Sandhill Cranes in the Barker Ranch/Horn Rapids area on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Dennis Dauble saw a flock of about 30 Sandhill Cranes over Horn Rapids on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Jason reported the return of Sagebrush Sparrows in the Thornton Wildlife area on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mark Gerber is still seeing his 2 Anna's Hummingbirds (rare, winter) at his feeders although they are less regular and seem to have found other food sources during February. Other visitors

to his West Richland yard: Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Pine Siskin (uncommon winter irruptive) and a male and female Red Crossbill (rare winter irruptive). Visiting Horn Rapids Park on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, Betsy Taylor spotted Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Downy Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

**Rancho Reata and Amon Creek Natural Preserve**  
Jason Fidorra reported 1 Greater Yellowlegs (rare, winter) at Amon Creek on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Neil and Sharon Ofsthun reported from their Rancho Reata yard: Great Blue Heron, Sharp-shinned and Northern Harrier Hawks, Sandhill Crane flyover on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Mourning and Eurasian Collared-Doves, Western Screech- and Long-eared Owls, a male Downy Woodpecker, intergrade Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Varied Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Spotted Towhee.

## Yakima Delta, Bateman Island and Columbia Park

Two Purple Finch (rare, winter) were spotted at the Yakima Delta HMU on the 6<sup>th</sup> by Jason Fidorra. On the 7<sup>th</sup> from Bateman Island he spotted 1 Slaty-backed Gull (this rarity is continuing its presence from last month), 1 Fox Sparrow and 1 White-throated Sparrow (both sparrows are uncommon winter visitors). The gull was also seen on the Columbia Park Marina roof. Back on the island on the 14<sup>th</sup> he reported the gull and 1 Barn Owl flying over the Yakima Delta. An Orange-crowned Warbler (rare, winter) was reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> on Columbia Park Trail by Laurie Ness. Mark Gerber reported a Great Horned Owl at the Yakima Delta HMU on the same day. Jane and Keith Abel picked the windiest day of the month, the 28<sup>th</sup>, to hike Badger Mountain. They saw a Prairie Falcon (uncommon resident) and overhead, a large flock of Sandhill Cranes. On Bateman, Betsy Taylor's highlights included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Flicker, Northern Shrike and Yellow-rumped Warbler. At the WDFW launch off Duportail she added a Black-capped Chickadee.

## South Richland, Johnson Park and Badger Mountain

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, Lisa Hill came upon a flock of 7 Western Bluebirds (uncommon migrant) near the end of Duportail Street by the boat launch. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, across the Yakima from this same spot, Mark Gerber spotted a single male Western Bluebird with a House Finch and 2 Northern Flickers. They are perhaps all part of the flock of 8 Western Bluebirds spotted in the Queensgate area in late December and early January. Betsy Taylor

birded the Tapteal Water Trail on the 25<sup>th</sup>: Double-crested Cormorant, Red-tailed Hawk, Sandhill Crane (flock overhead), Northern Shrike (uncommon, winter), Cedar Waxwing and American Goldfinch.

### Pasco and Franklin County

Bob and Pat Woodley happened upon an interesting collection of blackbirds on January 30<sup>th</sup>. On Dodd Road, near the cattle feeding area, there were a large bunch of Yellow-headed Blackbirds (rare, winter), a considerably smaller group of Red-winged Blackbirds, and a much smaller group of Brewer's Blackbirds (uncommon, winter)! February 5, Jason Fidorra spotted 2 Lewis' Woodpeckers (uncommon migrant) in the Windust area.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> Laurie Ness spotted a Eurasian (Common) Green-winged Teal (no records available) which was also seen and identified by Jason. It was seen in a pond off Road 36 by the Big Cross track field. Jason also reported about 75 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches (rare in winter) in the Lyon's Ferry area. In our yard we enjoyed periodic visits from 5 Red Crossbills and our first Pine Siskins of the winter. Rocky Ross reported a flock of 23 Sandhill Cranes over Chiawana on Leap Day.



*Red-winged Blackbird*  
Photo credit: Ivar Husa

**Clarifications and corrections are always appreciated.**

Please contribute *your* sightings to our newsletter! Call them in to 545-4898, post them online at LCBirds2, or email to [lanirock@charter.net](mailto:lanirock@charter.net).

## LCBAS Board Member and Committee Chair Elections

It's Election Season!

No, not those elections... LCBAS elections!

We will hold elections for officers and committee chairs at the May membership meeting – but first, we need candidates!

Officer positions are President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Positions as the Chairs of Standing Committee include Birding Events, Communications, Conservation, Education, Finance, Fundraising, Membership, and Program.

In addition, we have a number of Special Committees, committees that support the work of Standing Committees. These are Audubon Adventures, Book Sales, Christmas Bird Count, Hospitality, Publicity, Website, and the Sagebrush Songbird Survey.

Not ready to take on one of these positions? Any level of commitment is welcome, no matter how small.

We on the Board welcome help from members who wish to contribute but don't have the time, energy, or inclination to be in charge of an office or committee. Maybe you have a particular talent for organizing social events, managing databases, using GPS technology, or working with children – there are many ways to contribute to your Audubon Society.

Interested in a helping but want more information before you commit? Just ask a board member! We would love to help you find a way to contribute to LCBAS and keep our work going.

We do great stuff in education, conservation, and birding activities – and we have a lot of fun.

Drop Lori Nelson an email ([president@lcbas.org](mailto:president@lcbas.org)) or a phone call (509/619-0143) if you're interested in an office, a committee chair, or becoming a member of a committee. Remember – all help is welcome!

# BATEMAN ISLAND CLEAN UP



**Saturday**  
**Mar 26th, 2016**  
**9AM-12PM**

Tapteal Greenway

**Meet at the Columbia Park Trail at Wye Park**

Please join the WSU TC Environmental Club and many other like minded community groups in the Tri Cities. We will be picking up trash! Please bring gloves, snacks, and a re-fillable water bottle. Please be prepared for cold, rainy, windy weather.

**COUGS**  
in the Community

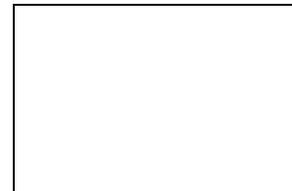
Bags, buckets will be provided by City of Richland.

No Need to RSVP, family friendly event.

Contact: Elinor Lake [elinor.lake@wsu.edu](mailto:elinor.lake@wsu.edu)



**The Curlew**  
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon  
Society  
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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. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ LCBAS has an e-alert list (for last minute activity changes, important issues, volunteer opportunities). If you want to opt out, check here. If you opt out, you will not receive e-alert emails (Your e-mail address will not be shared in any case).

**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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