

The Curlew

The newsletter of the Lower Columbia Basin
Audubon Society

Items of Interest

- More chances to go birding with LCBAS
- Sagebrush Songbird Survey gearing up for its 5th field season
- How do birds survive winter nights?
- Eat pancakes & help LCBAS!

Upcoming Events

Jan 6 - First Saturday Bird Walk, 8:00 AM at Bateman Island, by special permission.

Jan 8 - Board Meeting, 6:15 PM at Richland Public Library

Jan 20 - Field Trip, 8:00 AM at Hood Park, Burbank.

Jan 23 - Membership Meeting, 7:00 PM at First Lutheran Church, Kennewick

Feb 3 - First Saturday Bird Walk, 8:00 AM. Location to be announced. For details, visit lcbas.org.

Wallula Gap and Its Amazing Natural History

Mike Denny

January 23, 2018 at 7:00 PM

First Lutheran Church

US 395 and Yelm, Kennewick

Join us to hear Mike Denny from Blue Mountain Audubon speak to us about Wallula Gap, a geological landmark along the Columbia River.

Mike is a life-long birder and a talented natural historian and speaker who has lived in eastern Washington for forty years. Mike has written or co-written five books about the natural history of the interior Northwest, including one about Wallula Gap.



Wallula Gap
by Lori Wollerman Nelson

Report: First Saturday Bird Walk

Bateman Island bird walk

Saturday, December 2, 2017

by Lisa Hill

With special permission, we once again we had the pleasure of birding part of Bateman Island. The weather was agreeable and there were about a dozen birders on the trail. We came up with a respectable list of 47 species, mostly dominated by waterfowl; NORTHERN SHOVELER, NORTHERN PINTAIL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, RING-NECKED DUCK, BUFFLEHEAD, HOODED MERGANSER, COMMON MERGANSER, and RUDDY DUCK. Three BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS were perched in the shrubs at the shoreline near the causeway. WESTERN, PIED-BILLED and HORNED GREBES were present. We haven't seen an Eared Grebe in a while. A small flock of about 25 DUNLIN were busy in the shallow water near a mud bar in the delta.

We got great looks at VARIED and HERMIT THRUSH. The Varied Thrush must be one of the most striking birds around here in winter. Their orange and black patterns lend an exotic look to the birds. There were plenty of YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, so it was good to see an ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER mixed in, too. A noteworthy number of them have been spotted in the area this fall. Another bird we saw whose winter numbers appear to be on the rise is PURPLE FINCH.



Harris's Sparrow
by Larry Umthun

After the walk when most people had left, we found a first-year HARRIS'S SPARROW next to the boat launch west of the causeway. It isn't a rare bird here in winter, but in some years, none are reported.

The next Bateman Island Bird Walk will be Saturday, Jan 6. Meet at Wye Park above the

causeway before 8am. Access to the island is still restricted, so latecomers will not be able to join the group.

Sneak Peek at our CBC Results

The 118th Christmas Bird Count is in the books! We'll have a full report for you in the February Curlew, but here are some teasers to whet your appetite

Overall we had 108 species counted on Count Day (December 30) and Count Week.

The most abundant birds were the Canada Goose (4289 individuals counted) and American Coot (4225 individuals counted).

We had a number of unusual birds this year, including Red-breasted Sapsucker, Blue Jay, Scrub Jay, Slaty-backed Gull, and White-breasted Nuthatch. We also had two Wild Turkeys counted this year.

Between Count Day and Count Week, we counted X species of owls this year, including Snowy, Burrowing, Western Screech, and Great Horned Owls.

For the details, check the February Curlew!

The data generated by all Christmas Bird Counts is reviewed and compiled into a database that is publicly available at www.birdsource.org. Select the Christmas Bird Count icon; the TriCities count code is WATC.



*Save the date for our big
Flapjack Breakfast
Fundraiser!*

Saturday, February 17

8:00 - 10:00 AM

Applebee's
5305 Road 68
Pasco

Come hungry to Applebee's for a delicious breakfast of flapjacks, sausage, scrambled eggs and beverage (coffee, tea, juice or milk).

All of this for just \$10.00 and LCBAS keeps \$6.00 from each ticket sold! Tickets will go on sale at the membership meeting, January 23rd.

Use them, give as gifts, and enjoy a good time while allowing us to further our bird education and environmental efforts in the Tri-Cities. Your fellow members will take your order, serve your food, pour your drinks and then clean the table for the next eager eater.

Additional LCBAS Field Trips

*Did you make a New Year's Resolution to watch birds more often?
We are here to help!*

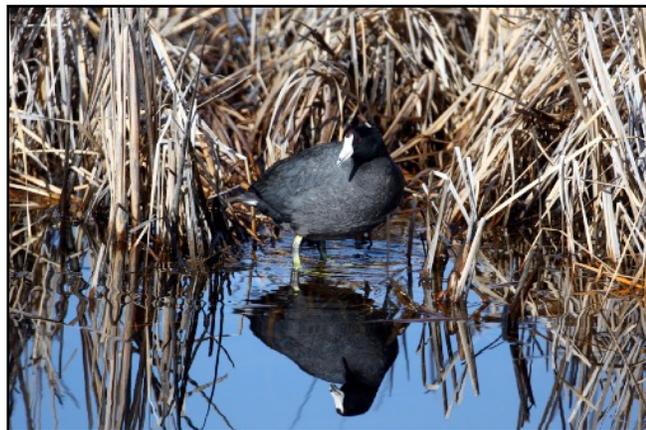
Starting this month, LCBAS will offer a second field trip each month. Led by Jason Fidorra, Birding Events Chair, we will bird at a different site on the third Saturday of each month.

On **January 20**, join us at **Hood Park**, just across the Snake River in Burbank. We will meet at the parking lot and kiosk at the entrance, look for winter passerines around the ponds, and then head down to the Snake to scan for waterfowl and gulls.

The tentative schedule (subject to change) is:

- **February 17** - McNary National Wildlife Refuge in Burbank
- **March 17** - Riverview Park and the TriCities Animal Shelter in Pasco
- **April 21** - W. E. Johnson Park in Richland
- **May 19** - Horn Rapids County Park near Benton City
- **June 16** - a site to be determined in the Blue Mountains

Details will be published in the Curlew and will be available on the LCBAS website and our Facebook page. You can also contact Jason at birdingevents@lcbas.org.



American Coot
by Ivar Husa

Sagebrush Songbird Survey

Our 2018 field season is fast approaching!

by Robin Priddy, Survey Chair

The Sagebrush Songbird study will be continuing in the spring of 2018! The Eastern Chapters have covered **close to 200 sites** since the study began in 2014. We are hoping to complete coverage during the spring of 2019. For details about the study, which is taking place across eastern Washington, visit <http://wa.audubon.org/songbird-survey-eastern-washington-underway>

I'm planning to make a brief presentation to the membership meeting soon so the chapter can see all the great work that has been done so far, including some of the results.

As in years past, we'll survey sites in April, May and June. We've already got sites for this spring in some interesting spots including northern Walla Walla County and near McNary Dam. New volunteers are always welcome and we'll have a refresher training at the end of March (date TBA).

I hope to see you this spring, please contact me (grania0358@aol.com) if you would like to talk about the study or get more information. Thank you!



Grasshopper Sparrow
by Ron Louderback

"When crushed, sage-brush emits an odor which isn't exactly magnolia and equally isn't exactly polecat - but it is a sort of compromise between the two."

— Mark Twain in a letter to Jane Clemens, 1861

Mark your calendars for these upcoming bird festivals

January

The **Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival** near Concrete and Rockport WA is offering birding and nature events every weekend throughout January. Visit their website for particulars at concrete-wa.com/skagit-eagle-festival/.

February



The **Winter Wings Festival** in Klamath Falls, OR offers 60 events during the festival between 15-18 February. Registration and details are at winterwingsfest.org.

Registration opened December 16, but it appears that there are still openings for birders interested in making the trip to Oregon!

Northern Puget Sound is home to the **Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival** the weekend of 24-25 February. Find out more at www.snowgoosefest.org.



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birds!

Our Twitter handle is
LCBAS Audubon,
@LcbY01, and our
Facebook page is Lower
Columbia Basin Audubon
Society, @lcbas.



Tiny Birds, Cold Nights

by Lori Wollerman Nelson

Take a quarter out of your pocket. Feel its weight in your hand? That's about how much a Ruby-crowned or Golden-crowned Kinglet weighs. Add another quarter to your palm and you have the weight of a Black-capped Chickadee or a Red-breasted



Golden-crowned Kinglet
by Keith Abel

Nuthatch. All three birds are commonly encountered during winter in the Tri-Cities. How do such tiny birds survive on long, cold winter nights?

Anyone who has worn a down coat knows that feathers offer great insulation. The layer of feathers on birds likewise reduces heat loss; birds fluff out their feathers even more when it's especially cold to increase their insulating power.

These tiny birds can also perform a metabolic trick - they lower their body temperature by as much as 15 degrees (F) to conserve energy. To conserve even more energy, they often huddle with other birds in sheltered places.

All three species are active foragers, moving quickly through the trees, searching constantly for their next meal. They add to their fat stores throughout the day – increasing their weight enough to get them through the long night. Kinglets eat insects, even in winter, probing under bark and into dead leaves for overwintering caterpillars. Chickadees and nuthatches also stash seeds away and retrieve them later.

Shop at WBU and earn \$\$ for LCBAS!

Buy bird feeding supplies from Wild Birds Unlimited on Keene Road in Richland and they will donate 10% of your sale to LCBAS! And for every 20 pound bag of seed you buy, they'll donate 50 cents to us. Just let them know that you are an LCBAS member when you check out - they keep track of sales and send us the donation! WBU is owned and operated by Hanna and David Goss, new LCBAS members!





Stork-billed Kingfisher in Borneo
by Jason Fidorra

How to plan an international birding trip: First choose an international birding destination

by Jason Fidorra

There are over 10,000 described species of birds in the world. While house finches can be fun, remember those days when every bird was a lifer and you always saw something new and unfamiliar? Luckily most of us can still experience that rush and wonder by hopping on a plane. But where should you go?

Where you go will affect the number of species you see, but no matter where you choose, you're likely to find birds to be excited about! For any trip, two of the most important decisions for most birders are how much **money** to spend and what **style** of trip to plan.

Money: Where you decide to go will have a big effect on how much money you spend. Some countries are just less expensive than others. For example, Quito Ecuador is typically reasonably priced while Rio de Janeiro Brazil always seems pricey. There are many web resources to help you find the best deal on airfare. Remember that in-country costs can vary greatly, and places like Iceland often have good flight deals, but the cost of travel in country will be much more than a similar trip in the USA.

Style: The style of trip you plan to take determines how cushy your trip is and how much it costs. It also will influence the birds you see and places you can visit.

The nearly stress-free **package tour** with professional English speaking guides are fantastic and fun ways to see a lot of birds in comfort with the bonus of meeting new birders. These are usually 1-3 weeks in length and include the best available accommodations, food, and hassle-free transport within the country. Prices for tours do not include airfare to the destination country and dates are set long in advance. Expect to pay \$150-500/day on a tour like this.

Comparatively cheap, **independent trips** might appear to be only for the masochistic adventurer who loves solving logistical problems on the fly using charades. These trips can be cheap - you might not need to shell out big dollars in a country where you can find a bed for less than a Starbucks coffee and you can rent a car or hop on busses, trains, and chicken trucks to get to birding sites. Aside from cost savings, you're guaranteed to have some interesting stories when you return. The down side is that unless you are extremely prepared, you won't likely see as many birds as on a well-greased tour in the same time frame - but you will have the freedom to set your own pace and itinerary. You'll also be responsible for your own safety, accommodation, communication, and bird identification.

A **locally guided trip**, where you hire a local guide for all or part of a trip, is something of a hybrid of the two styles. You might hire a guide for a day or two to access a restricted site, to help find a rare species, or to add a few hours or days of birding to a family vacation. Popular birding destinations have guides available with a range of skill in birding, English, and prices. You'll always see more with a guide even if they are just an extra set of eyes. Local companies can also offer full package tours at a fraction of the price of an internationally tour company. Just do your homework before wiring money abroad.

There are other factors that will influence where you go on your birding trip - especially how much time you have to travel - but thinking about these few points will get you well on your way toward your first international birding adventure!

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ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send address changes (postal address or email address) to Rich Barchet at subscriptions@lcbas.org so that your subscription is not interrupted. You can mail address changes to LCBAS, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA 99354.

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 <http://lcbas.org/JoinLCBAS.html>

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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 here to 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

<https://action.audubon.org/donate/chapter-membership?chapter=Y01>.