



The Curlew

The newsletter of the
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

Special Notice to National Audubon Society Members

Are you a member of National Audubon Society, but not LCBAS?

We send three complimentary issues of the Curlew to new National Audubon Society members to show you what LCBAS, your local Audubon chapter, is all about.

We are proud of our efforts to educate local children and adults about birds, bird ID, and bird conservation. We contribute to the scientific community's understanding of bird behavior and ecology through our community science programs. We also promote habitat conservation in and around the Tri-Cities. *And we have fun!* We organize birding trips, both locally, regionally, and internationally.

If you also think bird education, conservation, and fun are important, please join LCBAS!

We can't do our work without your help!

See the last page for details about joining LCBAS.

Hells Canyon Geology and the Ringold Formation

Nick Zentner

Central Washington University

February 26, 2019 at 7:00 PM

First Lutheran Church

US 395 and Yelm, Kennewick



Is it true that Hells Canyon is deeper than the Grand Canyon?

And is it true that Hells Canyon is half the age of the Grand Canyon?

What evidence has been found in the White Bluffs to confirm the age of Hells Canyon?

We'll get answers to these questions in an entertaining evening of geology with Nick

Zentner, winner of the 2015 James Shea Award. The James Shea Award recognizes a person who excels at explaining earth science to the general public. You can learn more about Nick and view some of his videos at nickzentner.com.



**Hells Canyon
by Nick Zentner**

Upcoming Events

Go birding with LCBAS

Join us on **Saturday, February 2** for the monthly **Bateman Island Bird Walk**. We will depart from Wye Park (1600 Columbia Park Trail, Richland) at 8 AM, so try to arrive around 7:50. The walk takes between two and three hours and is a great option for families and beginners. We'll have binoculars for newcomers to borrow and bird lists for you to take home.



Goofing around on a Bateman Bird Walk
by Lori Wollerman Nelson

The **March Bateman Island Bird Walk** will be on **Saturday, March 2** - same time and meeting place as the February walk. Mark your calendars!

Watch Facebook (Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society page and Tri-Cities Birders page) and our website (lcbas.org) for any additional field trips planned for this summer!

Other nature-related events around the TriCities

Tapteal Greenway will lead a **nature walk** at **Amon Basin Natural Preserve** on **Saturday, February 16 at 9:00 AM**. Meet at the south parking area for Amon Basin off Leslie Road; a map is available at www.tapteal.org/tapteal-trail/amon-basin/. LCBAS members will be there to help ID birds.

The **Winter Birds** event at the **McNary National Wildlife Refuge** is on **February 23** from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. The Friends of Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges host this event. More information will be available soon, so keep an eye on their Facebook page!

The **REACH** is hosting a STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art and Math) workshop on **February 9 (Winter Wildlife)** from 10 AM to 12 PM. On **February 23** (10 AM - 1 PM), join the Northwest School of Falconry, Northwest Tortoise Rescue, and the Tri-Tech Pre-Veterinarian Team for a program about **"Animal Allies"**. For details and location visit the REACH website at visitthereach.org.

Eat some pancakes for a good cause!

Flapjack Fundraiser
February 23, 2019
8 - 10 AM
Applebees
Road 68, Pasco

Come hungry to Applebee's for a delicious breakfast of flapjacks, sausage, scrambled eggs and beverage! You get all of this for \$10 and LCBAS keeps \$6 from each person served!

Your support will help LCBAS further our bird education efforts in the TriCities. Tickets are available from any board member or by contacting Charlotte Reep (fundraising@lcbas.org)



Christmas Bird Count - December 29, 2018

Hold on to your binoculars!

by Dana Ward, CBC Coordinator

The Tri-Cities annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday, December 29, 2018. Nationally this was the 119th Christmas Bird Count and the 51st organized count for the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society. We had over 75 participants this year, which is outstanding considering the weather conditions.

Congratulations to all participants and support personnel for such a fine effort. As a Tri-Cities team, we did an impressive job!

The count was conducted in the traditional count circle that covers 177 square miles centered in the Columbia River just off of Road 68 in Pasco.

The weather can be summed up in one word: WINDY! Gusts of wind 60 MPH rocked birds and birders alike. The temperatures during the day, were relatively mild (thank goodness!) ranging from a low of 47° to a high of about 57° in some locations. Historical records show that on some CBC days it can be near zero with winds in excess of 30 mph. Thank goodness we didn't have the cold.

Although the winds blew hard and the birds took refuge in the brush, the bird counters were up to the task and met the challenging conditions to produce an excellent count.

Some population numbers of interest		
Species	2017 CBC	2018 CBC
Canada Goose	14,541	7,350
Mallard	9,413	8,442
American Coot	8,807	8,807
American Wigeon	5,981	5,918
American Robin	564	2,228
Red-winged Blackbird	353	127
Yellow-headed Blackbird	0	0
House Finch	748	516
American Goldfinch	322	143
European Starling	4,898	4,791

Final results show that over **43,000 birds** were reported with **95 different species** sighted during the 24-hour official count period. This is an unusually low number of species going back to 2003 when we spotted 93 species. Most years we count over 100 species, with 113 in 2017 and 116 (a record) in 2015. Pasco counted 76 species, Kennewick counted 60, and Richland captured top honors with 90 species.



Black-crowned Night Heron
by Jane Abel

A number of species were MIA this year, including Clark's Grebe, Burrowing Owl, Yellow-headed Blackbird and Short-eared Owl. Shorebirds were also rare this year. We didn't see Spotted Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper or Greater Yellowlegs, although a Wilson's Snipe was counted (a rarity) by Tony Greger in Pasco.. Strangely we did not find any Horned Larks, Prairie Falcons or Greater White-fronted Geese.

High counts were recorded for Wood Duck at 258, Peregrine Falcon at 5. Anna's Hummingbird at 6, and Black-crowned Night-heron at 103 (close to last year's record total of 105). No Tundra Swans were reported this year in the count circle. (cont. on p. 5)

Field Trip Reports

First Saturday Bird Walk: Bateman Island *Saturday, January 5, 2019*

by Lisa Hill

A new year of birding has begun! A sizeable group of about 25 people scoured most of Bateman Island. We made a very respectable list of 50 species, but overall the numbers of birds were noticeably low, especially small songbirds. MALLARDS however were very abundant. About 90% of the 1000+ waterfowl on the Yakima delta were mallards. AMERICAN WIGEON and NORTHERN PINTAIL came in a distant 2nd and 3rd. The Mid-Columbia area has had quite a mild winter resulting in virtually no ice. This, along with high water, eliminated large flocks of gulls or shorebirds.

Near the causeway was a small gaggle of geese; mostly comprised of a loose group of distinctly smaller birds which we determined were CACKLING GEESE. In 2004, "Cacklers" (including four subspecies) were split from Canada Goose and given status as a separate species. Ever since, birders far and wide have debated the identity of smaller Canada-type geese. The smallest subspecies is barely larger than a plump mallard while the largest is nearly impossible to separate from the smallest Canadas. In general Cackling Geese have a shorter bill and neck, steeper forehead and a distinctly different voice.

Birders that visit the island and adjacent river delta are frequently treated to the sharp chatter and iconic hunched stature of a BELTED KINGFISHER, a year-around resident. From a solitary perch on a branch overhanging the water, or hovering like a kestrel, a kingfisher spots underwater prey (usually fish) and dives to snap it up. Back on the perch with prey held firmly in its bill, it whacks the food on the branch to stun it, then swallows it whole. A kingfisher's feet are relatively small and unsuited to catching or grasping prey. Of the three forward-facing toes, the middle and outer ones are partially fused making their feet ideal for digging a 5'-8' deep nesting burrow in a vertical sand bank. The southwest-facing sand banks of Bateman Island are likely used by kingfishers to raise their young. The banks are dotted with the nest holes of Bank Swallows, with which kingfishers have been known to share nesting space. This spring I plan to spend some time observing these banks hopefully to see some nesting kingfisher action.



Mallard
by Nancy LaFramboise



Northern Pintail
by Danny Brown
Audubon Photography Awards
Courtesy of National Audubon



Belted Kingfisher
by Ivar Husa



Red-breasted Nuthatch
by Betsy Bass
Great Backyard Bird Count
Courtesy of National Audubon

Got Nuthatches?

LCBAS has kicked off the Nuthatch Climate Watch survey for the second year!

Volunteers are surveying sites in and around the TriCities for nuthatches as part of the winter survey. They will repeat their surveys in summer to document both wintering and breeding ranges of these birds. The data are entered into ebird (ebird.org) where it is available to researchers at the National Audubon Society. Scientists hope the results will help them understand the effect that climate change is having on North American birds.

If you are interested in joining the survey, contact the local coordinator, Cherie Baudrand (cheriebaudrand@yahoo.com). The survey is only two mornings during the year - perfect for people who want to act to conserve the birds we love, but don't have much time to volunteer.

For more information about Climate Watch, visit <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch>

Christmas Bird Count

(continued from p. 3)

I want to thank all the hardy participants that joined this year's CBC - the count was a winning success even with the high wind. I particularly want to express gratitude to Rich Barchet and Lisa Hill for such good work as team leads for Kennewick and Richland, respectively. I also want to thank Jack and Murrel Dawson, Barb Clarke, Tracy and Marcie Daines, Lori Wollerman Nelson, Ivar Husa and Charlotte Reep for their help during and prior to the count.

The CBC potluck was a delicious success with over 70 participants who brought main dishes and desserts. We all enjoyed the food and each other's company while tallying the results of the day's bird count. I hope you all join in the fun again next year.

Sagebrush Songbird Survey

by Robin Priddy

The final season of this survey is upon us! The Sagebrush Songbird Survey is a state-wide Audubon effort to document the distribution of sagebrush-obligate and grassland birds, specifically Sage Thrasher, Northern Shrike, and five sparrows: Brewer's, Sagebrush, Vesper, Lark, and Grasshopper. LCBAS has participated for 5 years; most other Eastern Washington Chapters for 4. Additionally, a number of volunteers from Puget Sound survey sites each year, Collectively volunteers have surveyed over 250 sites across the eastern part of the state.

The study was structured by WDFW and the data will be available to support conservation decisions made by all agencies in Washington State. Washington Audubon is using this work to identify opportunities to support sagebrush obligate birds through land management practices.

We're in the push to the finish line! We have about 11 sites this year. Each needs to be surveyed three times: once each in April, May, and June. We have added flexibility in the schedule this year - we only have to be sure that each survey is in the appropriate month and two weeks has passed since the previous survey.

Come to a refresher training on **Saturday March 23** at the Richland Community Center (10 - 2). Training will include bird ID by sight and song, survey methods, use of hand held GPS units, and an opportunity to sign up for survey sites. Any level of experience is welcome!

Please contact me at grania0358@aol.com to sign up. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered over the years - let's finish strong!

Have you seen this bird?



Devin de Zwaan, a doctoral student at UBC has banded Horned Larks on their breeding grounds and wants to know where they go in the winter. Current data suggest the larks winter east of the Cascades, from the Okanogan Valley to central and southeastern Washington and Oregon – in other words, they might be visiting us!

If you see a Horned Lark, look for three things:

- **color bands** on its legs, both the colors and the legs that the bands are on (bird's right or left). See the picture for the colors that Devin has used.
- if the bird is **male or female**
- if it has a **yellow wash on its throat**, indicating that it is a Streaked Horned Lark, and endanger subspecies.



GPS location and photos are welcome!

Report your information to Devin at drdezwaan@gmail.com.

Understanding how birds use habitat throughout their life cycle is key to developing effective conservation actions. Help Devin gather this information for Horned Larks by reporting your sightings. You can follow sightings updates on Twitter at @devindezwaan.



Sagebrush Sparrow
by Dennis Werlau



Great Blue Heron
by Michael Barrett



Cedar Waxwing
by Larry Umthun

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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>

The **LCBAS Privacy Policy** is available at our website.

Find out more at www.lcbas.org or www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.org

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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>.