



Calliope Crier

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society is people dedicated to the enjoyment and preservation of the natural world. Through birding, education and conservation activities in our community, we raise awareness and promote the cause of global environmental protection.

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PROGRAM ARTICLE

BILL DRENGUIS

Swiftly Speaking

We start off the fall speaker schedule with a star. Larry Schwitters will be in town! You may know him as the "King of the Swifts" for his vast knowledge of the Vaux's swift. And why does he know so much about them? He did it the old fashioned way, hard work and personal observation.

This fast paced PowerPoint presentation will examine Audubon's ongoing citizen science project, Vaux's Happening, launched six years ago to gather the data necessary to make a compelling case for the preservation of a single chimney roost site in Portland, OR. Vaux's Happening quickly expanded into an attempt to locate, raise awareness of, and hopefully preserve the important roost sites used by this species all along their migratory path. In the last twelve migrations the project has documented nearly six million Vaux's Swift roosting events from San Diego to the Yukon. Schwitters will also share images and information captured by the project's chimney surveillance cameras and precision temperature recorders.

Last September, YVAS member Lori Isley discovered Vaux's Swifts funneling into the Johnson's Auto Glass Chimney on First Street just after sunset. Over the next 21 days, 19 observations documented a total of 24,481 Swifts entering this chimney. On twelve occasions, the nightly total exceeded 1,000 individual birds with the high count of 1,595 tallied by Greg Bohn on Oct 2.

This fall, Larry, with the assistance of several YVAS volunteers, will attempt to mist net a few swifts and attach radio locators on them. This will allow the tagged birds to be monitored to see how long they remain at the Yakima roost and even better, monitors at chimneys to the south may be able to track their migration route.

I really look forward to hearing more about these fascinating flyers and the effort that we can take to learn more about them.

Swift Snips:

These 4-5" long birds are the smallest and most numerous of the swift species in Washington State. They spend much of

their time in the air and forage, eat, drink, court, collect nesting materials and mate all in flight.

Vaux's Swifts prefer to roost in hollow old trees but frequently use brick chimneys as a substitute. Vaux's Swifts cannot perch because they have weak feet so they must clutch the rough surface of wherever they roost upon, using their stubby tail as a brace.

Prior to entering the chimney, the swifts often gather just prior to sunset in great numbers and circle the chimney. As they begin to enter the chimney, they change from their head-first direction and go in tail-first. Once in the chimney, they overlap one another in "shingle" fashion to conserve body heat. They often slow their metabolism to a near-dormant state to conserve energy while roosting.



Larry Schwitters holds a Master's of Science degree and spent 30 years in the trenches of public education, mostly as a Middle School Science Teacher and Coach in the Seattle area. He spent four years tracking down Black Swifts at Washington State's waterfalls for the American Bird Conservancy before his involvement with Audubon Vaux's Happening Project

Visit the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's website at: <http://www.yakimaudubon.org>



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

ANDY STEPNIIEWSKI

July in the Yakima region is typically a "slow month" for birding. Birdsong has trailed off, and our memories of the exciting spring birding extravaganza are fading. Did I mention it's been hot? July is Yakima's hottest month and this July hot was redefined as records show July 2014 was the hottest on record in Yakima. Time to head to the mountains!

Though summer is YVAS'S slowest period, your chapter has been plugging away on several projects. Your board met August 5th in the lovely garden of Denny Granstrand and Chris Reid for the annual YVAS summer board meeting. Fortunately, a cool breeze from the Northwest brought some much-needed relief. This fun event combined pizza, salads, delicious desserts, refreshments, and Bocci Ball, along with a short board meeting.

Toppenish NWR. At long last, YVAS entered into a "Memorandum of Understanding" with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, which manages Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge. Kerry Turley, YVAS's Refuge Keeper, and I attended a meeting at the refuge August 6 where we met with Rich Albers, refuge manager, and two from his staff. We signed the MOU and discussed our chapter's commitment to sharing the refuge with the visiting public. We agreed to man the visitor center on Sundays starting in late winter and continuing through at least May. Kerry will need help on staffing the visitor center and you will hear more about this later this year. We are excited with the opportunities to showcase Toppenish NWR next spring! Not only are we given some latitude to use and "personalize" the visitor center, we also have a grand opportunity to interpret and share the springtime bird show to the public during its best season. We've long wanted more access to this great birding venue! We do appreciate YVAS is making a commitment here! We also plan to continue the point counts Kerry and I completed this year at the refuge. The MOU allows YVAS to more easily conduct fieldtrips and classes at the refuge.

Bluebirds. Richard Repp, Bluebird Committee Chair reported at the August 5 meeting there were still 52 or so yet-to-fledge bluebird babies on the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail. Rich predicts the final count is poised to be "better-than-average" with a predicted final count of well over 500. Once again, my heartfelt thanks to Rich and everyone who monitored the bluebird trail, sponsored or helped repair boxes, or participated in the spring box cleanout. All in YVAS have reason to be proud of this "trail," Yakima Valley Audubon's longest running project. Since its inception, over 14000 baby bluebirds have fledged from these 132 boxes!

Bobolinks. As reported last month, only two males were seen this summer at the Lateral C colony. There was hope a

female was hidden on her nest. Despite several very careful surveys, no females were observed at all this season. "We've been documenting the disappearance of Bobolinks at Toppenish," said Jan Gano, who heads the Bobolink surveys on June 14 at his talk to the Washington Ornithological Conference Annual Dinner. I think we were all hoping a female or two would appear as her youngsters started to fledge. Alas, this wasn't to be. Still, we want to again thank the Bobolink crew this year. Besides Jan, surveyors were Kevin Lucas, and Karen and Joe Zook.

Birdathon. Yakima Valley Audubon's annual fundraiser and Birdathon totals have now swelled to over \$2100, reported Dan Kinney, YVAS Finance Chairman. Dan reports 52 YVAS members made contributions. A huge Thank You once again to all who donated to the fundraising, the only occasion each year YVAS approaches you directly for donations.

Programs. Bill Drenguis, Program Chair announces Larry Schwitters, who has become well-known throughout the West for his efforts to document and protect migrating Vaux's Swifts. Larry will be speaking at our August chapter meeting, our first meeting of the fall. An exciting project underway is for putting transmitters on some swifts (some of them from Yakima chimneys) and tracking them during their migration.

By-law changes proposed. Vera Backstrom, YVAS Secretary has compiled a list of areas of the Bylaws we might wish to change or clarify:

1. At the June board meeting, we discussed amending the Bylaws to increase the number of Directors from 3 to 5 and to add an Environmental Science Committee. Then Teresa Lorenz could be chair of that committee and Scott Downes could be appointed to the board in the fall.
2. In Article IV, Section 2, we say that meetings of the Board are held in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October and November. For a few years now, we have had only one board meeting in the July-August period. Shall we change the Bylaws to reflect that reality?
3. In Article IV, Section 3, it says that Eight members of the Board shall constitute a quorum. We have ignored that for several years now and decided that a quorum is a majority of those present at any meeting. We did that because for a while we were barely getting eight members to come to a meeting. Shall we change eight to some other number? Six?
4. In Article V, Section 4, it says that checks may be signed by the Treasurer, President or Vice-President. For some years we have had no vice president and I, the secretary, have signed checks. Shall we change the Bylaws?



MEMBERSHIP
DEBIE BROWN

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Toppenish: Apanakhi Buckley

Yakima: Linda Miller, Warren and Sue Terrell

Thank you for renewing your Membership!

Yakima: April and Bob Adamson, DeAnn Afualo, Joy Brandt, Terry and Sherri Dahlin, Karen Ireland, Dan Kinney, Susan Lattomus, Jennifer Lee, Carol Licht, George and Delila Roulston, Mike Roper, Susan Talbott

Naches: Larry and Doris Robinson, Katherine Vornbrock

Selah: Bob and Maia Mittlestaedt, Beverly Olson

White Swan: Linda King

Tieton: Kimberly Craig

Union Gap: Lawrence Martin

Seattle: Jennifer Kauffman

Please note that the above membership renewals are for Yakima Valley Audubon membership. Renewals to National Audubon are separate and are not listed here.

YVAS recently received a gift in memory of Agnes Badgley. Agnes was a long time YVAS member who loved birds and nature. We thank the Hurlburt family for their generous donation in her memory.



THIS MONTH'S YVAS
CALENDAR

Aug 23 Lower Valley Shorebirds

Aug 28, Sept 4, 11, 18, 25 Thursday Morning Birdwalk – 7:30 am on Aug 28; 8:30 in Sept

Aug 28 YVAS Chapter Meeting , Yakima Arboretum, 7:00 pm

Sept 6 Yakima River near Granger

Sept 10 Wenas Lake for Shorebirds

Sept. 27 Bear Creek Mt. Trail with Denny Granstrand and Luke Safford

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum, located at 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA. Guests are welcome at these meetings. The Annual Meeting of the Society is held the first Thursday of December at 6 pm. The Board of Directors meets each month **except** December at 7 pm at locations announced in the *Calliope Crier*. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.



Birder, Birder, Birder, Goose?
Photo by Loretta Olson



Fitting in with the Crowd
Photo by Loretta Olson

Bird Walk On The Poppoff - Literally

On July 17, we had a new participant on the Thursday morning Bird Walk. The previous week, we noticed that someone had left a couple of domestic geese in a picnic area next to a lake there. On the 17th, one of the geese was gone, but the remaining goose joined up with us at the beginning of the walk and walked the entire way with us. When we stopped, it stopped. Quite a long walk for a goose, and we were still in our "heat wave" so it was really warm. We met with a few people along the walk who knew this goose from

their recent visits. They brought food for it, but it didn't want to eat, it just stayed with us. Fortunately there was a couple sitting by the pond when we were leaving, and they were able to coax the goose into coming over with them. It was a nice goose and very people friendly. This gave a new definition to our "Bird Walk."

The goose is no longer at the Poppoff – hopefully someone was able to give it a home. Loretta Olson took a few photos of the bird walking with us.



FIELD TRIPS

LUKE SAFFORD

- Aug 23** **Lower Yakima Valley Shorebirds** — Meet leader Eric Heisey at **7:00 am** at the Branding Iron Restaurant in Toppenish to start a day of searching the Lower Yakima Valley hotspots for shorebirds. Eric is an enthusiastic young birder who will be able to share his growing knowledge of shorebirds. The list of potential species is long, with some rarities as real possibilities. E-mail Eric at magicman32@rocketmail.com if you are planning on joining him.
- Sept 4, 11, 18, 25** **Thursday Morning Birdwalk – 8:30am**--Meet the group at the Poppoff Trail/Jewett Pathway parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd., at the north side of the eastern most roundabout. Join us for leisurely birding and good company! Contact Luke if you have any questions at luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com.
- Sept 6** **Yakima River near Granger** – Fall migration for many species of birds is in full swing at this time and the tract of land below Eric Heisey's house is excellent habitat for passing passerines. Join Eric and others for an easy hike along the Yakima River bottoms near Granger. Special emphasis will be on identifying birds by their call notes and could serve as a great trip for birders who are seeking a new challenge in honing their ID skills. Contact Eric for trip details at magicman32@rocketmail.com.
- Sept 10** **Wenas Lake for Shorebirds** – Wenas Lake frequently hosts good numbers of migrating shorebirds in late summer and early fall. Numerous first sightings for Yakima County have occurred here. We will traipse out onto the mudflats for shorebird viewing, then head to the riparian area upstream from the lake searching for migrating species. Rubber boots are almost necessary. Contact Richard Repp for trip details at rich712@aol.com or 965-1134 for this late afternoon trip.
- Sept 27** **Bear Creek Mountain Trail** – Will this be the year we find the elusive White-tailed Ptarmigan in Yakima County? Join us on this intense, but beautiful, hike into the heart of the Cascades. Plan on an all day hike and contact trip leaders Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com or 453-2500) or Luke Safford (luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com or 833-6081) for more information.
- Oct 4** **Grays Harbor County Shorebirds and Pelagic Trip** – We will join a Westport Seabirds Pelagic Trip (<http://www.westportseabirds.com/>) on Oct. 4. Contact Westport Seabirds as soon as possible to reserve your spot on the boat. After the boat trip and Sunday morning we will scour the top shorebird locations in the Grays Harbor area. Contact Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com or 453-2500) for more information and motel ideas.



BIRD SIGHTINGS

DENNY GRANSTRAND

Fall migration has been underway since the middle of July, when the first migrating hummingbirds started their journey south. If our yard is any indication, there are a lot of hummingbirds moving through the valley.

Chris and I regularly eat dinner at a small table in our garden. We have been entertained every time recently by hummingbirds chasing each other around the garden and by some drinking at the hummingbird feeder that is eight feet from the table. You wonder why Rufous Hummingbirds can't just get along. They spend so much time chasing each other, and other species of hummingbirds, away from every feeder that it seems like no one gets enough to eat. On Aug. 3, Andy Stepniewski and I got our year-bird Anna's Hummingbird while sitting at that table enjoying the spectacle. My sister and brother-in-law, Sue and Warren Terrell, got their first Anna's in Yakima County there. The three other three hummers, Rufous, Black-chinned and Calliope, have been regular visitors in our yard recently. I am sure that a pair of Black-chinned Hummingbirds have nested this year either in our yard or close in a neighbor's yard because we have seen them at our feeders all summer.

Anna's Hummingbird birds used to show up in the Yakima area only in the fall. There have been reports of them this



Anna's Hummingbird
Photo by George Vlahakis

spring and summer, which makes it look like they are breeding in Yakima County now.

Shorebirds haven't been far behind hummingbirds in their migration. The Yakima County shorebird hotspots (Kerry's (Bird Sightings continued on page 5)

Fire and Restoring Forest Health

By Michael Stevens, Washington Nature Conservancy state director...previously printed in the July 27, Seattle Times

Disastrous fires have ravaged homes, communities and forests in Washington State in the past two months. Multiple fires have closed major roads, led to the evacuation of thousands, scorched more than 400 square miles and destroyed about 150 homes. The lives of both residents and firefighters remain in jeopardy and the road to recovery will be long and costly. While the fires continue to burn, Washington State must focus on protecting people and communities, and caring for those who have lost so much. I am thankful for the firefight-

Fire and Restoring Forest Health continued on page 6

Bird Sightings continued from page 4

Pond along the Yakima Valley Highway and Wenas Lake) have been heating up with good sightings. Richard Repp hit Wenas Lake on his way home from checking bluebird boxes and found Kevin Lucas, who had spotted a Solitary Sandpiper and a Pectoral Sandpiper.

Wenas Lake also has hosted several Semipalmated Sandpipers, along with Lesser Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitchers.

Eric Heisey spent the summer working at Camp Dudley at Clear Lake and managed to get in some birding. He found several Northern Saw-whet Owls, a Black-backed Woodpecker nest, a Williamson's Sapsucker and a pair of Barred Owls at their nest.

Here is Andy Stepniewski's report to BirdYak on his field trip to Sheep Lake and Sourdough Gap on August 17:

Ten keen Auduboners and guests trekked east and up from of Chinook Pass first to Sheep Lake. Some of us climbed on up to Sourdough Gap on the Pacific Crest Trail. Arriving at the parking lot, we heard and saw two Pine Grosbeaks, the most sought-after species for the listers in the group as it is uncommon-to-rare anywhere in Yakima County.

We strolled along the first quarter mile of the trail, as our experience shows this south-facing stretch with brush patches, tree clumps, and forb meadows typically has the highest diversity of birds. Today was no different. We checked off 21 of the 32 species on the list in the first 30 minutes of our hike. Two Cassin's Vireos, one of



Black-backed Woodpecker
Photo by George Vlahakis

them singing, gave us super views. Our first of five Black-headed Grosbeaks provided an unusual tally of this species for the subalpine zone. Perhaps, large numbers of this species migrate south alongside the Cascade crest and I've been missing them because we usually hike this trail later in "fall." This first stretch was good for all the corvids on our trip list, too, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel and Townsend's Warbler.

Farther along the side-slope we blundered into a juvenile Townsend's Solitaire, still with downy tufts. We got on to this bird first with its soft "wheep" calls.

We were entertained at Sheep Lake with a very close Clark's Nutcracker, which seemed interested in handouts from the many hikers and routing out seeds from one of its caches.

Sourdough Gap was great for a mini hawk watch. In one hour we noted: Golden Eagle (1), Sharp-shinned Hawk (3), Cooper's Hawk (1), Bald Eagle(2), and American Kestrel (1). An impressive kettle of 38 Common Ravens soaring over the Cascade crest a mile or so north, along with a Bald Eagle, suggested good feeding nearby, perhaps carrion?

On our return we heard a hooting Sooty Grouse which seemed a late date for a displaying grouse.

Mammals were interesting, too. Five Mountain Goats clambered high on gullies on Yakima Peak. We saw a number of chipmunks, heard Pikas, Hoary Marmots, and a Coyote.



Clark's Nutcracker
Photo by Denny Granstrand

Fire and Restoring Forest Health continued from page 5

ers, National Guard and all who are putting their own lives at risk to battle these blazes, and I have the deepest sympathy to those who have lost everything.

As our state deals with the trauma caused by the largest fire in its recorded history, the debate has already begun on how we as a society can mitigate and reduce future catastrophic fires and prepare resilient communities.

Climate change is leading to a hotter, drier Eastern Washington and a longer fire season. Combined with poor forest conditions, it means the fire footprint in our state could more than double in the next 40 years.

Imagine the impacts on Washington communities — more smoke, more homes and people endangered, and a greater strain on firefighting resources. Disastrous fires are not just a community safety issue, but also an enormous economic issue.

Communities around Washington are already adapting to this new fire reality. The Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition near Leavenworth is a local collaborative group making its community safer from fire and creating healthier forests.

It's a hub in the national Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, where private and public agencies, groups and individuals come together to address challenges before a catastrophic fire to minimize harm to residents, homes, businesses, utilities and other community assets.

Community preparation is vital, as is a focus on forest health and restoration.

Just as a healthy human fights off illness, a healthy forest is better able to resist catastrophic megafire. Restoring state forests to health is the key to mitigating the effects of climate change that are causing more disastrous fires.

Consider a forest where the trees have been cut for myriad human needs, and the natural role of fire has been interrupted for many decades. Today, many such forests are dense with small trees and loaded with flammable undergrowth ready to burn. Driven by hot and windy weather, a blaze in a forest like this races through the dry underbrush and up into the treetops. It jumps easily from tree to tree, across natural barriers like rivers and valleys, and quickly threatens entire communities.

Tens of thousands of acres of forest across our state are damaged, unhealthy, primed to go up in flames, and in desperate need of help.

Restoration in our dry forests is complex, but offers big payoffs: safer communities, clean drinking water, vital habitat for wildlife. Thinning involves removing many small trees and

giving the others space to grow large, healthy and fire resilient. Controlled burns by trained and well-equipped state and federal fire crews strengthen the forests by reducing the fuels that feed extreme fires in extreme summer weather.

It's meticulous, hard work, but is scientifically proven to create more resilient forests. Smaller natural fires might come through from time to time, but the forest will survive where there is greater diversity, resistance and resiliency in the face of enormous catastrophic megafires.

Healthy forests and fire-prepared communities require investment. Fire knows no boundaries. Investment from state, federal and private sources is needed to restore our forests and empower communities to prepare for fire in a changing climate.

At the federal level, Congress has created the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program that provides federal funding and a way to bring federal, state, tribal and private landowners and stakeholders together for collaborative forest restoration. In Eastern Washington, five forest collaboratives are bringing together diverse groups including loggers, recreationists and public and private land owners committed to restoring the forest landscapes to health.

The U.S. House of Representatives has proposed fully funding this program at \$40 million in its Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2015. Congress should do so.

In addition, the Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy includes federal, tribal, state and local governments and nongovernment organizations to address growing wildfire challenges. The Nature Conservancy is a partner, and we urge full participation by state and local communities.

The state Department of Natural Resources will soon be handing the Legislature a data-driven estimate of forest-restoration needs on state, private and federal lands from 2015 to 2020 named the Healthy Forests Report.

It's imperative that the 2015 Legislature support the Department of Natural Resources and other state and federal agencies as they embrace the challenges and the potential of restoration to keep our communities safe, protect lives and mitigate the devastating costs of catastrophic fires.

Faced with the reality of climate change and the growing impacts of catastrophic fires, it's more critical than ever to work diligently, across the boundaries of ownership and management authority, to protect and restore our state's forests and protect communities.



Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Join/renew your annual membership to YVAS to receive ten issues of the *Crier* and all chapter membership benefits.

Yakima Valley Audubon Membership\$ 25
 Yakima Valley Audubon Senior (62+)/Student Membership\$ 15
 Yakima Valley Audubon Life Membership\$ 500/household

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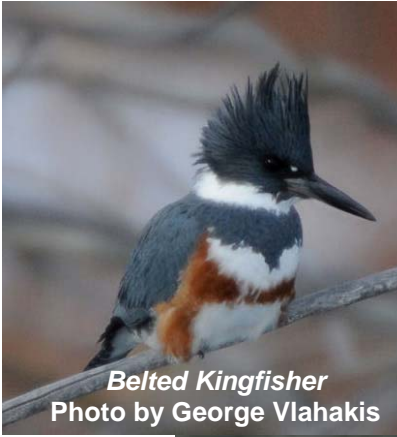
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 P. O. Box 2823
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*** If you have any questions on membership, please call Debie Brown at 248-3878**

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			YVAS Email	(birds@yakimaaudubon.org)	

Do you remember seeing these extra photos from previous criers?



Belted Kingfisher
Photo by George Vlahakis



Great Blue Heron
Photo by Denny Granstrand



A pair of Western Bluebirds



Tufted Puffin with a beak full of fish
Photo by Mike Roper



Western Sandpiper
Photo by Ellen Stepniewski

Coming Attractions:

Aug 28, Sept 4, 11, 18, 25 Thursday Morning Birdwalks
7:30 in Aug, 8:30 in Sept

Aug 23 Lower Valley Shorebirds field trip

Aug 28 YVAS Chapter Meeting,
Yakima Area Arboretum, 7:00 pm

Sept 6 Yakima River near Granger field trip

Sept 10 Wenas Lake Shorebirds field trip