



# 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.

Volume 46, Number 03

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

March 2017



## MARCH PROGRAM

BILL DRENGUIS

## YTC AND SHRUB-STEPPE

Presented By Colin Leingang

Let's stay closer to home for this month's program. Most of us know that the "Firing Center" is more properly called the Training Center. Some of us have been out there to enjoy this huge (over 500 square miles) tract of undeveloped habitat. A few of us have been fortunate and seen the sage grouse that live there.

We know that the sage grouse is having a difficult time these days, so why can we still find them at the Training Center?

Our speaker will be Colin Leingang who is the Wildlife Program Manager at the Training Center. He will be sharing the Center's efforts to track the sage grouse with telemetry. And did you know that there is a repopulation effort? Come and hear how our own Dan and Eileen Kinney helped to transport grouse to Yakima from Nevada.



His will be a great program, and a chance to learn more about Yakima Training Center's unique assets and what may be done to preserve them for future generations of humans and wildlife. For more information on the value of shrub-steppe habitat, see the Conservation article in this Crier.

As of Calliope Crier press time, the program has not been approved by the Base Commander. We might be treated to a different program.

Mark your calendar for Thursday, March 23, at 7:00 to see this presentation at the Yakima Area Arboretum



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

KERRY TURLEY

Spring migration is just around the corner! It is an amazing spectacle which begins with bluebirds and Say's Phoebes in March, shorebirds like American Avocets in late April, followed by warblers and a host of other species in May. With this in mind I wanted to share a few opportunities to bird in some new or maybe under birded places.

One of the more exciting prospects is the "Yakama Nation Wildlife Viewing Permit Program" that was launched last fall. It will allow for birding the Satus Wildlife Area as well as the Lateral "A" property (old Zimmerman farm). The permits are \$5.00 for day use are available at the sites and

\$20.00 for a season pass, from spring until hunting season starts, are available at the Tribal Office.

The next opportunity I would like to share with you is the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge. As many of you know we started opening the visitor's center on Sundays last year and will do the same this year. The goal is to have the center open from noon to 4:00pm every Sunday from April through June. It's given me a chance to have fun, share my interest in nature with the community and the opportunity to constantly learn new things about our natural environment. I encourage you all to consider volunteering at TNWR this season, even if it's just for a handful of shifts. You'll be surprised at how much you'll gain from the experience.

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7pm 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 6pm. The Board of Directors meets each month except December at 7pm at locations announced in the Calliope Crier. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.

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



## MEMBERSHIP

### JOY MCKINNEY

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Thank you for renewing your membership!

**Selah:** Bob and Darlene Fay

**Yakima:** Tyler Shepard

**Moxee:** Debbie and Ron Brown

**Seattle:** Birgitta Beck

**Selah:** Cathy LeCompte, Joy McKinney, Doug and Marjorie Peters, Gus and Mary Pooler

**Sunnyside:** Lorri Gilmur-Dillman, Myra Dorsey

**Toppenish:** Sister Kathleen Ross,

**Yakima:** Cowiche Canyon Conservancy, Terry A. Davis, Earl and Dorothy Derry, Lee and Edith Hunsperger, Julie Johnson, Susan Paoella, Gus and Mary Pooler, Karen Ramey, Ken Tolonen and Margaret Morris, Bill Jacobs



## THIS MONTH'S YVAS CALENDAR

- Mar 23** Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at **7:00 pm. Great program!**
- Mar 30** "Wild Reverence" will show at YVC at **7:00 p.m.** See page 5 for more information.
- April 11** Board Meeting at Vera Backstrom's house (9770 Hwy 12, Naches,) at **7:00 pm.**
- April 15** Arborfest at the Yakima Area Arboretum, 1400 Arboretum Dr. Yakima, WA 98901. **10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** See article below.
- April 18** "The Messenger" will show at YVC at **7:00 p.m.** See article on page 6 for more information.
- April 20** Earth Fest at Yakima Valley College. **11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** See article below.

## Earth Fest at Yakima Valley College

*"Land is a community to which people belong."*

This is one of the themes of the Earth Fest to be held at Yakima Valley College in conjunction with Earth Day. Earth Fest is a feature event of the year-long initiative YVC Reads: A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold. Yakima Valley Audubon will host an educational station. In keeping with themes derived from Leopold's writing, our booth will feature the Shrub-Steppe. We will focus on what is special

about this incredible habitat around us, enjoying and preserving it

College students will tour the various stations hosted by YVAS and others. Earth Fest will take place on **Thursday, April 20, 11:30 am to 2:00 pm** in the **Hopf Student Union Building (HUB)**.

For further information, or to volunteer to help, please contact, Ellen Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net 509-731-6805)

— Ellen Stepniewski —

## Arborfest — "Trees are the Best"

Come help with the Audubon booth! Enjoy the festivities! Bring your family!

Once again, it is almost time to celebrate nature with families at the Yakima Area Arboretum's annual Arborfest, on **Saturday, April 15th from 10am to 3 pm**, at the Yakima Area Arboretum. This is a **free** community event, celebrating Arbor Day, spring, conservation, and nature. Featured are lots of hands-on learning opportunities, crafts, and displays for children of all ages.

The theme this year is "Trees are the Best!" This year's event celebrates everything wonderful about trees, including Yakima's newest designation as a TREE CITY USA community. The Yakima Audubon station will highlight the birds to be found on a walk in the woods. We will be making the ever-popular buttons, providing materials for kids to make a button of a bird



President Kerry in Action

they might find on such a walk. The Arboretum will be having a special noon time ceremony in the Jewett Center courtyard in honor of the occasion. Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands Hillary Franz will be presenting the Tree City USA award to Mayor Kathy Coffey as part of the festivities.

Hundreds of kids and families will participate in our activity and we need volunteers to help. Please consider joining us for this fun and educational activity. We will need **VOLUNTEERS** to help for all or part of the event, assisting with setting up, and taking down the booth as well as interacting with participants. Set up will start at 8:30. Please contact Ellen Stepniewski at 509-731-6805 or steppie@nwinfo.net for more information

or to volunteer.

— Ellen Stepniewski —

## Celebrating the Shrub-steppe Ecosystem: the Communications Challenge

Yakima naturalists know the wonders of the shrub-steppe. Especially in spring, we love to hike the verdant hills in south-central Washington with their beautiful wildflower display and scenic vistas. Birders revel in the spring bird chorus out in the sagelands, too. Who among us isn't stirred by the Western Meadowlark's bubbly and fluty song? Observers who delve further into the birds out in the shrub-steppe eagerly look forward to the spring chorus of other birds, especially the cast of the mostly gray birds that characterize the chorus: the beautiful and sustained melody coming from the Sage Thrasher, the extraordinary buzzes and trills of the Brewer's Sparrow, and the less virtuoso songs of the Sagebrush and Lark Sparrows. Then, of course, there's the magical spring mating ritual of the Greater Sage-Grouse, clearly the iconic symbol of an imperiled species in an imperiled ecosystem.

But for those folks who have not experienced the shrub-steppe, especially in summer or winter, it can appear a lifeless wasteland and an ecosystem simply to be hurried past on the way to our stunning Cascade meadows or glacier-draped peaks. Naturalists, conservationists, and biologists know the perceptions of many in the public are unfounded and have undertaken many scientific studies to better understand the sagebrush ecosystem and spearheaded many conservation initiatives to better protect this landscape.

However, the shrub-steppe continues to disappear. Less than half of the original "Sagebrush Sea" survives due to conversion to agriculture and grazing for domestic livestock, and urbanization. Much of the remaining acreage is degraded due to the incredible invasion of weedy plants, particularly Cheatgrass, making the shrub-steppe one of America's most imperiled ecosystems.

Simply put, the shrub-steppe desperately needs more advocates. Promoting this special landscape will no doubt foster positive conservation measures to preserve the remaining areas of high quality shrub-steppe. This involves celebrating and communicating the wonders of the sagelands. Fortunately, the movement to enhance awareness of the shrub-steppe is well underway and includes lots of folks who care deeply about sagebrush country, but nonetheless, more is needed.

In December 2016, shrub-steppe advocates comprising the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) agreed on a "vision for a sagebrush ecosystem that is being sustainably managed and restored in a balanced and collaborative manner for the

*benefit of wildlife as well as the human users and communities that are part of the ecosystem."*

To achieve better communication of the values of the sagebrush country to the general public, the IWJV, a group active in promoting conservation of the Sagebrush Sea, assembled a diverse group to begin planning this effort in 2016. The IWJV group brought together private landowners, non-governmental organizations, federal agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, tribes, and corporations to brainstorm shared values. Their initial meetings yielded a vision statement to support a healthy sagebrush landscape for both people and wildlife. The group created specific objectives, targeted audiences, and began to develop communication strategies to achieve the goal of getting the message out on the values of the Sagebrush Sea. Their common goal was conservation, but each participant offered their perspective on the variety of values of this landscape: natural, historical, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, agricultural, recreational, and other economic endeavors. They deliberated over how best to share these values with the public to further conservation of the imperiled sagelands.

The discussions resulted in the first version of the Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework, a document that will assist IWJV in spearheading a nationwide communications campaign that is hoped will have a tremendous and long-lasting impact on shrub-steppe conser-

vation. The National Audubon Society was one of several organizations that sponsored the forum; the others were Partners for Conservation, Western Association of Fish Wildlife Agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and IWJV.

Communicating and promoting the values and story of the Sagebrush Sea is a huge key to conserving it. Those involved in this effort, including the Yakima Valley Audubon Society, are whole-heartedly invested in telling this storyline of the shrub-steppe ecosystem to our members and participating in the effort to preserving this amazing landscape, including the song of the Western Meadowlark and the beautiful wildflower show in the sagelands forever.

To take a look at the document the IWJV produced in December 2016, go to [https://iwjv.org/sites/default/files/sagebrush\\_comms\\_framework\\_december\\_2016\\_final.pdf](https://iwjv.org/sites/default/files/sagebrush_comms_framework_december_2016_final.pdf)

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Seeking serenity in the Umtanum Canyon's shrub-steppe -- photo by Ellen Stepniewski





<b>FIELD TRIPS</b>
<b>SCOTT DOWNES</b>

**March 25 (Saturday) - Shrub-steppe Zone fieldtrip.** Led by **Andy and Ellen Stepniewski**. Contact Andy and Ellen for details and meeting place and time: [steppie@nwinfo.net](mailto:steppie@nwinfo.net). On this trip we will head out into the sagelands of the western Columbia Basin starting in the Yakima Canyon before heading north into the Wenas Wildlife Area on Sheep Company Road. Ellen and Andy will introduce you to the plants and birds of the shrub-steppe ecosystem, a northern extension of the Great Basin semi-desert. There are a variety of different plant communities in this landscape, each with a different assortment of birds. Some of targets will be: Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Chukar, Long-billed Curlew, Canyon and Rock Wrens, Burrowing Owl, Say's Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Horned Lark, Sage Thrasher, various "desert" sparrows: Brewer's, Vesper, and Sagebrush, and Western Meadowlark.

**March 31 (Friday) or April 1 (Saturday) or ??? - (Weather /Participant Dependent) - Bluebird Box Cleanout** - It is spring and once again time to clean out and inspect the 132 nest boxes on the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail in preparation for the upcoming nesting season. To facilitate the assignment of boxes to teams, please contact Richard Repp ([bbirder247@gmail.com](mailto:bbirder247@gmail.com) or 965-1134) if you wish to help or for further info. A half-day event but bring snacks, drinks, and work gloves. Clothing for wind and rain protection recommended as are sturdy footwear.

**April 19 (Wednesday) - Conboy NWR.** Join leaders Bill Drenguis and Joe and Karen Zook on a trip to Conboy NWR in Klickitat County. We will be enjoying the beautiful scenery and hoping to spot Sandhill Cranes, which nest on the refuge. Some other great birds which may be found there include Red-breasted Sapsucker, Western Bluebird, Common Yellowthroat and the fabulous Marsh Wren. On last year's trip, we also found Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds, some very cooperative Purple Finches, Pygmy Nuthatches and a Nashville Warbler. We will be carpooling, and this will be an all day trip. In addition to Conboy, we plan on a couple of quick stops along the way. Dress for changing (spring) weather, and bring lunch, snacks, drinks and optics. Scopes are not required but if you have one, please bring it. Contact Bill at 965-5808, or email the Zooks at [gadzooks7@charter.net](mailto:gadzooks7@charter.net) for meeting place and time.

**April 23 (Sunday) - Satus Wildlife Area.** We will explore a small part of the 3,276 acres of upland and floodplain habitats, shrub-steppe, grassland habitats, and riparian, wetland habitats of the recently opened Satus Wildlife Area. located along the Yakima River 11 miles southeast of Toppenish, this property borders the Yakima River for about 8 miles of meandering shoreline. It contains one of the few remaining river sections with mature riparian forest. Natural resources values in the Satus Wildlife Area include nesting, feeding and wintering habitat for numerous wildlife, including breeding and migratory species of ducks, upland game birds, songbirds, herons, eagles, osprey, otter, beaver and deer. Bordering the Yakima River with about 8 miles of meandering shoreline, it contains one of the few remaining river sections with mature riparian forest. This is a great half day field trip with birding opportunities close by for those who want to extend the day. Meet at 7:30 am at the Valley Mall parking lot north of Sears (old IHOP location). Contact Kerry Turley (840-0980 or you can send him an email at [kdturley@gmail.com](mailto:kdturley@gmail.com))

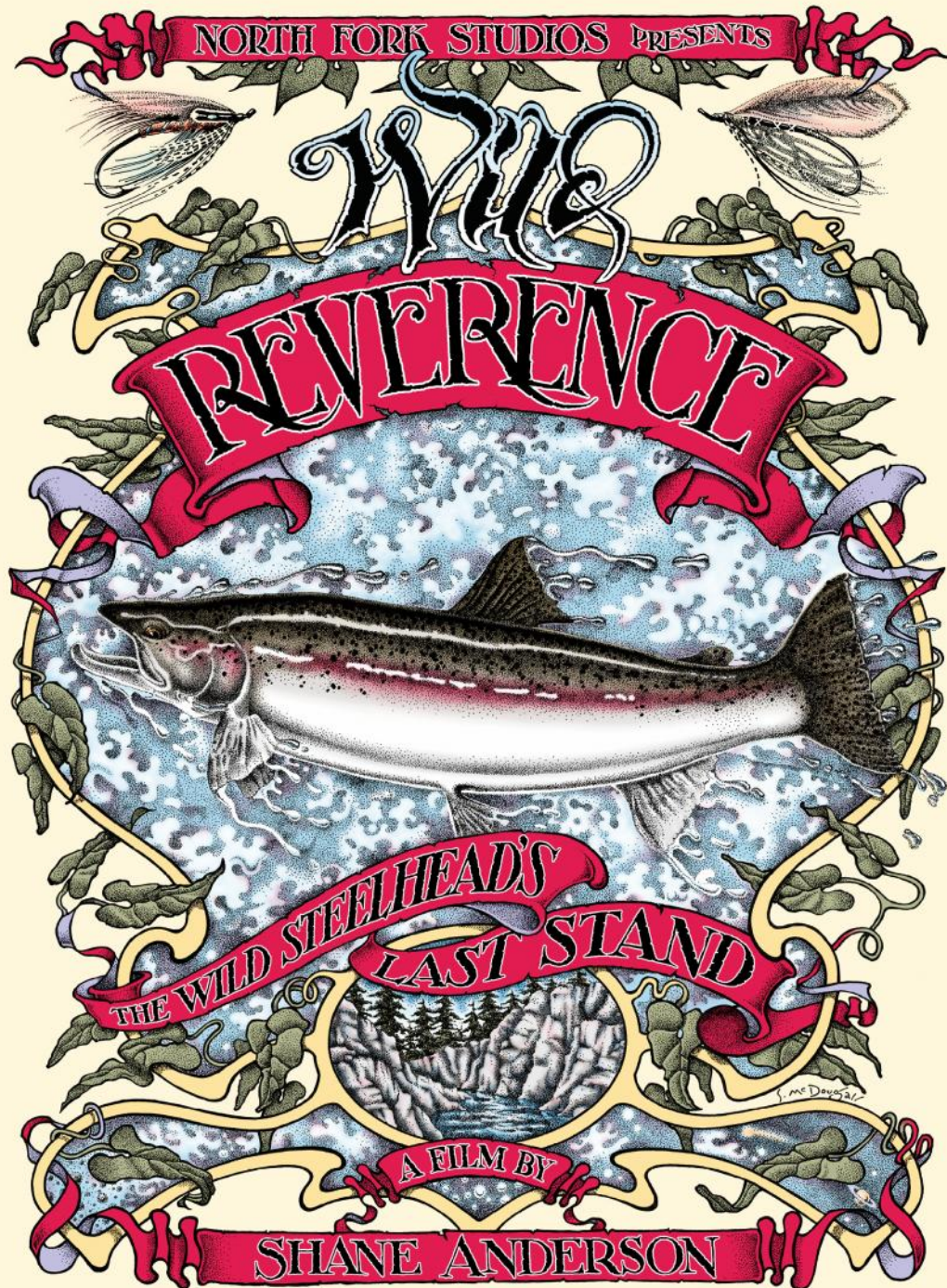
*Further out... Save the date:*

**May 6 (Saturday) - Yakima County Migration Count.** YVAS's annual "Birdathon" will be a county-wide bird count, as we try to tally species from different sectors in the county. Scott Downes will be putting teams together to cover all of the best areas to bird around Yakima including the White Pass, Chinook Pass, Lower Valley, Yakima Training Center, Toppenish and Wenas areas. Some teams start before dawn with owling, while most teams go all or most of the day. If you are interested in participating, contact Scott Downes ([downes@charter.net](mailto:downes@charter.net))

YVC's Biology Department, YELF and Trout Unlimited are proud to present:

# Wild Reverence

Yakima Valley College, in collaboration with the Yakima Environmental Learning Foundation (YELF) and Trout Unlimited, presents a showing of the documentary *Wild Reverence*. The free event will take place **Thursday, March 30, 2017 at 7:00 pm** in Deccio Higher Education Center, Building 8, Parker Room.





KEEN is proud to announce:

## The First Annual Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest!

KEEN is so excited to announce that our first annual *Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest*, set for May 12-14, 2017! Registration is now open.

Our planning team is meeting weekly to bring this event together - we anticipate a crowd of about 250 birders enthusiastic to learn more about our region, our important bird area, and our special shrub-steppe habitat.

Registrations are now open for all the events included in *Bird Fest* - with many free activities and some additional ticketed events. You can engage in birding by ear, wildlife photography, avian illustration, special trips to Ginkgo and the Upper County, and enjoy a special dinner and keynote

from renowned birder and photographer Paul Bannick.

We are actively seeking partners and sponsors for this great event and welcome inquiries and questions. I've attached the sponsorship packet if anyone is interested in exploring that as a way to increase outreach to this group of engaged visitors to our area.

*Bird Fest* also incorporates *Get Intimate with the Shrub-Steppe*, our flagship event that is now in its 18th year! GISS is on Saturday the 13th of May and will be an added activity for event attendees. There are tabling opportunities at GISS and at *Bird Fest*. Event materials can be found on-line at: <http://www.ycic.org/yakima-river-canyon-bird-fest>.

You are invited to another film sponsored by Yakima Valley College, YELF and the Yakima Valley Audubon Society

## *The Messenger*

**April 18 at 7:00 p.m. in the YVC Deccio Bldg. 8, Parker Room**

Sponsored by  
YVC, Audubon  
Society, and  
YELF

www.yelf.org

YVC Deccio Building 8, Parker Room  
16th Ave & Nob Hill Blvd, Yakima, WA 98902

**THE MESSENGER**  
Imagine a world without birdsong

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY SU RYNARD | MUSIC: PHIL STRONG | COSTUME DESIGNER: EMILY HENNING | CINEMATOGRAPHY: DANIEL GRANT | IMAGE ARCHIVE: VISUAL EFFECTS: MARK ALBERTS  
PRODUCERS: JOANNE P. JACKSON | SALLY BLAKE | MARTIN DE LA FOULCHIERE | DIANE WOODS | SU RYNARD | ARTIST: SALLY BLAKE & SU RYNARD | EDITOR: SU RYNARD  
AND YOUR VOICE: THE.MESSENGER.MOVIE.COM #BIRDSMATTER #SONGBIRDSOS

For thousands of years, songbirds were regarded by mankind as messengers from the gods. Today, these creatures – woven inextricably into the fabric of our environment – are vanishing at an alarming rate. Under threat from climate change, pesticides and more, populations of hundreds of species have dipped dramatically. As scientists, activists and bird enthusiasts investigate this phenomenon, amazing secrets of the bird world come to light for the first time in this acclaimed and visually thrilling documentary. Find out what's killing our songbirds, and what can be done about it. As in ancient times, songbirds may once again be carrying a message to humans – one that we ignore at our own peril.

*The Messenger - Imagine a world without birdsong.*

THE MESSENGER, a new documentary by award-winning filmmaker Su Rynard (*Dream Machine*, *Kardia*) chronicles the struggle of songbirds worldwide to survive in turbulent environmental conditions brought about by humans and argues that their demise could signify the crash of the ecosystems globally, akin to the disappearance of honey bees and the melting of the glaciers.

*The Messenger is particularly effective at sounding the alarm because it makes the issue highly personal. With exclusive footage, and high-tech cinematography, the movie offers an intimate look at the plight of the songbird. Stunning flight sequences...are conveyed in slow motion, making the complexities of wing movement, control, and rhythm visible to the human eye.*

Here is the link to *The Messenger* movie trailer:  
<http://songbirdsos.com/portfolio/official-film-trailer/>

*The National Audubon Society*

### Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Join/renew my annual membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society to receive 10 issues of the Calliope Crier and all chapter benefits. National Audubon membership and Audubon Magazine are not included.

Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership.....\$ 25.00 per household  
 YVAS Senior (62+) \_\_\_\_ OR Student Membership \_\_\_\_ (please check one).....\$ 15.00 per household  
 Yakima Valley Audubon Society Life Membership .....\$ 500.00 per household

New Member \_\_\_\_ Renewing Member \_\_\_\_ (please check one)

In addition to my membership payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, my check includes an additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I do not want to receive any solicitations or communications from NAS (please check if applicable)

\_\_\_\_ I prefer to read the Crier online and not receive my copy by mail (please check if applicable)

Please make any corrections to your contact information as needed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form and your check payable to: YVAS Membership, P.O. Box 2823, Yakima, WA 98907

**If you have any membership questions, contact Joy McKinney at [joycatbird@gmail.com](mailto:joycatbird@gmail.com) or 698-4110.**

### **2017 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD**

President	Kerry Turley ( <a href="mailto:kdturley@gmail.com">kdturley@gmail.com</a> )	840-0980	Membership	Joy McKinney ( <a href="mailto:joycatbird@gmail.com">joycatbird@gmail.com</a> )	698-4110
Past. President	Andy Stepniewski ( <a href="mailto:steppie@nwinfo.net">steppie@nwinfo.net</a> )	949-7404	Newsletter Editor	Elizabeth Bohn ( <a href="mailto:elizabethannbohn@yahoo.com">elizabethannbohn@yahoo.com</a> )	901-1886
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Directors:	Ken Tolonen ( <a href="mailto:8rivard@gmail.com">8rivard@gmail.com</a> )	965-4584	<b>Special Committees:</b>		
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	Bob Chicken ( <a href="mailto:robertchicken@msn.com">robertchicken@msn.com</a> )	457-2014	Bird Reports	Denny Granstrand ( <a href="mailto:dgranstrand@gmail.com">dgranstrand@gmail.com</a> )	453-2500
	Phil Fischer ( <a href="mailto:pcfischer@gmail.com">pcfischer@gmail.com</a> )	731-0211	Important Bird Areas	Vacant	
	Reneé Navarrete ( <a href="mailto:renee@digitalcardboard.com">renee@digitalcardboard.com</a> )	654-9646	Publicity	Vacant	
			Social	Vacant	
			Volunteer Rec.	Vacant	
<b>Standing (Voting) Committee Chairs:</b>			Webmaster	Denny Granstrand ( <a href="mailto:dgranstrand@gmail.com">dgranstrand@gmail.com</a> )	453-2500
Refuge Keeper	Kerry Turley ( <a href="mailto:kdturley@gmail.com">kdturley@gmail.com</a> )	840-0980	Website	<a href="http://www.yakimaaudubon.org">www.yakimaaudubon.org</a>	
Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp ( <a href="mailto:bbirder247@aol.com">bbirder247@aol.com</a> )	965-1134	Toppenish CBC	Eric Heisey ( <a href="mailto:magicman32@rocketmail.com">magicman32@rocketmail.com</a> )	
Conservation	Andy Stepniewski ( <a href="mailto:steppie@nwinfo.net">steppie@nwinfo.net</a> )	949-7404	Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand ( <a href="mailto:dgranstrand@gmail.com">dgranstrand@gmail.com</a> )	453-2500
Education	Ellen Stepniewski ( <a href="mailto:steppie@nwinfo.net">steppie@nwinfo.net</a> )	731-6805	YVAS Email	( <a href="mailto:birds@yakimaaudubon.org">birds@yakimaaudubon.org</a> )	
Field Trips	Scott Downes ( <a href="mailto:downess@charter.net">downess@charter.net</a> )	469-7807	YVAS Facebook	( <a href="http://www.facebook.com/yakimaaudubon/?fref=ts">http://www.facebook.com/yakimaaudubon/?fref=ts</a> )	



Birds we will see on  
upcoming field trips



## Coming Attractions:

Mar 23 Chapter Meeting: YTC and Shrub-steppe

Mar 25 Shrub-steppe Zone field trip

Mar 31 (or Apr 1) Bluebird Box Cleanout

Apr 12 Arborfest at the Yakima Arboretum

Apr 19 Conboy NWR field trip