



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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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

April 2017



MARCH PROGRAM

BILL DRENGUIS

The Poachers, the Protectors and the Public. Presented by Becky McRoberts

It's time for a law and order speaker! We have all heard stories of poachers being confronted in the wild. Well who does this? And more importantly, is there a better way to address this problem?

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Program and Agency has a strong desire to expand citizen awareness and to invite active public involvement and participation. They are offering an opportunity to be part of an alliance that has a positive influence on conservation, the outdoor heritage, public safety, and the state's natural resource based communities.

They are calling that opportunity a Shared Values Alliance. This alliance forms an open line of communication to identify existing and potential problems facing our natural resources and the communities that are impacted by them. This open communication line allows for constructive problem solving and discussion, to achieve positive results for forward progress. This project-oriented approach ensures that Fish and Wildlife Police Officers and the Agency are connected with changing public and resource-based industries' values and needs. They welcome the opportunity to engage

with local organizations to provide awareness, listen to our ideas, and encourage active participation within this statewide conservation endeavor.

Becky McRoberts is the newly hired Community Outreach Liaison with the Washington Fish and Wildlife Police. Becky wears many hats, but her main mission is to connect with local communities through the formation of a Shared Values Alliance. Although new to the program, she has held several community outreach positions in the past, focused on both agriculture and natural resources in Oregon, California, and Michigan.

(The picture is WDFW agents confiscating poached sturgeon.)



Mark your calendar for Thursday, April 27, at 7:00 to see this presentation at the Yakima Area Arboretum



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

KERRY TURLEY

An Invitation



Hello again. By the time you're reading this, it should be about middle of April. My winter coat will be hung in the closet developing a fine layer of dust on it, because I hopefully won't need it for another 7 or 8 months. The weather should be beautiful with sunshine every day

(we hope) and migration will be in full swing. A lot of the peeps should be back and we will have the warblers to look forward to at the end of the month. There is going to be lots to see and lots to do. Remember to just get out and enjoy it and don't get frustrated if you can't identify every bird you see. No one can figure every bird out especially if it's at a glance.

Over the past few days I've been reviewing what's coming up and I'm pretty excited about what's on the

President's Column (continued on page 2)

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

President's Column (continued from page 1)

horizon from field trips, to programs, to Bird-A-Thon and International Migratory Bird Day. As all this was running through my mind, I became aware that there may be some area of interest and/or some programs you and other members would enjoy that we're not currently providing. If this is the case for you, feel free to contact any board member with your idea and we will see that the board looks at your suggestion.

So now I'd like to extend an invitation to all of you. Volunteers are the driving force of the YVAS and we'd like to have more of our members involved in helping us grow and become increasingly visible in our service area. This doesn't mean that you need to serve on the board—helping us by participating in either an existing program or on a new project you would like to be involved with is important too.



MEMBERSHIP

JOY MCKINNEY



THIS MONTH'S YVAS CALENDAR

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Sunnyside Eva Mitchell
Yakima Marjorie Henderson, Mike Sliman

Thank you for renewing your membership!

Goldendale: Robert and Mary-Lane Baker
Naches: Thomas Thrush
Selah: Steve Emhoff and Sally Rodgers
Toppenish: Don and Jane Gargas
Yakima: Bob and Carrie Chicken, Rick Mains,
Kelly Kindlespire, Rebecca Buell, Beth Akin,
Kim Cody

Apr 27 Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm. Great program!

May 6 Birdathon – pledge or participate! See article in this Crier for information.

May 9 Board Meeting at Joe & Karen Zook's home, 5808 W Chestnut, 7 pm.

May 13 Migratory Bird Day at Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge from 8 am to 1 pm. See article in this Crier.

May 26 – 29 (Fri thru Mon) Annual Memorial Day Wenas Campout. On your own – see field trips in this Crier.

Spring (sort of!) Cleaning on the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail

The past winter piled some of the deepest and longest lasting snow cover upon the Wenas area in recent memory. Amid concerns for road conditions, lingering snow, runoff and mud, the weather for our annual cleanout was surprisingly pleasant on Monday, April 3.

Joe and Karen Zook alternated checking groups of boxes on the lower trail with David Churchill while Elizabeth Bohn and I drove to the upper end and worked back towards the others. While the road was mostly decent, Karen's choice of high-top rubber boots allowed her to frequently two-step through water running along the road's edge and to crunch through a snow drift or two to access boxes set back from the roadway. On the upper trail, though my age has cut my effective hopping distance to thirty-two inches, I was able to pick approaches with no more than thirty inches of water to clear.

With the exception of Box 104 which disappeared post and all, only minor repairs were required on the 132 boxes that the group cleaned...mostly of old chipmunk nests constructed after the departure of the bluebirds last August.

Western Bluebirds were abundant along the trail; a few Mountain Bluebirds were in the mix near boxes on the upper half. Notable other sightings include White-headed Woodpecker, Bushtit, Say's Phoebe, Sage Thrasher plus a Mountain Chickadee checking out Box 59. At Box 86, male Mountain and Western Bluebirds were involved in a dispute about possible ownership. More concerning was a male House

Sparrow eyeing a pair of Mountain Bluebirds investigating Box 122.

If anyone is interested in spending three or four hours on the trail during the upcoming nesting season, consider contacting me by email at (bbirder247@gmail.com) regarding monitoring. We are willing to train/coach a few new monitors! Additionally, there are several boxes that are without sponsors...first come, first serve to have your name listed in our October Crier (view online at the YVAS website) recap for ten bucks a year. Plus I try to send out a couple of trail updates each year to sponsors that furnish email addresses.

From April through August, having the "blues" ain't so bad as long as those blues are bluebirds.



First timer David Churchill describes a chipmunk nest to veteran Joe Zook

Photo Karen Zook

— Richard Repp —



CONSERVATION ANDY STEPNIEWSKI

Wildlife and Forestry Conference stresses importance of Snags

A joint Meeting of the Washington Chapter of the Wildlife Society and the Washington State Society of American Foresters was held in Yakima March 28-31. Yakima Auduboners Karen Zook, Phil Fisher, and I attended parts or all of the conference. The theme this year of the conference

was "Forests and Wildlife: responding to change."

There were an impressive number of sessions at the conference that highlighted the critical role of snags which are standing dead trees, in the forest ecosystem.

Ken Bevis, Yakima Audubon alumni, gave two excellent sessions: With his usual flair, energy, and enthusiasm, the first was "Hazard becomes habitat," in which Ken acknowledged the potential dangers of standing snags to both humans and structures, but made a impassioned

plea for preserving as many dead trees as possible. His other talk "Wildlife Elements in east Cascade forests fuels reduction projects" in which he painted a picture of a healthy forest ecosystem tying the various habitat characteristics to an acronym: SLLOPPS, " Snags, Legacy, Logs, Open Areas, Patches, Piles, and Shrubs." Foresters and wildlife biologists alike heard Ken's plea for structural diversity loud and clear. Bravo Ken!

Jeff Kozma and Scott Downes, of the Snag Conservation Working Group, presented "Working to Preserve Snags on Federal and Private Lands." Jeff, who chairs the

group, was on vacation to the big island of Hawaii, so Scott made the presentation, delivering a forceful and clear call for preservation of snags on forest lands.

Finally, Kelly Lawrence, Naches District Ranger of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest delivered a talk highlighting the importance of snags in the forest titled: "Burns for Birds: benefits of prescribed fire for woodpeckers." Kelly mentioned White-headed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, both important species in Cascade east slope forests. A number of times, Kelly cited both the research and photos of Teresa Lorenz. Early in her talk, Kelly stressed implementation of a "no snag felling" policy is a significant challenge given the dependency on firewood for home heating for quite a number of south-central Washington residents. A substantial local culture has developed in which firewood gathering is an important rite to many and changes to Naches District policies are being met with resistance.

I think it's safe to say the issue of snag preservation was considerably ramped up during this conference, attended by hundreds of wildlife and forest biologists and resource managers. Now comes the hard part of follow-up by the Snag Conservation Working Group and other environmental groups in achieving secure protection for snags in our Eastside Cascade forests!



White-headed Woodpecker
Photo by George Vlahakis



Black-Backed Woodpecker
Photo by George Vlahakis

What's Happening at the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge

DON'T MISS EVENTS: THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

On Saturday May 13, come celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at the TNWR from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Activities will include bird banding, guided bird walks, live raptor program, children's games, and hay rides that travel into parts of the refuge that are normally closed to the public. The bird banding demonstration and first bird walk begin at 8:00 a.m. Bring your binoculars! The refuge visitor center will be open with children's activities and learning materials. International Migratory Bird Day, held annually on the second Saturday in May, is an invitation to

celebrate and support migratory bird conservation. It was created specifically to highlight the migration of nearly 350 species of migratory birds between nesting habitats in North America and non-breeding grounds in South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. The day serves as an opportunity to celebrate all the species of birds whose annual movements enliven our lands, waters, and skies. A free event and all are welcome! Mark your calendar now!



FIELD TRIPS
SCOTT DOWNES

- April 23 (Sunday) Satus Wildlife Area.** Join leader Kerry Turley on a trip to the newly opened to the public, Satus Wildlife Area on the Yakama Nation lands. This area hosts a wonderful collection of wetlands and by late April, the site is likely to be filled with sights and sounds of spring. If flooding is a factor, the trip may be diverted to the Nation's Zimmerman Property at the south end of Lateral A. To sign up and verify the meeting place and time, contact Kerry at kdturley@gmail.com.
- April 29 (Saturday) Snow Mountain Ranch.** Join Joe and Karen Zook for a hike around this parcel of land west of Yakima, which is preserved by the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy. We will be looking at all of the birds, but hoping for some early passerine migrants, such as Vesper sparrows Loggerhead Shrike, flycatchers (Say's Phoebe), and perhaps a Nashville warbler or two. Snow Mountain is also a great place for Horned Larks, Meadowlarks, California Scrub-Jays, Northern Flickers and Lewis's Woodpeckers. We may see some nice flocks of White-crowned sparrows as well. Several species of raptors have been known to nest there, including Great-horned owls, American Kestrel, Red-tailed hawk and Northern Harrier. We are also hoping to catch some wild flowers. With the cooler, wetter weather we are hoping our timing is good for some beautiful blooms.
- Meet at the trail head on Cowiche Mill Road at 7:00 AM. Be prepared for 2 to 3 miles of hiking. Last year's flooding created some rough trail conditions, so wear appropriate footwear and be prepared for some rough trail in places. Bring optics (scopes are helpful for raptor viewing) and this can be a great opportunity to photograph wild flowers, so bring a camera if you are so inclined. Depending on conditions and what we are seeing, plan on 3-4 hours for the trip. Questions? Contact the Zooks at gadzooks7@charter.net (or 225-9494).
- 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 begin a bit later to spend most of the day in the field. If you are interested in participating, contact Scott Downes: downess@charter.net.
- May 13 (Saturday) - Come celebrate International Migratory Bird Day** at Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on Saturday, May 13, from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Activities will include bird banding, guided bird walks, live raptor program, children's games, and hay rides. See article in this Crier for more information or contact Kerry Turley for more information: kdturley@gmail.com
- May 20 (Saturday) - Scott Downes will lead an evening owl trip to Bethel Ridge.** This trip will explore the forested slopes of Bethel Ridge Road. Target species include Flammulated Owl, Northern Pygmy Owl, Barred Owl and Common Poorwill. Possibility of Great Horned Owl and Long-eared Owl. Trip will leave Yakima in late evening, getting to Bethel Ridge near dusk. Trip likely getting back around midnight or slightly after. Dress in layers for varied weather. Some owls may be heard only. Playback may be used. Binoculars useful if owls are cooperative for looks. Scopes probably not useful. Trip is limited to 8 participants, so is likely to fill early. Contact Scott for meeting place and time if interested in attending: [Scott Downes \(downess@charter.net\)](mailto:Scott Downes (downess@charter.net)).
- May 26-29 (Friday-Monday) - Memorial Day Wenas Campout.** The annual Memorial Day weekend Wenas Audubon Campout at the Wenas Creek Campground on Audubon Road. Birding field trips and flower walks abound at this casual and friendly gathering. In past campouts activities have included field sketching, bat and owl prowls, and much more. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. Drive up for a day or camp. All are welcome. Visit the Wenas Audubon website (www.wenasaudubon.org) for directions and complete information.

Sunday Open House at the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge

Open House at Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) will be held *every Sunday* through June from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm. The most popular attraction so far this year has been the great-horned owl nest where visitors have delighted in views of the fuzzy owlets that are already peeking out of the nest. Soon the focus will turn to the many migrating birds that use this great area. We welcome your help! You certainly don't need to be an expert birder to help. Please consider volunteering to help staff the refuge on a Sunday of your choice. Our just drop by to share the wonder of nature with friends and family!



BIRDATHON

field to tally as many species and individuals as they can find. Each team's tally will be added into an overall spreadsheet, Christmas-count style. In 2011, teams set a record by finding 195 species. Can we break that record?

We need birders to help assist with this fun effort. Scott Downes is organizing this year's birding efforts. If interested in participating, contact Scott to see which teams can use help. E-mail is preferred at downes@charter.net or phone him at 469-7807. You do not need to be an experienced birder to enjoy the spectacle of spring migration. Full day or part day, if you are willing to participate, please contact Scott to work out details.

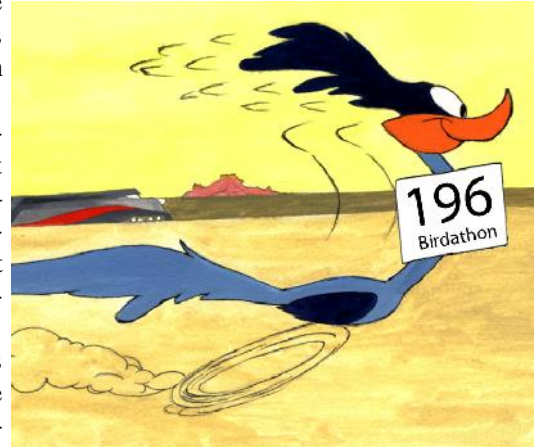
Everyone making a Birdathon pledge will be mailed a recap of the day's birding detailing the species seen as well as a narrative of the highlights the birding teams encounter. But most of all, donors may revel in the knowledge that they have contributed to the overall success of YVAS.

— Dan Kinney —

DOLLARS FROM DONORS, BIRDS FROM BIRDERS

Spring is the season for great birding throughout Yakima County. It is also the time for Yakima Audubon's BIRDATHON, the chapter's appeal to members for financial support. Please join in and contribute to BIRDATHON. Monies donated are used for the chapter's operating expenses, including the informative and beautifully illustrated newsletter, bringing great programs to our chapter meetings, important conservation issues and efforts, education, outreach, and more.

This year's BIRDATHON is **May 6** and will again entail a county-wide birding effort. In this endeavor, up-wards of 10 teams, each with a mapped portion of Yakima County, head out into the



YVAS Birders Chase 196!

Yes, I want to help support YVAS by making a Birdathon pledge!

I Pledge \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

You can include your check now (payable to Yakima Valley Audubon Society), or we will bill you following the Birdathon.

Send form to: Yakima Valley Audubon Society, P. O. Box 2823, Yakima WA 98907

Pickles (Borrowed from the Yakima Herald Republic)



YVAS March 25 Shrub-steppe Field Trip

Thirteen keen Auduboners met early on a cold Saturday morning for a day trip to study the shrub-steppe ecosystem plants and birds. The day started very cold and cloudless and the sun was still barely above the horizon when we entered the Yakima Canyon. I saw nice sunshine warming the ground as we passed the Selah Cliffs Nature Area Preserve, while ahead at our usual starting point I could see still deep in shadows northward in the Yakima Canyon. So we made an abrupt and unplanned turn into this site. Though degraded shrub-steppe here, some of the essential elements are present, such as Big Sagebrush and the weedy invasive storyline. A nice riparian woodland set against scenic basalt cliffs in the warm sunshine provided a pleasing scene. Birds were few, but we did spot some Violet-green Swallows lined



Enjoying the view of the "Big Cliff" in the Yakima River Canyon
Photo by Ellen Stepniewski

up on a wire, waiting for warmer temperatures to wake-up the bugs before they started flying. Next in the Yakima Canyon, at the pull-out below Selah Butte, we walked up to the overlook north of Milepost 4. Though our perch still lay in shadow, beautiful morning light on cliffs across river to the west made for a stunning sight. At the viewpoint, I imparted a bit on the Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass Community around us and pointed out the dramatic contrast in vegetation caused by aspect. On the nearby north-facing slopes, native plants have survived to a much greater extent as compared to adjacent south-facing slopes which are now often dominated by weedy invasives. This is a recurrent theme throughout the Great Basin sagelands. Bighorn Sheep scattered about high, grassy slopes across the river to the west, were a great sight through our scopes. A Chukar called from the rocky slopes to east of overlook. Most exciting here was a pair of Prairie Falcons which appeared to mate at least once. Otherwise they screamed persistently indicating courtship behavior. One of the birds repeatedly flew into a cave on the cliff, suggesting this was the chosen nest site. After about an hour here, we still had not seen any Golden Eagles, making me worry the pair usually nesting here may no longer be breeding at this location.

We took a longer walk at the Umtanum Creek Recreation Site, ascending the side canyon which climbs up Umtanum Ridge, from just west of swinging bridge. The word is out about the scenic qualities here as we met many hikers. I

shared some more tidbits on shrub-steppe botany, especially on Purple Sage, actually in the mint family. We encountered two more biscuitroots: Gormann's and Piper's. A lovely moss and lichen component here is an underappreciated aspect of the shrub-steppe. Overhead, an immature Bald Eagle soared, accompanied by a pair of Common Ravens. In the riparian habitat along the creek, we had great views of a pair of Bushtits. Discovery of a small population of this usual west-of-the Cascades species here was one of the first noted east of the Cascade crest in eastern Washington. Clearcuts right up to the Cascade crest may be allowing this denizen of brushy habitats to colonize similar habitats in eastern Washington. Time will tell how much they spread.

It was cool and breezy at our next stop. In the high quality shrub-steppe habitats found on and near the Quillomene



The group studies a Sagebrush Sparrow on the Quillomene Wildlife Area
Photo by Ellen Stepniewski

Wildlife Area on the Old Vantage Highway. The usual show of wildflowers was only just beginning with lots of Canby's Biscuitroot and a couple of Sagebrush Violets, indicating spring is very tardy this year. Birds were less quiet, though. Sage Thrashers sang their lovely song and gave most of us good views, as did a pair of exquisite Mountain Bluebirds. One of the bluebird boxes surprisingly seems to have been usurped by a pair of House Sparrows. We also had good views of Sagebrush Sparrow but our encounter with Brewer's Sparrow was a "heard-only" bird.

Our last stop was at the Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park Interpretive Overlook. The Columbia River waters below were quiet and birds were not much in evidence, but the vistas were dramatic as always. American Coots were tightly packed right below us. Mixed in with these birds were Horned and Pied-billed Grebes, while off in mid-river, some Western Grebes drifted. A Say's Phoebe called plaintively from the overlook, no doubt a bird that will construct its nest under the eaves of the visitor center building.

— Andy Stepniewski —

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 or 698-4110.

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Birds you might see May 13 at International Migratory Bird Day



Photos by
George Vlahakis
and
Denny Granstrand



Coming Attractions:

Apr 23 Satus WRA field trip

Apr 27 Chapter Meeting - 7 pm

Apr 29 Snow Mountain Ranch field trip

May 6 Birdathon - See page 6

May 13 Migratory Bird Day

May 20 Bethel Ridge Owls field trip