

Calliope Crier

Newsletter of the Yakima Valley Audubon Society

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 53, Number 1

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

January/February 2024

February Program & Meeting (via Zoom Only)

Thursday, February 22, 7:00 PM

Waterfowl of the Yakima Valley

Presented by Connie Sidles



Ring-necked Ducks, photo S. Shippen



Northern Shoveler, photo S Shippen

Everybody knows a Mallard, right? And Northern Shovelers are those guys with big bills, while Buffleheads are the little black-and-white ‘rubber duckies.’ But do you **really** know your waterfowl? Can you identify each species by gender, in eclipse, in flight, and by voice? Do you know the secrets of their lives? The Yakima Valley is home to nearly three dozen different species of swans, geese, and ducks. Let master birder Connie Sidles take you on a virtual journey through Yakima’s waterways to discover some of our most fascinating waterfowl and give you tips on how to identify some of the most challenging birds in our waterways.



Constance Sidles is a master birder and long-time member of Birds Connect Seattle (formerly Seattle Audubon), where she served on the board and was chair of the Publications Committee. She currently serves on the Conservation Committee. Connie is on the faculty of the University of Washington as an instructor in continuing education programs. She teaches classes for Audubon societies across the country. Connie is a published author with more than 600 published articles and is founder and president of Constancy Press. She has written four books about nature focusing on her favorite “backyard” Montlake Fill, aka Union Bay Natural Area on the UW’s campus. She is excited to be with YVAS again, even briefly and virtually - her eastern WA home away from home.

Zoom meeting will open at 6:55 PM. To Join Zoom Meeting click on link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85751241932?pwd=K0lseGlvbng4WGikN3NaeEdaL2VTQT09>,

Meeting ID: 857 5124 1932; Passcode: 385168

Upcoming Events

Sat, Feb 3-All day	McNary National Wildlife Refuge , Leader Bill Drenguis, sign up, bdrenguis@gmail.com
Sat, Feb 10, 9-11 AM	Second Saturday Bird Walk , Poppoff Trail, Union Gap, map ; Leaders Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky
Fri-Mon, Feb 16-19	Great Backyard Bird Count , birdcount.org
Sat, Mar 2, 9 AM-noon	Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge , Leaders Sarah Shippen & Gene Miliczky, ses1440@outlook.com
Sat, Mar 9, 9-11 AM	Second Saturday Bird Walk , Leader Kerry Turley, location TBD.
Sat, Mar 16	McNary NWR Waterfowl Migration , Leaders Andy and Ellen Stepniewski. For details and sign up, steppie@nwinfo.net
Fri-Sun, Mar 22-24	Sandhill Crane Festival , Othello, www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/

News from the Board

Our New Year has been a cold one, but there are still lots of birds to see. There are several field trips in the next couple of months exploring our wintering and migrating waterfowl. Our February Speaker, Connie Sidles, will help us tune up our birding skills for waterfowl viewing, so don't miss this Zoom presentation. The February program will be Zoom only (no in-person meeting) because of the driving challenges we frequently face on those winter evenings. You will be able enjoy our program from the comfort of your armchair or view the recording later.

We are still looking for volunteers to assist with the newsletter and conservation. Sandra Hulteen, a new member of our Board this year, will now be helping with programs. Kerry Turley and Bill Drenguis have organized an amazing list of field trips for 2024.

Holiday Celebration

The annual Holiday Potluck dinner was a special event this year where we honored Ellen and Andy Stepniewski. After more than 30 years of service to YVAS, Ellen and Andy retired from the Board at the end of 2023. They will continue to lead field trips and support birds and birding in the Valley, but now have a well-deserved opportunity for travel and birding outside the Valley! In appreciation for their significant contributions to YVAS over the years, the YVAS Board has established an endowment in their names to be awarded annually to worthy organizations, projects, or education.

The evening's outstanding program was presented by Jeff Kozma on Woodpeckers of Washington. We have a couple of field trips planned this year to use Jeff's birding tips!



Ellen and Andy Stepniewski

Upcoming Field Trips – Kerry Turley and Bill Drenguis

Saturday, February 3: McNary National Wildlife Refuge, Leader Bill Drenguis. Come join us on the first field trip of 2024!

The destination is McNary National Wildlife Refuge near the Tri-Cities. We will be looking for the early migration of waterfowl. Ducks are big and many will be in breeding plumage. It's an easy trip with lots of parking. Bring binos, a scope if you have one (there will be several to share), warm clothes and lunch.

We leave Yakima at 7:30 and will be home before dark (on this trip, you may head home early from Tri-cities if necessary). Bill will be scouting the area earlier in the week. If we must cancel because of ice, fog, snow, lack of birds etc., Bill will let you know. Participants will need to sign up for meet-up information.

Contact Bill Drenguis, bdrenguis@gmail.com or text 509 731 8632 to sign up.



Barrow's Goldeneye display, photo S. Shippen

Saturday, February 10: Second Saturday Bird Walk, Popoff Trail, 9 -11 AM. Leaders Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky. Meet in the parking lot of the north-most roundabout on Valley Mall Boulevard at 9:00 AM. Click here for [map](#). No need to sign up in advance. *This monthly event is suitable for all ages and birding abilities.* Participants may join for the entire two hours or for as long as they are comfortable.

Explore this local hotspot with us—you will be amazed at how many species over-winter here! The Helen Jewett and Poppoff trails have a variety of habitats and we can expect to see diverse species of birds during this walk. Dress warmly and be prepared for mud on some parts of the trail. Contact Sarah at ses1440@outlook.com with questions.



Tundra Swans (one doing yoga), photo S. Shippen

Saturday, March 2: Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge, 9 AM – noon. Leaders: Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky

Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge hosts thousands of waterfowl as they stop over on their way north. February and March are the best months to see these birds in abundance and in their breeding plumage. Bald eagles, various raptors, shrikes, songbirds, nesting Great Horned Owl, and shore birds also frequent the refuge during spring migration. Participation will be limited to 6 vehicles, so please sign up to ensure participation.

Bring binoculars, scope, camera, warm and wind-proof clothing, hot beverage and snacks. **How to Sign Up:** For further details and to sign up, email Sarah Shippen, ses1440@outlook.com.

Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count 2023

~Submitted by Scott Downes, CBC leader and Compiler.



Great Egret and Double-crested Cormorant,
photo S. Shippen

On Saturday, Dec. 30th, the Yakima CBC was held. Seventeen observers were in 8 teams plus 1 feeder watcher. The morning started out warm, with an overnight low of 37, but was met with cloudy conditions and a light drizzle much of the morning. The warm weather allowed most water, flowing and still to be open. The afternoon resulted in mild temperatures of mid to upper forties with partial sunbreaks. The 17 observers found 82 species on count day plus two count week birds and 14,311 individuals. The 82 species is higher than the all-time average of 74 species but lower than the most recent 10-year average of 90 species. The number of birds was both lower than the all-time average of 15, 252 and much lower than the 10-year average of 16, 547.

There were a few notable species found and a few notable misses. For this analysis, we are counting it as a notable species if the species has been seen on 10 or less years out of the 54-year history of the count. A notable miss is if the species has been recorded at least 20 years out of the count history. A Eurasian Wigeon was found in a pond off 40th Ave near Highway 12, likely a recurring bird as a male has been seen in recent years in that same location. A Peregrine Falcon was found in Yakima, for only the 9th time on the count, yet annually for the last five years. A White-breasted Nuthatch was found in residential Yakima for a count week bird. There was a large-scale irruption of this species earlier in the fall and this individual could be part of that event. An American Tree Sparrow was found on the Yakima Training Center and a pair of finches, Red Crossbill and Lesser Goldfinch, rounded out the notable species. Both finches were found in residential neighborhoods of Yakima. Red Crossbill was recorded on the count for the 3rd time and Lesser Goldfinch was noted for the 9th time, yet all nine occurrences have occurred in the past 10 years. Notable misses included Lesser Scaup, Prairie Falcon, Northern Shrike, Brown Creeper, Horned Lark and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Notable numbers included new high counts for Cackling Goose (170) and Northern Shoveler (82). Species substantially above average numbers were, 2023 numbers/average, Common Goldeneye (375/110), California Scrub-Jay (86/35), American Robin (951/644), Purple Finch (27/12), Spotted Towhee (50/27). Many species were substantially below the average, though suspect below average coverage of the circle has some contributing factors. Hooded Merganser (8/38), Ring-necked Pheasant (7/21), Rock Pigeon (173/566), Great Blue Heron (16/40), Black-billed Magpie (153/487), Golden-crowned Kinglet (3/22), House Sparrow (528/1099), Dark-eyed Junco (418/890), Red-winged Blackbird (130/731), Brewer's Blackbird (92/303).

Thank you to all the counters who participated and your effort. I would like to end with a notable statistic that summarizes the effort well. Combined, counters walked an estimated 33 miles. That equates to an average of more than 4 miles per team, with some teams walking 6-8 miles. Thank you to all for your efforts!

Scott Downes
Yakima CBC Compiler

2023 Christmas Bird Count Spreadsheet

<u>Species</u>	<u>Yakima</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Yakima</u>
Cackling Goose	170 H	Steller's Jay	3
Canada Goose	1629	California Scrub-Jay	86
Wood Duck	76	Black-billed Magpie	153
Northern Shoveler	82 H	American Crow	119
Gadwall	26	Common Raven	78
Eurasian Wigeon	1	Black-capped Chickadee	94
American Wigeon	157	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	11
Mallard	828	Golden-crowned Kinglet	3
Green-winged Teal	117	Cedar Waxwing	175
Canvasback	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	11
Ring-necked Duck	158	White-breasted Nuthatch	cw
Bufflehead	54	Bewick's Wren	37
Common Goldeneye	375	Pacific Wren	1
Barrow's Goldeneye	25	Marsh Wren	5
Hooded Merganser	8	European Starling	3962
Common Merganser	84	American Dipper	1
Duck Spp.	32	Townsend's Solitaire	1
California Quail	329	Hermit Thrush	6
Ring-necked Pheasant	7	American Robin	951
Pied-billed Grebe	8	Varied Thrush	59
Rock Pigeon	173	House Sparrow	528
Eurasian Collared-Dove	475	House Finch	915
Mourning Dove	160	Purple Finch	27
Anna's Hummingbird	5	Red Crossbill	13
Virginia Rail	6	Pine Siskin	19
American Coot	3	Lesser Goldfinch	10
Killdeer	1	American Goldfinch	213
Wilson's Snipe	2	Fox Sparrow - Sooty	4
Double-crested Cormorant	4	American Tree Sparrow	1
Great Blue Heron	16	Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco	2
Great Egret	4	Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	416
Northern Harrier	7	White-crowned Sparrow	435
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Golden-crowned Sparrow	27
Cooper's Hawk	11	Song Sparrow	96
Bald Eagle	9	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Red-tailed Hawk	78	Spotted Towhee	50
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Red-winged Blackbird	130
Western Screech-Owl	1	Brewer's Blackbird	92
Great Horned Owl	6	Orange-crowned Warbler	cw
Belted Kingfisher	15	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Aud)	64
Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myr)	4
Downy Woodpecker	52		
Northern Flicker - Red-shafted	181	Total Species	84
American Kestrel	39	Total Individuals	14311
Merlin	2	H = High Count	
Peregrine Falcon	1	Bold = Noteworthy Species	

Join in the *Great Backyard Bird Count!*

Friday through Monday, February 16 to 19

From the National Audubon website...

The **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. Click here for more information: birdcount.org and become a citizen scientist!



Juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk watching feeder, photo S. Shippen

Membership – Joy McKinney

Welcome New Members!

Blaine and Paula Nordwall, Yakima
Don Rasmussen, Yakima

Thanks for renewing your membership!

Kristi Weeks, Mary Lane Baker, Marion and Jean Winkler, Kathryn Blair, John and Sheri Rivard, Joyce Lucas, Ellen and Andy Stepniewski, Janet Demorest and Steve Moore, Robert and Leslie Wahl, Stan and Lori Isley, William and Rachel Moore, Barbara and Jim Riley, Gwendolyn Nash, Mary Lane

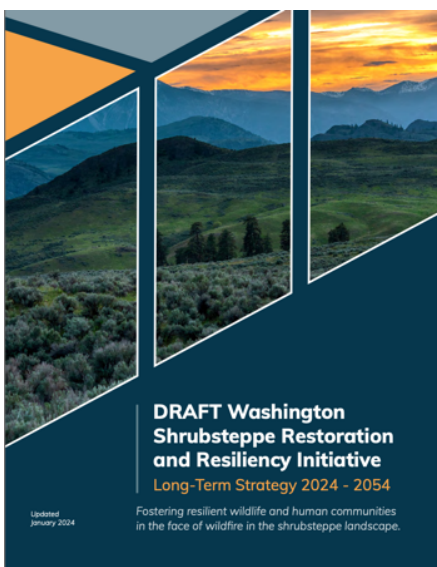


Great Egret, photo S. Shippen

Conservation

Andy Stepniewski and Stan Isley of YVAS have been participating on the Shrubsteppe Committee of WA Audubon for the past year. This committee has been working with various State and Tribal agencies on a Shrubsteppe management plan. A draft plan has now been completed and is available for public comment here:

wdfw.wa.gov/newsroom/news-release. Thank-you Andy and Stan for helping with this important work! If you are passionate about conservation and interested in participating on Audubon conservation issues, please consider volunteering! For information, contact Sarah Shippen, ses1440@outlook.com.



Meet Your Board

More volunteers still needed. **Please consider joining the Board, we would like to get to know you!**

President	Sarah Shippen	Newsletter Chair-volunteer needed!	Interim: Sarah Shippen & Gene Miliczky	Toppenish Refuge Volunteer	Kerry Turley
Vice President	Volunteer needed	Conservation -volunteers needed	Volunteer needed	Toppenish CBC	Volunteer needed
Secretary	Deborah Severtson-Coffin	Education Chair	Volunteer needed	Yakima CBC	Scott Downes
Treasurer	Rich Mathieu	Field Trips Chair	Kerry Turley & Bill Drenguis	Yakima Migration Count	Scott Downes
Director	Bill Drenguis	Director	Sandra Hulteen	Arboretum Bird Blind	Kathy and Joe Howell
Bluebird Trail	Karen Zook	Membership Chair	Joy McKinney		
Programs Chair	Sandra Hulteen	Website Administrator	Mary Lane		

To Contact YVAS

YVAS Information: info@yakimaaudubon.org

Newsletter

content: newsletter@yakimaaudubon.org

Bird questions: birds@yakimaaudubon.org

Donations: donations@yakimaaudubon.org

For more information about Yakima Valley Audubon Society, visit our website:

<https://yakimaaudubon.org/>

To Join:

https://yakimaaudubon.org/assets/pdf/yvas_membership_form.pdf



Photo S. Shippen