



The Calliope Crier

Newsletter of the Yakima Valley Audubon Society

March/April 2023
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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.

YVAS March Program

A “Big Natural Year” in Wild America

Speakers – **Andy and Ellen Stepniewski**

Thursday, March 23 at 7 pm
Yakima Area Arboretum

Doors open at 6:30; Zoom meeting opens at 6:55.



Roger Tory Peterson invited his British colleague James Fisher on a 3-month natural history tour of North America in 1953. They recounted this journey in *Wild America*, which takes the reader on a wonderful armchair excursion of our continent’s natural venues. Though not a stated goal, theirs was an early “Big Year” in the parlance of birders. They amassed a list of over 580 species of birds. Since this book was published 65 years ago, it has inspired countless naturalists and birders to learn about and visit the stupendous natural areas Peterson and Fisher visited. A sequel 40 years later, *Return to Wild America: a yearlong search for the Continent’s Natural Soul* (by Scott Weidensaul), focuses on the monumental ecologic changes that have occurred in the sites originally visited.

In 2022, Andy and Ellen undertook a visit to many of the areas Peterson and Fisher chronicled on their trip. In this presentation, they will share their travels to a good number of these areas and their flora and fauna, and especially the birds they observed around this vast continent. Though Peterson and Fisher’s circuit of North America was limited to three months, Andy and Ellen took a year and so were able to take their time to more thoroughly visit and explore North America’s varied environments during their “prime time.” During their year, they tallied more than 700 species of birds, testament to a vastly improved road system and knowledge of “where the birds are” as compared to 70 years ago.

This program can be viewed in person or on Zoom at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85751241932?pwd=K0lseGlvbng4WG1KN3NaeEdaL2VTQT09>

To view this and previously recorded programs, visit our website at

www.yakimaaudubon.org.

Andy and Ellen Stepniewski are life-long naturalists with a love for travel, natural environments, and birds. Both have a long involvement in the Yakima Valley Audubon Society, holding various leadership roles.



Events Calendar

Thursday, March 23	YVAS March Program. A “Big Natural Year” in Wild America. Speakers: Ellen and Andy Stepniewski. 7:00 PM at Yakima Area Arboretum and on Zoom.
Saturday, March 25 Half-day trip	Toppenish NWR Field Trip. Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky. ses1440@outlook.com . See details below in <i>Field Trips</i> .
March 31/April 1 or April 7/8, TBD	Bluebird Box Cleanout. Karen Zook. gadzooks7@charter.net . See details below in <i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>
Saturday, April 8	Second Saturday Bird Walk. Selah Cliffs. Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky. ses1440@outlook.com . 9-11 AM. See details below in <i>Field Trips</i> .
Saturday, April 15	Arborfest at Yakima Area Arboretum. Coordinated by Ellen Stepniewski. steppieellen@gmail.com . See details below in <i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>
Sunday, April 16	Sunnyside Wildlife Refuge Field Trip. Andy and Ellen Stepniewski. See details below in <i>Field Trips</i> .
Thursday, April 27	<u>No program in April</u>
Saturday, April 29th Half-day trip	Yakima Training Center Field Trip. <i>This trip is currently full</i> and requires early sign-up in order to get permission to visit the Training Center.
Fri-Mon, May 12- May 15	Yakima Migration Count. Scott Downes compiler. downes@charter.net
Fri- Sun, May 12-14	GISS & Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest 2023. Kittitas Environmental Education Network (KEEN), details at https://www.ycic.org/giss-and-birdfest
Saturday, May 20	International Migratory Bird Day, Toppenish NWR Headquarters. Details available later this year.



Snow and Canada Geese over Toppenish, photo by S. Shippen

Volunteers Needed!

YVAS Board and Committee Members Urgently Needed!

Your Board needs your help! We are currently without a person for the following positions: Vice-president, Director, Fund-raising Chairman, and Communications and Newsletter Chairman. These positions are vitally important to the sustainability of our organization. Following is a brief description of the responsibilities of each position. Collectively we can get so much done!

- **Vice-President:** The Vice-President assists the President in the carrying out of his/her duties and shall preside at all meetings in the absence of the President. He/she may be designated by the President to head one of the Standing Committees. The Vice-President is in training to become the President for the next term.
- **Director:** This position serves on the Board in support of activities, but without specific Chairman duties.
- **Fund-raising Chairman:** To make recommendations and carry out plans for obtaining financial support for the Society, and to coordinate all revenue-generating activities of this Society. Birdathon in May is the principal fund-raising event for YVAS.
- **Newsletter Chairman:** Publish a periodic newsletter for the members of the local Society and to prepare any other publications helpful to the ongoing programs of the local Chapter. The chairman of this committee shall be known as Editor.

If you would like to learn more about the responsibilities or are able to help, please contact Sarah Shippen, YVAS President at ses1440@outlook.com.

Bluebird Box Cleanout 2023

Submitted by Karen Zook

"Oh, how the waiting countryside thrills with joy when the Bluebird brings us the first word of returning spring. Reflecting heaven from his back and the ground from his breast, he floats between sky and earth like the winged voice of hope." - W.L. Dawson

Are you looking for something fun to do outdoors - something that will help bluebirds? Please consider joining us for the annual cleanout of the bluebird boxes along the Vredenburgh Trail. This year (weather permitting) we will clean out the boxes on March 31/April 1 or April 7 and 8.

Things will be a bit different this year. We will also plan on replacing a few of the 22 boxes that burned in last year's fire. We will not be able to replace all of them at one time, but we hope to get some put up. We will be installing new boxes throughout the spring, so if you are able and interested in helping with that, please let me know. We will need help. If you are able to help and you have a "fence post pounder" for metal posts please bring it.

Things are a mess up there right now. Salvage logging has been done on both public and private land, and the road is a muddy mess. Hopefully conditions will

improve in a month's time. We don't know if more logging will be done in the spring.



Photos taken on February 18 by Karen Zook.

We will be meeting at the end of the pavement on North Wenas Road at 9:00 AM. If you have not been there before, there is a small area there where we can park and gather before the clean out. You will need to bring some type of work gloves (i.e. garden gloves), wear shoes or boots that are sturdy, and dress for weather that can change quickly. It's also a good idea to bring snacks and water. We will supply scrapers and a list of boxes for you to monitor. When we are finished with the clean out, we will meet at the Umptanum Falls Parking lot for lunch and to turn in our sheets. We can eat in our vehicles or outside in the parking lot if weather permits. If you prefer not to do lunch, you can turn in your sheet there and head home afterward.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Karen Zook (gadzooks7@charter.net), so that we know

how many people to expect, and who to contact in the event that we need to change or cancel our plans. If you have a specific day that you can participate, please let us know that as well.

We hope to see some of you there!



Pygmy Nuthatch on Vredenburg Trail, photo by Karen Zook

Arborfest! "Our Changing Climate"

Come *volunteer* at 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. For more information on the event itself, please see the Yakima Area Arboretum's website at www.ahtrees.org



The theme this year is "Our Changing Climate!" The emphasis at the Yakima Valley Audubon booth will be the possible impacts on birds. Informational

displays will be for both adults and children. A scope will be set up. If there are no birds on the pond or at the swallow boxes, participants can practice looking at life-size photos and bird models. We will be making the ever-popular buttons, providing materials for kids to make their own button of a bird.



HELP, PLEASE. 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. Hundreds of children and families will participate in our activity and we need volunteers to help. As well as helping the children with crafts. Please consider joining us for this fun and educational activity. 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.

Submitted by Ellen Stepniewski, Education

Membership — Joy McKinney

Welcome new members!

Ron Rabin, Bellevue; Christopher and Nancy Condie, Selah; Meghan Anderson, Ellensburg; Sandra Hulteen, Yakima; Sue Ranger, Naches

Thank you for renewing your membership!

Kathleen Hennessy, Jeff Kozma, Peggy Schwartzberger, Jennie Hodge, Mary Pooler, Karen Hyatt, Joy McKinney, John Tolonen, James Riley, Margarita and Frederico Lopez, William and Rachel Moore, Connie Estep, Karen Ramey, Deborah Brown, Dale and Terry Critchlow, Cheryl Meenach, Frank Brown, Kerry Turley, Maia Mittelstaedt,

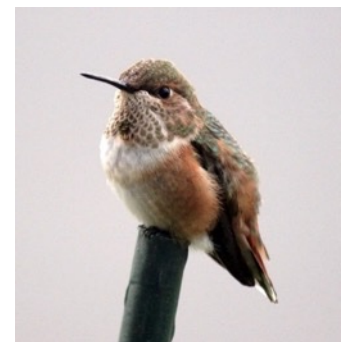
Education — Ellen Stepniewski

Yakima Valley Audubon and The Yakima Area Arboretum present
HUMMINGBIRDS & Attracting Them to Your Garden

Saturday, April 22 at 10 am to noon

Hummingbirds are truly incredible birds! They amaze us with their boldly colored iridescent plumage, their wild aerial acrobatics, their overly aggressive personalities, and their miraculous migrations. Please join wildlife biologist and expert birder Jeff Kozma for a class focusing on how to identify and attract the four species of hummingbirds regularly found in Washington to your garden. Jeff has been growing nectar producing plants and providing feeders in his yard to attract hummingbirds for the last 17 years and he looks forward to sharing his techniques with you. During the class, Jeff will cover 1) a brief overview of hummingbird biology (e.g., habitat, migration, territoriality, etc.), 2) where

while focusing on native plants that grow best in our warm dry climate, 4) the proper use of feeders (e.g., making sugar water, maintenance /cleaning /location of feeders, etc.), and 5) how to feed hummingbirds through the challenging winter months.



Rufous Hummingbird, Jeff Kozma



Crocosmia, photo by Jeff Kozma

and when to expect each hummingbird species, 3) how to landscape your yard with the types of plants that are most attractive to hummingbirds,

The two-hour class will be at the Yakima Area Arboretum on Saturday, April 22, 2023 at 10 am. The cost will be \$20 (Arboretum and Audubon members or \$25 for non- members.

To register or for more information, contact the Arboretum: (509-248-7337 or www.ahtrees.org) . The direct link to the arboretum registration is: <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=uhwrcxcab&oeidk=a07ejn4yc3e8ec311aa> . Registration will be limited due to space in the meeting room.

Field Trips – Scott Downes

Second Saturday Bird Walk, Selah Cliffs Natural Area Preserve

9:00 – 11:00 AM. *Discover Pass required.* Leaders Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky, ses1440@outlook.com. The cliffs provide nesting and roosting habitat for raptors including prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks and kestrels. Approximately half mile loop trail.

Directions to Selah Cliffs Natural Area Preserve: An access road and parking lot are just off of Highway 821, south of mile marker 3. The entrance is approximately 7 miles north of Yakima or approximately 28 miles south of Ellensburg. No restroom facilities are available onsite.

Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge and Pumphouse Road

Saturday, March 25, 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM



Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge hosts thousands 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. Last month we saw the early migrants: swans, Coots, Northern Pintail, Mallards, and Ring-necked Ducks. We may see a few this month, but American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, are now abundant. Bald Eagles, various raptors, shrikes, songbirds, shore birds and Great Horned Owls, visit and are resident at the Refuge.

We will spend time at the Headquarters Lookout, take a brief walk around the Headquarters grounds before heading out in a car caravan to view from Pumphouse Road. Participation will be limited to 6 vehicles, so

please sign up to ensure participation. We will bird for approximately three hours. Dress for cool weather and if you have one, bring a spotting scope.

How to Sign Up: *For further details and to sign up, email Sarah Shippen, ses1440@outlook.com.*



Sunnyside Wildlife Area

Sunday, April 16, 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Fieldtrip to Sunnyside Wildlife Area. April 6. 8 am. We'll head to this state wildlife area south of Sunnyside to walk around the flooded "rice fields." In the ponds and marshes, we should see a nice selection of ducks such as the beautiful Cinnamon Teal. Various migrating shorebirds will be moving through, too and the very showy Black-necked Stilt may be here in good numbers. Other marsh birds such as Virginia Rail and Sora might be lurking in the

cattails. Swallows of various species should have arrived, flitting low over the water hawking insects. We'll walk 1.5-2 miles on a dike track encircling the ponds on the lookout for other birds like Yellow-headed Blackbird. Raptors should be about, too. Expect to be homeward bound by about noon or so. Dress for the weather and bring footwear you don't mind getting a little muddy. Contact Andy Stepniewski at steppie@nwinfo.net to sign-up and receive more details and meeting location.



Waiting for the Rail, photo Ellen Stepniewski

Field Trip Report

Field Trip Report: March 8 Second Saturday Bird Walk, Poppoff Trail, Yakima

Twelve members attended the Second Saturday Bird Walk on March 8 and were rewarded with one of the nicest days of 2023! It was clear, calm, and sunny at 9:00 AM and after a cool night, the birds were just starting to forage. The Poppoff Trail meanders along and around three ponds adjacent to the Yakima River. It passes through a variety of excellent bird habitats along the ponds, the Yakima River, and wooded areas. Our walk finished at Billy’s Pond. The pond was created as run-off from the water treatment plan and a place where birds congregate when most local ponds are still frozen.



Female Downy Woodpecker

A total of 29 species were sighted in the two-hour walk:
 45 Canada Goose, 7 Wood Duck, 8 Northern Shoveler, 4 Mallard, 2 Green-winged Teal, 5 Ring-necked Duck, 1

Bufflehead, 10 California Quail, 1 Pied-billed Grebe, 6 Mourning Dove, 4 Killdeer, 1 Great Blue Heron, 1 Bald Eagle, 5 Red-tailed Hawk, 2 Belted Kingfisher, 3, Downy Woodpecker, 3 Northern Flicker, 1 Black-capped Chickadee, 3 Bewick's Wren, 1 Hermit Thrush, 4 American Robin, 1 House Finch, 3 Dark-eyed Junco, 11 White-crowned Sparrow, 3 Golden-crowned Sparrow, 6 Song Sparrow, 6 Spotted Towhee, 1 Red-winged Blackbird, 34 Yellow-rumped Warbler



Meet Your YVAS Board and Committee Members

President	Sarah Shippen	Newsletter Chair	Vacant	Membership Chair	Joy McKinney
Vice President	Vacant	Conservation Chair	Stan Isley	Programs Chair	Andy Stepniewski
Secretary	Deborah Severtson-Coffin	Conservation Committee	Andy Stepniewski, Scott Downes	Toppenish Refuge Volunteer	Kerry Turley
Treasurer	Rich Mathieu	Arboretum Bird Blind	Kathy and Joe Howell	Toppenish CBC	Vacant
Director	Bill Drenguis	Education Chair	Ellen Stepniewski	Yakima CBC	Scott Downes
Director	Ken Tolonen	Education Committee	Kathy Howell	Website Administrator	
Director	Vacant	Field Trips Chair	Scott Downes	Website Committee	
Bluebird Trail	Karen Zook	Fundraising	Vacant	Yakima Migration Count	Scott Downes

Conservation News – Stan Isley

A Couple of Developing Issues in Washington State

Stan Isley, Conservation Chair

Bateman Island Causeway Removal

An effort is currently underway to remove the Bateman Island Causeway in the Yakima River delta, at the Yakima River's confluence with the Columbia River in the Tri-Cities. This causeway is an earthen berm built across the southern channel of the Yakima River from the river's right (southerly) bank to Bateman Island, that was constructed in 1939 or 1940 to allow Bateman Island to be farmed, but with no culvert or bridge allowing passage of water through the causeway.

The causeway has acted as a dam, impounding Yakima River water on the upstream side of Bateman Island, blocking salmon migration via this historic south channel into the Columbia River, causing sediment deposition and poor water quality, and causing summer water temperatures as high as 89° F. Water temperatures over 77° F are lethal for our cold-water salmonids. With the causeway in place, Yakima River out-migrating juvenile salmon have been forced to detour north of Bateman Island to enter the Columbia, and returning adult salmon have faced the thermal barrier caused by these high water temperatures that prevents the fish from migrating into the Yakima River system to return to their upstream spawning grounds. Additionally, the warm water embayment has created ideal conditions for mostly-non-native predatory fish to thrive, and those predators have grown fat eating Yakima River salmon fry.

This causeway has been, in my opinion, an environmental disaster, that more than 20 years of studies by various agencies have shown needs to be removed, in order to restore better river flow and water quality conditions for salmon survival, and as an important step in restoring a more natural Yakima River system.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and its non-federal sponsor (NFS), the Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), have completed a draft NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this Bateman Island Causeway removal project. As I understand it, the 30-day public comment period was scheduled to end on March 10th, but has been extended another 30 days, allowing comments on the EA to be submitted until April 10th, 2023. I encourage anyone interested in more information, or in submitting a comment, to visit this USACE website: [Yakima River Delta Ecosystem Restoration](#) .

And also see this article about this Bateman Island Causeway removal issue in *Columbia Insight*: <https://columbiainsight.org/at-confluence-of-yakima-and-columbia-a-barrier-to-salmon-may-finally-be-removed/> .

The preferred alternative described in the draft EA (Alternative 3a) calls for complete removal of the causeway without additional riparian habitat restoration.

Our fellow Auduboners in the Tri-Cities, the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society chapter (LCBAS), support removal of the causeway, but also seek to have a replacement bridge constructed to provide continued recreational access to Bateman Island. LCBAS hosts monthly bird walks across the causeway to Bateman Island through much of the year, and also censuses birds on Bateman Island as it conducts its Christmas Bird Count every year.

USACE and WDFW, et al., have so far rejected the idea of including the construction of a bridge to Bateman Island for many reasons, including the cost, and the likely negative effects to tribal cultural sites and resources. Bateman Island has a 16,000-year history of occupation and use by native peoples.

[Stan—this newsletter will go out after the Board meeting, so you will know how to modify it on Tuesday] I personally believe USACE and its NFS

(WDFW, et al.) should move forward as fast as possible with complete removal of the Bateman Island Causeway, as outlined in the draft EA and FONSI (Alternative 3a) as Phase 1 of this project. Despite the impact of losing birding and recreational access to Bateman Island, I personally do not support the idea of building a bridge to the island. I would like to see USACE and WDFW and other members of the Yakima River Basin Watershed Enhancement Workgroup (YRBWEW) commit to a Phase 2 project, that would restore Bateman Island by eliminating invasive species and restoring a more natural habitat, and would designate the island a refuge or preserve; and also commit to acquire or designate new land in the area to

replace and fully mitigate for lost recreational use opportunities caused by causeway removal. Despite the loss of birding access, I personally see this option as the best path forward for the health of the entire Yakima River system and the protection of tribal cultural sites and cultural resources. But that’s my opinion...

Our Yakima Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) Board of Directors will discuss this issue at our March 14th Board meeting and settle on our chapter’s position. Then I will draft and submit a comment letter to USACE and WDFW capturing our YVAS Board position on Bateman Island Causeway removal.

Westport Links Golf Course Proposal at Westport Light State Park

One of our new YVAS members asked me to investigate this new Westport Links Golf Course proposed for construction and operation on Westport Light State Park. I contacted our fellow Audubon members of the Grays Harbor Audubon Society (GHAS), and spoke with GHAS President Janet Strong. Janet tells me that the GHAS Board of Directors voted on March 5, 2023, to oppose this proposed Westport Links Golf Course, because if approved and constructed, it would dominate the state park and turn much of the park’s current open space lands into a golf course development with amenities (an 18-hole golf course and a 9-hole golf course, a driving range, a lodge/hotel, and new parking areas). For more information about this proposal, go to: <https://www.parks.wa.gov/1161/Westport-Light-State-Park-Planning>

GHAS has asked our YVAS chapter to join them in opposition to this project.

Our YVAS Board of Directors will discuss this Westport Links Golf Course issue at our March 14th Board meeting and decide on our chapter’s position. This issue may have statewide interest for all of our Audubon chapters, as it could elevate to policy questions about how our state parks should be managed, and also about ensuring our entire Washington State Parks system is provided adequate budgetary funding every year by our State Legislature. I will be in contact with GHAS and with Audubon Washington on this golf course issue and the larger statewide funding and parks management issue. Stay tuned for updates in the futur

Contacts:

- YVAS Information: info@yakimaaudubon.org
- Membership questions: membership@yakimaaudubon.org
- Newsletter content: newsletter@yakimaaudubon.org
- Conservation concerns: conservation@yakimaaudubon.org
- Field trips: fieldtrips@yakimaaudubon.org
- Program ideas: programs@yakimaaudubon.org
- Bluebird Trail: bluebirdtrail@yakimaaudubon.org
- Bird questions: birds@yakimaaudubon.org
- Donations: donations@yakimaaudubon.org

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[:https://yakimaaudubon.org](https://yakimaaudubon.org)

To Join:
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