

Volume 52 Issue
3

March 2022



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.

YVAS March Program

Bird's Eye View: Living with Volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest
Speaker Gina Roberti

Thursday, March 24th on Zoom.

Sign in to visit with others at 6:45 pm, program begins at 7:00 pm

On May 18, 1980, a cataclysmic event occurred at Mount St. Helens as the north flank of the volcano slid off in one of the largest landslides in recorded history, unleashing a powerful eruption. This eruption buried 230 square miles of existing old-growth forest with hundreds of feet of volcanic debris. In some places closest to the crater of the volcano, almost no living organisms survived. Ash from the eruption blew across the United States and megatons of logs and volcanic debris clogged up rivers, lakes, and streams. The eruption dramatically reshaped the landscape, creating a mosaic of habitat types that are now home to a diverse suite of birds.

Using satellite images and aerial photography, we will make observations of the major stratovolcanoes of the Cascades range and learn what to observe in the rock record that gives evidence of past eruptive processes. We will learn why the volcanoes in the Cascades produce certain types of landforms and distinct disturbance zones. Finally, we will discuss how birds make a home in landscapes shaped by volcanic disturbance.

Join us as we tour the diverse mosaic of habitats created by the 1980 eruption and learn about where to see some of Mount St. Helens' signature birds. This interactive presentation will excite and prepare you for birdwatching in the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. Bring your questions and curiosity!



Speaker Bio: Gina Roberti is a geologist, naturalist and educator who grew up digging quahogs and exploring the shorelines of the Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island amidst ancient metamorphic rocks of the Appalachian Mountains. Since graduating from Brown University with a degree in Geology-Biology, Gina spent several years working as a geoscience educator in various geologic regions in the western U.S., including the Colorado Plateau, Snake River Plain, Klamath-Siskiyou, North Cascades, and presently the active Cascade volcanic range. In each of these places she taught thousands of youths and adults about earth science in a variety of field-based and classroom settings.

Gina currently works with the Mount St. Helens Institute. She strongly believes in the power of education to inspire awareness, appreciation, and stewardship for the natural world. When Gina is not working, she can be found on long walks or cross-country skis, often in the company of birds.

Photos *Left:* Gina Roberti. *Right:* Mount St Helens from 2020 photo contest, D.T. Strouse.

How to View YVAS Zoom Programs

Zoom event name: Yakima Audubon March Program

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

iPhone one-tap : US: +12532158782 **Telephone:** +1 253 215 8782 **Webinar ID:** 844 2557 6656

Events Calendar

Thursday, March 24th, 7:00 pm (Zoom)	YVAS March Program <i>Bird's Eye View: Living with volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest</i> with speaker Gina Roberti.
Tuesday, March 29th, 6:30 to 8:00 pm (Zoom)	eBird Class with Jason Fidorra and Scott Downes. 90-minute class on eBird fundamentals. See article and/or contact Scott at downess@charter.net for information. Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87365770838?pwd=MzRDSk50WHZIRXZuVCt2dEdiNjF1dz09
Friday & Saturday, April 8th & 9th	Bluebird Box Cleanout. Contact Karen Zook, (gadzooks7@charter.net) or Richard Repp, (bbirder247@gmail.com) for more information.
Saturday, April 9th, 9:00 am	Second Saturday Bird Walk. Snow Mountain Ranch, CCC. Meet at parking lot. See article in this issue for more information.
Friday, April 15th	April Calliope Crier deadline (send articles, questions to newsletter@yakimaaudubon.org)
Saturday, April 16th	Yakima Training Center Greater Sage Grouse Lek Trip. (This is just a reminder. Trip is full.)
Saturday, April 16th	Arborfest "After the Fire." Hosted by Yakima Valley Arboretum.
Thursday, April 28th, 7:00 pm (Zoom)	YVAS April Program: <i>Alcids Off the Washington Coast</i> with speaker Peter Hodum. (Alcids are northern hemisphere seabirds similar to penguins, such as puffins.)

Membership – Joy McKinney

Welcome New Member!

Patricia Beeman, Centerville WA

Thank You for Renewing Your Membership

Bob and Darlene Fay, Jennie Hodge, Karen Hyatt, Jeff and Cindy Kozma, Cindy Lacey, Cheryl Meanach, Renee and Jason Navarette, Peggy Schwartzenberger.

Field Trips – Sarah Shippen

Second Saturday Bird Walk

Saturday, April 9, 9:00 –11:00 am

Snow Mountain Ranch, Cowiche Canyon Conservancy. Meet at 9:00 am at the parking lot.

We can expect to see early wildflowers, Lewis' Woodpeckers, Northern Harrier, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Downy Woodpecker, California Scrub-Jay, American Goldfinch, sparrows, and other songbirds. We will be walking the riparian area trails for approximately two hours.

Leaders: Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky, ses1440@outlook.com.

Directions: From 40th and Summitview, head west on Summitview Ave. In 8.8 miles, turn left on Cowiche Mill Rd. Go 2.6 miles. The parking lot and TRAILHEAD are on the left, about 150 meters past the Cowiche Creek Nursery.

Trailhead GPS: 46.6597651,-120.7593044,17



Photo: Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Photo by Sarah Shippen

Field Trip Report: Toppenish NWR

Saturday, February 26, 2022

February 26 was a beautiful, sunny day, but challenging for waterfowl, following several days of subfreezing weather. Most of the usually flooded areas were dry or frozen, with the only free water being Toppenish Creek itself. Ten of us met at the Refuge Lookout at 8:00 am, and we were rewarded with an immediate sighting of a Northern Shrike in a shrub near the parking lot. From the Lookout, we observed a large group of Tundra swans and American Coots. We walked to the Headquarters along the Creek trail, spotting a Northern Harrier, Song Sparrow, California Quail, and Northern Flicker. From the Headquarters we headed off in the cars along Pumphouse Road to Old Goldendale Road where we saw a Bewick's Wren, more Canada Geese, and American Coots. Another couple miles along Pumphouse Road, we found a mature and an immature Bald Eagle in a tree with a vacant nest. We will keep an eye on the nest and see if the mature Eagle decides to use it. This was also a good overlook of Toppenish Creek, where we saw Green-winged Teal, Canada Geese, a Cackling Goose, and American Wigeons in the moving water. The nest along Pumphouse Road, which has been used by Great Horned Owls for years, is occupied again this year. (No chicks visible yet.)



Photo: Northern Shrike. Photo by Sarah Shippen

We finished at Lateral C and stopped just north of the bridge. The surrounding fields are usually flooded at this time and would have lots of waterfowl, but this year they were dry and empty of waterfowl. We did spot a Prairie Falcon flying overhead, and there is another Great Horned Owl nesting here.

Since our YVAS field trip, the Refuge has been transformed. There is now extensive open water and there are huge numbers of migrating waterfowl, including Northern Pintail, Tundra Swans, Green-winged Teal, and American Wigeons. It is an excellent time for a visit!



Photos *Top:* Great Horned Owl. *Bottom:* Tundra Swans. Photos by Sarah Shippen

Species Observed

Cackling Goose	1
Canada Goose	162
Tundra Swan	52
American Wigeon	2
Mallard	24
Northern Pintail	60
Green-winged Teal	53
California Quail	1
American Coot	7
Killdeer	2
Northern Harrier	4
Bald Eagle	2
Red-tailed Hawk	2
Great Horned Owl	2
Downy Woodpecker	1
Northern Flicker	3
Prairie Falcon	1
Northern Shrike	1
Black-billed Magpie	7
Common Raven	7
Bewick's Wren	1
House Finch	2
Dark-eyed Junco	18
White-crowned Sparrow	1
Song Sparrow	2
Red-winged Blackbird	22

Bluebird News – Karen Zook

Bluebird Box Cleanout, April 8th and 9th

"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



Photos Top: Western Bluebird checks out a box, April 2021. **Bottom:** Male Mountain Bluebird along the trail, April 2021. Photos by Karen Zook.

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 Vredenburg Trail. This year (weather permitting) we will clean out the boxes on April 8th and 9th– maybe both days.

This is a fun activity that anyone can help with. If you have not participated before, we will be happy to show you how to clean a Bluebird box. If you have monitored or cleaned boxes before and would like a little refresher, this is a great way to do that as well. We can briefly discuss the monitoring process while we clean the boxes.

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 Umptanam 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!

Free eBird Class Reminder

Tuesday, March 29th, 6:30 to 8:00 pm

eBird: What is it and how can it improve my birding experience?

eBird, which is developed through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, has revolutionized how people contribute their bird sightings to citizen science. Whether you are a casual birder who enjoys keeping track of birds in your yard or at your favorite park or a birder who travels to many exciting places, you can contribute to eBird. As a benefit, it keeps a personal list for you, so you can keep track of your birding memories. You can also use it to read about sightings in an area you're considering for birding.

The website, ebird.org, is free, but to submit sightings you do need to sign up for a user name and password. eBird can be used on your smartphone or computer and there are no age restrictions. You just need to have an email account and know how to submit sightings in a manner consistent with eBird, which this class will teach you. Recent developments have allowed users to add pictures, recordings, and other media to their checklists. Thus, the range of what you can do with sightings in eBird is close to limitless. You can even create bar charts and other data for your personal lists or local data.

To learn more about this great resource, join Jason Fidorra and Scott Downes on Zoom, Tuesday, March 29 from 6:30–8:00 pm. You'll learn the basics of eBird, how to enter and search for sightings, and also some of the more complex elements referenced above. There will be plenty of time for questions. Whether you are brand new to eBird or have used eBird before but would like to use more features, please join us. Jason and Scott have over 20 years combined experience using eBird, and we are interested in exploring that world with others.

No registration is required for the class: simply join the Zoom meeting at the link below. To make the most of the class, we recommend that you visit ebird.org beforehand to browse and to download the mobile app to your smartphone, if applicable.

We hope to see you there.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87365770838?pwd=MzRD Sk50WHZIRXZuVCt2dEdiNjF1dz09>

Frosty Flies Free! – Karen Zook

Snowy Owl Rescued by YVAS Member Returns to the Wild After 10 Years

In 2012, then YVAS member John Hebert spotted an injured Snowy Owl near Union Gap. The owl had been hit by a car and had a dislocated shoulder. John notified Blue Mountain Wildlife Rescue (BMW), which took in the bird, dubbed “Frosty,” for rehabilitation. Usually, by state and federal wildlife regulations, a rescued wild bird must be released or euthanized within 180 days. But Frosty healed enough initially not to be released to the wild, but to become an ambassador for birds through BMW’s education program.



Photo Frosty the Snowy Owl in November 2012. Photo by Karen Zook.

Frosty’s story has a very happy ending (more than his namesake snowman). This winter, the folks at BMW realized that his flying ability had improved enough for him to survive on his own, and he was released at a site where wild owls winter in Central Washington. You can read the whole story on the BMW blog [Lynn’s Journal](#). Congratulations to Frosty, to John Hebert who spotted him, and to the good folks at BMW for ten years of care.

Conservation – Stan Isley

ALERT: The Impact of Neonicotinoids on Insects and Birds

I was recently reading the winter 2022 issue of *Trout*, Trout Unlimited's quarterly magazine, and came across an article by Shauna Stephenson entitled "[Is Your Food Killing Your Fishing?](#)" (click on this hyperlink to go to the article). The article examines the links between the widespread use of neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) and the worldwide decline of insects, including the aquatic insects that trout rely on for food. Neonics are associated with alarming declines of insect pollinators and birds, and even cold-water fisheries.

Neonics were introduced in the 1990's as alternatives to older organophosphate and carbamate pesticides (with their dangerous side effects) and quickly became the most widely used group of pesticides in the world. Neonics are either applied directly to crops or are used as a seed coating that absorbs into the plant tissues, targeting pest species that may infest the crop. Neonics are not limited only to use on crops, but are also found in over-the-counter garden sprays, in plants we buy for landscaping, and even in flea collars.

But neonics are terribly lethal to many insects, including valuable pollinators, not just to crop pests. And, as systemic pesticides, they are transported to all the plant tissues, including the leaves, flowers, roots, and stems, as well as the pollen and nectar. Neonics are indiscriminately killing many non-target insects and are negatively impacting (either by direct toxicity or by reducing the amount of insect food they rely on) the fish, amphibians, birds, and other wildlife that depend on the tangled web of a functioning ecosystem.

Neonics persist and remain toxic for several months, or even up to several years, in the environment. The European Union began banning the use of neonics as early as 2013. The Xerces Society, a science-based conservation group focused on invertebrates, has documented a worldwide decline in insect populations, and has led the way in sounding the alarm about the negative impacts of neonics, particularly as it relates to pollinators. Insects are the functional base of the food chain in most of the world's ecosystems. Loss of insects causes reverberations throughout the entire ecosystem, a

trophic cascade of negative effects that we do not want to cause.

Examples of neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) include: acetamiprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin, imidacloprid, thiacloprid, and thiamethoxam. Some of the neonics brand names being sold include Wrangler, Malice, Venom, Scorpion, and Assail. In the United States, several million pounds of these neonics are still being used annually.

Neonics and Birds

To further investigate the impacts on birds of our use of neonics here in the United States, I went to the website of the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and its very informative "[Neonics and Birds](#)" webpage. ABC reports that a single seed coated with neonics is enough to kill a songbird. Lesser amounts of neonics can emaciate the birds, impair reproduction, and disrupt their migration. Neonics are reducing the insect food available to sustain aerial insectivores like Common Nighthawks, Purple Martins, swallows, and swifts—birds whose numbers are declining. And as we know, most birds rely on insects as high-energy food to feed their young during the nesting season. Neonics are poisoning the birds, bees, butterflies, and other organisms that pollinate our food crops and other flowering plants.

Encouragingly, ABC reports that some entities, agencies, and businesses, are taking steps to limit or phase out the use of neonics, neonicotinoid pesticides, here in the United States. ABC encourages us all to avoid using neonics and provides a link to an [easy-to-use list of products to avoid that contain neonics](#), assembled by the Center for Food Safety.

For the sake of our birds and pollinators (and ourselves), let's avoid using neonics in our lives.

For more information about the Yakima Valley Audubon Society, or to join, visit our website, yakimaaudubon.org.

To contact us, email info@yakimaaudubon.org.