



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. YVAS is a Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

May – June 2024

Volume 53, Issue 5

Yakima Valley Audubon Society presents:



*Sagebrush Sparrow,
photo: Ben Sonnenberg*

Hands-on learning, games and an ice cream social!

Thursday, May 23, 7:00 – 8:30 PM, Yakima Area Arboretum, 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima. *This program will only be available in-person. It will not be recorded.*

Our program this month will focus on how we all can actively participate in conservation. Scott Downes and Jeff Kozma will speak about these opportunities and be available to answer your questions. This evening is for the whole family, with ice cream, and a bird trivia contest. We hope to see you there!

Birds and Wildlife Data

Scott Downes will present on both past and present opportunities for birders and wildlife watchers to contribute data to WDFW databases and how contributing that data helps wildlife managers. These opportunities are both formal surveys and informal observations. Formal examples include projects such as the completed Sagebrush Songbird Survey and informal includes ways to report special status wildlife including species like bats, burrowing owls and pikas.

In addition to his talk, Scott will be bringing a suite of taxidermy birds, their skulls, tracks and nests for participants to look at.

Project FeederWatch

Jeff Kozma will give a presentation on Cornell University's Project FeederWatch; a citizen science project that has been running for close to 30 years. FeederWatch is a November-April survey of birds that visit backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. You don't even need a feeder! All you need is an area with plantings, habitat, water, or food that attracts birds. What sets FeederWatch apart from other monitoring programs is the detailed picture that FeederWatch data provide about weekly changes in bird distribution and abundance across the United States and Canada. Jeff will take attendees through an online tutorial showing



American Goldfinch, photo: Jeff Kozma

them how easy it is to establish a count site and enter count information. The goal is to get at least 5 more people to participate in FeederWatch, up from the current 5 in a 31 mi radius!

Bird Trivia, Ice Cream Social and Hands-on Learning

Test your avian knowledge with bird trivia while enjoying delicious ice cream treats. Get up close and personal with Scott’s fascinating collection featuring taxidermied owls, grouse, waterfowl, bird skulls, songbird nests, and even rubber molds of bird tracks.

Scott Downes

Scott works as a habitat biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. He has spent more than 20 years studying the birds and habitats in our area, focusing on the forested and shrub steppe habitats. Scott has also been active in Yakima Audubon for nearly two decades and knows the important contributions that Audubon members make by reporting their observations. Their knowledge and commitment aids scientists in species management.



Finch, photo: Jeff Kozma

Jeff Kozma

Jeff received his B.S. Degree in Environmental Forest Biology from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse and his M.S. Degree in Wildlife Science at Texas Tech University where he studied the use of Chihuahuan Desert arroyos and adjacent uplands by migrant and breeding birds in southern New Mexico. After graduating, he worked as a Wildlife Biologist at the Yakima Training Center monitoring Sage-grouse, raptors, and non-game birds, and was involved with restoration of seeps, springs, and riparian areas. He is currently the TFW Wildlife Biologist for the Yakama Nation where he has been studying the ecology of White-headed Woodpeckers and other cavity-nesting birds in managed forests since 2003, as well as reviewing timber sales on the ceded lands of the Yakama Nation to help protect habitat important to state and federally listed wildlife.



Jeff Kozma with White-headed Woodpecker

NOTE: The event will be in-person only and not available on Zoom.

Upcoming Events

May 10-31, 2024	2024 Birdathon! It’s not too late to help. Click here to donate.
Thursday, May 23, 7:00 – 8:30 PM, 2024	May Program: Citizen Science Night and Ice Cream Social. Please note: this program will be in-person only and will not be recorded.
Saturday, June 1, 2024, all day	White Pass Highway. Woodpeckers & songbirds. Leaders: Andy & Ellen Stepniewski, steppie@nwinfo.net
Saturday, June 8, 9-11 AM	Second Saturday Bird Walk-Tieton Nature Trail. Leaders: Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky, ses1440@outlook.com

Last Month's Recorded Program



A recording of April's program, *Eric Heisey's "Tropical Wildlife and Conservation – Peru and Kenya"* is available on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/>

Upcoming Field Trips - Kerry Turley and Bill Drenguis

White Pass Field Trip: Woodpeckers and Songbirds

Saturday, June 1st, 7:00 AM to late afternoon

Leaders: Andy and Ellen Stepniewski



*Williamson's Sapsucker pair at Bethel Ridge,
photo: George Vlahakis*

Meet 7:00 AM in Yakima, return by late afternoon. Short walks on easy roads and trails. This long day trip will be along the White Pass Highway towards the end of the spring migration and features sites that typically host colorful spring migrants and a variety of other bird species.

We will make stops in some of the many ecosystems found as one progresses up in elevation westwards from Yakima: the dry and warm Oregon White Oak (Lewis's Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Nashville Warbler), the dry Ponderosa Pine Zone on Bethel Ridge Road (woodpeckers, flycatchers), Tieton Marsh (ducks, shorebirds, swallows) and Clear Lake in the wetter and colder Mixed-conifer Zone (Barrows's Goldeneye, wet forest birds, American Dipper). If time and energy permit, we will finish at White Pass in the snowy Subalpine Zone, where the snow will be gone (Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Wilson's Warbler).

Bring a lunch, fluids for the day and don't forget sun and insect protection and dress for the weather.

Contact Andy and Ellen at steppie@nwinfo.net for meeting place details.

Tieton Nature Trail, Second Saturday Bird Walk

Saturday, June 8, 2024, 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Leaders: Sarah Shippen and Gene Miliczky

The Tieton Nature Trail is a part of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area off Highway 12. We will follow the path across a suspension bridge over the Tieton River and head up a wide canyon. Riparian vegetation, brushy hillsides, and cliffs along the way attract many birds, including Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles, Lewis's Woodpeckers, and Bullock's Orioles. Contact Sarah at ses1440@outlook.com for information.



Bullock's Oriole, photo: Sarah Shippen

Directions: From Yakima, proceed west on US 12, turning left to stay on Highway 12. Continue southwest 2.0 miles to right before the Oak Creek Wildlife Recreation Area. You may park to the left along the highway in the trail parking lot or continue and turn right into the large Recreation Area lot. If you park in the Recreation Area parking lot you must have and display your Discover Pass. A Discover Pass is not required in the highway parking area.

Bluebird Box Cleanout 2024



The Clean Out Crew, from left to right: Judy Gano, Jan Gano, Betsy Martin, Jenifer Parsons, Joe Zook, Dale Critchlow, Terry Critchlow. Not pictured: Theresa Mottet, Richard Repp, Sue Wright, Karen Zook. Photo: Karen Zook

This year, we did the clean out a little differently. Most of the boxes were cleaned on Friday, April 5, but we saved a few boxes on the Vredenburg Trail and the boxes on the Durr Road Trail for Saturday.

We gathered on a chilly Friday morning at the usual spot, got our box assignments and went from there.

Several boxes had been knocked down (presumably by animals) but were intact and were re-installed. There were a few boxes in need of replacement as well, but overall things looked pretty good. We found three nest starts on the Lower trail (boxes 1-63) and 29 nests started on the Upper Trail (boxes 64-125). Unfortunately, two of the boxes had dead birds in them, but there were no nests in those boxes. There were nests in 10 out of 21 boxes along Durr road, and two had eggs in them!

There were a few other interesting birds seen: Sage Thrashers and a couple of Vesper sparrows were singing, Turkey vultures soared overhead and a few days before the clean out, Joe and I saw a pair of Chukar along the side of the road.

There were also some nice early wildflowers, too. Sage Buttercups, Yellow Bells, Grass Widows, Sage Violets, Prairie Starflower, Lomatium and Shooting Stars were seen. The Shooting Stars were a new flower for me. I'm including a photo of them. Although it was windy at times, there was no rain and no mud this year. We had a great clean out and we are now ready for the nesting season. A big Thank You to our volunteers! You make the Bluebird world go 'round.



Shooting Star flowers, photo: Karen Zook

Karen Zook, Vredenburg Caretaker AKA Chair

Field Trip Reports

Field Trip Report: Second Saturday Bird Walk, Selah Cliffs Nature Area Preserve Saturday, April 13, 2024

It was a chilly, clear morning with six members of YVAS heading off in pursuit of nesting Prairie Falcons. Selah Cliffs can be a challenging area to bird. We heard a few calls but it was about 30 minutes before we caught sight of this Say’s Phoebe grooming on a post. Clearly it was feeling the chill morning, too! Thanks to a tip from Andy Stepniewski and the leadership of Joy McKinney, we were able to locate a Prairie Falcon nest, but alas, the adults were away and the nest is so high on the cliff and tucked deep into the rock opening that we couldn’t see the chicks. We did see an adult circling overhead. As it warmed in the sun, we caught sight of a Yellow-bellied Marmot. Birds observed on the return trip included Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Canyon Wren. This morning, overall, was just one of those quiet days where you just enjoy being out.

~Sarah Shippen

Species	Count	Species	Count
California Quail	2	Violet-green Swallow	1
Chukar	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
White-throated Swift	1	Rock Wren	1
Red-tailed Hawk	1	Canyon Wren	1
Northern Flicker	1	Bewick’s Wren	1
American Kestrel	1	European Starling	1
Prairie Falcon	1	American Robin	1
Say’s Phoebe	1	American Goldfinch	3
Black-billed Magpie	1	White-crowned Sparrow	26
Common Raven	1	Western Meadowlark	1
Black-capped Chickadee	1		



Say's Phoebe, photo: S. Shippen



Prairie Falcon, photo: Ross Bornfleth



Yellow-bellied Marmot, photo: S. Shippen

~ ~ ~

Field Trip Report: Sunnyside Wildlife Area Saturday, April 20, 2024

A beautiful day was had by all who joined the Yakima Valley Audubon Society trip to the Sunnyside Wildlife Area, where a great group of 8 enthusiastic birders hiked around the "rice / millet ponds," a series of ponds formed by dikes south of Giffin Lake and observed 37 bird species. April is at the beginning of the migration of northbound shorebirds, so it was thrilling to come across several of these peeps working the shallows. We tallied 7 species of this group, beginning with nice views of the very striking American Avocet, 12 in one pond, as well as even larger numbers of Black-necked Stilt. Other shorebirds



Photo: Alan Bauer

included Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs (seeing both gave a good visual of their size difference) and a flock of sleeping Dunlin. There was also a great egret slowly working the edges of the marsh.



American Bittern, photo: Ross Bornfleth

Waterfowl were fairly abundant with Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Mallards, Redhead, Bufflehead and Double-crested Cormorant all noted. In the cattail and tule marshes, Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroat were singing everywhere and Virginia Rails were calling from the marshes, too. Best bird of the trip was an American Bittern doing its best to hide from us by posing as part of the reeds. Yellow-headed Blackbirds were singing their most unpleasant squeaky screen door song. Raptors included Osprey, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel.

For those who couldn't make it I encourage you to join our trip next year or visit this exceptional area on your own when you are in the neighborhood. Check out this link <https://youtu.be/ladrKnIZdul>

~ Kerry Turley

~ ~ ~

Field Trip Report: Second Saturday Bird Walk, Umtanum Creek Canyon Trail,

Saturday May 4, 2024 A wet morning, but wonderful wildflowers: balsam root, lomatium, lupine, all dewy fresh with raindrops. The color of the surrounding hills was intensified by the rain. We happened to encounter Deb Essman, our March speaker and she tipped us off to a Cooper's Hawk nest, but alas it was empty while we watched. Despite the rain, we encountered a number of Spring migrants: Orange-crowned Warbler, Western Wood-Pewee, Yellow-rumped Warbler and a Lazuli Bunting. Our bird of the day was spotted by Sandra Hulteen, a Warbling Vireo, a first for her. Our apologies, photography was particularly challenging in the rain, but we all got good looks with our bins.

~Sarah Shippen

Species	Count	Species	Count
Turkey Vulture	2	House Wren	3
Downy Woodpecker	1	American Robin	1
Northern Flicker	1	American Goldfinch	3
Western Wood-Pewee	2	White-crowned Sparrow	4
Warbling Vireo	1	Song Sparrow	1
Common Raven	1	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Black-capped Chickadee	8	Nashville Warbler	4
Violet-green Swallow	4	Yellow-rumped Warbler	5
Cliff Swallow	6	Lazuli Bunting	1



Lupine and Umtanum Creek Trail, photos: S. Shippen



Turkey Vulture, photo: Sarah Shippen



Yellow-rumped Warbler at Sportsmen Park, photo: Sarah Shippen

Membership - Joy McKinney

Welcome new members!

Colleen Anderson, Yakima

Ted Kalkreuth, Yakima

Atul Tandon, Seattle

Thanks for renewing your membership!

John Thayer, Deborah Severtson-Coffin, Robert and Carrie Chicken, Donna Homer, Clara Eustis, Kathy Tierney, Elizabeth Chicken, John and Sheri Rivard, Anita Osterhaug and Job Rabinowitz, Alex Conley, Bill Drenguis, Becky Drew, Joy McKinney, Sue Ranger, Kathy Hennessey, Susan Gallegos, Rich and Deb Mathieu, Kathleen Harman

Meet Your Board

Please consider joining the Board, we would like to meet you!

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

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/join>