



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.

Volume 35, Number 4

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

April 2006

AUDUBON CALENDAR

- Apr 27 Chapter Meeting** at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm.
May 9 Board Meeting at Denny Granstrand's — 2011 S. 47th Ave (453-2500) at 7:00 pm.

FIELD TRIPS

- Apr 23 Zimmerman Ponds and Toppenish NWR** — meet leader Kerry Turley (837-6930) in the parking lot west of IHOP at the Valley Mall at 8 am.
Apr 27 Thursday Morning Bird Walk — Meet at the first parking lot past the main gate at Sportsman State Park at 8 am.
Apr 29 Saturday Morning Bird Walk — Meet leader Denny Granstrand at the Poppoff Trail/Jewett Pathway parking lot at 8 am.
May 6 South Fork Ahtanum Creek flower and bird walk -- meet leader Phelps Freeborn at the north end of the Rosaur's parking lot (72nd and Tieton Dr.) at 9 am.
May 11 Thursday Morning Bird Walk — Meet the group at the parking lot for the Jewett Pathway/Poppoff Trail at 8 am.
May 13 Migratory Bird Day — At the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge from 9 am to 1 pm; contact Kerry Turley (kdturley@bentonrea.com) if you can help. See article on page 8.
May 13-14 Dixie Hummingbirds Overnight Trip — see article on page 10.
May 20 Birdathon — See article on page 2 for details.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Apr 28-30 Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival** — This is one of the great birding festivals in the Northwest. The shorebirds are a spectacle! Visit their website at: <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>
May 26-29 Wenas Campout — Join Washington Audubon for a fun-filled weekend of birding in the Wenas. See article in May Crier. Visit their website at: <http://www.nwlink.com/~cyrus/wenas.html>

APRIL PROGRAM

The Wildflowers of Mount Adams with Susan McDougall and David Biek

The Wildflowers of Mount Adams, Washington is now available from Sound Books. This is the first field guide ever prepared for the most common plants of the region and will be a welcome addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in Washington natural history. *Wildflowers* describes 88 of the most common and attractive plants, in a manner that is accessible and informative.

The author, Susan McDougall, is a lifelong resident of western Washington, an experienced hiker, a master birder, and is devoted to the study of the natural world.

We will do the program in two parts. The first is by Susan, talking about their research and progress on the Mount Adams project. David Biek will present the second part, showing his slides and talking about the plants and habitats of the mountain.

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

Two ways to support the YVAS Birdathon on May 20

First, we need birders. We will be surveying the birds and other wildlife at two of the premier locations in Yakima County: the Green Ranch in the Wenas and the Snow Mountain Ranch in the Cowiche area.

One team of birders will be at each location, scouring the varied habitats of each area. There will be a good-natured competition between the groups to see which area will generate the longest species list.

The Green Ranch covers about 400 acres in the Wenas, and has about a mile of Wenas Creek running through it. The habitats include lots of riparian area along the creek, ponderosa pine forest, shrub-steppe and open fields. Last year in June, our chapter held a morning fieldtrip and picnic on the 400-acre *Green Ranch* in the Wenas. This trip netted 60 species of birds, all without driving!

The group explored the mile-long riparian habitat by Wenas Creek and found it to have the most variety, including Red-naped Sapsuckers, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Warbling Vireos, lots of Veeries, Gray Catbird, Nashville, Yellow and MacGillivray's Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Bullock's Orioles.

The shrub-steppe habitat uphill from the riparian zone proved excellent for close views of both Vesper and Brewer's Sparrows, and Western Meadowlarks.

A walk in the ponderosa pine forest proved good for White-headed Woodpecker, Cassin's Vireos, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, Townsend's Solitaires, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Western Tanagers.

Overhead, were Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, a speeding Prairie Falcon, Common Nighthawk, and a few Red Crossbills.

This impressive diversity is the primary reason primary reason why the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Yakima Valley Audubon Society are focusing on preserving the Green Ranch as natural habitat, a wish of Gary Green, too.

Snow Mountain Ranch (1700 acres) is the latest acquisition of the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy. The property has a mile of Cowiche Creek and much of Cowiche Mountain. Habitats on the ranch include a lush riparian zone along the South Fork of Cowiche Creek and an expanse of shrub-steppe on the north side of Cowiche Mountain uphill from the creek. The riparian habitat by the creek is loaded with birds, including Lewis's Woodpeckers, Western Wood Pewee, and Yellow Warblers. The shrub-steppe has Sage Thrashers, Loggerhead Shrikes, and Brewer's Sparrows plus raptors soaring overhead. Not only are there birds but a beautiful and complex mosaic of plant communities now receiving formal recognition and protection.

The Snow Mountain Ranch project was funded by the state Salmon Recovery Funding Board and mitigation funds from the Bonneville Power Administration. A deed restriction will insure the habitat will be maintained in a natural state for perpetuity.

Each birding group will have its hands full identifying and tabulating all of the birds seen and heard.

Second, and certainly the most important, is we need generous people to contribute financially to our Birdathon. The Birdathon is Yakima Valley Audubon's main fund raising activity. A short article and contribution form are on page 10 of this Crier.

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Yakima: Vicky Whiteman, Margaret Mashburn, Ellen Smith,

Union Gap: Louise Sisk

Thank You for renewing your YVAS Membership!

Yakima: Rosemary James, Michael Murphy, Richard De Zarn, Ray and Susan Paoella, Mike Finney, George and Gloria Hilsinger, Susie Lattomus, Michael Roper, Arlene Wood, Alice A. Nevue, Walt Nelson, Jennifer Parsons, George and Susan Vlahakis, Robert Zaremba

Grandview: Myra Dorsey

Cowiche: Roy and Maxine Hallstrom

Selah: Sandy Staples, Gus and Mary Pooler, Bob and Maia Mittelstaedt

Naches: Harold Frantz

Please note that the above membership renewals are for Yakima Valley Audubon membership. Renewals to National Audubon are separate and are not listed here.

— Debie Brown —

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! No Experience Necessary

The Audubon Nature Preserve needs some dedicated "Weed Whackers" to start visiting the site bi-monthly to whack the emerging Scotch Thistle. We got a good start on the control of this noxious weed the last two last years, but need to keep up our efforts for 4-5 years to ensure good control. The weed experts tell us these seeds can lay dormant in the ground for up to 20 years. It's good exercise and keeps us from considering a chemical solution to the problem. A short lesson in identification and the proper technique for cutting the emerging plants will be given. Our first outing will be Sunday, April 23rd at 10AM, meeting at the K-Mart parking lot. Bring work gloves and a small, sharp shovel. Please call me if you plan on participating - Leslie Wahl - 452-9183.

CONSERVATION

Initiative 933 has nothing to do with Property Fairness

Initiative 933, the “so-called” Property Fairness Initiative

Habitat conservation strategies usually take one of three forms:

- ★ Buy it (like Nature Conservancy did in the Tieton, awaiting state and federal grants);
- ★ Negotiate voluntary conservation easements binding on future users to maintain uses that nurture existing habitat as opposed to future subdivision.

Reasonable regulatory restrictions, at the federal, state and local level, sometimes make sense, especially regarding areas containing natural resources. At the national level, these protections are under attack, such as the push to de-list the bald eagle as an endangered species.

Most of us recall when it was legal for corporations to put arsenic in rivers and streams, when we had dead streams, rivers and lakes, and that due to the Clean Water Act, that doesn't happen now. Restrictions imposed by government have produced fish runs and enabled our kids to swim in rivers without fearing chemical burns. Not all government restrictions are bad, and some definitely improve the situation. This is especially true when dealing with natural resources. If you own land with a natural resource, you have a **responsibility** of ownership; you do not have a free ride.

Initiative I-933 would effectively erase every state and local restriction in place to protect habitat, birds or animals. **I-933 should not make it to the ballot.** Why is I-933 a bad idea?

1. I-933 would totally strip critical areas ordinances (protections for wildlife and fish habitat adopted under the Growth Management Act). I-933 provides that no action taken under any critical areas ordinance can restrict an existing use. Counties and towns cannot update restrictions even if best science shows existing restrictions don't work. If a county currently provides for a 10-foot set back from streams for pesticide spraying, and science finds that this buffer didn't protect fish, and a 30-foot buffer would, I-933 would prevent an expansion to a 30-foot buffer, because that would restrict an existing use. I-933 would cancel out all habitat protections contained in critical areas ordinances.

2. Under I-933, any land regulation that restricts profit must be paid for or waived. The result would be as in Oregon, where land regulations are waived because local municipalities don't have the funds to pay for perceived loss. The trigger is any action that prohibits the “intensity” of existing or permitted. Land use changes that increase density and development and profit are allowed. Land use changes that restrict use will end up being waived. And, this provision would be retroactive, erasing protections and regulations back over the last 10 years. We'd have chaos and free-for-all development.

3. Private actions to control flooding could not be restricted. Currently, if a property owner has a stream passing through his land, before he can install levies or diversion dams,

he has to obtain a permit. That process ensures that remedial action will not just create flooding downstream or destroy fish spawning grounds and other habitat. I-933 allows anybody with a backhoe to be their own unregulated Army Corps of Engineers. The result would be destruction of fish and wildlife.

4. I-933 would be triggered by any restriction prohibiting the maintenance or removal of trees or vegetation. Think clear-cutting down to the water's edge, muddying and fouling streams. That would be permitted. If eagles are de-listed as endangered, and an eagle is nesting on a tree on your property, you would be able to cut down the tree on your own say. Rather than making money from trees cut down, timber owners would demand and receive payment for any trees left standing.

I-933 does even more. It is far reaching, and would destroy virtually every protection of nature and habitat in Washington State. I-933 is not on the ballot yet – they are gathering signatures. **The action to take now is to not sign a petition and to tell your friends not to sign.** Some think that every idea, every point of view, should be given a chance on a ballot. That's not true. Stupid ideas are not entitled to a vote – they shouldn't even be considered. If I-933 makes it to the ballot, its supporters will misrepresent what it means. They've already started with the title: Property *Fairness* Initiative. Most will not read the entire initiative. The conservation action to take now is to squash this thing in the bud.

Northern Spotted Owl Agreement Reached.

As reported in the *Olympian* and other press, conservation groups, including the Washington Environmental Council and the National Audubon Society, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources settled a lawsuit that claimed the agency wasn't doing enough on state forest lands to protect the endangered northern spotted owl. Under the settlement, no timber harvest will occur on some 45,000 acres of prime owl habitat in Western Washington.

The settlement follows a court finding last October that DNR had failed to do an adequate environmental review of the impact the agency's 10-year timber harvest plan would have on the spotted owl. DNR will now do a revised plan, but the identified areas will be protected. The land being set aside is less than one-half of one percent of Western Washington state forest lands.

Spotted owls need broad swaths of suitable habitat to exist. Destruction and division of habitat into isolated pockets results in displacement by other species, such as the barred owl. However, the northern spotted owl will not recover from the state agreement alone – more habitat protection is needed on federal and private timberlands, too.

— Michael Martin —
Conservation Chair

LOCAL FIELD TRIPS

Please call the leader before the trip to let him/her know you are interested in going. That way, if plans need to be changed, he/she can call you. Also, if no one calls, the leader will know to cancel the field trip and won't be sitting around at the meeting place all alone! Be sure to wear clothing appropriate for the weather and take lunch, snacks and beverages. Also please make a contribution to the driver for gas when you carpool. Contributions should be 20 cents per mile divided by number of people in car, including the driver.



- Apr 23 Zimmerman Ponds and Toppenish NWR** — Each spring, snowmelt in the Cascades east of Mt. Adams rushes down Toppenish Creek filling numerous ponds and flooding valley bottoms, creating a bonanza for water and marsh birds. The marshes, fields, and riparian patches near Toppenish are at their peak in late April. Look for Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Cinnamon Teal, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Meet leader Kerry Turley (837-6930) at the west side of the IHOP, Valley Mall Blvd. at **8 am**.
- Apr 27 Thursday Morning Bird Walk** — **Sportsman State Park**. The Wednesday morning bird walks have switched to **THURSDAY**. Help welcome John Hebert back to the morning bird walks as we search for returning vireos and warblers. Parking fees are no longer required at this popular park. Meet the group at the first parking lot past the main gate at **8 am**.
- Apr 29 Saturday Morning Bird Walk** — Join leader Denny Granstrand for a walk along the Jewett Pathway/Poppoff Trail to see what Spring Migration has brought to the valley. **8 am** at the parking area at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd.
- May 6 South Fork Ahtanum Creek** flower and bird walk. Spring color and song are highlights of a trip into the shrub-steppe and oak and pine habitats west of Yakima. Flowers include Bitterroot, two types of fleabanes, penstemons, and Mariposa Lily. Amble over open slopes on DNR land. Birds on tap include Lewis's Woodpeckers, Western Bluebirds, American Kestrels and House Wrens. Meet leader: Phelps Freeborn (454-0871) **9 am** at Rosauers (72nd and Tieton) at the north end of parking lot. Half-day trip.
- May 11 Thursday Morning Bird Walk** — A palette pleaser: Gray Catbirds to Yellow Warblers are possible. Meet the group at the Valley Mall Blvd. entrance to the **Jewett Pathway/Poppoff Trail** of the Yakima Greenway at **8 am**.
- May 13 Migratory Bird Day** — See article on page 8.
- May 13-14 Dixie Hummingbird Weekend** — We will visit one or two houses in Dixie that have incredible numbers of hummingbirds, especially just at dusk. We will leave Yakima at about **2 pm** on Sat. Hummingbirds in Dixie Saturday evening, overnight in Walla Walla. Search for the Green-tailed Towhee on Biscuit Ridge on Sunday. Head back home before noon on Sunday. See article on page 10.
- May 20 Birdathon** — See article on pages 2 and 10.

Coming soon to a birding location near you:

May 26-29 Wenas Campout — Join Aububoners from around the state for the annual Wenas Campout. Information can be found on the Wenas Campout webpage: <http://www.nwlink.com/~cyrus/wenas.html>



BIRD SIGHTINGS

This month's Crier arrives close to Earth Day, April 22. How does one celebrate that? Audubon's mission statement mentions, "focusing on birds."

This past month one of our members seems to be focusing better than most of us, especially on migrants returning to the Valley. A chipper Chipping Sparrow caught Jeff

Kozma's eye just after sunrise in his Terrace Heights yard on April 14. A March 27 coffee stop on his commute to work netted a few of the Valley's first spring Violet-green Swallows. On his lunch hour, Jeff has toured the area on and near the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge. On the menu have been singing Savannah Sparrows, a pair of Cinnamon Teal, and a Lesser Yellowlegs...Greater are much too filling. Commuting home, hitchhikers have included Osprey (March 21) and Turkey Vulture (March 30). Arriving home on March 22, Long-billed

Curlews entertained Jeff in the shrub-steppe beyond his backyard.

Lest we become too envious, we should consider the drudgery of Jeff's typical workday. April 11, a run-of-the-mill day in the field, landed Jeff in the middle of the Hazel Wolf Memorial Campground in the Wenas. Through his binoculars he tapped a Northern Flicker, a Hairy Woodpecker, a White-headed Woodpecker and a (sigh) Black-backed Woodpecker... all four visible in the same view. Sadly, he had to change his position to pick up his first Red-naped Sapsucker of the year. Application anyone?

The numerous cloudy and cool days we have been enduring have not seemed to put a damper on the nesting efforts of raptors. After a hiatus of several years, American Kestrels have returned to a Terrace Heights nest box provided by Mike Roper. A food exchange at the box has convinced Mike that a nesting effort is underway and the Kestrel's eviction of European Starlings will stand for this year. As of April 5, Bill and

(Bird Sightings continued on page 5)

Bird Sightings (continued from page 4)

Sue Ericksen's nest cam indicates six eggs in the Kestrel box at their Sawyer home.

On March 27, Tyler Munson recounted that Barn Owls were on their eggs in a Grandview area barn. Overhead, Tyler overheard migrating Sandhill Cranes on two occasions. And a pair of Osprey over at Myron Lake had reclaimed that traditional nest by April 11 according to Rod Champoux.

Andy Stepniewski was showcasing the Yakima River Canyon to Bill and Frances Wood (who gave a presentation at our March Chapter meeting) when Bill discovered a Golden Eagle on a nest a bit upstream from prior years' location. For an encore, the group was treated to a Prairie Falcon dive-bombing a soaring Golden Eagle.

Of course, all these nests and eggs lead to offspring or owlets as in the case of the Great Horned Owls along the 12th fairway of the Mount Adams Golf Club. Duffer Steve Rayner was among the first to spy the owlet on March 23. Clearly Steve scored a birdie on the hole; do the rules of golf allow him to mark his scorecard accordingly?

Shrub-steppe habitats have been replete with wildflowers and birds of late. Sage reconnoiterer Kerry Turley spied two Sage Sparrows along Pump-house Road on Mar 19; the same day near the intersection of Lateral A and Marion Drain, Kerry trumpeted over 100 Tundra Swans. Scott Downes led a group of Auduboners to Kittitas' Quilomene Wildlife Area where the group thrashed Sage Thrashers, Sage Sparrows, Brewer's Sparrows and Vesper Sparrows from abundant sage and bunchgrass. Closer to home, Andy and Ellen Stepniewski routed the same four species while pilgaging several locations along Highway 24 east of Moxee. The duo also doted on dual flocks of 30 birds each comprised of American White Pelicans and Sandhill Cranes manipulating thermals as the flocks cruised north. By coincidence, Denny Granstrand was in the vicinity and while photographing six Long-billed Curlews at milepost 28, he inadvertently flushed a female Curlew off a nest containing two eggs.

Near the east end of Mieras Road, a Swainson's Hawk sashayed into the valley (and Scott Ray's eyes) from its winter-

ing grounds in Argentina. Scott also found two Yellow-headed Blackbirds two miles south of Highway 24 on Birchfield Road, an uncommon find in the upper valley.



These Sandhill Cranes were seen west of Othello.

Photo by Denny Granstrand

In Moxee City proper, a pair of Yakima County first Eurasian Collared Doves has attracted many local birders. (Editor's note: Richard is being far too humble. After receiving a call from the people who first saw the collared-doves, Richard persisted in driving around Moxee until he finally found one on March 30.) Practicing perseverance, Kerry Turley enjoyed five hours of April showers before he collared one of the doves. In Union Gap, White-throated Swifts were not swift enough to elude the unblinking eye of John Hebert. While driving east on I-82, Alice Nevue detected 50 American White Pelicans loafing on an East Selah pond island near milepost 28. From the unusual vantage point of a White Pass chairlift, Paul Huffman spotted an owl, the diminutive Northern Pygmy Owl.

Our yard and garden birds include a Townsend's Solitaire being hazed by an American Robin at the Cowiche Canyon Road home of Betty Peterson. Near 72nd and Washington Avenues, Bruce and Sherrel Hailstone waxed euphorically over two-dozen Cedar Waxwings in a neighbor's tree. Feathers drifting down from above alerted Denny Granstrand to a Merlin plucking prey atop a pole near his garden on South 47th Avenue. The photos he obtained from his upstairs office revealed the Merlin to be of the Prairie subspecies, rarely documented in Washington State.



American White Pelicans

Photo by Mac Knight

Addressing our opening question regarding celebrating Earth Day, perhaps we should reflect on a statement made by Earth Day's founder, Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-WI), on the Day's tenth anniversary in 1980. The Senator stated, "So long as the human species inhabits the Earth, proper management of its resources will be the most fundamental issue we face. Our very survival will depend upon whether or not we are able to preserve, protect and defend our environment." Enjoying birds is free. Saving them will require work. Feel free to emulate people like Jeff Kozma, who do both.

Please e-mail your sightings at Rich712@aol.com or call me at 965-1134.

— Richard Repp —

The Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail Clean-out was really a “wash-out”

Celebrating 25 years of Bluebirds in 2006

How could I have been so foolish as to schedule the annual nest box cleanout of the Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail on the first of April...April Fools Day? Our “wet” winter and spring turned a bit wetter on the eve of cleanout. I awoke to driving rain and knew the noon potluck at the Umtanum Falls Trailhead following the cleanout was doomed.

After an hour, the dark gray skies to the west showed no sign of relief from the falling rain. Reluctantly, I phoned the volunteers who had signed up for the event. The consensus was that the day’s activities would have to be abandoned. Gus and Mary Pooler traditionally tend to the boxes at the trail’s north end and vowed to attend to them if and when the weather broke.

Larry Robinson, our master nest box builder, was adamant that he and Doris would be able, at the minimum, to install the 19 new boxes slated as replacements for our most worn ones. I agreed to rendezvous with them at the scheduled meeting location.

Two vehicles greeted me at the intersection of Audubon and North Wenas Roads. L. R. “Putt” Putman and Cathy LeCompte were in one and Bill Drenguis occupied the other.



This male Western Bluebird is thankful that he and the missus found a newly-cleaned box in which to raise their family.

Larry and Doris soon arrived and asserted that they intended to proceed with the replacement boxes. The others, immune to Mother Nature’s April Fool’s showers, proved to be Mudders of Good Intentions and rallied to slog forward to clean the nest boxes.

Bill and I teamed together to tackle the upper portion of the trail. In truth, I drove and Bill dove. Larry and Doris, making remarkable progress for the conditions, passed by us. Cathy and Putt finished the lower portion of the trail and paused to wish us well as they headed for Ellensburg for some well deserved hot coffee. Then, just like the cavalry in those old cowboy movies, the Poolers

arrived to seal the victory.

The group adjourned to the trailhead parking lot for an abbreviated potluck...the only standing luncheon I have ever attended. Joining us were Elizabeth and Greg Bohn who had washed out on their optimistic quest to see a Snowy Owl on adjacent ridges.

To be sure, the entire group is looking forward to seeing both blue birds and blue skies!

Springing into action with Audubon

The Spring Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) meeting was held March 24 - 26 at Port Townsend. Yakima Valley Audubon was represented by Bob and Leslie Wahl. This is always a great opportunity to meet with members of other chapters from the entire state and share our common goals and projects. Any Audubon member is welcome to come to these conferences and the YVAS Board will reimburse part of your expenses.

On Friday was the meeting of the Audubon State Conservation meeting (WASCC). Our Conservation Chair, Michael Martin, was unable to attend, but had developed a list of priorities of projects being worked on by YVAS. These were presented to the Conservation Committee and of particular interest to others in the State was the status of the Wenas Valley and the Audubon campground area. The other meeting on Friday was the first Chapter Education Summit. This was an all day workshop that presented many excellent educational programs being done by other Audubon Chapters. There was a very informative presentation by Bob Boekelheide and Powell Jones

from the Dungeness Audubon Center. If you are every near Sequim, you should stop by and see the Dungeness Center.

On Saturday, there were field trips to Protection Island, the Marine Science Center, and also Digi-scoping and wildlife photography. The business part of the meeting had some very informative presentations on I-933, which Audubon Washington strongly opposes. They are referring to it as the “Developer’s Loophole Initiative”. To find out more about the Legislative priorities of Audubon Washington, you can find the “Birds Eye View” newsletter at www.wa.audubon.org

Another important part of this Conference is the chapter reports. Two monitoring projects by YVAS, on the Yakama Reservation lands and at Fort Simcoe State Park, were mentioned and there was a lot of interest in these by other Auduboners from across the State. Finally, the fun part of Conference was a program by wildlife artist Bart Rulon. To see some of his work, look at www.bartrulon.com.

— Bob Wahl —

VREDENBURGH BLUEBIRD TRAIL BECKONS YOU

Celebrating 25 years of Bluebirds in 2006

At the April Chapter meeting, the sign up sheet for monitoring the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail will be available. You may volunteer to monitor bluebird activity on one-half of or all of the 132-nest box trail. If you have not participated in the past, indulge yourself in this opportunity this year.

Bear in mind that while experienced monitors are able to do the entire trail in five hours or less, many people find that opting to monitor half the trail affords one time to fully enjoy both the nesting birds and the surrounding habitat. This is especially true during the prime nesting period from mid-May through mid-July. Plan to enjoy a picnic lunch and perhaps a short hike at Umtanum Falls. Other options include visiting the Wenas Campground on Audubon Road, a return trip through the Yakima River Canyon or a stop at the Ellensburg City Park along the Yakima River.

Jeanne Crawford wrote an excellent article on her adventure monitoring the trail with her granddaughter for the August 2005 Crier. If you don't have your hard copy, it can be found on the chapter website.

— Richard Repp —

Migratory Bird Day Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge

Set on the second Saturday in May each year, International Migratory Bird Day is an opportunity to learn about the protection of wild birds and their habitats.

When spring arrives, birds of all feathers make their way back to eastern Washington from their winter in Latin America. Chats, warblers, sparrows, plovers, woodpeckers, orioles, swallows and more will again fill the air with song and bring bustle and energy to area woods, backyards and feeders.

In celebration of this remarkable journey the Yakima Valley Audubon Society will offer special activities designed to raise public awareness of migratory birds and their habitats on Saturday, May 13, 2006 starting at 9:00 AM at the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge which was designated by the National Audubon Society as an "Important Bird Area" in June 2001. An open house is planned and guided field trips will take place on the refuge throughout the day and families are welcome.

Other special activities include Bird banding/Mist netting demonstrations, and free Migratory Bird Day posters (while supplies last).

— Kerry Turley —

Eurasian Collared-Doves finally make it to Yakima County



Eurasian Collared-Dove
Photo by Denny Granstrand

Jim and Dee Finley in Moxee knew they had something unusual when they saw two doves with black "collars" on the ground under their bird feeder in the first week of March. They took the correct action — they called the YVAS phone line to report the sighting.

In the next month, several YVAS members made numerous trips through Moxee searching for the doves, which the Finleys correctly identified as Eurasian Collared-Doves.

Richard Repp finally found one on March 30. Two phone calls and 25 minutes later, Debie Brown and I joined Richard standing on Holly Street in Moxee looking at another new species for the Yakima County list.

Eurasian Collared-Doves were introduced into the Bahamas in the 1970s and made their way to Florida in the 1980s. Since then, they have expanded their range and have been seen in every continental state.

This dove is quite similar to the Ringed Turtle-Dove, a commonly-kept cage bird. Care must be taken in identifying them.

— Denny Granstrand —

Audubon gurus guide Pokies hike

Northern Harriers courting in loops in the sky—two Killdeer eggs (are they really THAT big?) among the rocks along a trail—and the Great Horned Owl peering down from his customary perch in the big Norway spruce--these were among the highlights of the annual “hike” to the Toppenish Wildlife Refuge by The Cascadians’ Thursday group, The Pokies.

Twenty-two hikers--most of them amateur, if anything, birders--followed Audubon guide Kerry Turley on April 6 with the bonus of another excellent birder, Sister Kathleen Ross. She had accepted my invitation knowing she loved to bird--“because it’s spring break and I wanted to do something totally different on one of the days.”

Hikers brought their binoculars and Kerry carried his scope, and he and Sister Kathleen helped the non-experts distinguish between Ravens and Crows, Savannah and Lincoln’s Sparrows, Mallards and Northern Shovelers.

Bird species outnumbered hikers by just a few. Kerry had 28, having started his list before we Pokies arrived. Sister Kathleen tabulated 26 and her list is given below. (I assume Kerry pocketed his for his Herald-Republic notes.

Hikes through the Toppenish Wildlife Refuge began for The

Pokies in 2001, planned by Cascadians Jerry and Dan Baris of Toppenish, who made the arrangements necessary back then to wander through the area. They led the group again in 2002.

In 2003, someone from Audubon (I think—not really sure) guided us and in 2004, it was Richard Repp. Kerry was our piper last year, also.

Here is the list of what we saw: Northern Harrier, Killdeer, Red-winged Blackbird, Mourning Dove, Savannah Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk, Mallard, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Tree Swallow, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Canada Goose, Great-horned Owl, Black-billed Magpie, Yellow-rumped (Audubon’s) Warbler, American Coot, Ring-necked Pheasant, Raven, American Robin, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, House Finch, Western Meadowlark, Marsh Wren, Downy Woodpecker (heard drilling his mating call) and California Quail.

Thanks to Kerry for guiding us and to Sister Kathleen for being there, both of them giving us a great birding morning. Thanks, too, to Kevin Lamm of the Refuge staff for opening the headquarters for us.

— Jeanne Crawford —



Killdeer “nest” with two eggs found on the Pokies hike.
Photo by Jeanette Werkhoven.

Rare subspecies of Merlin found in Yakima

As we learned at the October 1995 chapter meeting with David Drummond of the Merlin Falcon Foundation, there are three subspecies of Merlin found in North America.

The Black Merlin is found in the coastal forests of the Northwest, the Taiga Merlin nests in the boreal forests of Canada and the Prairie Merlin spends in the breeding season in the prairies of the central states and provinces..

Most of the Merlins we see during the winter in the Yakima Valley are Taiga Merlins. Black Merlins are the common one found in Western Washington.

Prairie Merlin is a very rare visitor to Washington. Andy Stepniewski saw one in the Black Rock Valley eating a Horned Lark in December 1990.

On March 19, 2006, I saw a Merlin eating a bird on top of the power pole in my backyard. I stuck my scope out an upstairs bedroom window and got photos of it, which I put on my website. Steve Mlodinow, who is on the Washington Bird Records Committee, saw them and e-mailed me saying he thought it was a Prairie Merlin. Steve e-mailed, Brian Wheeler, one of the top raptor authorities in the country, who looked at the photos and agreed with him. Here are Brian’s comments: “Certainly does appear to be a female/juv. male richardsonii (Prairie) by the pale head, lack of malar, presence of thin dark eyeline, and scapular spotting. I have them mapped in much of e. Wash. in my big book.”

— Denny Granstrand —



Prairie subspecies of Merlin
(Falco columbarius richardsonii)

Photo by Denny Granstrand

Making Wind Energy Compatible with Birds and Wildlife: Avoiding the Salmon/Dams Controversy

In recent years the development of industrial-scale wind energy facilities has accelerated rapidly in the Northwest and throughout the country. Since 1980, advances in technology have resulted in a ten-fold decrease in the cost of producing wind energy. Consequently, wind generated energy is now economically viable, even in the Northwest where it must compete with subsidized hydropower. Currently, wind power contributes enough energy to heat 1.6 million American homes. At current rates of growth, that number could reach 2.3 million by 2006 and 6.3 million by 2010. In California, the recent adoption of a Renewable Energy Portfolio, requiring an increasing percentage of power from alternative energy, is driving state and federal agencies to adopt guidelines to site wind facilities. In Washington, there are currently six major wind generation facilities under development. Other coastal and plain states are targeted for more wind facilities to meet a growing demand for alternative energy.

With the rise in development of wind power, there is increasing concern among conservationists about cumulative impacts on birds and wildlife. While Audubon and other conservationists strongly support wind power as a cleaner and more sustainable alternative to fossil fuels, research has shown that wind turbines can reduce the quality of habitat for ground-nesting birds, can impact migrating birds and fragment habitat for other wildlife. Monitoring of wind power facilities reveals that birds and bats are vulnerable to collisions with turbine blades and towers.

At the moment, siting wind facilities is not coordinated at a state, regional or federal scale to avoid cumulative impacts to bird populations. At the local scale, pre-construction assessments of risks to birds are based on as few as three months of monitoring. Audubon supports two-year studies of local bird populations to adequately assess migrating populations, which vary throughout the year. State and federal agencies have published voluntary siting guidelines, but do not provide adequate tools to allow the industry to make sound siting decisions.

The wind industry is currently seeking the expertise of ornithologists and conservation groups like Audubon to assist them in developing siting policies that limit negative impacts to birds and other wildlife. Developing sound policies early on will allow industry investors to avoid costly negotiations and mitigation in the future and enable the industry to be sustainable into the future. We have all witnessed the lengthy and expensive restoration work for salmon due to dam construction in the Pacific Northwest. Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past. We should plan ahead for wind power and make it a truly sustainable, bird and wildlife friendly source of energy.



Photo credit: Warren Gretz, Natl. Renewable Energy Lab

Audubon Washington's goal is to assist the wind power industry to make sound siting decisions, avoid construction delays or expensive mitigation measures while at the same time conserving bird populations and the habitats they depend upon. In 2005, Audubon Washington began working with Washington State and several federal agencies to improve the planning framework for siting wind power facilities, with the intent of reducing both the local and cumulative risks to bird populations in Washington State. We attended national, state and local meetings to negotiate guidelines or site-specific projects (National Wind Coordinating Council; Wildlife Working Group sub-committee; Washington State Fish and Wildlife; county projects). Audubon worked with the Geographic Information System (GIS) Laboratory at the University of Washington to create GIS maps to analyze sites where high potential for wind development and high risk to birds may occur.

Now our goals are to:

- Conserve resident and migratory bird populations and their habitats.
- Improve the scientific methods used to assess the risks of and develop mitigation for wind energy facilities.
- Improve state and federal siting guidelines to avoid or decrease impact on birds and wildlife.
- Encourage construction of wind energy facilities in areas where there is a low risk of impacts on birds.

If residents in Washington want to help make our wind farms safe for bird and wildlife, then they should support Audubon Washington's work as we advocate better siting guidelines at state and federal levels.

— Tim Cullinan and Nina Carter —
Audubon Washington

Birdathon is set for May 20

With Spring Birding in Yakima comes the Yakima Audubon's annual Birdathon. As one of our major Fundraisers, this fun event raises funds for the chapter's overall operating budget, and helps support the chapter's programs and conservation projects. Past supporters will be receiving a special letter in the mail before the event. You can pledge either a lump sum or a per species amount.

Again this year we will have bird teams out counting birds for the May 20th Birdathon. Our species total this year will be quite a bit lower than in years past because our birders will

only be going to the Green Ranch in the Wenas or Snow Mountain Ranch in the Cowiche area. If you like to pledge per species seen, our species count will be about half of what it was last year. At the end of the day we will count up the species and report on the Birdathon activities to the sponsors.

We invite you to contribute to the Birdathon and help the Yakima Valley Audubon. Please use the pledge form below or any reasonable facsimile.

— Dan Kinney —

YVAS Birdathon Pledge

Yes I want to help support the Yakima Valley Audubon Society by making a Birdathon Pledge.

I Pledge \$ _____ lump sum, or

I Pledge _____ cents per species

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

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

Send form to YVAS P. O. Box 2823 Yakima WA 98907-2823

Overnight trip to Dixie promises lots of hummingbird fun!

Dixie, which is just north of Walla Walla, seems to be the hummingbird capital of Washington. Tom Lamb, who lives on Biscuit Ridge Road, has close to 30 feeders around his yard. The last time a YVAS field trip went there, we saw nearly 60 hummingbirds on a drizzly afternoon..

We have been told, though, that the time to visit is just before dusk, when hordes of hummingbirds are fighting for position at the feeders. I have heard estimates of up to 300 hummingbirds have been in his yard some evenings. Kerry Turley has been there, encircled a feeder with his fingers and had hummingbirds land on his hands to feed.

Our trip on May 13-14 will have some options. Some people might want to leave in the morning and hit birding stops in route. Others might leave in the early afternoon and get to Dixie by 5:00 or so.

You will be responsible for your own overnight accommodations. I will do some research to find possibilities. Sunday morning will find us driving onto Biscuit Ridge searching for Green-tailed Towhee and other species. Great Gray Owl is possible. We should return to Yakima by 3:00 or so. Please contact me if you are interested in going on this trip.

— Denny Granstrand —



Black-chinned Hummingbird

Photo by Mac Knight, taken in Tom Lamb's yard

Use the following form for membership in the Yakima Valley Audubon Society. A separate membership is required for the National Audubon Society. Please use the form sent to you for renewal of your National Audubon Society membership. Current membership will be honored until their expiration date. At the time of the renewal of your National Audubon Society membership you will need to send in a membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society in order to continue to receive the *Calliope Crier* and other local membership benefits.

YVAS MEMBERSHIP

Join or renew your annual membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society to receive ten issues of the *Calliope Crier* and all chapter membership benefits. National Audubon membership and *Audubon Magazine* are not included with your YVAS membership.

Yakima Valley Audubon Membership \$25

Yakima Valley Audubon Senior (62+)/Student Membership\$15

I do not wish to receive any solicitation or communications from NAS (please check if applicable)

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make your check payable to: **Yakima Valley Audubon Society**

First time members can use the following form for an introductory membership that includes membership in **both** the Yakima Valley Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society. You will be assigned to your local chapter when you join National Audubon. Please use this form so that Yakima Valley Audubon will receive the full first year dues. After the first year, a separate membership renewal will be required for the Yakima Valley Audubon Society or for you to continue to receive the *Calliope Crier*. After the first year, you will need to use the renewal form sent to you by the National Audubon Society to renew your membership with the National Audubon Society.

INTRODUCTORY NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

New members receive membership in the National Audubon Society and the Yakima Valley Audubon Society for the first year with a combined introductory membership. You will receive ten issues of the *Calliope Crier* and four issues of *Audubon magazine*.

Introductory Membership\$20

Introductory Senior (62+)/Student Rate\$15

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make your check payable to: **National Audubon Society**

Y09-7XCH

Send the form and your check to :

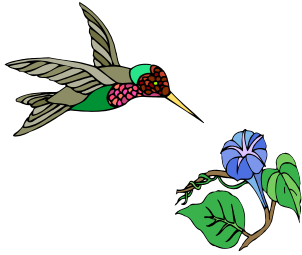
YVAS Membership
P.O. Box 2823
Yakima, WA 98907-2823

If you have any questions, please call 248-1963.

Yakima Valley Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2823
Yakima, WA 98907

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The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum, located at 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA. Guests are welcome at these meetings. The Annual Meeting of the Society is held the first Thursday of December at 6 pm. The Board of Directors meets each month **except** December at 7 pm at locations announced in the *Calliope Crier*. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.

2005 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

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