



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 34, Number 10

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Nov/Dec 2005

AUDUBON CALENDAR

- Dec 1 Christmas Banquet and Silent Auction** at the Yakima Area Arboretum at **6:00 pm**. See article on this page.
- Jan 10 Board Meeting** at Bob Wahl's, 2403 W. Yakima Ave. (452-9083) at **7:00 pm**.

Field Trips

- Dec 3 First Saturday Bird Walk** — Meet leader Denny Granstrand at the parking lot at the Valley Mall entrance to the Yakima Greenway Pathway at **9:00 am** for a two-hour saunter along the bird-rich Greenway.
- Dec 14 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk** — meet the group at the parking lot at the Valley Mall entrance to the Yakima Greenway Pathway at **9:00 am**.
- Dec 17 Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count** — contact Denny Granstrand (453-2500) or e-mail (dgranstrand@charter.net)
- Dec 18 Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count** — contact Andy Stepniewski (877-6639) or e-mail (steppie@nwinfo.net) (See article on page 5 for more information on both Christmas Bird Counts.)
- Jan 11 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk** — meet the group at the parking lot at the Valley Mall entrance to the Yakima Greenway Pathway at **9:00 am**.

DECEMBER PROGRAM

Bhutan: A Himalayan Paradise with Andy and Ellen Stepniewski

Bhutan is a small Buddhist kingdom in the Himalaya Mountains, sandwiched between India and Tibet. Andy and Ellen Stepniewski spent several weeks in Bhutan in April 2005 on a Sunbird Tour, a birding company based in England. They will share their natural and cultural experiences of Bhutan with us following the Christmas Banquet.

Bhutan is truly paradise. Untouched forests, with thousands of plant and animal species, extend as far as the eye can see, containing a hugely varied birdlife. It boasts a tremendous array of natural environments, from the subtropical plains bordering India upwards to the icy summits of the Himalayas, the highest mountains on earth. In this rugged country, only the size of Switzerland, the people of this kingdom have been able to protect their rich natural heritage, indeed, the most biodiverse area remaining in the Himalayas.

For some years now, scientists and naturalists have been aware that the further east one travels in the Himalayas, the richer the forests become in birds and other wildlife. Their journey introduced them to some of that diversity. They sampled, in stages, many of the various vegetation zones, each with their unique assortment of birds, from the super-rich subtropical forests, then up to the temperate deciduous and evergreen woodlands, and finally a cold pass at elevation of 13,000 feet. Some of the 300 species of birds they encountered included many strikingly beautiful species, like the butterfly-like Wallcreeper and the globally endangered Rufous-necked Hornbill. Many, many others, however, were "skulkers," which required lots of patience and luck to see in the dense vegetation. In this category were numerous babblers, a mostly Asian family which contains the appropriately-named laughingthrushes and pygmy wren-babblers.

The Bhutanese people form one of the most fascinating and least disturbed cultures in the world. Theirs is a rich culture which respects all forms of life, resulting in an avifauna that is not only marvelously diverse, but remarkably visible and approachable.

What's inside the Crier this month...

President's Report and New and Renewing Members	2
YVAS Members attend Fall ACOW	2
Conservation Issues	3
Field Trips	4
Bird Sightings	4
It's Christmas Count Time!	5
Maia says "yes" to another auction!	6
Christmas Banquet	6
Lewis's Woodpeckers declining at Fort Simcoe	7
Membership Survey	8-10
Rocky Prairie Bluebird Trail Numbers	8

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

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Happy Holidays to you all! December is the month the Yakima Valley Audubon Society celebrates the holiday season and the close of another great year. The first event is on December 1 when you are invited to the chapter's annual dinner and silent auction. Plan to arrive at 6 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum for the pre-dinner silent auction. Contact Maia Mittelstaedt (965-9220) to

arrange and list your donation items. This is a potluck dinner. Bring your own place setting and please bring a dish sufficient for eight fellow members. Fresh ham will be served by the chapter.

Following this sumptuous dinner, Ellen and I are excited to share our April 2005 trip to Bhutan, a tiny Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas. We really hope this will be a presentation you will enjoy as we take you on a tour through various habitats, from subtropical elevations to almost treeline, in this small kingdom. Why Bhutan as a destination venue for naturalists? This country, more than any other on the Indian subcontinent, has protected its rich natural heritage. This is fortunate because the eastern Himalayas are one of Earth's "hotspots" of biodiversity. We will share with you the superb variety of large and colorful birds and mammals amidst the extraordinary backdrop of the high Himalayas that reside in this kingdom. Though we are oriented to a region's flora and fauna, we will not neglect sharing with you this country's remarkable Buddhist culture, which Bhutan's peoples are striving hard to maintain.

The Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count is the perfect way to spend December 17. Join one of 12 teams that will cover a selected part of the long-established 15-mile count circle. Everyone who enjoys birds is welcome, regardless of skill level. If you are a beginner, other members of your team will be willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm. After the count, the teams meet at Debie Brown's home on Konnowac Pass to warm up, tally the birds seen, recount the day's events, and enjoy a potluck dinner (with pizza rumored to be the main dish). Denny Granstrand is the leader for this event. To sign up, call or e-mail him: 453-2500, dgranstrand@charter.net.

December 18, the Toppenish NWR Christmas Count will be held. Seven to eight teams cover another 15-mile diameter circle in the Lower Valley. Again, you don't have to be an expert, just interested in the beautiful world of birds. The same warm up refuge, blow-by-blow tally, and potluck dinner will be at our home in Parker Heights. I will be organizer for this count. Please contact me if you are interested in participating: 877-6639 or steppie@nwinform.net.

I hope to see each and every one of you at one or all these December events!

— Andy Stepniewski —

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Yakima: Steve Miller, Dave Myllenbeck, Kathryn Reese

Thank You for renewing your YVAS Membership:

Naches: Vera Backstrom, Norris & Alice Faringer

Seattle: Raleigh Watts

Selah: Helen & Norb John

Sunnyside: Gunter Hadersberger

Yakima: Grace Anderson, LaVonne Benner, Stan & Lori Isley, Dale and Charlotte Johnson, Sara Cate & Catherine Maier, John & Elaine Pigion, Mary Rasmussen, Rebecca Buell Silsbee, Ken Tolonen, Richard Woods, Charles DeJournette, Bill & Jan Drenguis, Mac & Merri Knight, Roberta Walker

Zillah: Bill & Sue Ericksen

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

— Bob Wahl —

YVAS members attend Fall ACOW in Federal Way

YVAS was represented by Dan Kinney, Leslie Wahl and Bob Wahl at the Fall Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) conference in Federal Way on October 7-9. This was an excellent conference with informative workshops on many topics of practical value to the Chapter.

The ACOW is an important opportunity to meet with members of Audubon chapters from all over the state and talk with the staff of Audubon Washington. Charlie Kahle, our representative on the National Audubon Board, presented the new Funding Program. Grants will be available to chapters for conservation work and advocacy, especially to further the Important Bird Areas program.

The Conservation Committee discussed many ongoing concerns such as Wenas Creek, the Cross Base Highway at Ft. Lewis and the protection of the Western Snowy Plover. Policy issues discussed included the Endangered Species Act, Forest Service Management Plans, the "Takings Initiative", Toxic Lead Shot campaign, and Wind Power. But after these serious discussions was a more optimistic report on the Great Washington State Birding Trail. The third Birding Trail map for southwest Washington just came out and the next planned is for the Olympic Peninsula.

The Education Committee held a workshop on "Building and Expanding Education Programs with Volunteers". A presentation was then made about a very successful bird identification program for fourth graders by Vashon-Maury Island Audubon.

The ACOW conferences are not all meetings. There were many field trips, including a very interesting tour of the Morse Wildlife Preserve in Graham, east of Tacoma. This is a fifty acre marsh and forested area being restored by Tahoma Audubon. We also got to watch the bird banding that has been ongoing there for ten years. This area is accessible by permission from Tahoma Audubon.

CONSERVATION

Fires on the Yakima Training Center

This summer another 1,000 acres of prime Sage Grouse habitat was burned on the Yakima Training Center as a result of wildfires started by live ammunition use. This is the third year in a row that significant habitat destruction has occurred in habitat important for grouse from fires along the Cold Creek valley. Unfortunately, the fire demonstrates YTC's failure to manage its training activities so as to prevent catastrophic fires. Every year, live ammunition exercises result in wildfires that expand far beyond designated live fire exercise areas. The numbers can be staggering – over 25,000 acres in 2003, over 60,000 acres in 1996. These escaped fires are destroying sage grouse habitat and could result in the total destruction of the local sage grouse population.

Sage Grouse are designated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a State Threatened Species, i.e., a native species “that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future” . . . “without cooperative management or removal of threats.” There are two relatively isolated sage grouse populations remaining in Washington – one in Douglas and Grant counties primarily on private land, and the other on the YTC. (In addition, there is a planned reintroduction of Sage Grouse onto Yakama Nation lands.)

The area in the YTC along Cold Creek Road is prime sage grouse habitat. Lands along the road are generally north-facing with a moderate density of big sagebrush, a well-developed ground cover of perennial grasses and nearby springs which have herbaceous plants that seem important in late summer to grouse. The Cold Creek Road area also contains designated

Range Impact Areas where live ammunition exercises are regularly practiced.

In late spring 2005, YVAS wrote to and met with YTC commander LTC Rick Nohmer to propose sensible measures that would significantly reduce the risk of serious fires, including limiting live-fire exercises to tracts already burned, conducting live-fire exercises in dedicated tracts completely ringed by fire break roads, avoiding exercises during windy, hot days (when most fires have occurred), and increasing firefighting crew readiness and equipment. The huge fires on the YTC have virtually all started as small ammunition-caused fires that were thought to have been controlled, only to escape in windy, dry conditions. While professing a dedication to preserving the area's ecosystem, DOD steadfastly refuses to formally agree to any restrictions on military training activities that would limit catastrophic fires. The background here is that in early 2005 USFWS decided not to list Sage Grouse as an endangered species. The prediction at that time was that DOD would most likely not be as proactive in conservation efforts and habitat protection if not mandated to do so. That prediction has become true.

Over 20 years of promised protection of Greater Sage Grouse on the YTC has only resulted in a continued decline of both habitat and numbers of birds. It seems reasonable to propose a more activist strategy is in order. We will be exploring various measures in the coming months to put more meaningful protective grouse protection measures into place on the YTC.

Upper Wenas Public Access

The Upper Wenas Owner's Group met in October and agreed upon a protocol that will allow continued access to the upper Wenas areas by all user groups (including hunters, horse backpackers, jeepers, bow hunters as well as Audubon) with reasonable restrictions designed to protect the land and private owners' interests. The restrictions include gates at BBQ Flats property line, Audubon Road, and at Observatory Road and upper Observatory Road, to be closed December 1 to May 1. In addition, by May a Green Dot road agreement will be in place identifying roads appropriate to drive on and those not. The primary damage to private lands (which can result in a closure of all access) includes damage to roads in the wet

season, unauthorized campfires, muddying creeks, and destroying gates and fences. Audubon by far has the smallest impact in this area, but we can have a significant impact in maintaining appropriate public access. One tool that will be generated by next May is a Green Dot style map handout with information on the back, including specifically how to report abuses (such as writing down license numbers or taking digital photos of habitat vandals). Another activity Audubon can help in is passing out the maps and information to those entering the Wenas private/public areas next May. More to follow here in the coming months.

Spotted Owl Actions

In November, the Seattle and Kittitas Audubon Societies filed suit against the US Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to complete a recovery plan for protecting the northern spotted owl, as mandated under the Endangered Species Act. Coincidentally in

November, the Washington State Forest Practices Board voted to enact emergency rules to provide additional protection to our northern spotted owl population, including a moratorium on the practice of “decertifying” spotted owl sites until June, 2007.

—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. Contribution should be 15 cents per mile divided by number of people in car, including the driver.



- Dec 3 First Saturday Bird Walk** — Meet leader Denny Granstrand at the Yakima Greenway parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **9:00 am** for a walk on the Poppoff Trail and the nearby Greenway Pathway. We'll explore the area for two hours and start acclimating for the Christmas Bird Counts.
- Dec 14 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the Yakima Greenway parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **9:00 am** for a walk on the Poppoff Trail and the nearby Greenway Pathway to continue our acclimation.
- Dec 17 Yakima Christmas Bird Count** — Meet at the fireplace in the center of Sportsmans State Park off S. 33rd St. (formerly Keys Road) at **7:00 am** to be assigned to groups for the day's birding. Gather for pizza dinner (donations to cover pizza are expected) at or shortly after **5:00** at Debie Brown's house on Konnawoc Pass. Directions to Debie's house are on page 5 at the bottom of the Christmas Bird Count article. Contact Denny Granstrand (453-2500 or dgranstrand@charter.net) to participate.
- Dec 18 Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count** — Meet for breakfast at the Branding Iron Restaurant south of Toppenish on Hwy 97 at **7:00 am** (or a little earlier) to be assigned to groups for the day. Meet for soup and whatever everyone brings at Andy and Ellen Stepniewski's house off West Parker Heights Road east of Wapato (directions on page 5 below the CBC article) at **5:00 pm** or so. Contact Andy Stepniewski (877-6639 or steppie@nwinfo.net) to participate.
- Jan 7 2006 Field Trip Planning Meeting** — Meet at Larry and Doris Robinson's (658-2918) house at 430 Clover Springs Road in the Nile at **9:00 am** to help plan (and volunteer to lead) field trips for 2006 and enjoy a potluck lunch.
- Jan 11 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the Yakima Greenway parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **9:00 am** for a walk on the Poppoff Trail and the nearby Greenway Pathway.



BIRD SIGHTINGS

As winter moves in as dank and cool as a Dostoevsky novel, any alienation from our feathered friends, be they residents, migrants or vagrants, must be considered a crime. And punishment for such transgressions is surely self-inflicted. Despair naught; seek out the beauty fluttering around us.

A Temminck's Stint, a Siberian breeder never before documented in the lower 48, touched off many a wild car chase when it tarried several days in Ocean Shores. Kerry Turley, John Hebert and Denny Granstrand quickly joined the pursuit. Our KJD trio arrived to find the Stint undergoing a thorough cross-exam by a curious contingent of avian investigators. As a bonus, they managed to cuff a Ruff.

Patrolling separately on their regular beats, the KJD trio detected an array of perpetrators. At the ponds between Fort Simcoe and the Job Corp gate, Kerry captured a Bonaparte's Gull. A White-breasted Nuthatch was duly mugged as yard bird # 90 by Denny. Debie Brown also added White-breasted Nuthatch to her yard list — number 171! A stakeout of the Poppoff Trail feeding area yielded John two White-throated Sparrows, a Fox Sparrow and a speedy Prairie Falcon. George Vlahakis teamed with the trio to document Spruce Grouse above Tampico on White's Ridge. Later under cover of darkness, the group held a covert conversation with a shadowy Boreal Owl near Darland Mountain.

On Nov 16, Alice Nevue ticketed a Steller's Jay cutting across the intersection of Lincoln and Naches Avenues. A veritable spate of Jay walking citations ensued. Four Jays were booked at an Arboretum oak on Nov 18. In another two days, two more jays; Scott Downes nabbed both, one near the Greenway parking lot on North 16th Ave and the other creating a disturbance at his Summitview Avenue residence...the 65th species he has collared at that location. The final bust of the spree occurred at the end of a Wednesday morning walk when Mike Roper's raptor radar detected sounds of a solicitous soliloquy. Terry Morrill and LaVonne Benner quickly apprehended the culprit, a brazenly blue Steller's Jay near the Arboretum Sparrow Patch.



Steller's Jay
Photo by George Vlahakis

The past month's blotter also includes a few sporadic visitors to our jurisdiction. Jeff Kozma caught a Northern Goshawk above Dipping Vat Creek in the Wenas. Two immature Anna's Hummingbirds were pilfering sugar water at Jody William's Toppenish home in mid-October. A flock of Sandhill Cranes flying above skeins of geese near the Tri-Cities were

(Bird Sightings continued on page 5)

THE 2005 YAKIMA VALLEY CHRISTMAS COUNT

Please mark your calendar now for our 32th Annual Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count. This nation-wide census of birds in specific 15-mile diameter circles is now undertaken annually by more than 50,000 birders. And you don't have to be an expert to participate—just be willing to help by looking, listening or tallying. It's great fun, and challenging too, to canvas your designated area.

Call Denny Granstrand at 453-2500, or e-mail him at dgranstrand@charter.net if you would like to participate or for more information.

We will meet at **7:00 am.** Saturday, December 17, at the central fireplace in Sportsman's Park. We will then depart for a full day of birding. Meet again with the traditional re-cap pizza dinner at Debie Brown's home on Konnowac Pass at **5:00 pm.** Please bring a contribution for the pizza (money and food to go with pizza) and your beverages. Slippers would be good, too, to keep the floors clean.

Directions to Debie's house: Go east on Hwy 24; five miles east of K-Mart, turn right on Rivard Road; go south and turn left at the stop sign; in a quarter of a mile you come to another stop sign; turn right on Konnowac Pass Road; go two miles and turn right on Meadowlark Lane; turn left at the first driveway to Debie's house.

THE 2005 TOPPENISH NWR CHRISTMAS COUNT

Coming a day after the Yakima Count is the 22nd Annual Toppenish Christmas Bird Count. We will meet December 18 at **7:00 am.** at the Branding Iron Restaurant in Toppenish (junction of US-97 & SR-22). The rules are the same as for the Yakima Count: observers are assigned to a team to cover a specific portion of a 15-mile diameter circle in the Lower Valley. If you're interested, please call Andy Stepniewski at 877-6639 or e-mail him at steppie@nwinfo.net

Interest and enthusiasm are key requirements. We will train you! Following the count, we meet at Andy and Ellen's house in Parker Heights at around **5:00 pm** to go through the tally, warm up with a bowl of soup and hot (and cold!) drinks and recount the day's experiences. Please bring a contribution for dinner (in the form of food) and your beverages. Remember your slippers, too.

Friendly competition between the two counts has become a tradition. In 2005, which count will win?

Directions to Andy and Ellen's house: Take Exit 40 off I-82; turn right at the stop sign and go two miles to West Parker Heights Road; turn left; go half a mile and turn left on Windy Point Dr.; go through the yellow gate; as the road starts to curve to the left, turn right just past the row of evergreen trees onto the driveway.

Bird Sightings (continued from page 4)

subpoenaed after their fingerprint cries alerted WDFW agent Ken Bevis of their escape attempt.

Andy and Ellen Stepniewski spied an uncommon number of raptors as they trekked the slopes of the Yakima Training Center on October 30. Netted in their sweep were two Prairie Falcons, three Golden Eagles, ten Northern Harriers, and an even dozen Rough-legged Hawks. In addition to the lineup of eight raptor species were a Long-eared Owl and a Great Horned Owl. Sherry and Pam Morris patrolled the big horned sheep feeding area on the flanks of Mount Cleman and observed a lone Golden Eagle, sans the necessity of an YTC security clearance check.

Homies avoiding indictment this month include a pair of White-headed Woodpeckers that have returned to the suet feeders of Doris and Larry Robinson. Merlins have worked their impromptu magic at the homes of both Denny Granstrand near the airport and Mike Roper in Terrace Heights. According to Mike, local thugs (Crows and Magpies) were intent on mugging a Merlin of its prey, thereby forcing it to relocate to dine in peace. Heisting a thermal over Debie Brown's Konnowac Pass abode on Oct 19 was an early Rough-legged Hawk.

The Greenway has done nothing to sully its record as a safe haven for desirable birds. If there were a bounty on grebes, John could re-retire. During a two-day shakedown, he summoned Pied-billed, Western and Eared Grebes on Rotary Lake and a Horned Grebe on Myron Lake before cashing in with a Red-necked Grebe on the pond south of the Poppoff Trail parking lot. Though the Red-necked Grebe is very rare for the valley, the Poppoff bird may well be a repeat offender as one lingered at the same location last November.

In the fading twilight following sunset on Nov 12, a grand total of 47 Hooded Mergansers were cooling their heels (keels?) on Buchanan Lake. A late Osprey assaulted the water of the adjacent Yakima River on Nov 9: what would warrant this



Red-necked Grebe
Photo by Denny Granstrand

Osprey's hesitance to flee south? On the same date, the edge habitat between the Arboretum and the Greenway path harbored Cedar Waxwings and both Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

In closing, we remind you that the Christmas Bird Counts are coming up. An All Points Bulletin (APB) is being put out for information leading counters to attest to the following species: Anna's Hummingbird, Blue Jay, Scrub Jay, Barred Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Bohemian Waxwing and Harris' Sparrow. All these species should be considered winged and innocuous; all pose high risk of flight to avoid capture. We know they are out there. It is up to you to bring both counts to justice. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to make this one of the most productive count years on record.

Please e-mail me with your sightings at Rich712@aol.com or use the phone at 965-1134.

— Richard Repp —

Maia says “Yes” to another auction!, “and bring your checkbook!”

It's Thanksgiving weekend and Maia Mittelstaedt is secluded in her computer office with notes and lists, preparing for the Silent Auction that accompanies the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's annual Holiday Potluck. This year it's on December 1.

She has scrolled through her files of the *Crier*, which she edited for years, and is surprised that this is the eighth year she has masterminded the auction. “I thought it was maybe five or six,” she says.

“I'm just a girl who cain't say no!” she grins. In 1998, she took over the event from Bev Clark, who started it in 1996 and continued for another year before moving away from the Valley.

Although it's a large workload to prepare the illustrated catalogue and the final bookkeeping lists of sales, Maia says that “it's fun. And it's always interesting to add it up and see how much we've made.” She's grateful, she adds, for auction-eve help from her husband, Bob, Betsy Martin, Gunter Hadersberger and me, although, she confesses, “I'm picky about how it's done!”

Over the seven years she's chaired the auction, \$6,418 has been raised. Last year was the most successful. Maia totals the figures for 99 items that were listed (although all of them did not sell) and finds that YVAS made \$1,450 in 2004.

Where did the BIG money come from? Bids for the garden dinner with Linda Knutson and Ron Sell, which went for \$150 in 2003, were so competitive that the hosts agreed to offer two last year. One raised \$300 and the other \$325.

Auction items should be creative, Maia suggests. “A bird hike for a novice birder”, “an unusual luncheon or dinner”.

Some items are traditional: Virginia Vredenburgh's handmade quilt, Larry Robinson's bird houses and feeders, Agnes Badgley's bags of thistle seeds, decorated sweat shirts and homemade peach jam.

Before the years of the silent auction, YVAS traditionally had a white elephant exchange at the banquet. You received a number that was your key to selecting something from the assortment brought by other Auduboners.

The 1990 *Crier* noted that “there will be several door prize drawings and if you have a nice but unwanted item that would be suitable please donate it.

Everyone enjoys winning a prize and the more we have the better your chance of winning.”

Edith Ryan found the old *Crier* and reminisced about how “Arlene Wood always brought wonderful handmade grapevine wreaths—for years!—and I could never win one.” (Well, they weren't really white elephants. Arlene remembers going to friendly vineyards to gather material for them.)

Now, Maia urges, “no white elephants”. In fact, she suggests in a recent *Crier* that “if you see something interesting that you think our birdy crowd might be tempted to bid on, you might purchase it” and donate it to the auction.

Be sure to call Maia NOW if you haven't already donated an auction item. And be sure to come December 1 and . . . bring your checkbook. (Maia – 697-8144 or maiakelly@charter.net).

— Jeanne Crawford —

Christmas Potluck Dinner and Silent Auction 2005

Yes, reminders are boring but sure can save on questions about our very festive get-together on December 1st. Bring your own table service (plates, cups, silverware) and serving utensils for your potluck items. Put names on bowl, serving plates and utensils to ensure return to the proper owner.

The doors will be open at 5:30 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum. All foods need to be there by 6:00 pm, since dinner starts at 6:30. That gives people time to set up a table, peruse the silent auction items and visit. Potluck food assignments are by the first letter of your last name: A-G + main dish, H-P + potatoes, vegetables, salads; Q-Z + deserts, bread and butter. Dishes need to serve 12-14 people. The chapter will be providing ham and turkey. Coffee, hot water for tea, and punch will also be served. Wine will be available to purchase by the glass.

If you are a member who hasn't been coming to the monthly meetings, this is a great time to get re-acquainted with some wonderful people, enjoy a great meal, and maybe pick up a real treasure at the auction.

If you have any questions, please call LaVonne Benner (453-1096) or Alice Nevue (453-7096).

Please call Maia Mittelstaedt (697-8144) with your contributions for the Silent Auction. Please help make this Silent Auction the most successful ever!

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The entrance to the Yakima Area Arboretum has changed, as a part of the construction project on Highway 24 east of I-82. The entrance to the arboretum is now just over .2 mile east of where it used to be. The entrance to K-Mart has also moved east. There is a traffic light at the entrance to K-Mart. The arboretum entrance is a short distance east of the traffic light. The driveway now goes past the Nob Hill Auto Wrecking Yard and the Humane Society.

(continued from page 7)

Lewis's Woodpecker, however, he was also quick to agree that individual sites may create conditions that do not follow the general rule. He gave me a couple references that I plan to follow-up on to learn more about starling interactions with other woodpeckers (they do appear to negatively impact flickers in select areas). More on what I find in this review later. Finally, John suggested that the best way to get a handle on interactions between starlings and Lewis's Woodpeckers is to watch them (no big surprise here). This means focusing on select cavities, especially those that the Lewis's Woodpeckers appear to be "staking out", and then watching periodically from the courtship period on to see if starlings are in anyway driving the Lewis's Woodpeckers from their nests.

I'll keep you all posted on this issue in the coming months!

— Andy Stepniewski —

YVAS is working with State officials concerning declining numbers of Lewis's Woodpeckers at Fort Simcoe

During May Birdathon, Richard Repp found only a couple Lewis's Woodpeckers at Fort Simcoe State Park. Usually, many of these beautiful birds, declining in numbers over much of their range, are observed at the park. Richard noted European Starlings were everywhere. This prompted me to contact Washington State Parks Robert Fimbel (Resource Advisor) to express concern about the apparent disappearance of Lewis's Woodpeckers in the park.

Robert replied: *Thank-you for your note Andy. I was out at Fort Simcoe about one month ago and did not see any Lewis's Woodpeckers either. Their absence is worth exploring further. Starlings may be contributing to the current situation, however, there may be other factors at work. To start, I would like to know if there are any historical population surveys that we can examine to determine if this appears to be a periodic or isolated event Does Audubon have survey data from this site? I will check with the park and WDFW to see if they might have any of this information. Once we have a sense of the historical population fluctuations we should be in a better position to determine a course of action. Finally, re: the lawns. Certain lawn areas have a historical significance associated with them and thus we would want to try and maintain them. Areas outside of this footprint could be considered for restoration towards native vegetation. The manager is interested in reducing the time staff spend on mowing, so restoration efforts could prove a win-win situation. Where and how much to restore remain open questions. Please advise if you have survey data.*

Robert scheduled a meeting at the park on October 27. Attending were Richard Repp, Ken Bevis (WDFW biologist), Washington State Parks Resource Stewardship Managers Rob Fimbel and Thomas Ernsberger, park manager Mike Mahaney, and Brian Carter. We discussed management of Lewis's Woodpeckers and Ash-throated Flycatchers.

We talked about how European Starlings, a cavity nester, might be affecting both the woodpecker and flycatcher, also cavity nesters. Fire protection requirements dictate continued irrigation of large areas of the park to protect the historic buildings, so we came to the conclusion only small areas of lawn could be reduced. We concluded increasing the shrub layer in the understory of oaks could be accomplished. A shrub layer is considered important for Lewis's Woodpeckers, as this part of the oak woodland is insect-rich.

We discussed a project to determine population trends of Lewis's Woodpeckers in the park. We aired various approaches, including "Citizen Science" school and Audubon projects, or a Masters project at Central Washington University. To begin, a Citizen Science approach was chosen, but others will be investigated.

Tom provided an overview of tasks lying ahead for us:

- * Mike will look for any starts from the hybrid oaks as well as qualitative survey of how the natives are doing with regards to reproduction.
- * Rob, Tom, Ken, Brian, and Andy will set a date in the January/ February time frame to GPS the trees in the developed area of the park.
- * Rob and Ken will develop protocols for data collection.
- * Rob will conduct a literature search for information on starling biology and control as well as their impact upon other

cavity users.

- * Tom will investigate the options surrounding replanting native oak.
- * Andy will research Ash-throated Flycatcher ecology.

We closed by agreeing to an e-mail conference sometime early December to see how we are coming along with our assignments.

Developments since the meeting include a message by Brian who spoke with Paul James, CWU Biology Dept. about this study. Paul will check to see if there are any interested students. Paul wanted a little more detail on what the study could or should entail.

Brian contacted Dave Darda at the CWU biology department to inquire if this study might be of interest to a student. After discussion Dave felt that this would be an excellent student project and depending on how in depth we want to proceed could be expanded into a graduate study. Dave suggested that Brian contact Phil Mattocks of Heritage College and Paul James of CWU as this is more in their area.

Brian also contacted Phil Mattocks who teaches at Heritage University and is an adjunct professor at CWU. Although he does not teach ornithology at Heritage and, though Heritage does not have any Masters programs as yet, he was very interested in this study and volunteered to make contacts to see if there are any students available. He too felt that such a study could be developed into a graduate project.

I suspect that this site may be one of those cases where starling competition could result in diminished LEWO productivity based upon the quality of the cavities present, which is a question this monitoring could shed some light upon. The competitive interactions would be interesting to document. I am curious if there is any literature with a similar situation. (I have an interest in starlings, and did my MS on cavity excavators). I look forward to working on this with State Parks, Audubon and other partners.

Rob wrote: *I spoke with John Marzluff (ornithologist) at UW yesterday about starlings. He was doubtful that there would be a significant negative impact of the starlings on the Lewis's Woodpecker. However, he was also quick to agree that*

(continued at bottom of page 6)



Fort Simcoe, the Lewis's Woodpecker Capital of the Northwest, is experiencing a decline in its numbers.

Photo by Mac Knight

Member Survey – What do you want?

*Little drops of water, tiny grains of sand
Make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land.*

The mission statement of the Yakima Valley Audubon Society is always on the front page of the “*Calliope Crier*”. Birding, education, conservation, preservation, environmental protection, local, global... Those of us who are active in YVAS activities, either on the board, or as participants, sometimes feel overwhelmed and challenged by the tasks we face. As a group, much more is possible. Not all drops of water in this Audubon ocean are the same. Each of us on the board, volunteers, and Audubon members have different strengths and interests. Hopefully, what one of us lacks, someone else will be good at.

So, **why this survey?** It could be that in any small organization there will not be enough volunteers with enough variety of expertise and enough time and energy to do everything. We would like your help to determine priorities for Yakima Valley Audubon (YVAS). We’d like to know which of all our activities mean the most to you, and what you’d like to participate in. As always, we’d really like to have all of you participate and/or volunteer on some of these committees and projects.

Please take some time to let us know your feelings. Fill out and return the survey on **pages 9 and 10** soon. There are two columns. One is for what you think is most important to you and for Audubon to be involved in. The second column is what you expect to read, attend or participate in. Written-in comments will be most appreciated! You can cut the survey page out of the *Crier*, send written comments, or copy the survey from the website. There will be extra copies at the December dinner.

Thanks!!
Ellen Stepniewski (on behalf your board)

ROCKY PRAIRIE YIELDS SMOOTH RESULTS

In the early 1980s, a number of local bird enthusiasts recognized that logging and snag removal had reduced the number of natural cavities available to species such as bluebirds to utilize for nesting. In hopes of increasing populations of cavity nesting birds, manmade nest boxes were placed in suitable habitat to create “bluebird” trails.

An open basin, rimmed with pine and fir, Rocky Prairie appealed to Bill and Edith Ryan. The basin is located along Bald Mountain Road (Forest Road 1701) three miles above Highway 410. In 1984 an agreement was forged with the

U. S. Forest Service to allow the placement of nesting boxes along Forest Road 1701 and its spurs. The 42 boxes Bill and Edith put up that year expanded to a total of 63 boxes in 1988. Close to 3,500 birds, including 2,400 bluebirds, have fledged from these nest boxes (see chart below).

Few, if any, of the area’s bluebird trails can match the perseverance, continuity, and record keeping the Ryans have exhibited in their efforts at Rocky Prairie over the past 22 years. Congratulations, Bill and Edith . . . may you long continue to inspire us.

ROCKY PRAIRIE/CANTEEN FLAT NEST BOX RECAP 1984 - 2005

YEAR	WEBL	MTBL	MOCH	WBNU		YEAR	WEBL	MTBL	MOCH	WBNU
1984	9	37	7	0		1998	147	5	53	0
1985	32	29	31	0		1999	74	5	49	0
1986	58	20	16	0		2000	117	11	90	0
1987	100	28	14	0		2001	154	10	58	0
1988	98	21	23	0		2002	132	21	69	0
1989	76	40	31	4		2003	108	10	19	0
1990	103	22	26	0		2004	98	9	30	0
1991	94	18	21	0		2005	82	11	23	0
1992	104	17	36	0						
1993	133	11	85	11		TOTALS	2076	363	870	45
1994	124	10	11	12		Key: WEBL= Western Bluebird MTBL= Mountain Bluebird MOCH= Mountain Chickadee WBNU= White-breasted Nuthatch				
1995	45	6	66	6						
1996	115	10	4	12						
1997	73	12	108	0						

MEMBER SURVEY

In the two columns on the right, please rate each activity 1 – 5. #1—very high priority for the chapter or likely you’ll participate, through # 5—very low priority or very unlikely to participate. Please write in any helpful comments you have.

Mail completed surveys to:

Yakima Valley Audubon Society, PO Box 2823, Yakima, WA 98907 attn: survey
 Or bring them to the chapter Christmas Banquet on December 1.

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS	IMPORTANT FOR YVAS	I’LL PARTICPATE
Newsletter – “Calliope Crier”	_____	_____
Monthly Programs, annual dinner	_____	_____
Field Trips	_____	_____
Conservation – Local (i.e. Wenas, Critical Areas Ordinance) -State-wide (i.e. ACOW conferences)	_____	_____
Education		
-classes for members and community	_____	_____
-programs for schools, scouts, community clubs, etc.	_____	_____
-bird alert in the newspaper	_____	_____
-refuge activities (Toppenish)	_____	_____
-YVAS preserve (Hoeger Preserve)	_____	_____
Website	_____	_____
Bluebird trails – maintenance, monitoring	_____	_____
Other:		
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Continued on next page . . .

Member Survey, page 2

Suggestions for future programs, topics and speakers:

I'd like to participate in field trips that are (please check all that apply):

A few hours long

Full day trips

Involve hiking

Stops for coffee breaks and lunch would be nice

To local sites

To areas 50-150 miles away

Elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest

Best times for me are _____

Suggestions for field trips:

Other suggestions and comments:

If you'd like to help with any aspect, let us know what, and send us your name, phone number and e-mail address:

THANKS!!!

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

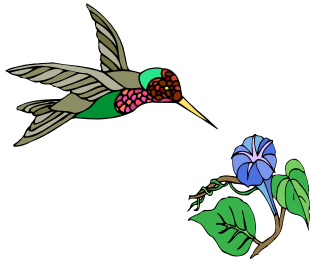
Send the form and your check to : YVAS Membership
P.O. Box 2823
Yakima, WA 98907-2823

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

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

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Yakima, WA
Permit No. 38

Return Service Requested



*Check your label—
has your membership expired?*

 printed on 50% post-consumer recycled paper

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

President	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639	Social	LaVonne Benner	453-1096
Vice President	John Hebert (jhebert8235@charter.net)	965-8235	Revenue	Alice Nevue Dan Kinney (insur3@charter.net)	453-7096 452-3260
Secretary	Vera Backstrom (mw_327@msn.com)	653-1174	Special Committees:		
Treasurer	Ellen Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639	Audubon Refuge	Kerry Turley (kdturley@bentonrea.com)	837-6930
Directors:	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808	Keeper	Connie Hughes (CHbirdlady@msn.com)	457-5661
	David Hartwig (hartwigwest@msn.com)	453-4099	Bird Rehabilitator	Richard Repp (Rich712@aolcom)	965-1134
	Richard Repp (Rich712@aolcom)	965-1134	Bird Reports	Bettie Soden (sponsorship records)	453-8185
Committee Chairpersons:			Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp (trail maintenance)	965-1134
Conservation	Michael Martin (Thirdeye@mindspring.com)	698-4430	Courtesy	vacant	
Crier Editor	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@charter.net)	453-2500	Important Bird Areas	John Hebert (jhebert@nwinfo.net)	965-8235
Education	open		Volunteer Recognition	vacant	
Field Trips	Larry Robinson (laris430@yahoo.com)	658-2918	Webmaster	Mac Knight (mac_knight@charter.net)	457-6410
Membership	Bob Wahl (rewahl@televar.com)	452-9183	Website	www.yakimaaudubon.org	
Program	Merri Knight (merri_knight@charter.net)	457-6410	Toppenish CBC	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639
Publicity	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808	Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@charter.net)	453-2500
			Yakima Valley Audubon Voice Mail		248-1963