

2009 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD TRIPS

Yakima Valley Audubon Society fieldtrips for 2009 are presented here. Print this schedule and keep it for handy reference. It will also be available on the YVAS website.

Several short trips each month will be taken to sites in Yakima. Most often these will be to the Poppoff Trail on the Yakima Area Greenway. These outings on a paved or smooth path and offer an easy, close-to-town opportunity to see lots of birds in a natural setting. These trips typically last just a few hours. A variety of interesting waterfowl, birds of prey, and songbirds are easily seen on these walks. Watch for dates and times in each issue of *The Crier*. Unless stated otherwise, the meeting place for these walks is at the east end of Valley Mall Boulevard (Take I-82 to Exit 36, then go east to parking for Helen Jewett Pathway). Meeting time is 8 a.m. except 9 a.m. in winter. Remember, it is a very good idea to check *The Crier* as occasionally these trips will visit other areas, such as Sportsman State Park or Cowiche Canyon.

January 24 (Sat.). **Horse Heaven Hills and Columbia River.** An all-day trip up and over Horse Heaven Hills south of Mabton to Bickleton, then on down to the Columbia River hot spots from Maryhill State Park to Roosevelt.. Birds of the Columbia River and wintering birds like Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl and Townsend's Solitaire would be the emphasis. Leader: Scott Downes, 509-469-7807 or email at downes@charter.net. Meet on the west side of IHOP on Valley Mall Blvd.at 7:00 a.m., hopefully limiting it to 3 cars total as parking isn't all that great in some spots.

February 21 (Sat.). **McNary NWR and Tri-Cities birding.** This trip offers a superb opportunity to study a variety of waterfowl, including geese, dabbling, and diving ducks at McNary Pool at the refuge at the height of waterfowl migration. Birds of prey, gulls, and songbirds will also be looked for. Leader: Bill Drenguis, phone 965-5808. Meet 7:30 a.m. west side of IHOP on Valley Mall Blvd.

February 13-16 (Fri.– Mon.) **Great Backyard Bird Count.** See *The Crier* for details.

February 14-16 (Sat. thru Monday). **Coastal Oregon.** A Yakima Valley Audubon Society first! Very early Saturday morning we head south over Satus Pass, bypass Portland to visit at least one of Willamette Valley's waterfowl refuges (Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and Finley NWRs) created to protect rare wintering geese. We'll look for many other birds such as raptors and songbirds in the oak and riparian woodland habitats here, too. In the afternoon we'll head west to the coast at Newport for both Saturday and Sunday nights. Birding Sunday and Monday morning will focus on the bird-rich bays and scenic headlands that have made coastal Oregon so famous. Seabirds such as loons, grebes, and diving ducks are abundant as are alcids: murrets and guillemots. We'll also tackle difficult groups such as gulls and shorebirds, too.

This trip will offer dawn to dusk birding for those who wish but also alternatives for those wanting to beach walk or take in some of Newport's other attractions as on both Saturday and Sunday night we'll be based at the Agate Beach Best Western. This Best Western hotel is right on the beach and offers great beach walks and is only a mile or so from central Newport where there is lots to do besides birding.

Contact leaders Andy and Ellen Stepniewski by e-mail (Steppie@nwinform.net) or phone (877-6639) for more information and to sign-up for this trip. Deadline for sign-up is **February 1**. The reason for this is coastal Oregon is popular year-round and accommodations need to be booked well in advance. Andy and Ellen will help with organizing car pools. We will begin the return trip by 2 PM on Monday, arriving in Yakima about 8 PM (weather can alter this plan).

March 7 (Sat.). Birding Class: **Waterfowl**. This Yakima Area Arboretum-sponsored class begins with a morning class session to familiarize you with birds of the waterfowl family. Though south-central Washington is in the arid zone of the Cascade Mountain rainshadow, it is rich in waterfowl. At least 37 species have been recorded. Diversity and number of waterfowl are greatest in migration and winter, some stay on to nest in wetlands in the region. This class will concentrate on waterfowl identification, followed by information on their general biology. Following the class session, a visit to Ken Taylor's waterfowl collection in Selah will be a unique opportunity to study these beautiful birds close-up. Instructor: Andy Stepniewski. Sign-up through the arboretum. (248-7337).

March 14 (Sat.). **Raptors of the Kittitas Valley**. A half-day trip north through the Yakima Canyon to the Kittitas Valley to view raptors. In addition to wintering Bald Eagles, the Yakima Canyon hosts a dense concentration of breeding birds of prey, especially Red-tailed Hawks, Golden Eagles, American Kestrels. Prairie Falcons are fairly common also. Fields in the Kittitas Valley attract wintering raptors such as Rough-legged Hawks and both Bald and Golden Eagles, attracted to rodents in the fields and afterbirth of cows that have just calved. Northern Harriers and *Accipiters* are also frequently encountered on this trip. Leader: Denny Granstrand. 453-2500. Meet 8 a.m. at 40th Avenue Bi-Mart.

March 20-22. (Fri.-Sun.) **Othello Sandhill Crane Festival**. Celebrate the migration of thousands of Sandhill Cranes in Othello. Numerous fieldtrips, illustrated talks, banquet and speaker. Crane and Burrowing Owl bus trips will also be offered the Saturdays preceding and following the festival dates. Check it out at the following website: othellosandhillcranefestival.org.

March 28 (Sat.). **Bluebird Nest Box Cleanout, repair and potluck lunch**. Leader: Richard Repp. (965-1165). 9 a.m. at end of pavement on North Wenas Road.

April 11. (Sat.). **Arborfest**. Yakima Area Arboretum. This year's theme is "Take a Walk in the Woods." See *The Crier* for details.

April 25 (Sat.). **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. Leader: Kerry Turley. (837-6930). West side of IHOP, Valley Mall Blvd. 8 a.m.

May 2. (Sat.). **"Get Intimate with the Shrub-steppe."** Umtanum Creek Recreation Site in the Yakima Canyon. 7:30-1 pm. Leaders: Kerry Turley, Leslie and Bob Wahl, Elizabeth Bohn, Bill Drenguis. Sponsored by KEEN (Kittitas Environmental Education Network).

May 9 (Sat.). **Migratory Bird Day.** Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge. Field trips at the refuge. Meet at headquarters 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. . Leaders: Kerry Turley, Elizabeth Bohn, Bill Drenguis. Watch for details in *The Crier*.

May 16 (Sat.). **Birdathon.** Help celebrate the peak of spring migration with a Yakima County Big Day. We'll divide into groups covering all parts of the county. Our record for this event is 191 species! Expect lots of colorful Neotropical birds such as flycatchers, swallows, warblers, orioles, and grosbeaks. Raptors, waterfowl, and shorebirds are also about. Leader: Andy Stepniewski (877-6639). Details in the *Crier*.

May 22-25. (Fri.-Mon.). **Wenas Campout.** For over 40 years, Auduboners from across the state have gathered in the Wenas to watch birds, hike, and admire the flower show. What makes the Wenas so special to naturalists? It has to do with its position at the lower edge of the Ponderosa Pine Zone as it interfingers with the upper Shrub-steppe Zone. An amazing array of flora and fauna occurs here. Visit the Wenas website for more information. Lots of fieldtrips and hikes are offered on this three-day Memorial Day weekend. See *The Crier* for details, too.

May 24. (Sun.) **Wenas Creek region.** A combination drive/walk for a leisurely look at Wenas Creek and a bit of shrub-steppe nearby. Probe nest boxes for Western Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and house Wrens. Wear appropriate footgear. Leader: Richard Repp. Depart 9:30 am from bench above fire circle in Wenas Campground. Back around 1 pm.

May 30. (Sat.). **Snow Mountain Ranch.** A half-day trip to Cowiche Canyon Conservancy's 1700-acre preserve near Cowiche. We'll explore the four distinct habitats there: riparian woodlands along Cowiche Creek, open fields, Garry oak woodland, and shrub-steppe in the uplands. Each habitat hosts a distinctive community of birds, combined about 60 are possible if the group has enough energy! Leader: John Hebert. (965-8235). Meet 6:30 a.m. 40th Ave. BiMart.

June 6. (Sat.). **Tieton Nature Trail.** A 3-mile stroll along the Tieton River featuring riparian, oak, and conifer habitats. Expect lots of colorful spring songbirds and woodpeckers. Bushtits, found here in 2007 will be a target species. Pack a lunch to be enjoyed at the walk's turn around point. Leader: Debie Brown. (248-3878). Meet 7 am at 40-th Bi-Mart.

June 13 (Sat.). **Woodpeckers in the Ahtanum.** Jeff Kozma, Wildlife Biologist for the Yakama Nation discovered a wonderful variety of woodpeckers nesting in aspen trunks at middle elevations in the Ahtanum. Join Jeff as he leads you to this impressive concentration of woodpeckers and other mountain birds, including Lincoln's Sparrows. Leader: Jeff Kozma, (225-3465). Meet 6:45 a.m. at Wide Hollow Elementary School (72nd and Nob Hill). Car pool from there. Bring lunch, beverage, sun screen, etc., for trip to last at least until 2 p.m.

July 11-12. (Sat.-Sun.) **Folk Life Festival.** Yakima. Look for details in *The Crier*.

July 31-Aug. 2 (Fri.-Sun.). **Annual Ptarmigan Search to Cascades.** Yakima Audubon's now annual quest to find White-tailed Ptarmigan in wilderness areas of Yakima County. . Dunnage carried in by mules. You need carry only a day pack. Contact: Andy and Ellen Stepniewski, 877-6639 or steppie@nwinfo.net. Target bird: the ever-elusive Snowy ptarmigan!

August 12. (Wed.). **Wenas Lake for Shorebirds.** Mid-August is a good time to check out the "fall" migration of shorebirds in eastern Washington. This evening trip will focus on identification of this approachable but challenging group. Leader: Denny Granstrand (453-2550). Meet 5 pm at 40th Ave. Bi-mart.

August 15. (Sat.). **Burroughs Mountain Hike** on Mt. Rainier. This is a good leg stretcher, involving a 8-mile return hike into the Alpine Zone above Sunrise on Mt. Rainier. Great for Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Water Pipit and sometimes White-tailed Ptarmigan. Look for Baird's Sandpiper by Frozen Lake. Migrant warblers flit in the scrub near treeline and raptors fly overhead. Leader. DennyG ranstrand (453-2500). Meet 7am at 40th BiMart.

September 9. (Wed.) **Byron Ponds for Shorebirds.** Timed for the "fall" migration of shorebirds in eastern Washington. This evening trip to wetlands near Mabton will again focus on identification of this challenging group of birds. Leader: Andy Stepniewski (877-6639). Meet 5 pm at west side of IHOP on Valley Mall Blvd.

September 13. (Sun.). **Chinook Pass hike.** A half-day trip returning by mid-afternoon. A 2-mile easy hike to Sheep Lake is great for migrating hawks, eagles, and falcons. Songbirds such as sparrows and finches (Pine Grosbeak is possible) flit in the trailside thickets. An optional extension 1 mile farther to Pickhandle Gap for rosy finches and more raptors. Great for Mountain Goat viewing too. Fall colors can be superb! Leader: Andy Stepniewski. (877-6639). Meet 7 am at 40th BiMart.

Oct. 17 (Sat.). (Sat.). **Fort Simcoe and Medicine Valley.** Journey out to this marvelous grove of Oregon White Oaks at historic Fort Simcoe where Lewis's Woodpeckers, surely one of the most charismatic of its clan, can be numerous. Look for other birds of oak woodlands such as White-breasted Nuthatch and Western Scrub-Jay. Not far away is Medicine Valley, which can be excellent for birds of prey. Half-day. Leader: Kerry Turley. (837-6930). 8:30 a.m. at west side of IHOP, Valley Mall Blvd.

November 14 (Sat.). **McNary NWR and Tri-Cities birding.** This trip offers a superb opportunity to study a variety of waterfowl, including geese, dabbling, and diving ducks at McNary Pool at the refuge at the height of waterfowl migration. Birds of prey, gulls, and songbirds will also be looked for. Leader: Bill Drenguis, phone 965-5808. Meet 7:30 a.m. west side of IHOP, Valley Mall Blvd.

Dec. 3 (Thurs.). **YVAS Annual meeting and Christmas Dinner at the Yakima Area Arboretum.** Doors open at 5:30, silent auction at 6:00, dinner at 6:30.

Dec. 19 (Sat.). **Yakima Christmas Bird Count.** Leader: Denny Granstrand (453-2500). Meet 7 a.m. at IHOP on Valley Mall Blvd.

Dec. 20 (Sun.). **Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count.** Leader: Andy Stepniewski. (877-6639). Meet 7 am at Branding Iron Restaurant in Toppenish.