



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

36, Number 7

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

AUDUBON CALENDAR

The Egg and I

Aug 23 Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum

at **7:00 pm**.

Sep 11 Board Meeting at Michael Martin's house (698-4430) at **7:00 pm**.

Field Trips

Aug 19 Chinook Pass Hike — meet leader Debie Brown at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot at **7:00 am**.

Sep 8 Vagrant Search in Columbia Basin — meet leader Scott Downes at **6:00 am** at the K-Mart parking lot off Hwy 24.

Sep 12 Wenas Lake for Shorebirds — meet leader Denny Granstrand at **5:00 pm** at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot.

Sep 13 Thursday Morning Bird Walk — meet the group at the Valley Mall Blvd. parking lot for the Poppoff Trail at **8:00 am**.

Other Activities

Oct 19-21 Fall ACOW — Restore and Protect
See article on page 3.

While checking the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail on July 20, I had a truly marvelous, memorable moment.

As a rule of thumb, bluebirds tend not to lay eggs after the first week of July. Hence, given a two week incubation period, by July 20 any eggs remaining in nests are suspect of being abandoned.

While examining the clutch of five eggs in Box 22, I noticed that one egg was cracked...about one third around the diameter near the middle. As I watched, the crack widened a bit and then was drawn shut by the inner membrane. Convinced an egg was about to hatch, I continued to watch. After short rest intervals, the chick would thrust against the shell slowly enlarging the fissure.

Finally, a magnificent push halved the shell and a naked orange/pink body plopped out of one-half of the shell. However, the nestling's head remained encased in the blue shell as the bird flopped onto its side fully exhausted. The struggling infant was able to muster the strength to toss its head upward and the confining cap tumbled away.

At that point, the nestling shot its beak straight up and it gaped mightily as it gulped in its first breath of fresh air. As it fell once again upon the grass nest, I had to marvel at the strength of that tiny neck!

Barely thicker than the shaft of a penny lollipop, that tiny shred of flesh had the power to lift a bulky head and yet conceal both neck vertebrae and the equivalent of an esophagus. Imagine trying to lift a human head with a neck the diameter of a half-inch garden hose. Well, maybe some of us air-heads could manage it but the BirdYak brainiacs would surely have trouble.

It was my first glimpse of a living thing taking its first breath of air. When my children were born, a father's place was pacing the waiting room floor with a pocket full of King Edward cigars. Nowadays, I understand that expectant fathers are welcomed into the delivery room and outfitted with gloves, a cap, a mask and protective chest gear...just like Hall of Fame baseball catcher Johnny Bench. But while ol' Johnny only had to worry about a fastball tailing off or dropping, today's crouching father to be has to concentrate on fielding a much slippery offering. Maybe akin to dealing with a Gaylord Perry "spitter" loaded up with tobacco juice, I dunno.

As I drove off, I swore I detected the aroma of a King Edward's cigar. Maybe it was the ol' pickup's catalytic converter. The sex of the newborn? Like other fathers of my era, I'll have to ask the doctor.

Birding the Blue,
Richard Repp

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Visit the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's website at: <http://www.yakimaudubon.org>

AUGUST PROGRAM

Places You've (Probably) Never Been with David Hagen

David Hagen will present a program on four locations in the Washington Cascades. He will begin with the Teanaway in early summer, then move on to the Warm Lake area for mid-summer, followed by Meander Meadow-Cady Ridge for spectacular fall color and conclude with Stiletto Meadows for golden alpine larches. In addition to landscapes, he will share wildflowers, intimate scenes, & natural details of each area.

David Hagen is a past-president of the Cascadians as well as past-president and long-time Board member of the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy. He was by profession a counselor and social worker (now retired) and is by avocation a free-lance outdoor photographer. He became seriously interested in photography in the early 1970s. Since that time he has photographed throughout the Washington Cascades and the Columbia Basin as well as locations in Oregon, Idaho, and the Colorado Plateau. His work has appeared in numerous national, regional, & local publications.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**Welcome New YVAS Members!**

Yakima: Cindy McCormack

Zillah: Linda Diane Fortier Kerr

Thank You for renewing your YVAS Membership!

Yakima: Stan Belsher, Joyce Hernandez,
Susie Lattomus, Ken Meier, Diane
Murphy, Mike Roper,

Naches: Rose Hards, Katherine
Vornbrock

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 —

Second Broods Boost Bluebird Totals

At press time, only three of the 132 nest boxes on the Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail were still active with nestlings. To date, a total of 419 bluebirds, 328 Western and 91 Mountain, have fledged this year. While this total is close to the average production for the Trail over the past twenty-some years, it is a refreshing step up from the prior two years' totals of 301 and 336 bluebirds respectively. This year's parent birds were diligent; over one-third of our total fledglings were the products of second nests.



Tree Swallows enjoyed their most productive year ever on the Trail with a total of 29 fledglings from six nests. The lone Mountain Chickadee on the trail this year took home the big brood award by converting all eight eggs into first year birds. White-breasted Nuthatches contributed two young to this year's crop.

The October Crier will feature the annual box-by-box recap of nesting activity on the Vredenburgh Trail.

— Richard

Notice of Up-coming Election

At the October Chapter meeting, our bylaws require an election for the following offices:

President

Vice-President

Directors (all three positions)

As the Chapter was unable to elect a President-elect in October 2006, finding qualified candidates for the offices of President and Vice-president is somewhat essential to ensure that our chapter continues to function at established levels. The Board is endeavoring to solicit candidates for all of the positions due for election. If you, or someone you know, would be able to capably serve YVAS for a two-year term, please contact any member of the Board. All nominees must agree to serve if elected. Candidates for the office will be listed in the September and October Criers. As it is your Chapter, please reflect on whom you wish to assist in guiding YVAS and then take action.

CONSERVATION

I-960 Threatens Future Conservation Funding

Audubon Washington is joining a growing coalition opposed to Initiative 960 – on the statewide ballot this November – because it would put funding for conservation and clean-up of natural ecosystems and bird and wildlife habitat at risk.

Tim Eyman's latest initiative would make it much more difficult to obtain vital public funding for conservation. I-960 is a rigid, confusing and costly bureaucratic proposal to vastly expand the definition of a "tax increase." It would require the approval of two-thirds of the State Legislature, along with expensive public advisory votes in many cases, on every change in revenue, even routine fund transfers.

Innovative efforts to fund conservation or clean-up efforts would have to be sold to a supermajority of legislators – and in many cases to the public as well – as a tax increase, even if they did not raise anyone's taxes. Actions that require a public advisory vote would be identified as a "tax increase" and allotted just 13 words in the voters' pamphlet to justify their ten year cost. Hundreds of millions in state dollars would be wasted on endless

ballots and expensive court battles over how to interpret I-960, leaving even less for important environmental priorities.

Even transferring funds from one state account to another to fund conservation would be a "tax increase" and could be held up by a minority of lawmakers. Routine decisions about budgets and fees could be turned into polarizing debates over "tax increases" if I-960 is approved. Raising the parking fee at state recreational areas by 25 cents to invest in maintenance would require legislative action as a "tax increase."

It is already difficult enough to obtain funds for efforts like the State Department of Ecology's grants to improve and protect dozens of waters across the state. When you cast your ballot in November, imagine how hard it would be to get funding for any Audubon priority – even inflation adjustments to current projects, to say nothing of new investment – if I-960 is approved.

Audubon Washington is a member of the statewide Washington Tax Fairness Coalition. To find out more about I-960 visit their website: www.WATaxFairness.org.

Restore and Protect — ACOW's Conference Theme

Tidepools, shorelines, bays, the outer coast, wildlife refuges, old growth forests, wild and scenic rivers, glaciers, wildflower meadows, and many of the areas in between . . . what do these diverse habitats have in common? Answer: The need to protect these ecosystems for future generations to enjoy and appreciate, and for the sustainability of our planet. Restoration of degraded or misused areas is necessary, too.

That is why the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS) has selected "Restoration and Protection of Washington's Natural Areas" as the theme for the upcoming Audubon Council of Washington's (ACOW) semi-annual conference. This three-day event will be held at the Jamestown S'Kallam Tribal Center in Blyn on October 19, 20 and 21. More than 100 leaders from the 26 Audubon chapters in our state, along with national Audubon's Washington State Office staff, will share what's being protected and restored in their region. And global warming is, of course, very high on Audubon's agenda — both nationally and locally.

During the conference, participants will have the chance to visit one of three special places to see out-

standing examples: the restored Jimmycomelately Estuary; the Dungeness River engineered logjam installation; or the future Elwha River double-dam removal project.

Each Audubon chapter has been asked to bring a portable display showcasing an important conservation project I their region. Sometimes we become so isolated or busy within our own region that we forget that all areas are connected (bird migratory routes, for example) and we frequently need to work together when protecting ecosystems.

That is what ACOW's esteemed feature speaker is doing — bringing together a partnership of many entities to accomplish a huge goal for our state: Cleaning u Puget Sound. Nationally renowned William D. Ruckelshaus, appointed by Governor Christine Gregoire as chairman of the Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council, will speak at the conference's Saturday night salmon barbecue banquet. This Puget Sound cleanup effort will go a long way towards "Restoring and Protecting Washington's Natural Areas."

Please visit www.olympicpeninsulaudubon.org for more conference information.

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 25 cents per mile divided by number of people in car, including the driver.



- Aug 19 Chinook Pass Hike** — The wildflower display at Chinook Pass is justly famous, as are the views of Mt. Rainier. but wait! There are lots of mountain birds to be looked for, including various raptors, Sooty Grouse, swifts, hummingbirds, jays, various warblers, and sparrows, which should be encountered on this relatively easy hike. The group *should* be back in Yakima by 3:00. Meet leader Debie Brown at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot at **7:00 am**.
- Sep 8 Vagrant Search to Columbia Basin** — Join an expert on shrub-steppe birds on this trip with stops at many of the oases in the Columbia Basin searching for migrants with the hope of spotting a rarity or two. Places we'll visit include newly discovered Sentinel Gap near Mattawa, Washtucna, and Lyons Ferry. Meet leader Scott Downes at the K-Mart parking lot off Hwy 24 at **6:00 am**. You might make it home for a late dinner. Or at least dessert. Maybe! (But it will be worth it!!)
- Sep 12 Wenas lake for More Shorebirds** — Mid-August to mid-September is the peak of "fall" migration for shorebirds in eastern Washington. This evening trip will focus on identification of this difficult and interesting group. Meet leader Denny Granstrand at **5:00 pm** at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot.
- Sep 13 Thursday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **8:00 am**.
- Sep 27 Thursday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **8:00 am**.

Please contribute for gas when you ride on field trips

With high gas prices it is important for all participants to contribute for gas. Based on four people in a car, here are the totals per person: 100 miles driven on the trip — \$6.50 each; 150 miles — \$9.50 each, 200 miles — \$12.50 each; 250 miles — \$15.50 each; 300 miles — \$18.50each. Please pay your share; if drivers have to pay most of the gas bill, they may quit driving.



TOP July-August Bird Sightings **FIVE** in Yakima County

5. A group of ten **Red-necked Phalaropes** swirling in shallow water at the end of the boat ramp at Wenas Lake. A dainty shorebird, it frequently swims in circles to churn prey to the surface; it rarely ventures onto land where its short legs limit it to a halting, clumsy waddle. In the fall, the lake has attracted a peak of 30 birds in 1986. *Seen by Jeff Kozma.*
4. A **Western Screech-Owl** reported by Park Assistant Lois Bourgeois to YVAS members conducting a survey of cavity nesting birds at Fort Simcoe brought the survey to a screeching halt. The owl was roosting in the barracks building; at least our intrepid birders noted a Say's Phoebe at the same spot. *Seen by Richard Repp.*
3. A male **Lesser Goldfinch** on a power line over the fence near 47th & Washington Avenues. "When I first saw it, I noticed a more extensive black cap and larger white wing bar than an American Goldfinch would have." This is possibly only the third record for Yakima County and was yard bird # 104! *Seen by Denny Granstrand*
2. Four species of **hummingbirds (Anna's, Calliope, Rufus, Black-chinned)** at the Parker Heights home of Andy and Ellen Stepniewski. A "four hummer day" at one location is very rare in the county. *Seen by Andy & Ellen Stepniewski.*
1. An immature **Black-throated Sparrow** on Rattlesnake Ridge. It showed a distinctive eyebrow, grayish head and a 'chunky' sparrow bill. News of a fledgling Black-throated Sparrow is **EXCITING!** Andy Stepniewski noted a brood of three in August 1997, the only other solid evidence of breeding by this species in the county. *Seen by Debie Brown.*

— Richard Repp —

When Condors Flew in the Northwest (many, many years ago)

Every so often, we receive a sighting report of a condor in Cowiche Canyon. These sightings are usually some combination of birding inexperience and alcohol, but there was a time when it would not be impossible to see a condor in Yakima County. In the book *Visible Bones, Journeys Across Time in the Columbia River Country*, Jack Nisbet documents “the beautiful buzzard of the Columbia” seen by the Lewis and Clark expedition as they drifted down the Columbia and explored its tributaries.

On its return trip upstream, the Lewis and Clark party stopped on Deer Island, downstream

of Portland, to retrieve seven deer they had shot that morning. They found vultures and eagles had devoured four of the deer, one being dragged thirty feet from the cache site. A description in 1827 said the birds were so gluttonous that they could be approached and killed with a stick.

In the spring of 1835 or 1836, the naturalist John Kirk Townsend, on a visit to the falls of the Willamette River, noticed dozens of turkey vultures sailing overhead. “A rustling noise attracted his attention, ‘and there, to my inexpressible joy, soared the great Californian, seemingly intent upon watching the motions of his puny relatives below.’ The condor wheeled and plunged toward a freshly beached salmon. The naturalist fired, and the vulture fell on the opposite bank of the river.”

Townsend shed his clothes and swam across the river to “secure his coveted specimen. But ‘the huge creature had only been wing-broken, and as I approached him seemed determined not to yield himself a willing captive.’ Having left his gun with his clothes on the opposite shore, the naturalist looked around for a stick, but could not find one. In desperation, he began pelting the condor with stones.” Men, women and children from a nearby village, hearing the com-

motion, came to watch a naked man dancing with an



California Condor in flight
Photo by Noel Snyder

also obtained an juvenile condor, both of which he took back east and sold to John Audubon, who included then in the final volume of his *Birds of America*.

“Whether the Northwest condors were residents or visitors, no one has a definitive explanation for why they disappeared from the Northwest so precipitously after European contact. Salmon continued to fight their way up the Columbia, and whales still washed up on Pacific beaches. ... Whatever the ultimate cause, the beautiful buzzards recorded by those first fortunate visitors seem to have been caught in a narrowing spiral toward extinction.”

The last known sighting of a condor in Washington was around 1897, standing on the ground near Coulee City.

More details and other stories that journey across time in *Visible Bones*, available at your local library.

— Michael Martin —

Late Summer Birds in Cowiche Canyon

Walking through Cowiche Canyon in the cool of the South America. Some species making this incredible early morning throughout the summer, you are bound to migration are present in our northern latitudes for as little as three months.

hear (and, perhaps, see a few) of the many birds that are present all year in this area. black-capped Chickadees, resident year-round in the canyon, are hard to miss “chick-a-zeeing” along the creek. You will also likely hear the beautiful descending chant of the Canyon Wren, a resident of the cliffs. Black-billed Magpies squak “maag . . . maag!”, Common Ravens croak, and House Finches pleasantly warble. overhead, you might spot a Red-tailed Hawk or American Kestrel, or perhaps, a Turkey Vulture.

Look more carefully for migratory birds in the canyon. These birds spend most of their lives in the tropics to the south of the United States, coming north only for a few months to breed, taking advantage of the seasonal explosion in the availability of insects, fruits, berries, and other foods in the higher latitudes. These birds are here mostly between mid-April and early September. Collectively, these visitors are called “Neotropical migrants.” “neo” refers to New World as opposed to Old World (Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc.) tropical regions. Between five and ten billion individual birds of more than 200 species make up the Neotropical migrants; all undertaking a long and hazardous migration twice each year. most reside in a relatively small region from central Mexico to Panama. Only a few species go as far as



Bullock's Oriole
Photo by Mac Knight



Cedar Waxwing
Photo by George Vlahakis

Conspicuous Neotropical migrants in Cowiche Canyon include: Common Nighthawk, Eastern Kingbird, Violet-green and Cliff Swallows, Warbling Vireo (mainly August and September), Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Tanager (migration only), Black-headed Grosbeak and Bullock's Oriole.

Beginning in late July and continuing through August ripening fruits on the shrubs along Cowiche Canyon attract scads of birds. Red-osier Dogwood, Douglas Hawthorn, Serviceberry, Wild Rose, and Bitter Cherry all produce fruit attractive to neotropical migrants. Now is the time to take an early morning walk in Cowiche Canyon to see “frugivores” (fruit eaters) such as Cedar Waxwing, American Robin, Bullock's Oriole, and House Finch. A few species more catholic in their tastes such as Black-headed Grosbeak, warbling Vireo, and orange-crowned Warbler partake of this fare.

On your next visit into Cowiche Canyon, take along your binoculars and field guide. Set out to identify some of these colorful and exotic winged travelers from southern latitudes. Maybe, some of you will join them on their home turf in the tropics this winter.

Remember, the birds figured it out first: go south for the winter!

— Andy Stepniewski —

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.

Sharpen up your shorebirding skills with this tutorial on juvenile Peeps



Least Sandpiper (left) — the smallest shorebird in North America; quite dark with rufous edges on feathers of wings and back; streaky breast; yellow legs.
Western Sandpiper (right) — long, droopy bill; black legs; rufous color in the tertials (the feathers on the back just above the wings).



Semipalmated Sandpiper (above) — appears “scaly” on the wings and back due to pale edges of feathers; black legs; no rufous on back; shorter, blunter bill than Western Sandpiper.



Baird's Sandpiper (above) — largest of these four; black legs; pale edges to feathers on wings and back give it a scaly look; bill is straighter than Western Sandpiper; streaked upper breast.

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.

2007 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

President	Kerry Turley (kdturley@bentonrea.com)	837-6930	Newsletter	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@charter.net)	453-2500
Vice President	Open		Programs	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639
Secretary	Vera Backstrom (mww_327@msn.com)	653-1174	Special Committees:		
Treasurer	Ellen Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639	Bird Rehabilitator	Connie Hughes (CHbirdlady@msn.com)	457-5661
Directors:	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808	Bird Reports	Richard Repp (Rich712@aol.com)	965-1134
	John Hebert (jhebert8235@charter.net)	965-8235	Bluebird Trail	Bettie Soden (sponsorship records)	453-8185
	Bob Wahl (rewahl@televar.com)	452-9183	Courtesy	vacant	
			Important Bird Areas	John Hebert (jhebert@nwinfo.net)	965-8235
Standing (Voting) Committee Chairs:			Newsletter Mailing	Joyce Lucas (ajbirds@aol.com)	966-8115
Audubon Hoegar Preserve	Leslie Wahl (rewahl@televar.com)	452-9183	Publicity	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808
Audubon Refuge Keeper	Kerry Turley (kdturley@bentonrea.com)	837-6930	Social	LaVonne Benner Alice Nevue (alicenevue@charter.net)	453-1096 453-7096
Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp (Rich712@aol.com)	965-1134	Volunteer Recognition	vacant	
Conservation	Michael Martin (Thirdeye@mindspring.com)	698-4430	Webmaster	Mac Knight (mac_knight@charter.net)	457-6410
Education	open		Website	www.yakimaaudubon.org	
Field Trips	Larry Robinson (laris430@yahoo.com)	658-2918	Toppenish NWR CBC	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639
Fund Raising	Dan Kinney (insur3@charter.net)	452-3260	Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@charter.net)	453-2500
Membership	Debie Brown (Sturnella@aol.com)	248-3878	Yakima Valley Audubon Voice Mail		248-1963