

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 39, Number 5

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

May 2010



YVAS CALENDAR

- May 27 Chapter Meeting** at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm.
- June 8 Board Meeting** at Jan Gano's house (402 N. 57th Ave., 966-4539) at 7:00 pm.

Field Trips

- May 26 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the Weikel Road entrance to Cowiche Canyon at 8:00 am.
- May 28-31 Wenas Campout** — Join Auduboners from around Washington for a wonderful weekend of wildlife exploration. See article on page 6.
- May 30 Wenas Area** — Meet leader Richard Repp at the above the fire circle at the Wenas Campground at 9:30 am.
- June 5 Bethel Ridge Burn for Woodpeckers** — Meet leader Jeff Kozma at the 40th Ave., Bi-Mart parking lot at 6:45 am.
- June 9 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the first parking lot inside the gate at Sportsman State Park at 8:00 am.
- June 12 Conboy NWR** — Meet leader Bill Drenguis at the Sears parking lot west of IHOP at 7:00 am.
- June 19 Fort Simcoe Birding and Picnic** — Meet leader Richard Repp at the Sears parking lot west of IHOP at 7:00 am for birding or join the group at Fort Simcoe for the picnic at noon.



MAY PROGRAM ANDY STEPNIENSKI

Charles Darwin: the Right Man, at the Right Place, at the Right Time

with

Dr. Dave Darda

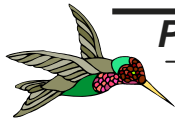
Charles Darwin is seen as the most pivotal person in bringing understanding and acceptance to the concept of evolutionary change in biological organisms. This major shift in the way we view the living world followed quickly after the publication of his major work, "The Origin of Species". As with other major scientific revolutions, Darwin's success can be contributed to several factors, some pertaining to his personal efforts and situation and others having to do with the time and place in which he lived. Dave will examine some of these factors as we move beyond the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of the "Origin".

Dr. Dave Darda has been a professor of Biological Sciences at CWU for the past 23 years. His primary areas of biological interest are vertebrate morphology, evolution, and herpetology. He has conducted fieldwork in California, Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest, and is a coauthor of the book, "Reptiles of Washington and Oregon", published by the Seattle Audubon Society. In 2002, Dr. Darda was honored as the CWU Distinguished University Professor of Teaching. He has twice served as Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, and is currently the Associate Dean of the College of the Sciences.

What's inside the Crier . . .

President's Report	2
Membership Update	2
YVAS at Arborfest	2
Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Updates	3
Field Trips	4
Birds & Words, Photos and Kudos	4, 5
Howard Browers Leaving Toppenish NWR	6
You're Invited to the Wenas Campout	6

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



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BILL DRENGUIS



It must be Spring. I keep seeing yellow birds. So far we have big ones like orioles, and gross beaks, and little ones like all those different warblers. I still am looking for my first chat and tanager of the year.

The chapter just finished another successful Bird a Thon. Thank you to all the contributors (its not too late to donate). The money raised goes to conservation. This year the Bird a Thon money helped to fund two donations that our chapter made. First a donations was made to

National Audubon that is earmarked to help with habitat recover in Louisiana. At this writing, the oil is leaking. (At the rate of an Exxon Valdez every 4 days!) Of course we must keep informed about this disaster.

The second donations we made was to the Cowiche Canyon Conservatory. (Don't forget that Snow Mountain ranch the site of the birdathon is one of their holdings.) This will be a three year sponsorship and our donation is earmarked for land procurement. You really should get out to the Canyon trail and Snow Mountain this month, the birding is great.

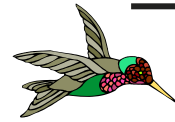
Pine cone bird feeders and volunteers make YVAS Arborfest booth a success!

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society was out in full force at this years Arborfest April 17, sponsored by the Yakima Area Arboretum. This years theme "The Giving Tree" inspired us to devise a project for kids to reinforce the idea of trees providing food for birds. A display of photos showed other things trees provide for birds such as protection, perch and a place to nest.

We used small pine cones (thank you all for the many hundreds of cones) and filled these with suet mixed with bird seed. Although this sounds like a real messy project, we had plenty of help, all with rubber gloves, to assemble each kids bird feeder (complete with a string to hang it). Each child thus went on his way with their very own bird feeder.

Thanks to the following volunteers from Audubon, YELF, Arboretum, and West Valley High School who made this booth a success:

Elizabeth Bohn
Elise Cardenas
Justine Faith-Repp
Ilene Gerardi, her daughter Gracie, and friend, Josie
Joie Howell
Richard Repp



MEMBERSHIP

DEBIE BROWN

Thank you for renewing your YVAS Membership!

Yakima: Sara Cate, Earl Derry, Jeff & Cindy Kozma, Gary Miller & Claire Carpenter, Richard Needham & Helen Harvey, Jheri Ketcham, Joan Miler, Gary & Sharon Slagle,

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



Volunteers help kids make pine cone bird feeders at the YVAS booth at Arborfest at the Yakima Area Arboretum

YVAS Board supports National Audubon's efforts to protect wildlife and clean-up oil along Gulf Coast

At our last board meeting, board members voted to donate \$500 to the National Audubon Society to help support their efforts to assist in dealing with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Millions of birds are nesting and breeding in the path of what may well become America's worst environmental catastrophe. Oil continues to stream uncontrolled into the Gulf of Mexico from the site of a destroyed drilling platform. The deadly and growing slick has already reached sensitive coastal areas of Louisiana. Globally significant Important Bird Areas - essential to survival of already-imperiled species - are at risk from Louisiana to Florida's Gulf Coast. The danger is real for all kinds of birds.

Audubon is working on site with several partners including the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, National Wildlife Federation and The Nature Conservancy. Their efforts include:

- Marshalling volunteer resources to help with wildlife rescue, clean-up, and to support emergency responders
- Monitoring response efforts and guiding them toward designated Important Bird areas and sites in need of special protection

- Researching bird and habitat impacts to inform recovery efforts
- Leading restoration of Louisiana coastal resources for the long-term and
- Alerting the public to risks to birds and fragile resources

We encourage each member to consider making a contribution to help with this massive, long-term effort. To make a donation, visit:

www.audubon.org

If you prefer, you may send your donation by regular mail. Please mail contributions to:

National Audubon Society
225 Varick Street
New York, NY 10014
Attn: Gulf Coast Oil Spill Disaster

— Angie Begosh —

Gulf Coast oil spill could eclipse Exxon Valdez

VENICE, La. – An oil spill that threatened to eclipse even the Exxon Valdez disaster spread out of control and drifted inexorably toward the Gulf Coast on Thursday as fishermen rushed to scoop up shrimp and crews spread floating barriers around marshes.

The spill was both bigger and closer than imagined — five times larger than first estimated, with the leading edge just three miles from the Louisiana shore. Authorities said it could reach the Mississippi River delta by Thursday night.

"It is of grave concern," David Kennedy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration told The Associated Press. "I am frightened. This is a very, very big thing. And the efforts that are going to be required to do anything about it, especially if it continues on, are just mind-boggling."

The oil slick could become the nation's worst environmental disaster in decades, threatening hundreds of species of fish, birds and other wildlife along the Gulf Coast, one of the world's richest seafood grounds, teeming with shrimp, oysters and other marine life.

The leak from the ocean floor proved to be far bigger than initially reported, contributing to a growing sense among many in Louisiana that the government failed them again, just as it did during Hurricane Katrina. President Barack Obama dispatched Cabinet officials to deal with the crisis.

Cade Thomas, a fishing guide in Venice, worried that his livelihood will be destroyed. He said he did not know whether

to blame the Coast Guard, the federal government or oil company BP PLC.

"They lied to us. They came out and said it was leaking 1,000 barrels when I think they knew it was more. And they weren't proactive," he said. "As soon as it blew up, they should have started wrapping it with booms."

The Coast Guard worked with BP, which operated the oil rig that exploded and sank last week, to deploy floating booms, skimmers and chemical dispersants, and set controlled fires to burn the oil off the water's surface. The Coast Guard urged the company to formally request more resources from the Defense Department. A BP executive said the corporation would "take help from anyone."

Government officials said the blown-out well 40 miles offshore is spewing five times as much oil into the water as originally estimated — about 5,000 barrels, or 200,000 gallons, a day.

At that rate, the spill could easily eclipse the worst oil spill in U.S. history — the 11 million gallons that leaked from the grounded tanker Exxon Valdez in Alaska's Prince William Sound in 1989 — in the three months it could take to drill a relief well and plug the gushing well 5,000 feet underwater on the sea floor.

Ultimately, the spill could grow much larger than the Valdez because Gulf of Mexico wells typically hold many times more oil than a single tanker.



FIELD TRIPS

ANGIE BEGOSH

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.

If you are planning on going on a field trip, please call or e-mail the trip leader to tell them you will be there. If no one calls, the leader may decide to sleep in. That may will leave you standing in a parking lot by yourself.



May 26 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk — Meet the group at the Weikel Road entrance to Cowiche Canyon at **8:00 am**.
May 28-31 Wenas Campout — See article on page 6.
May 30 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 bluebirds, Tree Swallows and House Wrens. Meet leader Richard Repp at the bench above the fire circle in the Wenas Campground at **9:30 am**.

June 9 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk - Meet the group at the Weikel Road entrance to Cowiche Canyon at **8:00 am** for our annual search for Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bullock's Oriole, and Lazuli Bunting.

June 5 Bethel Ridge Burn for Woodpeckers — The Forest Service staged control burns on Bethel Ridge last fall, which burned a large area of trees high on the ridge. Many woodpeckers were seen there last fall and the focus of the trip will be to find nesting woodpeckers. Meet leader Jeff Kozma at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot at **6:45 am**.

June 9 Wednesday Morning Bird Walk — Meet the group at the first parking lot inside the gate at Sportsman State Park at **8:00 am**.

June 12 Conboy NWR with Ralf Rogers — YVAS field trips to the Lyle area have spent some time at Conboy NWR in past years but this time we will be joining a knowledgeable, local expert, Ralf Rogers. Ralf will lead us to some of the fine birding areas of this wonderful refuge. Meet Bill Drenguis at the Sears parking lot west of IHOP at **7:00 am** for this all-day trip.

June 19 Fort Simcoe Birding and Potluck Picnic — Here is a great opportunity for families to enjoy leisurely birding and a potluck picnic at Fort Simcoe State Park. Meet for birding at the Sears parking lot west of IHOP at **8:00 am**. Join the group for the picnic at the picnic area at the south end of the Fort Simcoe parking lot at **noon**.



BIRDS & WORDS. PHOTOS & KUDOS

RICHARD REPP

At press time, YVAS's Birdathon centered at Snow Mountain Ranch was still in the future. However, a preview can be tweaked from the visits of **Andy and Ellen Stepniewski** on April 14 and 19. The first visit produced 47 species with 25 **Golden-crowned Kinglets**. The second visit trumpeted 52 species with an avalanche of over 600 **Greater-white Fronted Geese** high overhead while 350 **White-crowned Sparrows** flaked about on the ground. **Sage Thrashers** numbered two and three, respectively.

Webmaster **John Hebert** has been celebrating spring all across Yakima County. An early trek on foot to the Wenas Campground roused **Red-naped Sapsucker** and **Chipping Sparrows**. A dog walk along the Poppoff Trail barked up five **Nashville Warblers** and **two Orange-crowned Warblers** in a single tree. A shopping spree at Costco rang up two **Black-necked Stilts** in the containment pond. Flushed at the Grandview Waste Water Treatment ponds were a drake **Blue-winged Teal**, several **Common Yellowthroats**, a brilliant drake **Eurasian Wigeon**, and four peeps...**Least Sandpipers** piping. In the midst of all that travel, John spent a day at home, freshening the house of winter blahs by leaving the kitchen door open. An uninvited, yet welcome, visitor took a seat on John's table...one last gasp of a departing season, a **Winter Wren!**

Jeff Kozma has also had a busy season. In late April, Jeff trolled the Tieton River and hooked several Harlequin Ducks. Passing through Ellensburg Pass in the Wenas, a male **Calliope Hummingbird** stood guard over a blooming alder shrub.



Golden-crowned Kinglet
Photo by George Vlahakis

Birds & Words, Photos and Kudos continued from page 4

As Jeff's office is near the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge, a 50 minute lunch break sandwiched 29 species including 17 spicy **Cinnamon Teal** and 17 dressed for dinner **Black-necked Stilts** at the intersection of Pumphouse and Old Goldendale Roads.

On April 15 when several of us procrastinators were filing tax returns, **Debie Brown** leisurely picked up two more exemptions as a pair of **Swainson's Hawks** checked into their Konnowac Pass abode. Moving west to Terrace Heights, **Mike and Alice Roper** were able to audit their 41st Street yard list by adding a **Lewis's Woodpecker**. And even farther to the west near 18th Avenue and Bonnie Doon, **Stan and Lori Isley** did not tax their brains to identify yard bird number 76, a brilliant no-brainer **Lazuli Bunting**. More problematic on their seed budget, were the droves of **Evening Grosbeaks** that have lingered for two weeks. Think IRS agents can be intrusive? Consider the plight of the **Bald Eagles** nesting just south of Rosa Dam. Their nest egg had barely rolled over when **Jan and Judy Gano** used a scope to spy on two fluffy fresh eaglets...two new dependents for the 2010 tax year!

Last September our chapter meeting program was given by **Larry Schwitters**, Audubon project manager for "Vaux's Happening." Larry recounted how **Vaux's Swifts** roost in chimneys from California to British Columbia in both spring and fall migration. Of the thirty-nine known sites in Washington State, most are located west of the Cascades. Locally, the Swifts have been utilizing the chimneys of the Sawyer mansion for years. So when **Fred Erickson** called the YVAS hotline in late April to report their return, **Denny**



Calliope Hummingbird
Photo by Mike Roper

Granstrand and I independently hit the streets in sunset chimney crusades.

On April 30, a stroll along Third Street to check out stacks of bricks at the main library and the county courthouse was interrupted by a sift of swifts sneaking into the black chimney at the Yakima Herald Republic building fifteen minutes prior to sunset. On five of the next six days, 300 to 500 swifts were tallied each evening near sunset. The exception was May 3, when afternoon winds gusted to 40 mph. That evening, **Steve and Marcia Shotwell** braved the poor weather conditions and still managed to catch 67 Swifts swirl into the smokestack. On May 4, **Greg and Elizabeth Bohn's** streak of seven consecutive evening observations began, culminating with 1,194 Swifts heralded entering the Republic's chimney on May 7. According to Mr. Schwitters, that is the largest roost ever reported east of the Cascades! The number dropped to 467 on the next evening before plummeting to 43 on May 9 and a mere seven on the 10th.

According to [The Birds of North America Online](#), the breeding range of Vaux's Swifts stretches from Northern California to British Columbia with a bulge to the east encompassing northern Idaho and western Montana. "Best known for its quick flight and dazzling aerial agility, this bird seldom perches

except when nesting or roosting, and it probably mates on the wing. Hollow trees are its favored nesting and roosting sites (chimneys are used on occasion), making this swift vulnerable to loss of old-growth forest. Indeed, recent declines in Vaux's Swift populations have been documented in the Pacific Northwest where mature forest is dwindling. Its nest, an open half-circle of loosely woven twigs, is glued together and to the inside of a hollow tree or chimney with the bird's sticky saliva. In migration, large flocks of this species circle roosts at dusk, feigning entry until the first few birds take the plunge—then the whole flock follows abruptly, literally pouring out of the sky and disappearing into the roost tree." The Swifts nest in the mixed conifer belt of Washington State and are not found in Valley lowlands except in migration.

The fall migration of Swifts will begin in September. Are there other chimneys in the Yakima Valley that host these evening roosts at sundown? Probably so...will you be the one to discover yet another site? Mark your calendar, and then get out there. Make Schwitter's heart twitter!

As Andy and Ellen Stepniewski were eating breakfast on May 14, they heard a fluttering noise coming from their living room. When they checked, they found a Vaux's Swift that had evidently flown down their chimney and ended up in the living room. They soon caught it and were impressed with the prominent spines of the tail feathers, which Andy surmised helps them cling to the vertical surface of a chimney.

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



Lazuli Bunting
Photo by Mac Knight



Vaux's Swift in Andy's hand
Photo by Ellen Stepniewski

Howard Browsers is leaving the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge

At the Migratory Bird Day celebration May 8, at the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge, wildlife biologist Howard Browsers announced that he would be leaving TNWR (or more correctly, the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex) for a new assignment with the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah.

Though Howard has not been officially assigned to TNWR for several years, he has been synonymous with our local refuge in the eyes and hearts of YVAS members. During his eleven-year tenure in South-central Washington, Howard has been the face of the refuge at Migratory Bird Day celebrations where his mist net/ bird banding demonstrations have been a huge hit. On several occasions, he has participated in the Toppenish Christmas Bird Count and, when he has not been present, he has granted permission for YVAS participants to tour many areas of the refuge. The same is true for YVAS Birdathon efforts, where more than a few birds have been tallied at the refuge that were not detected anywhere else in the county.

A favorite memory for many of us occurred during the 2007 Migratory Bird Day event when an injured adult Bald Eagle was discovered in a shallow canal along the refuge's northern fence line. Howard reacted quickly by sloshing into the water, dress uniform be darned, and wrapping the injured bird in cloth. Both emerged unscathed from the ditch and posed for photos in a remarkably short time. Though the eagle never regained its ability to fly, it has prospered as a live display bird, delighting countless admirers.

No question that we will miss Howard but we wish him well in this new career opportunity. The new refuge is gain-



Howard Browsers holds a newly-captured, injured Bald Eagle on Migratory Bird Day, 2007

ing a gem of a man who will flourish with the 200-plus species totaling over a million individual birds at the new location.

— Richard Repp —

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE WENAS CAMPOUT

May 28-31, 2010

For decades Audubon families have been camping over Memorial Day weekend at the Wenas Creek Campground.

See our beautiful website: www.wenasaudubon.org

Officially named the Hazel Wolf Wenas Creek Bird Sanctuary, it's located SW of Ellensburg, in an "Important Bird Area" and has been assured of protective status. The free, "primitive" campground along the north fork of Wenas Creek has exceptional opportunities for birding, botanizing and enjoying spring in the eastern foothills of the Cascades.

There are wonderful field trips scheduled, and there will be an old-fashioned campfire in our "approved" fire-pit device each evening. We have a program item or two, singing, story telling and recapping the sightings of the day.

Please visit the Wenas Website, beautifully done by Webmaster Michael Hobbs. You'll see Hazel Wolf's familiar smiling face and get lots of downloadable information about

our campout: www.wenasaudubon.org

There are checklists of birds, and wildflowers, outline of field trips and program, directions to the campground, and lots of photos.

For people who don't "do websites," contact me and I'll send you printed information.

Bring friends & family, and join us at Wenas Memorial Day Weekend. Stay for as many days and/or nights as you want - May 28-31, 2010. See you there.

— Helen Engle —
hengle@inet.com
253-564-3112

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 _____
 E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

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**

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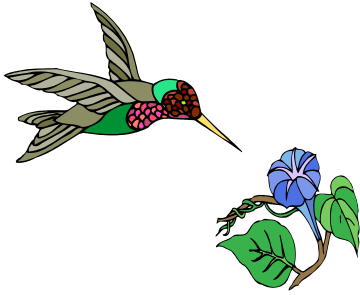
Send the form and your check to : YVAS Membership
 P.O. Box 2823
 Yakima, WA 98907-2823

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

Yakima Valley Audubon Society
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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.

2010 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

President	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808	Membership	Debie Brown Sturnella@aol.com	248-3878
Vice President	Open		Newsletter Editor	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	453-2500
Past-president	Kerry Turley (kdturley@embarqmail.com)	837-6930	Programs	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639
Secretary	Vera Backstrom (vback47@gmail.com)	731-2103	Special Committees:		
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	Bob Wahl (reljwahl@msn.com)	452-9183	Courtesy	Open	
			Important Bird Areas	John Hebert hejohn1126@msn.com	965-8235
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Audubon Refuge Keeper	Kerry Turley (kdturley@embarqmail.com)	837-6930	Social	Open	
Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp (Rich712@aol.com)	965-1134	Volunteer Recognition	vacant	
Conservation	Open		Webmaster	John Hebert (hejohn1126@msn.com)	965-8235
Education	Elizabeth Bohn (elizabethannbohn@yahoo.com)	901-1886	Website	www.yakimaaudubon.org	
Field Trips	Angie Begosh (mollybot5@hotmail.com)	834-1528	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@gmail.com)	453-2500
			Yakima Valley Audubon Voice Mail		248-1963