



Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

A chapter of the National Audubon Society

vancouveraudubon.org

Volume 45, Number 7

October 2020

Eastern Washington Wildfires and Wildlife

By Kim Marie Thorburn, MD, MPH

The fires have been (and since uncontained, continue to be) devastating. Washington's shrub-steppe ecosystem was already one of its most endangered at 40% of its historic extent due to agricultural and other human development fragmentation. Huge swaths of WDFW wildlife areas in Okanogan, Douglas, and Lincoln Counties that are owned as protected areas for Greater Sage-Grouse and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse have been consumed.

The day after what we're calling the "worst Labor Day ever," initial on-the-ground assessment found 33 Sharp-tailed and Sage-Grouse leks burned in Douglas and Okanogan Counties. Sage-Grouse winter habitat has been severely impacted on the Douglas Plateau. I haven't yet checked the status of the Pearl Canyon fire today to see if

blew up in Central Ferry Canyon. That would consume more Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat. In Lincoln County, with which I'm most familiar, 90% of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area burned. We've lost all Sharp-tailed



Swanson Lakes entry sign pre-fire, photo by Kim Thorburn

Grouse leks and the only Greater Sage-Grouse lek. The Sage-Grouse population was a restored of a previously extirpated population. It had been in precarious shape so we figure it's the nail in the coffin.

What we saw after the 2015 Carleton Complex fires was that Sharp-tailed Grouse counts (based on lek surveys) plummet for a year or two but once the grass grows back, the birds return. One positive piece is that all of our wildlife areas have undergone extensive field restorations and with some minimal post-fire re-seeding, the grass and forbs can return healthily, supporting Sharp-tailed reproductive areas. Wintering shrubs and trees can be a



Post-fire walk into Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, photo by Kim Thorburn

(Continued on page 8)

Did you renew your VAS membership last month?

Vancouver Audubon relies on your support! We are a volunteer-run organization, providing a voice in southwest Washington, promoting nature through education, involvement, stewardship, enjoyment and advocacy. Now, it's even easier to join or renew!

[Visit our website for a secure transaction](#) using your credit/debit card or PayPal account. (Or, if you prefer, you can still submit the form on page 2 with a check via mail).



NOT LIVE BUT JUST AS LIVELY!

Trivia Night - Musical Performances
 Family Crafts - Nature Photography
 Photo Contest - Local Vendor Products
 Watercolor Tutorial - Virtual Walks
 Ethnobotany - Chapotile Plankhouse
 And much more!
FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

All the fun you've grown to love from the festival just one click away!

OCTOBER 2ND & 3RD

AT YOUR LOCAL FACEBOOK PAGE

<https://www.facebook.com/RidgefieldBirdFest/>



Vancouver Audubon Society

PO Box 1966 | Vancouver, WA 98668-1966

Website | vancouveraudubon.org

Facebook | [@VancouverAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/VancouverAudubon)

Chartered December 18, 1975

Officers, Board Members, & Chairs

President | Sam Neuffer | 206-930-1032 | samneuffer@gmail.com

Vice President | position open | contact us if interested!

Secretary | Craig Wallace | craig@wallfam.net

Treasurer | Joan Durgin | 360-834-5621 | jdurgin1@hotmail.com

Conservation | Gretchen Starke | 360-892-8617 | gstarke@pacifier.com

Conservation | Susan Saul | 360-892-5643 | susan103saul@gmail.com

Editor | Cindy McCormack | 509-939-4448 | vas@vancouveraudubon.org

Education | Sam Neuffer | 206-930-1032 | samneuffer@gmail.com

Field Trips | Randy Hill | 360-975-2573 | re_hill@q.com

Mailings | Bonnie Bingle | 360-576-0330 | audubonnie@comcast.net

Membership | George Mayfield | 360-687-0360 | gomayf@comcast.net

Programs | Don Rose | drose1103@gmail.com

Refreshments | Cindy Mayfield | 360-687-0360 | gomayf@comcast.net

Sightings | Wilson Cady | 360-835-5947 | gorgebirds@juno.com

Website | Cindy McCormack | vas@vancouveraudubon.org

The Columbia Flyway is published monthly September through June (except January).

Vancouver Audubon Board Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month August through May in various locations (announced in newsletter).

Membership meetings and programs are held on the first Tuesday of the month September through June (except January).

Program meetings are held at the [West Park Community Room at 610 Esther St.](#) (just across the street from the west end of Esther Short Park, or kitty-corner from City Hall). Parking lot can be accessed from Esther Street. There is an entrance at either side of the building.

Vancouver Audubon believes in the wisdom of nature's design and promotes this through education, involvement, stewardship, enjoyment and advocacy.



Vancouver Audubon Society Membership & Donation Form

Membership dues support education, speaker programs, newsletter, and conservation projects.

_____ I wish to become a member/renew membership to Vancouver Audubon for \$20/year.

_____ I wish to support Vancouver Audubon with an additional donation of \$ _____

_____ I wish only to support Vancouver Audubon with a donations of \$ _____

**Membership Renewal
date:
September 1st**

Please include this form and make check payable to and send to:

Vancouver Audubon, P.O. Box 1966, Vancouver, WA 98668-1966

-OR- join/renew/donate online at vancouveraudubon.org

For more information:

George Mayfield 360-687-0360 (membership)

VAS will not share your information with any other organization.

VAS is a non-profit organization under US IRS Code Section 501(c)(3).

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____ (req'd for newsletter)

For additional information on membership to National Audubon (Chapter # Y13), go to <http://www.audubon.org/>

Programs

Vancouver Audubon Programs for this Fall

We learned much about Vaux's Swifts during our first virtual meeting earlier this month. It went almost without a glitch. Not bad for a first try! October will be our second virtual meeting using Zoom, which allows Vancouver Audubon Chapter members to participate in educational presentations through their home computer, laptop, or even your smart phone. Members will receive an invitation in their email to join the virtual meeting at the designated meeting time through a link in the email. Members will sign in to their own free Zoom account by giving their email address. An internet connection is required. Members will be able to interact with written questions at the end of the program.

What's on tap for this fall?

The following programs are planned for this fall. All meetings will start at 7:00 pm. We hope you will join us!

October 6 – PANAMA'S CLOUD FOREST – THE JUNCTION OF BIRD COMMUNITIES —Thomas Bancroft, Ph.D.

Take a virtual trip to Panama and be immersed in the sounds of Western Panama's cloud forests as Tom expertly guides you through gorgeous bird life, exotic flora, and a quick trip through geologic history to understand how the isthmus of Panama has influenced evolution of some of our common North American birds. The mountains of Western Panama are a mixing pot for birds. Neotropical migrants come to winter or pass through on their travels. Altitudinal migrants move in and out with the seasons, and then there are the permanent residents that make up a complex and diverse component. Central America is an active geological area, and over the last ten million years, the formation of the Isthmus has had a profound influence on the bird communities found throughout North and South America, including those in Washington State. Come learn more about this fascinating place, its influence on the Western Hemisphere, some of the flora and fauna, and listen to sounds from the cloud forest.

November 10* – SEABIRDS OF THE OREGON COAST (*NOTE THE DATE CHANGE TO 2ND TUESDAY)

Joe Liebezeit, Staff Scientist & Avian Conservation Program Manager for Portland Audubon, will talk about the seabirds of the Oregon coast, their habitat, issues that are threatening their populations, and recent successes at protecting populations, including the Oregon Marine Reserves program and the Rocky Habitat Management Plan.

December 1 - SURVIVAL BY DEGREES, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIRD POPULATIONS

Teri Anderson, Washington State Audubon chapter network manager, and **Trina Bayard**, Washington State Audubon Director of Bird Conservation, will be giving a presentation on the landmark report, Survival by Degrees, that describes the projected impact of climate change on North American bird species.

Contact Don Rose for more information: drose1103@gmail.com

Field Trips

All field trips and bird walks are postponed until COVID-19 restrictions allow for group gatherings or until it is safe to do so.



We miss birding and exploring with you!



Zoom Meetings

Chances are, you have had the opportunity to participate in a meeting, lecture, or class via Zoom since the pandemic restrictions began. If not, or you just want a little help, here is a [link for instructions for participants](#).

Although it's not the way we prefer to host meetings (which would be in person!), it's fairly easy, so we hope you will join us for the upcoming programs. VAS will be sending out invitations to our membership before an upcoming meeting. You will receive a confirmation email, which will include a "Join Meeting" link.

Oppose the Massive Fracked Gas Refinery at Kalama

By Susan Saul

The fracked gas industry wants to build the world's largest fracked gas-to-methanol refinery in Kalama. The proposed refinery would consume a staggering amount of fracked gas, more than all of Washington's gas-fired power plants combined. The project would convert the fracked gas to methanol, which would be shipped overseas to be burned as fuel or used as feedstock to make plastics.

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has released a new Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to address the climate impacts of the proposed plant. The SEIS explains that the refinery would cause a staggering 4.6 million tons of climate pollution every year for 40 years. It would contribute to a significant global increase in greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions would undercut Washington's efforts to move towards a clean energy economy.

The SEIS reveals what the project's backers have long denied: that the refinery would cause more methanol to be burned as fuel in China and result in significant methane pollution from fracking. The methanol refinery would quickly become Washington's largest climate polluter by 2025. It would use more fracked gas than all of Washington's gas-fired power plants combined. In addition, up to 6 tankers per month would transport methanol to China, adding to the total greenhouse gas emissions of this facility.

**Comment
Period Closes
October 2**

The Kalama project will drive fracking and methane pollution. Because of its enormous demand for fracked gas, the proposed refinery would be responsible for increased fracking and the methane pollution that fracking causes.

Because methane escapes during the fracking process, this "upstream" pollution will exceed one million tons of greenhouse gas pollution each year, using even the most conservative estimates of methane leakage.

Combustion of methanol from the Kalama project will lead to a large "downstream" source of greenhouse gas pollution. Although the proponents tried for years to claim that no one would ever burn the methanol produced in Kalama, the SEIS shows that the Kalama methanol refinery would lead to more methanol being burned as fuel in China.

Unfortunately, the SEIS also relies on speculative mitigation and an unenforceable market analysis to prop up this dirty, climate-wrecking proposal. The SEIS does not offer any proof for its theory that the Kalama plant will displace worse sources of pollution in China.

You can weigh in against this fracked gas project! The comment period closes Oct. 2. You can use Ecology's [online comment form](#) or [sign a petition](#) with Columbia Riverkeeper.

Sign on for \$140 Million for the WWRP

By Susan Saul

Whatever you do outdoors, chances are, you've seen more people than ever joining you this year. More and more people are discovering the mental and physical benefits our outdoors provide, especially during challenging times. As our population grows, as more people get outside, we need to provide more opportunities for communities to access safe and welcoming outdoor areas. We also need to protect and restore lands for the plants and animals who share these places with us. That's why the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition is asking the Governor and

Legislature to invest \$140 million in the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Program. The WWRP, part of the state capital budget, funds outdoor projects all across the state, from urban parks to working farms to mountain trails. [Join the Coalition in asking for this important investment](#) in our outdoors, our economy, our way of life, and our future.



Audubon Council of Washington Goes Virtual in 2020

October 2-3, 2020

By Susan Saul

This annual gathering is a chance to connect with your fellow Audubon chapters in Washington to share ideas for how to build resilience and adapt to our changing environment. Share your best ideas on how to continue our important work, and discuss strategies with your fellow chapters. This is an adapted ACOW for difficult times and everyone is encouraged to attend whichever part of the agenda seems most useful to you.

Friday, Oct. 2, is the annual meeting of the Washington State Audubon Conservation Council from 2-4 pm. Much of the agenda will be devoted to reviewing the 2020 Legislative session and looking forward to the 2021 session and organizing for the Audubon in Washington Advocacy

Day at the Legislature.

Saturday, Oct. 3, will be the annual meeting of the Audubon Council of Washington from 9:30 am to noon. We will meet Deborah Jensen, the new executive director of Audubon Washington. The meeting will include break out groups to discuss how chapters are adapting their work to digital platforms and social distancing.

[Registration is free](#) and the meeting will be held over Zoom.

https://audubon.zoom.us/meeting/register/_Jcrde2gqD0pE9GHKzk28vBXUu78d4PdU4mO

No Bonney Butte HawkWatch for 2020

After long and thoughtful consideration, HawkWatch International is temporarily suspending operations at five of our HawkWatch research sites for the 2020 season. This difficult decision is not reached lightly, and is based on health recommendations regarding COVID-19, as well as recommendations from groups like the Bird Banding Lab and North American Banding Council. Scientists the world over continue to urge distancing and travel restrictions as the most effective steps to take in slowing spread and protecting communities, and most project that these steps will be needed into 2021 in a best-case scenario. As a science-based organization that hopes our science-based findings are heard and heeded, it seems important and prudent that we do the same, however disappointing doing so may be.

One of the unique aspects of HWI's migration monitoring network is that a majority of our sites are located in remote wilderness areas. This means that field crew members don't have regular access to services, and are living together in small, communal areas. This becomes a major source of concern for social distancing during a three-month season that regularly includes sub-freezing temperatures and inclement weather. The remote nature of many of our sites also poses elevated concerns in the event that anyone requires medical attention, something we were not willing to risk.

The HawkWatches that will not be operating for the 2020

season are: Chelan Ridge (WA), Bonney Butte (OR), Commissary Ridge (WY), Goshute Mountains (NV), and Manzano Mountains (NM). Thankfully, we plan to continue operations at HawkWatches at the Grand Canyon (AZ) and Corpus Christi (TX). These

two sites are situated in a way that better allows for social distancing and medical access for field crew.

Fall migration counts are a core piece of our mission, but HWI is ultimately confident that suspending them for a year will not impact our long-term work, and will ensure the safety of both the hard-working field crew and the wild birds they study. It will also allow the HWI team time to improve operation plans at all of our sites, create new activities and content for visitors, and dig into our 30+ years of data and write some scientific papers.

Thank you for your continued support. We hope you will continue to follow this year's fall migration at the Grand Canyon and Corpus Christi, and join us at full capacity again in 2021. If you have questions about our decision, please contact us at hwi@hawkwatch.org.

Dr. Dave Oleyar
Director of Long-term Monitoring & Community Science



EAST CASCADES AUDUBON SOCIETY WINTER RAPTOR SURVEY PROJECT

The 16th winter of raptor survey work for the East Cascades Audubon Society chapter based in Bend, OR was completed March 31st. The Winter Raptor Survey Project (sponsored by ECAS), originally started as an Oregon project, is a very large citizen science project that covers the 4 Pacific Northwest states of Oregon, Idaho, Washington, and a small part of Northern California. The project is designed to enumerate wintering populations of birds of prey with once a month surveys being conducted during December through February with optional surveys additionally completed in November and March. We ended this winters effort with a total of 392 active routes covering more than 24,800 miles of transects. All project data is portrayed in a collection of charts and maps that can be found on the [ECAS website](#) and is also provided to The Peregrine Fund for storage in their database and analysis.

Prior to this past winter, 22 routes in WA extended from the Cathlamet area along the WA side of the Columbia River all the way east to the Tri Cities area. For this past winter, an extensive expansion effort occurred adding 66 new WA routes, mostly throughout eastern WA. Three routes were added to the SW coastal region, one covering the Long Beach peninsula, one covering the Chinook-Naselle area and the third covering the Grays River area. All three were very successful survey efforts, coming up with a total of 9 species (Red-tailed Hawk, American



*Immature Bald Eagle,
photo by Bud McCormack*

prepared by the Project Coordinator. They are asked to commit to doing one survey per month during the three month primary survey period and they can conduct the surveys based on their own life schedules. They should have a good working knowledge of raptor ID and have at least a pair of binoculars to use (spotting scopes suggested but not required). They are asked to drive their routes in a manner that will allow for thorough examination of habitat to get the most birds for the time spent on the surveys and can hopefully conduct these surveys during favorable weather conditions when most birds are out and about.

The expansion effort this past winter was a tremendous success but there is still room for more routes for next season. Besides the three routes mentioned, other established routes in the SW quadrant of WA include two in the Cathlamet area, two in the Ridgefield area, and one each in the Longview, Woodland, and Vancouver Lake areas. More routes have already been prepared for next winter and they include coverage in the Raymond-Holcomb, Raymond-Tokeland, Boistfort-PeEll, Centralia, Chehalis SE, Chehalis West, Toledo, Winlock, LaCenter, Monte Vista, Brush Prairie - Battle Ground, Washougal - Fern Prairie, and Washougal East areas.

It is our firm hope that those reading this article will be interested in participating in this project next winter by taking on one or more of these available new routes. You will be joining a cadre of hundreds of enthusiastic raptor lovers that have managed to conduct over 12,000 surveys in the 16 years of this project. More than 52,500 hours have been provided by project volunteers to conduct these surveys with more than 90% volunteer return rate each winter, once you get involved you don't want to quit :). If this sounds like something that you would like to get involved with next winter, please email me with your route choice. I will provide the necessary items, including a project survey protocol, to get you started and be available any time to help you enjoy the experience!

Jeff Fleischer, Project Coordinator
raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com
Winter Raptor Survey Project
East Cascades Audubon Society - Bend, OR



Barred Owl, photo by Bud McCormack

Kestrel, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Cooper's Hawk, Barn Owl, and Barred Owl) with Bald Eagles the most prevalent species found. To date, 31 species of birds of prey have been recorded on project surveys.

Volunteers for the project are provided a survey route

Little Tyrants

By Thomas Bancroft

"Dzeer" came from over the marsh. It was high in pitch and buzzy in nature. Twice, the call filled the air, and then there was a pause before it appeared more toward my left. I scanned the air above the cattails along Mary Anne Creek. My binoculars were held just below my eyes in the ready mode. There it was, maybe ten feet above the vegetation, making a loop out from a dead snag, an Eastern Kingbird.

This flycatcher breeds across eastern North America and west into Oregon and Washington and then north through much of Canada.

Incredibly, they fly to South America for the winter and spend those months in the western part of the Amazon Basin, some going down

as far as northern Argentina. I'd come to Washington's Okanogan Highlands in hopes of finding a few, and by mid-June, they should be in the middle of their nesting.

She looked elegant sitting back on that snag, bigger than many passerines, but still, she weighs only 40 grams, the equivalent of three tablespoons of butter. Her black and white body glimmered in the sunlight, and I tried to comprehend her journey of the last several months. I didn't actually know the sex of this individual, but her elegance gave that impression. If she'd wintered in Northern Argentina, she'd have traveled over 6,000 miles to reach here, all on her own power. Perhaps, this small bird had flown north to the Yucatan Peninsula, then across the Gulf in one flight, to Texas or Louisiana, and then moved up to here. To think, she probably fueled that trip on flying insects and fruit!

She suddenly shot up, flying rapidly toward a crow that was cruising across the valley. She began to chase that black bird, diving on its back repeatedly. Kingbirds are highly aggressive and will attack crows, hawks, and ravens that dare enter their territories. Their generic name, *Tyrannus*, means "tyrant." They will forcefully defend their nests and will try to dominate other birds.

However, in winter, these kingbirds travel in flocks, feeding on fruit, and apparently, they migrate in flocks, too. So different from the tenacious, feisty things here in the summer. Right now, I suspect that anything that moved might be attacked. But in winter, apparently, they seem more like a roving band of sorority and fraternity

friends; smoking cigars, drinking margaritas or gin and tonics, and looking for fruity hors d'oeuvres. It would be fun to see that communal behavior.

I'd first seen this species when I was in high school. In the late 1960s, several buddies and I had gone on a weekend to northwestern Pennsylvania. Its elegant black head and back with that white underbelly really stood out, but the



Eastern Kingbird, photo by Thomas Bancroft

white tip to its tail left a mark in my mind. It was as if the bird was dressed in a tuxedo, and his tail had an extra accent. I hadn't expected to find one on my first trip to the Okanogan a few years ago. It was a fun surprise that brought back fond memories of spring and summer birding trips when I lived in the east.

On this trip, I'd seen Eastern Kingbirds around Forde and Connors Lakes in the Sinlahekin Valley and now here in the Okanogan Highlands. Each time their classiness would grab my attention, and I'd stand watching them. They form monogamous pairs, and both members must work together to raise the young. If they both survive the winter, they will likely meet and become a couple again. Ornithologists, though, have discovered that many nests have at least one young fathered by a different male. Pairs only raise one brood per year. The fledglings are fed for up to five weeks after they leave the nest. Catching insects on the wing is demanding and requires a great deal of skill. These parents put that time into their young. Cold, wet weather will decrease flying insects and make it difficult for parents to provide for hungry young. It made me think of my daughter, who now lives in Australia. Had I done enough?

(Continued on page 8)

From the VAS Board

Wow, we are heading into October already! What happened to summer?! The board seems to be settling into our new virtual board meetings and correspondence. We are back to meeting regularly at the end of the month, although not in person. While it isn't as much fun as getting together one evening a month, it certainly has been faster!

We had a successful first virtual program last month, with only a small glitch when the slide presenter lost her connection. Everything got back on track quickly and Larry Schwitters provided some great information on Vaux's Swift migration.

October's program will be presented by Tom Bancroft and promises to be fascinating. I have participated in an earlier version of this presentation on Panama's Cloud Forest and can highly recommend it. You have probably already enjoyed one of Tom's essays in our newsletter (including this one!). I hope you can join us and enjoy a virtual trip to Panama's cloud forests.

Susan Saul, our Conservation co-chair, has submitted an extremely well-written letter for board approval. This letter will be submitted from Vancouver Audubon to the Dept. of Ecology to comment on the draft Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the proposed Kalama methanol plant. Thank you, Susan, for all the conservation issues you keep tabs on for us—we are lucky to have your expertise!

By Cindy McCormack

(Little Tyrants, continued from page 7)

Both members of this pair sat on branches in the same bush. My brain seemed to understand the science of this species' natural history, but my heart, my soul, saw so much mystery. Here was a small bird that flies between continents, changes personalities, and survives despite the distances traveled, weather, predators, and who knows what else. How remarkable, almost incomprehensible. These little tyrants took off along Mary Anne Creek, making a loop out over the water and then headed down across the marsh, disappearing out of my sight. To me, their flight seemed like a ballet as they twisted and turned in precise movements to pursue their flying morsels. They left me, though, with a treasure, a sense of primal awe.

(E WA fires, continued from page 1)

little trickier.

The Sage-Grouse will fare far worse because they need shrubs and their return will be slow. Gray rabbitbrush grows back quickly but is not preferred for either nesting or

forage. The needed sage-brushes and bitterbrush return much more slowly (we're talking decades) and the current moonscape appearance looks like extensive shrub destruction. The Swanson Lakes manager told me he hasn't seen a sagebrush since the fire blazed through.

Swanson Lakes is going to be an unfortunate natural experiment for both species. The Sharp-tailed Grouse population there is completely isolated from other population groups and has little nearby escape for either reproductive or wintering habitat.

Also, the largest of 3 pygmy rabbit enclosures is a complete loss as well as one of the release areas. There are still pygmy rabbits, including a few free ranging, but the population was hit really hard. Other state species of greatest conservation need off the top of my head that are impacted include Short-eared Owl, Sage Thrasher, Sagebrush Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, sagebrush lizard, pygmy short-horned lizard, both species of jackrabbit, Washington ground squirrel, American badger and while not species of greatest conservation need, we've lost huge amounts of habitat for important mule deer herds and the recently re-introduced pronghorn.



East Lake, Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area post-fire, photo by Kim Thorburn



Post-fire entry, Swanson Lakes

Editor's note: Kim Thorburn has been an active and dedicated volunteer in Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse recovery efforts in eastern Washington.

Abundance Codes used in this column:

(1) Common, (2) Uncommon, (3) Harder to find, usually seen annually, (4) Rare, 5+ records, (5) Fewer than 5 records

August 20, In Skamania County, Les Carlson birded Strawberry Island where, along the west loop trail, he photographed 3 **EASTERN KINGBIRDS**, that had been first found by John Davis (Code 5). He also found and photographed 3 **GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (Code 4) at the Juvenile Fish Facility fish ponds.

Michelle Maani photographed a juvenile **CHIPPING SPARROW** at Frenchman's Bar Park in the Vancouver Lake lowlands. At one time these were a fairly common breeding bird in the oak-grassland areas of Clark County but most of that habitat type has been turned into housing developments, making this a uncommon species here anymore.

Aug. 26, Don Rose ventured into Goat Rocks Wilderness and found **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS**, **PINE SISKIN**, **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE**, and **DARK-EYED JUNCO** in one area of juniper/fir in the subalpine zone above Snowgrass Flat.

Aug. 26, During the last week we saw an increase in migrants traveling down the ridge we live on in Skamania County that leads to the Steigerwald Lake NWR. This morning there were a couple of mixed flocks that came through where there were too many individuals for us to check before they moved on through the forest. Susan and I did see the following among the resident species, 27 **BAND-TAILED PIGEONS**, 3 **WILLOW FLYCATCHERS**, 1 **PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER**, 12 **WARBLING VIREO**, 4 **ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS**, 1 **YELLOW WARBLER**, 17 **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLERS**, 1 **TOWNSEND'S WARBLER**, and 4 **WILSON'S WARBLERS**. These morning pulses of birds usually continue through the month of September with a near daily change of the species mix, which pass in front of us as we enjoy our morning coffee on the decks. Although we didn't get a photo of it, we had an **ACORN WOODPECKER** (Code 5) in the alder trees at our place, calling incessantly while two **STELLER'S JAYS** chased it until it flew. This was the 255th species that I have seen in Skamania County and the 148th

bird on our property. While Acorn Woodpeckers nest in Klickitat County, in the only two known colonies in Washington, there are fewer than five records for Skamania County.

Aug. 27, Cindy McCormack, Les Carlson and I did some social-distancing birding in Skamania County, our best finds were a **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (Code 4) at Home Valley Park and four juvenile **HARLEQUIN DUCKS** at the Little White Salmon Fish Hatchery.

Aug. 30, Among the 52 species that Cindy McCormack found while hiking the Beacon Rock park was a **BANK SWALLOW** (Code 4), the nearest nesting colonies that I am aware of are in eastern Klickitat County.

Sept. 3, Cindy McCormack found another **ACORN WOODPECKER** (Code 5 in Clark County) at the Fort Vancouver Historical District. In Oregon they are widespread and found in oak forests on both sides of the Cascade Mountains, but in Washington state there are only two

known nesting colonies and both of those are in Klickitat County. With the fires that have been burning in southern Oregon and the Hood River area, there is the potential for displaced birds to show up anywhere.

Sept. 4, **LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS** are hard to find in Clark County (Code 4) but Jim Danzenbaker was lucky to spot an immature one perched atop a dead tree in the foothills of eastern Clark County, an unusual location for a species of the oak forests. There had been earlier reports of these colorful birds seen at higher elevations near Yakima that may have been dispersing migrants, but I always wonder if the Clark County birds are coming from the eastside or up from the Willamette Valley.

Sept. 5, Bob Flores counted 93 **GREAT EGRETS** on Rest Lake at the Ridgefield NWR and in the field just south of

(Continued on page 10)



Acorn Woodpecker at Fort Vancouver, photo by Les Carlson

the lake there were 12 **SANDHILLS CRANES**, the first of the migrant flocks that will winter on the Ridgefield NWR and in the Vancouver Lake lowlands.

Sept. 7, A **RED-SHOULDERED HAWK** (Code 4) was found on Strawberry Island by John Davis, there are only a handful of records for them in Skamania County. This year, John has found a very nice selection of birds on the loop trail there with his near daily visits.

Sept. 10, Les Carlson found a couple of **HORNED LARKS** in the parking area near the visitor's entrance guard shack at Bonneville Dam. I have only seen them in Skamania County at low elevations during the winter although they do nest in the barren areas on Mt. Saint Helens.



Horned Lark, photo by Les Carlson

Sept. 14, A nice selection of shorebirds were found by Jim Danzenbaker on the shore of Vancouver Lake near the end of the Vancouver Lake Park Bridge Trail. There he identified ten different shorebird species, **BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER, KILLDEER, LEAST SANDPIPER, PECTORAL SANDPIPER, WESTERN SANDPIPER, LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER, WILSON'S SNIFE, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, GREATER YELLOWLEGS** and **LESSER YELLOWLEGS**.

Sept. 14, During the smokey period, a bright spot in Mary Ann and Glenn Teague's yard were 2 **WILSON'S WARBLERS**, a bird they don't often see there during the Fall.

Sept. 16, The first **GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW** of the fall

at our place was a juvenile bird that was joined by another the next day.

Sept. 17, While birding in the Vancouver Lake lowlands, Les Carlson relocated the earlier reported non-breeding plumaged **EARED GREBE** (Code 4) at Shillapoo Lake and a **BLACK-NECKED STILT** (Code 4). Later in the day other people reported that there were two Eared Grebes and a **RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** on Vancouver Lake. Stilts are lovely shorebirds with their black and white plumage and bright red legs and are usually found east of the Cascades, although there is one breeding record in Clark County. Les also reported seeing 2 late-lingering **NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS**.

Sept. 18, At Shillapoo Lake, a **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** (Code 5) first spotted by Cindy McCormack, was another out of place bird that was that was enjoyed by several other birders. They normally nest in the northern Great Plains region but a few have nested in northeast Washington.

SEPT. 18, John Davis photographed another **RED-SHOULDERED HAWK** that was perched in a snag on Strawberry Island below Bonneville Dam in Skamania County. He reported seeing a **CASPIAN TERN** and a **BONAPARTE'S GULL** over the Columbia River flying downstream.

Sept. 18, Candace Moon was puzzled by a bird that showed up near her home that she could not find in her bird books, it turned out to be a **JAVA FINCH**, a species from Australia sold as pets and obviously an escapee.

The migration just seemed to stop at our place when the heavy smoke blanketed the West Coast. We went from seeing about 35 species a day around our house to about half of that and the number has not increased two days after the smoke lifted. We seem to be getting fewer birds at our feeders now with the exception of a good number of Band-tailed Pigeons that are visiting multiple times a day.



Black-necked Stilt, photo by Nick Mrvelj

As of September 20, even with the quarantine and shutdowns the Cumulative list of birds seen in our counties in 2020 stand at 220 reported from Clark County and 194 species in Skamania County. Please continue to send me your sighting reports or post them on the [Vancouver Audubon Afield Facebook group](#).

By Wilson Cady

Bird ID Challenge

By Cindy McCormack

Let's make use of those partial or poor photos or just birds that can be a challenge to ID! If there are identifiable features in the photo, submit your photo for our next challenge.

Uncertain about identification or if photo has enough info? Don't hesitate to send it in for discussion and review.

Of course, if you wish to share your good photos with your fellow VAS members, you are welcome to submit them for publishing. Send questions, comments, and submissions to [Cindy](mailto:Cindy@nwbirder@gmail.com) at nwbirder@gmail.com.

This month's challenge is not a usual sighting in our area, but is closely related to a common local breeder. It's always exciting to spot something rare! Can you name this bird and describe how it's different from its close relative?



Can you identify this bird?

September's Bird ID Challenge Answer

Wow, we seem to be missing some parts on this bird! No worries! We have everything we need to get to this bird's species—even its subspecies!

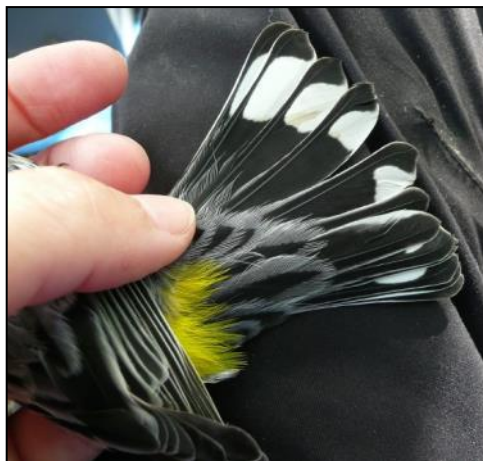
Well, let's start with the basics. How do we even know it's a bird? Feathers! If it has feathers, it's a bird.

Since this bird is in my hand, it is a very small bird.

Now we need to figure out which parts we have here, because things don't really appear lined up in this picture!

See the feathers with the white patches? Notice how the central vein (rachis) is off-center, almost completely over to one side? That tells us that it is a flight feather. A feather that is found in the wing or tail. Could this be a wing? Nope. Too "square" and the entire structure made by these feathers has two equal, but opposite sides. You can actually see the folded wings under my thumb in the photo.

Ok, so what we have here are tail feathers, or rectrices. The tail is being held open. Notice the spots continue on the other side of the



September's quiz bird, photo by C. McCormack



The rectrices of the tail. Note there are 6 pair (for a total of 12 rectrices).

tail, just harder to see because it's more closed on the left side of the tail. Those white spots in the tail are sure going to come in handy!

We have another big clue. We can see some feathers over the base of the tail that are gray with black centers (upper tail coverts), then above that is a big patch of bright yellow. This patch would be the "rump" of the bird, since it's above the tail's coverts. Did I just give the identity of this beautiful bird away?

Hmmm...so we have a bird with a YELLOW RUMP and white spots in the tail...

Maybe this isn't enough to get you to the solution, so I'm going to also use the process of elimination of other birds in our area that may show a yellow rump:

Yellow Warbler: No—tail would have yellow panels in it.

Western Tanager: No—black tail and coverts would also be yellow.

(Continued on page 12)

Golden-crowned Kinglet: No—they have an all-dark tail, and more of a yellowish wash on the tail, which extends down the coverts.

Wilson's Warbler: No—they don't have white spots in tail, and the rump is more greenish-yellow and includes the coverts.

Okay, we got those out of the way. Whew!

Did I say our mystery bird had a bright YELLOW RUMP? Could this bird possibly be a Yellow-rumped Warbler? Why, yes! A Yellow-rumped Warbler does, in fact, have a yellow rump! This brilliant color is separated by the gray/black/brown of the upper tail coverts and the back. They do have white spots in the tail feathers!



Basic-plumaged Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's), photo by C. McCormack

Now, we can also suggest that this bird is of the Audubon's subspecies, rather than the Myrtle, because of the extent the white spots in the number of retrices. Myrtle typically only have the spots on the outer 2-3 pair of retrices, while the Audubon's typically include the outer 4-5 pairs of retrices. This can vary with age and sex of the bird, but this bird has the white patches on the outer 5 pairs of retrices (only the 6th, or center, retrace pair are missing a patch).

This hind end of a Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler was photographed in October at a bird-banding station, as was the head view. These birds are in basic (winter) plumage.

I've added a photo of the alternate (breeding) plumage of this species. Aren't they fabulous??

Note that you can't see the white spots from the dorsal side of the tail when it's closed, but it's easy to see when it flies!

Let's also touch on a few other obvious characteristics that can separate Audubon's and Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warblers.

- Typically, Audubon's will have a bright yellow throat, while a Myrtle will have a white throat and chin.
- Audubon's have more extensive white in the secondary coverts of the wing.
- Audubon's have a more "plain" face. Myrtle have a distinctly darker auriculars and usually show a pale line above the eye. In basic (non-breeding) plumage, the pale whitish throat color will extend behind the auriculars.

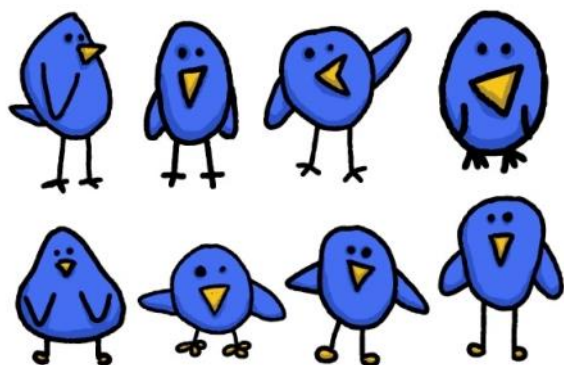


Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler in breeding (alternate) plumage. Photo from Creative Commons



Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler in breeding plumage.

Photo by Lynn Topinka



**Vancouver Audubon
is on Facebook!**



Follow our page [@VancouverAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/VancouverAudubon) to get up-to-date announcements, news, and events from Vancouver Audubon! We also added a group page "Afield"—you can find the group by just selecting the button "Visit Group" under our page banner. Join the group to share your nature photos and experiences, or to even get ID help!

NWR Updates

Ridgefield NWR

Auto Tour Route on the River "S" Unit is open to vehicle traffic **ONLY**. No bikes or pedestrian access at this time. **As usual, the seasonal walking trail, the Kiwa trail, will be closing for the season on October 1st.**

Carty Unit: Construction on a new office building off of 28908 NW Main Avenue started in September. The parking lot will remain open to the public during most of the construction window. Check the website for intermittent safety closures. **Spur trail from Main Street Bridge Closed During Construction.** Visitors can still drive in or walk in from the sidewalk through the main entrance gate. **Carty Lake Trail/Port entrance closes October 1st.** Access to the Oaks to Wetlands Trail and Carty Lake trail is provided from both the Main Ave and the Port of Ridgefield entrances.

The Oaks to Wetlands Trail north of the large oak tree overlook will be closed to all public access on Thursdays to provide work crews safe distancing while they continue work in this restoration area. Please respect this closure for their safety and your own.

Gate Time -

Current gates times are 7AM - 7PM. Check the website for gate times on the day of your visit. Note that gates close automatically.

There is no public access to bathrooms, informational kiosks, refuge office and the viewing blind due to the inability to uphold necessary social distancing guidelines during the pandemic. The Refuge is fee free at this time.

Information current as of publication. Check the alerts on the [website](#) for current information.

Steigerwald Lake NWR

Closed to All Public Access for Restoration

Good news! State Route 14 construction portion of the project is scheduled for completion in early October!

The Steigerwald Reconnection Project has begun. To ensure the safety of visitors and crews, the Refuge's trails are closed to all public access. This closure includes the Refuge's parking lot, restrooms, and access to both the Refuge's interior trails (currently) and the Columbia River Dike Trail (the levee trail) that parallels the Columbia River.

The Refuge Trails and Dike Trail east of Captain William Clark Park, will be closed to all public access between July and October of 2020. Please respect this closure while habitat and public use opportunities are enhanced.

For more info, visit <https://www.refuge2020.info/steigerwald-reconnection-project>.

INJURED WILDLIFE: WHAT TO DO?



??

**Injured Wildlife Hotline:
503-292-0304**

The nearest wildlife care and rehabilitation center is operated by Portland Audubon. Here are some general guidelines from their [Wildlife Care Center](#):

1. **Prioritize your safety**
2. **Safely contain the animal**
3. **Keep the animal calm and secure until you can take it to the Wildlife Care Center**
 - **Do not handle the animal** any more than necessary to contain it – this is for your protection as well as for the animal's well being. Wild animals are terrified of humans. They may fight back, try to flee, or freeze. Many people mistake the "freeze" behavior for tolerance or enjoyment of contact, when in reality it is a fear response. Limiting contact will reduce stress on the animal.
 - **Keep the animal in a warm, dark, and quiet space.** Keep them away from children and pets.
 - **Many animals benefit from a heating pad** set on low under half their enclosure, or a sock filled with dry rice and microwaved for 2-3 minutes.
 - **Do not feed the animal.**
 - **Be cautious when choosing to leave water.** Many wild animals do not drink standing water, and attempting to help them drink can result in pneumonia. In addition, if an animal spills its water and gets wet, it could get cold and may die. If in doubt, it is better not to leave water.

Bring the animal to the Wildlife Care Center as soon as you can. If you can't bring it to the center during our open hours, or you believe the animal is in critical condition and needs immediate attention after hours, the Wildlife Care Center has a partnership with the [24 hour Emergency Veterinary Hospital Dove Lewis](#). To get in touch with them, call (503) 228-7281.

If you are unable to transport to the care center, try calling Arden 360-892-8872. If he is available to transport a bird, you will be asked to donate a gas mileage compensation and a small donation for the Care Center for the care of the bird at the time of pick up.

The Wildlife Care Center admits native wild patients and operates its Injured Wildlife Hotline from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., 365 days a year.

Upcoming Events

September 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29 Board Mtg	30			

October 2020

				1	2 ACOW BirdFest	3 ACOW BirdFest
4	5	6 Program	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27 Board Mtg	28	29	30	31

Sept. 29 (Tuesday): VAS Board Meeting (via Zoom)

Oct. 2 (Friday): Washington State Audubon Conservation Council (2-4pm) See pg 5 for details; Day 1 of Ridgefield BirdFest (virtual)

Oct. 3 (Saturday): Audubon Council of WA (9:30a-noon), see pg 5 for details, Day 2 of Ridgefield BirdFest (virtual)

Oct. 6 (Tuesday): VAS Program, Thomas Bancroft, Panama's Cloud Forest, 7pm via Zoom. Contact Don Rose for registration

Oct. 27 (Tuesday): VAS Board Meeting (via Zoom)

Contents

VAS Board & Chairs	2
Membership/Donation form	2
Programs	3
Conservation	4
Raptor Surveys	6
Little Tyrants	7
From The Board	8
Wilson Cady's Afield	9
Bird ID Challenge	11
Ridgefield Updates	13
Injured Wildlife	13

Open for curb-side pick-up! Visit

backyardbirdshop.com



**8101 NE Parkway
Vancouver, WA 98662
(360) 253-5771**

THE COLUMBIA FLYWAY is the monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Publication **deadline** is the 20th of the preceding month unless otherwise posted.