



Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

A chapter of the National Audubon Society

vancouveraudubon.org

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December 2021

Winter Citizen Science Projects, Part II

Christmas Bird Count

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Thanks to the inspiration of Chapman and the enthusiasm of 27 dedicated birders, 25 Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined.

Now a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 120 years of community science involvement, it is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the U.S., Canada (where Audubon partners with Birds Canada), and many countries in the Western Hemisphere go out over a 24-hour period on one calendar day to count birds.

From December 14 through January 5 each year, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation action.

Each count takes place in an established 15-mile diameter circle and is organized by a count compiler. Count volunteers follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile (24-km) diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally—all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

Birders of all skill sets are involved in the CBC. If you are a beginning birder, your compiler will pair you with an expert initially. If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can even stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler. There is a specific methodology to the CBC, and all



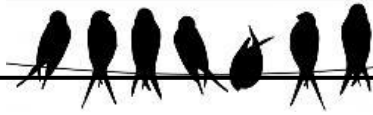
Young CBC participant recording her birds
Photo by Camilla Cerea/Audubon

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There still is time to sign up for **Speak Up for Birds!**, our second annual Audubon in Washington virtual Advocacy Day on December 7, 2021. We will meet with state legislators to share our love of birds and our vision for a climate-resilient state.

Register at act.audubon.org/a/advocacy2021



From the VAS Board

Now that winter is on its way, we have an opportunity to enjoy watching birds from the comfort of our homes and to help our feathered friends when they need a little more energy – such as during migration, temperature extremes, and in late winter and early spring when natural sources of food are scarce.

When feeding birds here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Place your feeder around 10 feet from evergreen trees, bushes, or brush piles. By providing cover near the feeders the birds can quickly fly to the feeder and then back to safety.
2. Offer good quality seeds. Black oil sunflower seeds are high in fat and most seed-eating birds like them. Suet cakes are another good high-energy food to offer. The staff at your local bird shop, like Backyard Bird Shop, are a great source of information on which are best seeds and other food items to offer birds



in your area.

By Craig Wallace

3. Clean your feeder regularly. Perhaps the most important thing we can do as “bird feeders” is clean our feeders at least every two weeks, or even weekly during times of heavy use or wet weather. Moldy and decomposing seeds, bird droppings, and other contaminants can make birds sick and dirty feeders can spread disease.

4. Clear the ground below the feeders to prevent a build up of hulls, uneaten seeds, or other waste.

The Cornell Lab AllAboutBirds.org and Audubon.org are excellent websites for instructions and tips on

feeding birds and the proper way to clean your feeders.

Let's have an enjoyable time feeding and watching birds this winter and remember to be responsible “bird feeders.”



Vancouver Audubon Society

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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.

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

Program meetings are usually held at the [West Park Community Room](#) at [1000 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.

Currently virtual meetings and programs only

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

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



Vancouver Audubon

Programs

Programs are currently scheduled as virtual events through Zoom, all start at 7:00 pm (social time at 6:30pm). All are welcome, we hope you will join us!

Contact Don Rose for more information or to get a Zoom link:
meetings@vancouveraudubon.org

Please send all topic, speaker, and program suggestions and requests to Don Rose at the above email address.

Looking ahead:

January: Holiday break! There is no program in January.

February 2: **Dan Friesz**, Natural Area Manager for Columbia Land Trust will give a presentation about Crane's Landing in the Vancouver Lowlands and its importance to birds.

March 1: **Curtis Helm**, Principal Restoration Ecologist for Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, will return to give us an update on the status of Steigerwald Wildlife Refuge, which is scheduled to reopen in the spring of 2022.

April 5: **Mary Coolidge**, Birdsafe Campaign Manager for Portland Audubon, will talk about how to make your home or business safer for birds, including the Lights Out program.

DEC 7 – BACKYARD HABITAT PROGRAM

Bethany Wray and Megan Van de Mark

Bethany Wray, Program Manager for The Watershed Alliance, and **Megan Van de Mark**, Program Manager for Portland Audubon, will give a presentation on what it takes to get a **Backyard Habitat Certification** in Clark County.

The Backyard Habitat Certification Program is a collaboration between Portland Audubon and Columbia Land Trust, with the program being facilitated in Clark County by the Watershed Alliance. The program supports urban gardeners in their efforts to create natural backyard habitats that will transform urban landscapes in a positive way to make our cities a healthier place for ourselves and for wildlife.



Bethany Wray



Megan Van de Mark

DEC. 1—FIRST OF MONTH BIRD WALK

Ridgefield NWR—Carty Unit, 8:00am

Contact Cindy at vas@vancouveraudubon.org to register



Bird Walks are meant to be a casual, local morning of birding. They are a great time to enjoy birds with others, find new areas to visit, and/or work on bird identification by sight and sound or to practice your eBird app with help when needed. These walks are usually easy to join or depart at any time during the morning, no commitment to participate in the entire walk if you have limited time. Please, only fully vaccinated participants at this time.

Adverse winter weather may cause cancellation, registrants should check their email and/or texts the evening before for updates.

We will meet at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge-Carty Unit parking lot at 8am.

Experienced and novice birders can enjoy birding opportunities during the winter period, even without attending an organized VAS field trip. Two annual events are Christmas Bird Counts (mid-December to early January) and a limited number of monthly raptor survey routes in the area (December-March) where a second observer/data recorder can be helpful. Christmas Bird Count sectors are filling quickly so best to contact the coordinator immediately if interested. Listed below are CBCs in Washington within 100 miles of Vancouver. Contact Randy (re_hill@q.com) for specifics on helping with raptor survey data collection.

Local Christmas Bird Count Opportunities

Saturday, December 18th Camas Prairie-Trout Lake CBC

This year our count will be on Saturday, December 18. It is open to experienced birders and other interested folks accompanying an experienced birder.

For those interested, please contact coordinator Jim White at 509-961-2775 (home phone, 509-395-2585) or email him at jwhite.mars@gmail.com

Sunday, December 19th Lyle CBC

We typically have over 100 different species. Sometimes we have the most Lewis's Woodpeckers anywhere in the universe, and we are regularly the only count in Washington with Acorn Woodpeckers. Our 15-mile diameter count circle straddles the Columbia River between Mosier and The Dalles. We organize about 10 sectors prior to the count, and each sector operates independently on count day.

Contact John Bishop at bishopjg@icloud.com or 360 546-9612

Wednesday, December 22nd Lewis County CBC

There will not be a morning meeting place. Participants are asked to sign up at least two days in advance so as to confirm their "spots."

I am glad to welcome any and all who wish to participate in the 5th running of this new CBC! Last we had a phenomenal year even during COVID and recorded a record 104 species on count day!

Participants will be asked to comply with Washington State COVID guidelines. There will be no mandatory carpooling and groups will be asked to social distance and maintain appropriate coronavirus precautions. We will be

focusing on breaking sections into smaller areas for individuals and groups to have as little contact as possible with each other. Unfortunately due to the pandemic, there will not be a compilation dinner in the evening.

As always, birders of all ages and stages are more than welcome to contact me and feeder watchers are also greatly appreciated to help make the data as well-rounded as possible! Lewis County is a beautiful place to bird in the winter time and there is often a great number of birds seen every year and that is all help to wonderful birders who help volunteer their time.

Contact Dalton Spencer:
offthehookflyshop@yahoo.com or 360-520-7890.

Sunday, December 26th Columbia Hills/Klickitat Valley CBC

Contact Samuel Holman at sam4cb@embarqmail.com

Tuesday, December 28th Wahkiakum County CBC

Contact Andrew Emlen 360-795-8009

Saturday, January 1st Cowlitz – Columbia CBC

Our count will be a part of the Annual Christmas Bird Count. Our count circle covers a 15-mile diameter circle that is centered just south of Rainier, OR. This year we will continue with the COVID guidelines. The contact is Bob Reistroffer: 360-751-5595 or email: breistrof@aol.com.

Sunday, January 2nd Sauvie Island and Ridgefield CBC

The ORSI circle covers areas on both sides of the Columbia River including Sauvie Island and a bit more on the Oregon side and Vancouver Lake Bottoms, Ridgefield NWR and up

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to the Lewis River, mostly west of I-5, on the Washington side. Our count is planned for Sunday, January 2, 2022. There is no backup date this year. We will follow CDC, Washington and Oregon COVID-19 guidance. As we did last year, we can rearrange and split territories to make sure everyone can participate safely under COVID rules. Feeder watchers very welcome. Call or email Susan if you would like to participate: smsetterberg@yahoo.com or 360-980-0884

(CBC, continued from page 1)

participants must make arrangements to participate in advance with the circle compiler, but the CBC is open to all!

The count circle compiler is responsible for recruiting, training and guiding participants on the count and summarizing and submitting data. You can also learn how compilers plan a CBC count by reading [The Art of the Christmas Bird Count](#) by Alan Contreras, longtime compiler and former regional editor of count circles in Oregon.

As a CBC participant, you need to coordinate with your local compiler in advance of the count date. Next, follow the instructions from the compiler and learn what data to collect. Go out on count day to your assigned location and document your observations. Finally submit your data to your compiler in a timely manner. Then we hope you will come back next year and do it again!

The data collected by observers over the past century allow Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long-term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat and helps identify environmental issues including implications for people.

CBC data have been used in hundreds of analyses, peer-reviewed publications, and government reports over the

decades. Consult Audubon's bibliography page or use Google Scholar to search for research using CBC data. Yearly summaries of [CBC data submitted by each circle compiler](#) can be reviewed on Audubon's website.

The Christmas Bird Count relies 100 percent on donations since becoming free to participate in 2012. Audubon provides support to compilers and volunteers, to manage the historic database, and to fund the technology to make historic data available to researchers. The data collected by CBC participants over the past century have become one of only two large pools of information informing ornithologists and conservation biologists how the birds of the Americas are faring over time.

What conservationists have learned through Christmas Bird Count data



Trumpeter Swans, one of the expected species on the Ridgefield CBC, photo by Duke Coonrad/Audubon Photography Awards

[Audubon's 2014 Climate Change Report](#) is a comprehensive, first-of-its kind study that predicts how climate change could affect the ranges of 588 North American birds. Of the 588 North American bird species Audubon studied, more than half are likely to be in trouble. Our models indicate that 314 species will lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has included

Audubon's climate change work from CBC data as one of 26 indicators of climate change in their [2012 report](#).

In 2009 CBC data were instrumental in the collaborative report by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - [State of the Birds 2009](#).

In 2007, CBC data were instrumental in the development of [Audubon's Common Birds in Decline Report](#), which revealed that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years.

From Audubon.org

Comments Sought for Clean Energy Plan

Clark Public Utilities is building a Clean Energy Implementation Plan in response to the 2019 Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA), which commits Washington utilities to providing greenhouse gas-neutral electricity by 2030 and greenhouse gas-free electricity by 2045.

CETA requires all publicly owned utilities to create a four-year plan to guide how utilities work toward the goals of CETA while maintaining affordable rates and reliable service. Clark Public Utilities' first plan addresses 2022-2025. A new plan will be developed every four years. Utility staff has produced a draft plan and is seeking customer feedback.

It is important that Clark Public Utilities hears from as many of us as possible. Our basic message is to "get cleaner, faster." The public comment period ends Friday, Dec. 3. Comments can be submitted either by email CEIP@clarkpud.com or by the online portal (scroll down to the bottom of the page to comment online): <https://www.clarkpublicutilities.com/about-cpu/public-documents/ceta/ceip/>

We want to support the transition to 100% clean energy by urging Clark Public Utilities to:

- Increase conservation and energy efficiency measures beyond what current levels, such as a heat pump

**December 3
Deadline**

water heater program for new residential and multi-family construction.

- Reduce peak demand with demand response measures.

By Susan Saul

- Focus on the timely transition to new renewable energy sources, with a greater commitment to using local renewable energy sources, conservation and energy efficiency to make our system more reliable and resilient.
- Commit to ending our reliance on gas by phasing out the River Road Generating Plant (RRGP), one of the ten largest greenhouse gas emitters in the state, sooner than CETA requires. Do more to reduce our reliance on a polluting facility and consider more carefully the adverse health impact it is having on our region.
- Drop consideration of nuclear power, in the form of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors, an emerging and risky technology that has significant economic and environmental challenges that do not make it a viable option for at least a decade. This is a distraction from focusing on more readily available and cost-effective alternatives, such as additional Community Solar and distributed solar projects.

Speak Up to Support Fossil Fuel Facilities Moratorium

By Susan Saul

The Vancouver Fossil Fuel Facilities Moratorium currently protects us from large scale fossil fuel facilities being proposed or permitted in Vancouver. It has been in effect since June 2020 and will expire on December 8, 2021.

Please support a 6-month extension of the moratorium by testifying at the City Council's **public hearing scheduled for Monday, December 6**, when the Council will make its decision.

The purpose of the extension is to give the city time to update Vancouver's current ordinance which prohibits large-scale crude oil terminals in Vancouver to include other forms of volatile fossil fuels. The city needs the moratorium extension to gain time to re-submit a revised

State Environmental Policy Act review in response to an appeal by the Western States Petroleum Association.

It is important to demonstrate widespread community support for the health and safety protection this moratorium extension provides all of us.

Testimony does not have to be technical or in-depth. Simply tell the City Council that you support the moratorium extension and appreciate the Council's work to continue protecting our health and safety and environment from large-scale fossil fuel facilities in Vancouver.

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In order to testify, **you must register by noon on December 6** citing the item number on the Consent Agenda. You also can submit written testimony by noon as well. You will receive an email from the city giving you the link to participate, which also includes a phone-in option. <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/citycouncil/page/city-council-meeting-231>

“Unintentional Tragedies”: Bird Deaths from Building Collisions

Birds behave as if sheet glass is invisible to them. They strike clear and reflective window panes in all types of human-built structures worldwide with death rates in the billions every year.

The science documenting this significant scale of loss has been known for decades, but only recently have meaningful efforts to address the problem begun.

National Audubon Society recently presented a webinar with Dr. Daniel Klem Jr., an ornithologist known for his pioneering research into the mortality of birds due to glass windows. He is currently a Sarkis Acopian Professor of Ornithology and Conservation Biology at Muhlenberg College. Dr. Klem has recently published a book about his research, [**Solid Air: Invisible Killer; Saving billions of birds from windows.**](#)

Dr. Klem has calculated that between 100 million and 1 billion birds are killed **annually** in the United States alone by flying into windows, contributing to the 3 billion birds lost from North America since 1970. He said that a million birds a day are dying, but they disappear due to scavengers so people don't see the scale of the problem.

No one wants to kill birds, so these bird deaths are an unintentional tragedy. Unlike complex issues such as

climate change, this is an issue that ***By Susan Saul*** we can easily solve today. The short-term solution is to retrofit existing buildings to make them bird-friendly. The long-term solution is adopting building codes that require the use of glass panes that birds can see.

Given all the new and proposed construction at the Vancouver Waterfront designed with lots of glass, it is important that city building codes and architects become participants in designing buildings that are bird-safe. Urge the Vancouver mayor and city council to adopt bird-friendly building codes.

Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle: anne.mcenerny-ogle@cityofvancouver.us

Councilmember Bart Hansen: bart.hansen@cityofvancouver.us

Councilmember Ty Stober: ty.stober@cityofvancouver.us

Councilmember Linda Glover: linda.glover@cityofvancouver.us

Councilmember Laurie Lebowsky: laurie.lebowsky@cityofvancouver.us

Councilmember Erik Paulsen: erik.paulsen@cityofvancouver.us

Councilmember Sarah Fox: sarah.fox@cityofvancouver.us

PREVENTING BIRD COLLISIONS AT YOUR HOME

- Place feeders within 3 feet of any window to minimize any momentum a bird might gain when startled.
- Alternatively, consider feeder placement at greater distances; study the landscaping around your windows and then put your feeders in places that guide birds away from the glass.
- Forget using single wind chimes, blinking lights, hanging plants, large eye patterns, falcon silhouettes, or owl decoys. They don't work.
- Uniformly cover windows with cloth or silver mylar strips on or near the glass surface, or parachute cords hanging in front of windows, and separated by 4-inch spacing, to transform windows into barriers that birds will see and avoid, reducing collisions by 95 percent. See

www.birdsavers.com

- Keeping white cloth drapes or sheer curtains closed during daylight hours work well, but only when the sun is shining through the window to make these coverings visible. At other times, without the sun falling directly on these window coverings, the outside surface of the window reflects the facing habitat and sky, and projects a deadly illusion of unobstructed space.
- Insect screens significantly reduces the collision threat.
- Add strips of bird-friendly adhesive tape about 4 inches apart; see products at abcbirds.org/glass-collisions
- Use bird-safety window film. www.decorativefilm.com/specialty-bird-safety

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

These codes vary for each county, to see all 39 WA county checklists go to wabirder.com and click on Checklists.

Oct. 19, Cindy McCormack was monitoring Crane's Landing, the Columbia Land Trust Property in the Vancouver Lowlands, when she heard at least two early **TUNDRA SWANS** calling but there may have been more, but they couldn't be seen due to the dense fog.

Oct. 18, a **SAY'S PHOEBE** (3) was identified on lower Larch Mountain by Jim Danzenbaker, this bird is much more likely to be seen in our area in spring migration rather than in the fall and almost always at lower elevations than there. He also had a **NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL** (2), 233 **AMERICAN ROBINS** and 227 **PINE SISKINS**.

Oct. 22, two **RED-NECKED GREBES** (3) were seen by Ken Vanderkamp from the Vancouver-Columbia River Boardwalk, this is not a rare bird in the fall, but always nice to find.

Oct. 26, a **SNOW GOOSE** (4) and an **EARED GREBE** (4) were located by John Davis at the Wind River mouth in Skamania County. If birding in this area, check the islands and Columbia River south of the railroad tracks as well as the boat launch area upstream of Highway 14 and then check Home Valley Park, just a quarter mile east of here.

Oct. 28, while birding Strawberry Island in Skamania County, David Ness picked out a **WHITE-WINGED SCOTER** (5) flying down river following close behind a group of **SURF SCOTERS** (4).

Oct. 28, Susan and I checked Home Valley Park in Skamania County where we found the previously reported



Eared Grebe, photo by
Wilson Cady

SNOW GOOSE, GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE (3) a **RED-NECKED GREBE** (3) in the Columbia River. We then checked the Wind River Mouth where we met up with Les Carlson who was also out birding and saw 2 **EARED GREBES** near the boat launch.



Check the big Snow and Cackling Goose flocks
carefully for unusual geese!
Snow Goose (left) and a Ross's Goose, photo by
Mick Thompson

Oct. 30, a continuing **SURF SCOTER** present since oct. 13th was seen by John Davis at the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery near Underwood in Skamania County.

Oct. 30, a **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (3) at Blurock Landing, was picked out by Robert Vanderkamp by its thin bill, orange-brown head, wispy crest and how the orange-brown blends into neck, unlike a Common Merganser. He and Ken Vanderkamp had a second **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** at Frenchman's Bar Regional Park where they also spotted a **RED-THROATED LOON** (3).

Oct. 30, Jim Danzenbaker heard and briefly saw a female type **CASSIN'S FINCH** (4) while birding lower Larch Mountain. He said that the bird had a peaked head crest, weak face pattern and sharp clear streaking below and that the call was multi-syllabic very unlike the sharp pick note of Purple Finch.

Oct.30, a hike up the trail to the top of the rock at Beacon Rock State Park provided Kevin Black a **CANYON**

WREN (3) and a **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** (3). The wrens are resident there despite supposedly being a species of the dry east side of the mountains.

Nov. 1, John Davis happened to notice and photograph a **LEWIS'S WOODPECKER** (3) perched in a snag along the road to the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery in Skamania County. They are seen here occasionally in the spring and fall as the east side of that county is east of the Cascade Mountains and close to the extensive oak forests of Klickitat County.

Nov. 2, the continuing **SNOW GOOSE** at Home Valley Park, Skamania County was seen again by John Davis.

Nov. 2, a **ROSS'S GOOSE** (3) found along Lower River Rd by Cindy McCormack in the Vancouver Lowlands. It was with a flock of **CAKCLING GEESE**. This small white goose was

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similar in size to the neighboring Cackling Geese, and has a relatively short neck and a stubby bill with grayish triangle at base of the upper mandible.

Nov. 2, according to Randy Hill, a female **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (3) continued to be seen at the east end of the Vancouver Lake Flushing Channel.

Nov. 2, a very rare for the region **HARRIS'S SPARROW** (4) was found by eBirder "Seymore Gulls" at Stop #11 on the Ridgefield NWR River S Auto Tour Route. These large sparrows are denizens of the Great Plains and normally winter in the southcentral United States. This bird continued through the reporting period and brought birders in from all across the state.

Nov 3, Maxine Reid picked out a **ROSS'S GOOSE** at Crane's Landing in the Vancouver Lake lowlands. They look similar to Snow Geese and can be overlooked among the flocks of those larger white geese.



*Ruffed Grouse,
photo by Wilson Cady*

Nov. 3, Ken Vanderkamp found another female **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER**, this one from the Vancouver-Columbia River Boardwalk.

Nov. 3, a **RUFFED GROUSE** (1) was feeding on the fruits of a Washington hawthorne tree at our place. Every fall we see

Ruffed Grouse in this tree and this year we have seen up to three here at one time through the reporting period despite not seeing any earlier this year.

Nov. 4, Will Brooks spotted a **ROSS'S GOOSE** in a massive mixed goose flock in field south of Frenchman's Bar Regional Park. He said it was seen fairly briefly but at close range when the flock finally came close to Lower River Road. He said that geese were filtering in and out constantly and thought there could be multiple Ross's Geese in the area right now.

Nov. 4, at the east end of the Vancouver Lake Flushing Channel, Bob Flores noted a **RED-NECKED GREBE**, identifiable by its long yellow bill, black crown on the head and down the back side of neck with white on front of neck to chin and lower face and a dark overall body.

Nov. 4, Will Brooks heard the light tinkling calls of

HORNED LARKS (4) as they flew over him at Frenchman's Bar Regional Park.

Nov. 5, Bob Flores mentioned the slight upturn to the lower bill of an **EARED GREBE** (4) at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit in the canal at northeast corner of Big Lake along the Auto Tour loop.

Nov 5, the **EARED GREBE** at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit, was also seen by Jim Danzenbaker. He described it as a small grebe with a peaked crest and very thin bill with a smudgy gray head unlike the crisp demarcation between black and white on the head of Horned Grebe.

Nov. 5, a lingering **TURKEY VULTURE**, was seen in flight low over the freeway near Paradise Point State Park by Brian Pendleton and Darchelle Worley.

Nov. 6, Greg Harrington photographed another **ROSS'S GOOSE** among **SNOW GEESE**, this one was near Blurock Landing.

Nov. 6, a **RING-NECKED PHEASANT** (4) rooster was under our bird feeders, the first we have seen on our property in the fifty years we have lived here. We used to hear them calling from the hayfields next to our forested property but they hadn't come into our woods before.

Nov. 11, a **BARRED OWL** (3) in her Fisher's Landing neighborhood yard was photographed by Vickie Hoehne. These mid-sized owls have become much more



*Ring-necked Pheasant
Photo by Wilson Cady*



*Barred Owl in Fisher's Landing
neighborhood.
Photo by Vickie Hoehne*

common in Washington in the last few decades, when they were first being reported in the state, I drove to Okanogan County to find my first one in Washington.

Nov. 13, John Davis saw the continuing **SURF SCOTER** and a **LEWIS'S WOODPECKER** (3) at the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery in Skamania County.

Nov. 13, a **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL** (5) was reported by Gregory Johnson in the Yacolt Burn Forest near the Larch Mountain Honor Camp. He first heard crossbills flying along the trees and then with binoculars identified at least one that had white on its wing.

Nov. 13, Charles Enlow was at the Ridgefield NWR-Carty

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Unit when he found a **MUTE SWAN** (4) which he described as a very white swan with an orange bill with a black knob on the top base of the bill swimming with its neck gracefully curved and its secondaries arched over its back. He said that it was seen well from the overlook by the Plank House as it fed and swam with many other swans. These swans were introduced from Europe and are considered an invasive species in Washington.

Nov. 13, at the Ridgefield NWR-Carty Unit, two more late **TURKEY VULTURES** were seen by Charles Enlow and Alan Knue. Another sighting reported later in the day by Andrew Magel may have been one of these birds.

Nov. 14, Destiny Faulconer saw a **EARED GREBE** swimming close to a **WESTERN GREBE** pair near the Vancouver Lake Flushing Channel east end.

Nov. 14, Eric Bjorkman was at a friend's house in Washougal and was talking about the Harris's Sparrow photo that he had sent them, a photo taken at Ridgefield. Almost unbelievably, a juvenile **HARRIS'S SPARROW** popped out of a bush and started to feed on the seed that they have out on their sidewalk that is directly under a big picture window in their living room.

Nov. 15, John Davis found a **BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** (5) at Home Valley Park in Skamania County for only the tenth record of this bird in Washington State. This a species from the forests east of the Mississippi River that should be in the tropics now. This is the first record of this bird in Skamania County and it was present for five days by many birders before disappearing.

Nov. 16, the **BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** was seen by Will Brooks, who is doing a Washington State big year, this was his 371st species this year breaking the old Big Year record set by Arden and Sherry Hagen in 2012 while doing a fund raiser for our Audubon chapter. Will also found a **SWAMP SPARROW** (5) in the marshy area near the Wind Surfing beach.



*Blackburnian Warbler at Home Valley Park,
photos by John Davis*



Nov. 17, Bob Flores was able to spot the Home Valley **BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** despite the high winds whipping the trees around.

Nov. 17, a **CLARK'S GREBE** (3) 1 late **AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (2) and 2 **RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS** (3) were seen on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area on LaFramboise Road by Ken Vanderkamp.

Nov. 18, Cindy McCormack, Les Carlson and I made a successful search for the **BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** at the Home Valley Park and then continued up river stopping at Drano Lake where we saw a 31 **BALD EAGLES** and **COMMON MERGANSERS** along with a number of other species including one **COMMON LOON**. We checked the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery and found the continuing female-type **SURF SCOTER**. We then explored the Underwood area on the top of the rim above the fish hatchery where we found two flocks of **WILD TURKEYS** (2), one flock had 60 birds in it. On our way back home we took a few minutes to sort through the gulls below Bonneville

Dam, among the commoner **CALIFORNIA, RING-BILLED, GLAUCOUS-WINGED** and hybrid **GLAUCOUS-WINGED X WESTERN GULLS** we picked out 2 **SHORT-BILLED GULLS** (1) (formerly called Mew Gull) and 8 dainty **BONAPARTE'S GULLS** (3).

Nov. 19, Bob Flores led a group of seven Vancouver Audubon people exploring the Clark County lowlands. At Frenchman's Bar park they found 2 **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS**. In an area off-limits to the public on the Ridgefield NWR they had 3,000 **SNOW GEESE**, a **ROSS'S GOOSE**, 117 **SANDHILL CRANES** and a **BLACK PHOEBE**.

Nov. 19, while monitoring Crane's Landing in the Vancouver Lake lowlands, Cindy McCormack tallied 7,000 **SNOW GEESE**, 3,700 **CAKCLING GEESE**, 1,490 **SANDHILL**



*Surf Scoter
Photo by Wilson Cady*

(Continued on page 12)

2022 Budget Proposal

It's that time of year again! Below is the board's proposed budget for 2021. Please contact our treasurer, Joan Durgin at treasurer@vancouveraudubon.org with any questions or comments regarding the budget. At the December general meeting, we will do an online poll to all attendees for the approval of this budget. Your vote will be anonymous and we will immediately show the results of the poll. Thank you for your flexibility again this year on the budget approval process.

	2020 Actual	2021 Budget	2022 Budget
Revenue			
Amazon Smile			\$10
Bank interest	\$16	\$20	20
Refreshment donations	3	30	10
Memberships	1,424	1,450	1,800
Donations	1,346	1,450	1,500
Doris Troxel Trust	1,889	765	700
Backyard Bird Shop		500	500
Nat'l Audubon Society	1,785	1,785	1,785
Comm Foundation Drawdown		7,000	7,000
Total Revenue	\$6,463	\$13,000	\$13,325
Expenses			
Supplies/software	99	100	100
PO Box fee	130	150	175
Non-profit filing fee	10	10	10
Refreshments	26	100	35
Mtg. room rental			150
Conf/Comm mtgs		100	
Audubon Washington	2,000	2,000	2,000
PDX Wildlife Care Center	250	500	500
Young Birders Club			200
Insurance			1,400
Intertwine Alliance	250		
Columbia Land Trust	100	100	100
WA Environmental Council	100	100	100
Friends of Columbia Gorge	100	100	100
Nature Conservancy	100	100	100
Columbia Springs	100	100	100
Printing		100	
Postage	11	15	30
Audubon Adventures		500	
Home & Garden Show		100	
Grants	800	7,000	7,000
Speaker travel		1,000	500
Website	103	125	125
Zoom	596	600	600
Misc		100	
Total Expenses	\$4,775	\$13,000	\$13,325

Sandhill Cranes are here for the winter!



Adult Sandhill Cranes
Photos by Mick Thompson

Good places to view the cranes right now include the auto tour route at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and Vancouver Lowlands including the fields along Old River Road, from the elevated paved trail east of Blurock Landing, and from Frenchman's Bar County Park (view the Crane's Landing fields to the east from the north parking lots).

Please **DO NOT** climb the berms along Lower River Rd to look into the Columbia Land Trust fields. It is trespassing on private property and disturbs the cranes and other wintering waterfowl. Thanks!



Joan, thank you for all your hard work as our treasurer! You do an amazing job!

CRANES, a SHORT-EARED OWL, 1 BLACK PHOEBE and 9 WESTERN MEADOWLARKS.

Nov. 20, An **AMERICAN DIPPER** on Cougar Creek near the junction with the Salmon Creek Trail in Vancouver seen by Anne Meyers was in an unusual location for this species.

Nov. 21, the Dog Mountain Trail is a popular hike for the spring wildflowers and views, but John Bishop proved it is a good birding spot too by finding a **NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL** at about the 2,000' elevation by hearing the **RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES** that were scolding it. At the 1,150' elevation he found a **BARRED OWL**. At the mouth of the Wind River he picked out a **WHITE-WINGED SCOTER** and at the Little White Salmon Fish Hatchery, he spotted a **LEWIS'S WOODPECKER**.

Nov. 21, while on a successful hunt for the **SWAMP SPARROW** at marker 11 on the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit Auto Tour, a young male **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** was found by Henry Lehman. A few of these warblers manage to spend the winter in our lowland marshes.

By early December, most of the waterfowl and other birds will have settled in for the winter. The annual Christmas Bird Count is a good way to census bird populations as they are now no

longer moving around. I encourage joining in on this annual citizen science effort that provides data for researchers and habitat managers.

The wintering ducks were just beginning to arrive in early November, but soon there will be rafts of scaup on the Columbia River, that like the flocks of geese, can hold a few surprises. These flocks are gathered over sand and gravel bars feeding on freshwater clams and mussels. Other species that can join the scaup to feed on these mollusks are scoters, goldeneyes and Long-tailed Ducks.

There have been a few reports of Common Redpolls and Snow Buntings in the state already this fall, watch for Common Redpolls in flocks of Pine Siskins or goldfinches.

Please contact me, Arden and Sherry Hagen or Eric and Tammy Bjorkman as soon as possible if you spot any birds that you think might be unusual in our area.



Red-tailed Hawk, photo by Wilson Cady

As of the writing of this column there had been 233 species of birds reported from Clark County and 201 species reported from Skamania County for the 2021 Cumulative Year List project. For more information on this list go to: <http://www.wabirder.com/bartel.html> If you have seen a bird not checked off for this year please let me know. And please continue to send me your sightings for this column.

By Wilson Cady

There is still plenty of time to sign up for the Christmas Bird Count this year!

If you would like to join us on Sunday, January 2nd, for the Sauvie Island-Ridgefield-Vancouver Lake Bottoms Circle, contact Susan Setterberg at smsetterberg@yahoo.com or 360-980-0844. There are still spaces available and we will conduct the count under COVID rules. Feeder watchers are very welcome.

Our area covers west of I-5 in NW Vancouver, Salmon Creek, Felida, and Ridgefield. So if you have a feeder & want to participate, count 30 minutes or all day if you wish. If you have a favorite hedgerow, tree, park or pond within the circle that you would like to have contribute to the count, do join us.

Happy Birdy Holidays all!

Each year, Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) gathers and publishes information about the various Audubon Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) going on around the state. This helps birders who'd like to join a count figure out a count that matches their available dates and interest.

You can see it at <https://wos.org/cbc/>

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@vancouveraudubon.org) at vas@vancouveraudubon.org.

It's a LBJ! (A little brown job!)

Identification and discussion will be in the next newsletter.



Photo by Mick Thompson

November's Bird ID Challenge Discussion



Quiz photos by Mick Thompson

One of the great advantages to living where we do in the winter is the sheer number of wintering birds! We have great numbers of wintering waterfowl, many having already molted into their more recognizable plumage after the late summer and fall generic browns. Several species do maintain a more female-type plumage through much of their first winter, so shape can really help in identification.

For November's challenge, there were three photos to contemplate. All were different species of waterfowl in a generic brown plumage and white splotches on the head. This is where studying the overall shape will help us out!

All three seem to be swimming easily in water and all three have the large, blunt, duck-type bills. I think we can easily figure that all three are species of duck, even if the bills are not quite what we are used to with some of the dabbling ducks like Mallards. There are several species of diving duck in plain brown that can have white in the face.

Probably one of the most frequently encountered would be the female Bufflehead, but would also include Ruddy Duck, Harlequin Duck, scoters, goldeneye and scaup. Let's start with the most common encountered species first.

Buffleheads are petite ducks with petite bills. A female Bufflehead does have a white patch in the same area as the bird in photo C, but it's more of a flattened oval shape. Bufflehead females also have a more angular head shape and a more flattened bill than the more conical bill shape of bird C.



Female Bufflehead—not one of our quiz birds. Photo by Mick Thompson

(Continued on page 14)



Harlequins are overall plain brown but have a rather distinctive round spot behind the eye. The adult male is quite striking, quite a beautiful duck!

So, with C solved, that leaves us with scoters as options for A and B. The three

We can rule out the scaup species by the bill alone, none have the right shape and all lack the scaup bill's blueish coloration and markings.

Ruddy Duck are very short-bodied, so do not resemble the long body of the birds in A and B. The shape of the Ruddy's big, flat bill also does not match any of these birds.

So, that leaves us with goldeneyes, scoters, and Harlequin Duck. We can also rule out goldeneyes, the bill doesn't fit photos A or B for certain, and neither goldeneye sport a spot behind the eye.

Now we are down to scoters and Harlequin Duck!

Notice that photos A and B both sit low in the water while the bird in photo C sits higher in the water (the relatively long tail is well above the water's surface). C also appears much more petite overall, short-bodied and with a fairly petite bill, especially in comparison with the other two birds. C also has a rather rounded head and the spot behind the eye in this bird is quite distinct. I think the "C" label is quite appropriate, as the shape of this bird can be described as cute! A petite, round-headed duck with a short bill and round white spot behind the eye would take



scoter species that can be found up the Columbia (and occasionally on other local bodies of water) in the late fall and winter are the Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, and the Black Scoter.

Neither A nor B have the more rounded head and flatter bill of the Black Scoter. A male Black Scoter can show a bit of white smudging in the face, but is blacker overall. The female has a very sharp delineation between the upper and lower

halves of the face coloration, so no match there. They are also more compact scoters than either of these two birds.

Head, neck, and bill really are key for A and B. In B, notice the rather large, square-shaped head and massive triangular bill. There is almost a straight line on the incline from bill tip to crown. In A, notice a more wedge-shaped head and flatter bill, especially towards the tip. The center of the bill has a knobby step over the nares ("nostrils"). The neck appears relatively thick in A, while in B there appears to be a clear narrowing at the neck.

These shapes are enough to identify both these birds, but let's also take a look at the base of the bills. Notice the feathering extending to the nares ("nostrils") in the bill of A, the **WHITE-WINGED SCOTER**, while the bill of B, the **SURF SCOTER**, is bare at the base, although a bump is present with some dark coloration developing at the center. Great details if you can get them!



Adult males of our quiz bird species: White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, and Harlequin Duck. Photos by Mick Thompson

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. Wildlife Care Center**

- **Do not handle the animal** any more than necessary to contain it. 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 micro-waved for 1-3 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.

NWR Updates

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

Ridgefield NWR

Entrance fee

Automatic Gate times for all units: dawn to dusk, times posted at the entrance and on website

"S" Unit

Auto Tour Route: Open Daily

October 1 to April 30, auto traffic only.

Kiwa Trail: Closed for season as of Oct. 1, reopens May 1

Carty Unit

****New Construction ****

The construction of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge's Multi-Purpose building is continuing. The main entrance looks a bit messy however you can still access the trail from the lower parking lot.

Spur trail from Main Street Bridge Closed During Construction

The pedestrian trail from Main Avenue to the trail head at the Carty Unit will remain closed during the duration of the construction. Visitors can still drive in or walk in from the sidewalk through the main entrance gate.

Port entrance: Lookout open year-round.

Steigerwald Lake NWR

Closed to All Public Access for Restoration

[Video update of the Steigerwald project](#)

We are looking forward to visiting Steigerwald again next spring if all continues on schedule!

Vancouver Audubon Society Support & Donation Form

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

_____ I wish to become a supporter of Vancouver Audubon for \$20/year or \$_____

**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**

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/>



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
December 2021						
Nov 28	29	30 Board Mtg	1 Bird Walk	2	3	4
5	6	7 Program	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Lyle CBC	20	21	22	23	24	25 Christmas
26	27	28	29	30	31	Jan 1 New Year's Day
January 2021						
2 Sauvie/ Ridgefield CBC	3	4	5	6	7	8

Nov 30 (TUE): VAS Board Meeting via Zoom, 6:30pm

Dec 1 (WED): Bird Walk: Ridgefield NWR/Carty Unit, 8am

Dec 7 (TUE): Zoom Program, Backyard Habitat, 6:30pm social/program 7pm

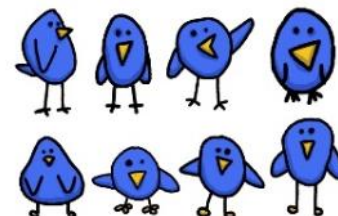
Dec 19 (SUN): Lyle CBC

Jan 2 (SUN): Sauvie Island/Ridgefield CBC

Jan 20 (THU): Submission deadline for February newsletter

Jan 25 (TUE): VAS Board Meeting via Zoom, 6:30pm

Feb 1 (TUE): Zoom Program, Crane's Landing, 6:30pm social/program 7pm



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backyardbirdshop.com



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