

Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON *A chapter of the National Audubon Society*



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December 2022

vancouveraudubon.org

Birds at the Legislature 2023: Speak up for Birds

by Susan Saul

Audubon Washington will be hosting Virtual Advocacy Days on **December 5 and 6** for you to help ensure your state legislators are all-in on protecting birds and ecosystems in the upcoming legislative session. Sign up today at birdscanwin.

When you register, Audubon Washington will help connect you with other conservation advocates from your area and help schedule a meeting with your state legislator. The meetings typically last 15 minutes. Audubon will provide training to ensure you're prepared to speak for the birds!

Audubon Washington's legislative priorities include four focus areas where state policy and budget items for the upcoming 2023 legislative session could have a positive impact on birds and the habitat they need to thrive.

Climate

- Include climate change in the Growth Management Act
- Additional staffing at state agencies to review wind and solar project proposals
- Ensure revenues from the state's new Climate Commitment Act program are allocated to climate actions.

Puget Sound

- Puget Sound shoreline protection

Working Lands

- Ensure responsibly-sited clean energy in the shrub-steppe
- Conservation District funding for voluntary landowner stewardship
- WDFW biodiversity and climate resilience staffing

Capital Budget

- Full funding for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program



Christmas Bird Count

Monday, December 19, 2022

Sauvie/Ridgefield/Vancouver CBC

Still thinking about doing the Christmas Bird Count?

**We had to change the date to
MONDAY, December 19th.**



(It was Friday, Dec 16th).

We are reconfirming all that have signed up so far and then assignments will be made, maybe even as you read this, so please let me know if you want to join the fun. We still have some spots for folks who want to do a couple hours or all day into night owling. I can put you on a team or give you a space of your own. Have questions? Give me a call. We would love to have you. If you live within the circle and want to do a feeder count for the day, that would be great too. Just let me know. Call or text to 856 701 2542 or email me at smsetterberg@yahoo.com. Who knows, maybe you will be the one to find this bird that has been moving around in the area lately.

Susan Setterberg



From the VAS Board

by Cindy McCormack

Happy Holidays to you all! Autumn is coming to a close and winter will soon be upon us—but we are incredibly lucky to have such a great variety of wintering birds in our region! We can experience the awesome and almost deafening spectacle of thousands of geese and Sandhill Cranes, sort through hundreds of scaup looking for a scoter or Tufted Duck, scan the waters for an amazing variety of waterfowl, hike along forested lowlands and encounter a large feeding flock of passerines, search through masses of gulls to find that one oddball, watch the endless patience of a stalking heron, enjoy the antics of the sparrow flocks foraging in the thickets and the edges, and so much more. Every day has something new to experience!

Winter also means it is time for the annual Christmas Bird Count! If you haven't participated before, we highly recommend taking part in this long-running citizen science project. No experience necessary—novice participants and birders can join a team led by an experienced birder. You can join for a day, a few hours, or take part in the feeder count portion. Our closest local count circles include the circles centered at Sauvie/Ridgefield, Portland, and Lyle. The Sauvie/Ridgefield CBC will take place December 19th; Portland's on December 31st, and Lyle's on December 18th. For information on other Washington circles and contacts for count circle administrators, visit <https://wos.org/cbc/>. I certainly enjoy having the extra

eyes and ears in my count team and sharing a day together counting birds and enjoying nature is delightful!

The Young Birders' Club will be having their first organized outing this December! We have binoculars and spotting scopes available for any that need optics for the event. Please pass along the invitation to any young birders (ages 10-18) you may know. See page 5 for details.

I am hoping to put together a committee and volunteers to handle requests for bird presentations, walks, discussion, or other requests we receive from area groups or entities. We frequently have requests, but need help accommodating all of the interested parties. Most are for very basic or introductory bird or nature walks and presentations for the community. We are seeing more interest in the outdoors, the environment, and in our local bird life and we would love to see this appreciation blossom. If this interests you or if you have any questions, please contact me at vas@vancouveraudubon.org.

Our December program should be amazing with Martha Jordan, the region's well-known swan biologist discussing our elegant wintering swans. This month's will be held on Zoom only, so check your email for the invitation. Contact Don Rose at meetings@vancouveraudubon.org if you need one. Everyone is welcome!



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

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

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 will be held in rooms #2 and

*#3 at **Evergreen Public Schools District***

Office at 13413 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial

Drive, Vancouver, WA

VAS Programs

Upcoming Programs:

Our December meeting will be a ZOOM-only meeting. All Vancouver Audubon members will receive a Zoom invitation via email. You must register in advance to receive the link to the meeting. We will also be live streaming on Facebook and record-

ing the meeting for viewing online. Previous program recordings can be found on our Vancouver Audubon Society Facebook page and edited versions are now on our YouTube page. Search YouTube for "Vancouver Audubon Society".

December 6th—Native Swans of the Pacific Northwest

Online Social at 6:30 pm, Program, 7:00 pm

MARTHA JORDAN, well-known swan biologist, will present a program on the native swans, Trumpeter and Tundra, in the Pacific Northwest with a focus on Tundra Swans. You will learn about their life history, biology, and some swan identification tips. Updates on eastern Washington swans and how Washington's west and east sides are connected for swans not only in Washington but along the entire flyway. Learn about the connection between swans and Snow Geese and their management connections on both sides of the Cascade Mountains.

Martha will shed some light on the problems and controversies these birds face on their wintering grounds and what is needed to ensure their future. Get updated on the swan lead poisoning problem, winter habitat issues, avian influenza, and more. You will leave with resources to help you identify swans in the field. Learn how to help *Get the Lead Out* of both shooting and fishing sporting activities. This is vital to the welfare of swans and all waterbirds.

Martha Jordan has a B.S. degree in Wildlife Science from Oregon State University. She has worked professionally in both marine and terrestrial environments throughout Washington and parts of Alaska. In the late 1970s, while

volunteering to observe snow geese and reading their collars in the Skagit Valley, she began to look at the small group of Trumpeter Swans in the same area. By 1984 she had expanded her survey efforts to all of Western Washington and had contributed much information to both state and federal agencies on the status of Trumpeter Swans in Washington State. She wrote the state's first Trumpeter Swan management plan in 1985. She is still active in both field work and education related to both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans throughout the region. She is currently the Executive Director of Northwest Swan Conservation Association, a regional non-profit. The focus is on our native swans and their habitats throughout the northwest region.



Trumpeter Swans
Photo: Mick Thompson

February 6, 2023—Photo Travel Adventure

Arden and Sherry Hagen will give a travelogue with pictures of one of their recent birding adventures.

March 7, 2023—Bring Back the Pollinators

Zoom meeting – Dave Kollen of the Xerces Society will present *Bring Back the Pollinators*, a presentation and discussion about importance and conservation of our pollinators.

Programs are held the first Tuesday of the month except Jan, July, & August. Programs start at 7:00 pm, with a casual 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.

Please visit the [VAS website](#) for field trip details and requirements.

Thursday, Dec 1

First-of-Month Bird Walk

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Meeting time: 8:00am

Meeting location: [Ft. Vancouver, 5th Street parking lot](#)

Register: vas@vancouveraudubon.org

December's bird walk: Ft. Vancouver NHS

A great year for Acorn Woodpeckers at the Fort! We will walk the property to look and listen for these clown-faced woodpeckers and any other wintering birds we can find. We will include a walk to the waterfront portion of the park if conditions allow. We will meet at the new parking lot, just east of the intersection of 5th and Ft. Vancouver Way.

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.

Saturday, Dec 3

Young Birders' Club Bird Walk

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Meeting time: 8:00am

Meeting location: [Frenchman's Bar County Park, center south lot](#)

Register: none required

Chickadees, Eagles, and Ducks, Oh My!

The Vancouver Audubon Society's *Young Birder's Club* is hosting a [bird walk](#) led by expert birder Cindy McCormack. Join us on **Saturday, December 3rd at 8 a.m.** and Frenchman's Bar to meet some incredible birds! We'll walk around, learn about and see the local avifauna, and meet with fellow birders. Open to anyone 10-18 years old plus parent/guardian. Feel free to reach out to vp@vancouveraudubon.org with any questions. We will have binoculars and spotting scopes to share.

Monday, Dec 19, 2022

Ridgefield/Sauvie/Vancouver CBC

Leader: assigned group or sector

Departure time: arranged

Meeting location: arranged

Register: Susan Setterberg call or text: 856-701-2542 or email smsetterberg@yahoo.com

Participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count! 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.

Dates TBD

Raptor Survey Route

Leader: Randy Hill

Departure time: Arranged

Meeting location: Arranged

Register: email re_hill@q.com or call/text 360-975-2573

Ride along to help locate and count raptors on an area driving route. Highlights are raptors and some occasional surprising finds in areas infrequently birded.

Sunday, Jan 1, 2023

First-of-Month Bird Walk

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Meeting time: 9:00am

Meeting location: [Frenchman's Bar, south center parking](#)

Register: vas@vancouveraudubon.org

January's bird walk: Frenchman's Bar Regional Park

What will your first birds be for 2023?

Celebrate the new year with some first-of-year (FOY) birds! We will get to enjoy the Sandhill Cranes and hordes of geese using the fields next to the park and check the treed areas for other great wintering birds (maybe even an owl!). This park has a great variety of habitats with a good mix of wintering species! Be sure to dress for the weather!



Young Birder's Club

December 3rd & 6th, 2022 events

Tag Along on a Guided Bird Walk!



Chickadees, Eagles, and Ducks, Oh My!

The Vancouver Audubon Society's *Young Birder's Club* is hosting a bird walk led by expert birder Cindy McCormack. Join us on **Saturday, December 3rd at 8 a.m.** and Frenchman's Bar to meet some incredible birds! We'll walk around, learn about and see the local aves, and meet with fellow birders. Feel free to reach out to vp@vancouveraudubon.org with any questions. We will have binoculars and spotting scopes to share.

There will also be a Zoom meeting on December 6th at 6 pm where we will discuss future opportunities for the club, as well as talk about birds, birding goals, and upcoming events.

December 3rd Bird Walk @ 8 a.m.

Location: Frenchman's Bar Hiking Trail Parking Area, Vancouver, WA

Open to anyone 10-18 years old plus parent/guardian

December 6th Zoom Meeting @ 6 p.m.

Location: Online Zoom Meeting

Open to anyone 10-18 years old

Contact Jared Strawderman at [vp@vancouveraudubon](mailto:vp@vancouveraudubon.org) for link

Spread Your Wings & Fly On Over To The

Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway!

January 26 - 29, 2023

Patrick Ranch Museum, Chico, CA



Join us in the search for winter birds of the Pacific Flyway on 4-days of action-packed field trips with experienced trip leaders, plus more.

Washington Leads the Way on Fossil Fuels-Free Buildings

by Susan Saul

Advocating for 100% clean energy in Washington includes a broad suite of policies. Last month, our state took a huge leap toward getting fossil fuels out of our homes.

On November 4, 2022, the Washington State Building Code Council (SBCC) voted to adopt new statewide residential building codes that will drive the transition to safe and healthy homes that run on low-cost, 100% clean electricity instead of methane gas — a climate super-polluter that also harms health.

The state's action to require heat pumps for space and water heating in new home construction follows similar action earlier this year on commercial and large multifamily buildings, making Washington's statewide building codes among the strongest in the nation for using heat pumps in all new construction. The new building codes also improve kitchen ventilation to protect health.

Washington's residential building codes will take effect in July 2023. The new codes require heat pumps for space heating/cooling and water heating. Heat pumps provide ultra-efficient heating, as well as cooling—an increasingly important need in Washington's hotter summers and when residents are forced indoors by wildfire smoke. They run on the state's clean and comparatively low-cost elec-

tricity. All-electric homes save Washingtonians \$1,000 per year over the lifetime of the HVAC equipment, according to the Department of Commerce.

The new codes also require improved ventilation requirements for any new homes built with gas ranges for cooking. These safeguards are needed because of toxic pollutants like nitrogen oxides emitted by appliances that burn methane gas. In kitchens, this air pollution affects children especially, who are 42% more likely to suffer symptoms of asthma when they grow up in homes with a gas stove instead of an electric stove. Recent research has found that gas appliances even leak pollutants when they are off, including benzene, a carcinogen.

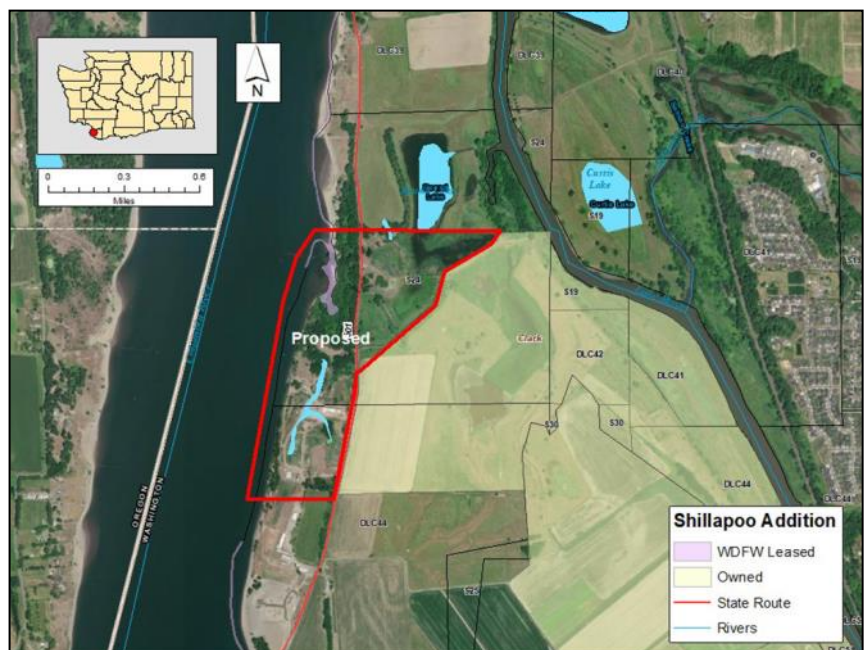
More than 100 people testified in support of the code updates at the SBCC's two public hearings and more than 4,600 residents and experts submitted written comments in support of the new residential codes.

During the 2023 legislative session, state legislators will have more opportunities to lead the way by making smart investments in equitable programs and incentives to electrify existing buildings that will help more households access the cost-savings, health, and safety benefits of efficiency, like electric heat pumps.

Vancouver Audubon Supports Shillapoo Lake Addition

by Susan Saul

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is proposing to acquire 90 acres on the Vancouver Lake lowlands as an addition to its Shillapoo Lake Wildlife Area. The land is located on the Columbia River shoreline and includes high quality riparian habitats that have the potential for both salmonid restoration and wetland habitat management. The property is located north of Fazio Brothers Sand and Gravel and includes wetlands at the southern end of Round Lake. Vancouver Audubon has submitted public comments in support of the acquisition.



Trip Report: VAS Field Trip to Wahkiakum and Pacific Counties

November 13-14, 2022

By Randy Hill

Our 7 AM departure from the Salmon Creek Park and Ride launched in four vehicles, with two per car providing plenty of room for comfortable viewing and stowed luggage. Aside from a restroom stop in Longview it was a straight shot to Wahkiakum County where we started serious birding at the ferry terminal on Puget Island. A bit of a chill depending on wind exposure, especially along the Columbia River, but livestock fields, scattered tall trees, ornamentals in yards, and a few feeders provided a good mix of 12 waterfowl species, 10 raptors and 26 passerines among 58 species. Not a bad start! Before leaving Cathlamet, we added numbers of waterfowl, including scoters and a distant flock of 2900 scaup to the south in the river channel along Little Puget Island.

Julia Butler Hansen NWR always has something worthwhile, and this day was no exception.

Among 17 species of waterfowl near the shop and Steamboat Slough Road were a Canvasback and a dozen Trumpeter Swans in addition to the more expected Tundra Swans. From the Whitetail Trail area we also had most of the 24 passerines working the small trees, shrubs and marsh. As we ventured into the afternoon, Brooks Slough Road wasn't quite as productive but we still had a drive ahead of us.

After a quick stop at Skamokawa Vista Park, Karen and Jean headed back home while the rest of us headed to Grays Bay, the far SW corner of the county where we look for species with a coastal association. Among 16 waterfowl species were Red-breasted Merganser, Surf and White-winged Scoter, Red-throated Loon, Pelagic Cormorant and a great view of an adult Peregrine Falcon completed our day with most seeing around 90 species for the day. Six of us headed to the Long Beach peninsula for lodging.

Monday morning was brisk. The northeast end of Leadbetter Point includes protected areas of Willapa NWR and Leadbetter Point State Park. The first stop with an outgoing tide was amazing. Big flocks of waterfowl and shorebirds, including at least 9000 Dunlin flying in amaz-

ing murmurations over the shallow water as the low sun angle created alternating black and white shine with minor shifts in direction. The 2100 Northern Pintails was a conservative estimate. The Brant flock reached 450 before we moved on to a beach access in the state park where the estimate reached 600. The Martha Jordan trail gave us an opportunity to see Hutton's Vireo and Red Crossbill very well, and there were numbers of both species of chickadees and kinglets.

After a quick stop at the Oysterville Cemetery we dropped into historic Oysterville where the community has many homes and other buildings beautifully preserved and maintained. The history back to 1859 indicates an important role before Washington statehood. Birding is always interesting and we found 39 species, but it appeared this fall's moisture has been sparse. To the



Scoping thousands of Dunlin at Leadbetter SP

south, Nahcotta has a productive oyster industry. While we had four species of shorebirds, Black Turnstone was not found for possibly the first time since I've visited the area over the last 25 years. Further south, near the PUD area, we had a goose flock with four species represented.

Continuing south to Ilwaco we then visited three locations of Cape Disappointment SP. The North Head lighthouse has viewing limited by the earth's curvature, and it is a stretch to count Western Grebes and scoters. The nearby Coast Guard station typically has daily emergency response training, so the 3 boats and hovering helicopter at mouth of the Columbia River were not a surprise. A hike at the north jetty for some reported rarities was next. While none of them turned up, we did find all three cormorant species, a very tame flock of young Snow Geese, meadowlarks next to the ocean, and an Iceland Gull. The boat launch was uninspiring as the sun was heading toward the horizon. We tried Chinook Valley but were halted by a roadblock on our route, so called we it a day. Steve, Cindy and Becky headed back home while Les and I headed back to Ocean Park and a final look at the west side of Willapa Bay. The day in Pacific County also yielded about 90 species for the day, with more than 100 for the two-day trip.

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.

Birds not given a rarity code may be ones that are common but unusual at this time of the year. Most of the sightings in this report are only the highlights gleaned from the eBird reports, to see the complete list for any outing go to eBird.org and enter the county name into Explore and then scroll to that date.

Oct. 23, the continuing Marine Park **PACIFIC LOON** (4) was seen by Cindy McCormack who noted the well-defined border between dorsal dark and ventral white through the center of face, a straight and stout bill that was as not was prominent as on a Common Loon.

Oct. 24, Clark County's first **BROWN BOOBY** (5) was spotted in the Columbia River from the Oregon shore by Ross Barnes-Rickett on the anchor chain of the container ship, *Adelante*. The ship remained anchored off of Blurock Landing for three days before being moved to a berth for loading/unloading, after that the bird has not been reported again. The sighting of this species, with a nearly six-foot wingspan and should have been in tropical waters, brought birders in from all across the state, from Oregon and other states. Local birders who saw it the first day included Jim Danzenbaker, April and Erik Brown, Luke Hanes, John Bishop, Kevin Black, Cindy McCormack and Ken Pitts. There is one prior record of a booby in this area, a Masked Booby was rescued from the Oregon side of the Interstate Bridge on Aug. 15, 2006 that died in rehab and is in the Slater Museum (University of Puget Sound) collection.

Oct. 24, Jim Danzenbaker reported a **SWAMP SPARROW** (3) along the Auto Tour on the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit.

Oct. 24, an **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** (4) was photographed by Tina Johnson and Gregory Johnson at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit. These small sparrows have a rusty cap, two toned bill, white wing bars with rusty and black on their wings and back. A key identifying mark on these Arctic breeding birds is a single dark spot in the center of a plain breast.

Oct. 25, the continuing **BROWN BOOBY** on anchor chain of *Adelante* was viewed from Blurock Landing by Terry Anderson, Randy Hill, David Poortinga and dozens of other birders including myself.



American Tree Sparrow
Photo by Greg Johnson

Oct. 25, Janet Phillips and David Poortinga both relocated the previously reported **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** and **SWAMP SPARROW** at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit.

Oct. 25, A male and female **REDHEAD** (3) were photographed by Josh Barstow at the Rock Creek Mill Pond in Stevenson. This pond at the Skamania County Fairgrounds is an excellent spot to view waterfowl that are attracted by the wind sheltered waters and the flock of domestic geese.

Oct. 26, 38 **TURKEY VULTURES** were seen above Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit by William "Joe" Rou-Laine, circling in a kettle formation.

Oct. 26, at Marine Park, Ken Vanderkamp spotted a female **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (3) amongst 19 **COMMON MERGANSERS**. He noted it as being less robust with a smaller head, bill, and body. It had no white cheek or

strong contrast between the dark head and neck and the white of the breast.

Oct. 26, on Little Buck Creek Road, along the White Salmon River in Skamania County, Samuel Holman heard 2 **CASSIN'S FINCHES** (3) flying over giving their distinct whistle calls.

Oct. 27, Jim Danzenbaker was birding on Lower Larch Mountain when he spotted 7 **TURKEY VULTURES** moving south along a north south ridge west of his viewing location. He also picked out a second-year **GOLDEN EAGLE** (3) with no white or pale in the plumage, the long wings were not as broad as those of a Bald Eagle held in a slight dihedral with a small head and no white at base of the tail.

Oct. 27, Darlene Betat and Skip Russell also spotted a late **TURKEY VULTURE** at the Steigerwald Lake NWR. This had already counted a kettle of 37 near the Fisher Rock Quarry, a couple miles west of the refuge on their way to the refuge.

Oct. 27, another **TURKEY VULTURE** was seen by Cindy

(Continued on page 9)

McCormack this one was in the Vancouver Lake lowlands soaring in a spiral up a thermal with 8 **AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS**.

Oct. 27, Debbie Meader was birding in the Vancouver Lowlands near the end of Lower River Road, when she was very surprised to see and photograph Clark County's first **TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (5), perched at the top of a tree flycatching insects. In her excellent photos you can see the lack of any white outer tail feathers that a Western Kingbird would have, Tropical Kingbirds also have a longer bill and are brighter yellow below with a greenish breast.

Oct. 27, Les Carlson and I birded at Skamania Landing finding 2 **SNOW GEESE** (4) there, an adult and one juvenile on the sandbar upstream of the boat ramp. At Rock Creek Mill Pond, in Stevenson we saw a 1 **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE**, a **CAKCLING GOOSE**, 4 **RUDDY DUCKS** and in the creek, there was a **WILSON'S SNIBE** imitating a Dipper. Les spotted a **SURF SCOTER** (4) at Drano Lake, the first in that county this fall.

Oct. 29, Jim Danzenbaker and Gregory Johnson had a fun morning of birding along the Vancouver waterfront on the Columbia River. With having an immature **BROWN PELICAN** (5) sailed overhead right in front of them while birding in front of the Tidewater Marina. There are only a couple of other records of them in Clark County. The birders that gathered here also picked out one female **BLACK SCOTER** (5) with a flock of 40 **SURF SCOTERS** (3) a female **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER**, 6 **BONA-PARTE'S GULLS** (3), 3 **PACIFIC LOONS**, 1 **COMMON LOON**, 3 **RED-NECKED GREBE** (3) and 15 **HORNED GREBES**.

Oct. 29, Trine Beach and Julian Hwa had a late migrant **TURKEY VULTURE** fly over them near the bridge at the Ridgefield NWR-Carty Unit.

Oct. 29, Dave Hayden was birding at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit when a kettle of 7 **TURKEY VULTURES** catching thermals drifted southward.

Oct. 29, Pamela Gunn spotted 3 of the long staying **ACORN WOODPECKERS** (5) flying around caching acorns at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Oct. 29, at Marine Park, Robert Vanderkamp found an **EARED GREBE** (4) noting the more rounded head with a peak on the forehead with a black cap that came down over the eye and completely surrounding it that helps separate it from the more common Horned Grebe.

Oct. 30, the **PACIFIC LOON** at Marine Park continued and was seen by many including Les Carlson and Ken Vanderkamp who also spotted two **TURKEY VULTURES**.

Oct. 31, M. Harvey who lives near Lyle, in Klickitat County, had a **RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER** (3) at his feeders. His photo showed the red chin and crown, white stripe below and

above the eye and the red on the nape that separates these woodpeckers from the Red-breasted Sapsuckers found in the western half of the VAS membership area. Until 1983 both of these birds were considered to be color variations of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which is found east of the Rocky Mountains.

Oct. 31, while conducting bird surveys in the Vancouver Lake lowlands Cindy McCormack found a **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** with a big mixed blackbird and starling flock. This species nests at the Ridgefield and Steigerwald Lake NWRs and in the Vancouver Lake lowlands but is considered rare anywhere else in western Washington, they are also migratory with most of them gone from our region in mid-September, and will not return until late March.

Nov. 1, David Poortinga found another **EARED GREBE** at the Steigerwald Lake

NWR.

Nov. 1, the **SWAMP SPARROW** was seen by Ken Pitts on the north side of the berry thicket just past marker 11 on the Auto Tour Route on the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit. He had photographed it in the same spot over a week earlier and described it as similar to the more abundant **LINCOLN'S SPARROW**, but with a clear gray breast and rufous brown wings.

Nov. 1, David Poortinga found a very late **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** at the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery near Underwood in Skamania, Washington

Nov. 3, Fran Lenski reported that the first **TUNDRA**

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*Tropical Kingbird
Photos by Debbie Meader*

SWANS of the season showed up at the Salmon Creek Greenway in Vancouver, an apparent family group of two adults and five juveniles.

Nov. 3, while walking the trail at Steigerwald Lake NWR, Carol Murdock heard a late lingering **SORA** calling in a wetland area and then confirmed the sound with the Merlin app on her phone.

Nov. 3, the **SURF SCOTER** at Drano Lake was added to his Skamania County life list by Josh Barstow.

Nov. 3, while at Fort Vancouver, John Koon saw an **ACORN WOODPECKER** picking acorns up from under a oak in the field west of the apple orchard when a second appeared and the two cavorted along the fence line in the evergreen trees.

Nov. 4, Klickitat County has only a couple of prior records of **BLACK PHOEBE** (5), so when CJ Flick and Stewart Fletcher found one at the Bingen Pond it has attracted many birders hoping to add it to their county lists.

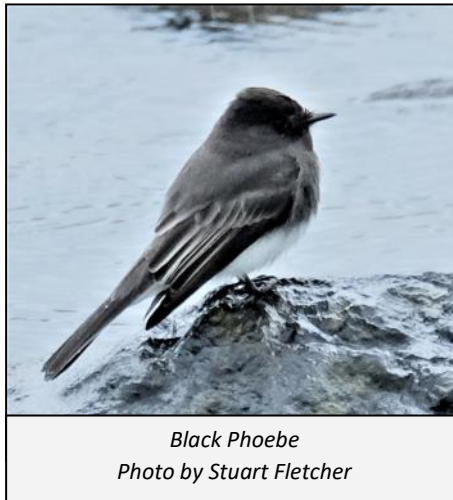
Nov. 5, a **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** was found by Tina Johnson and Gregory Johnson at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit. It was in with commoner in winter, **GREATER YELLOWLEGS** but much smaller and with a shorter and thinner bill. One spent most of last winter there too.

Nov. 8, in Klickitat County, Samuel Holman saw the continuing **SWAMP SPARROW** (4) near the beaver pond and pump station at the Bingen Pond where was able to pick out 1 **TRUMPETER SWAN** (4) in with the more expected **TUNDRA SWANS** (3).

Nov. 8, 3 very late migrant **TURKEY VULTURES**, each flying alone, were seen by Cindy McCormack in the Vancouver Lake lowlands. In the last few decades there have been a few that have wintered in the Willamette Valley.

Nov. 10, Cindy McCormack checked the Fort Vancouver NHS, for the continuing **ACORN WOODPECKERS** and viewed at least 5 at one time.

Nov 11, Samuel Holman went back to the Bingen Pond in Klickitat County and found that there were now 5 **TRUMPETER SWANS** there with 3



Black Phoebe
Photo by Stuart Fletcher

adults in the pond and 1 adult with an immature in the v-shaped cove between the pond and the log yard.

Nov. 11, Josh Barstow checked the Rock Creek Mill Pond in Stevenson finding an eclipse male **REDHEAD**.

Nov. 11, Bill Tweit stopped at Bonneville Dam where he found Skamania County's first **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES** (5) when he saw 2 immatures along the outflow from the north powerhouse but not associating with each other. These are trim gulls that were larger than the hundreds of **BONAPARTE'S GULLS** (3)

there, with a black M pattern formed on their back and wings. The slightly notched tail had a narrow black terminal band, they have a thick black bar on the nape with a dark vertical line behind eye, the rest of the head was white and it had a black beak. He continued upstream to Klickitat County where he spotted a **SABINE'S GULL** (5) at The Dalles Dam where it was seen earlier in the day. Both of these species of gulls spend most of their life over the ocean and only coming to land to nest, these were probably birds moving south from the Arctic Ocean using the corridor between the Cascade and Rocky Mountains.

Nov 11, Mike Clarke Clark observed 4 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at once very actively foraging and interacting with vocalizations and spread-winged displays in the oaks near the auditorium at the Fort Vancouver NHS.

Nov 12, the continuing **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES** at Bonneville Dam attracted birders from both Washington and Oregon to see these rare visitors. Cindy McCormack and I were happy to see it perched on a concrete wall while the Oregon birders were waiting to see it fly, hoping it would cross into Oregon waters.

Nov 13, both John Davis and Josh Barstow checked Bonneville Dam and saw the continuing **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** floating on the river, resting on the concrete apron, and flying. Sounds like they had better views than what I had the prior day when it sat in the shade most of the time.

Nov. 13, Aaron Walters reported getting good looks at 3 of the Fort Vancouver NHS **ACORN WOODPECKERS**.

Nov. 13, John Bishop birded The Dalles Dam from Seufert Park on the Oregon

(Continued on page 11)



Surf Scoter
photo by Wilson Cady

(Continued from page 10)

side to see the continuing adult **SABINE'S GULL** as it crossed into Washington waters to add it to his Klickitat checklist.

Nov. 15, John Bishop visited Bonneville Dam finding the continuing **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES** and then found 2 **HORNED LARKS** (3) in the small gravel lot closest to guard check-point to the Visitor's Center.

Horned Larks nest in treeless areas at high elevations in Skamania County like found at Mt. Saint Helens but are uncommon in the lower elevations there.

Nov. 15, Mike Clarke found a flock of 13 **HORNED LARKS** (4) along the entrance trail at Steigerwald Lake NWR. There is an endangered subspecies of these birds, the Streaked Horned Lark, that nest on the sandy beaches and islands in the Columbia River as well as the birds we get from higher elevations and further north.

Nov. 16, Philip Kline was able to see the continuing **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** below Bonneville Dam by viewing it from Bradford Island on Oregon side.

Nov. 17, 2 **HORNED LARKS** were still being seen at the Steigerwald Lake NWR according to Gregory Johnson who found 2 near the rock overlook.

Nov. 17, a **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** was seen again in a flock of blackbirds in the Vancouver Lake lowlands by Cindy McCormack while she was conducting a survey on Cranes' Landing for the Columbia Land Trust. This was most likely the same bird that was seen there last month.

Nov. 18, a **HORNED LARK** at Bonneville Dam was seen by Les Carlson in the same parking area near the visitor's entrance gate where they were first found..

Nov. 18, the Columbia Land Trust's Crane Landing in the Vancouver Lake lowlands is attracting a lot of birds now, these fields are planted with a variety of food crops chosen to attract Sandhill Cranes and other wildlife. Cindy McCormack conducted a survey there and counted 1,899 **SANDHILL CRANES** as they flew into the fields. Out of the 52 species that she saw in her four-hour visit there were nine species of raptors, ten if you count the fierce little **NORTHERN SHRIKE** as one.

Nov. 19, Josh Barstow reported there were now 3 **HORNED LARKS** in the gravel parking lot at the Bonneville



Wilson's Snipe
Photo by Wilson Cady

Dam visitor's entrance gate.

Nov. 19, two **TRUMPETER SWANS** were seen circling a small pond in Hazel Dell, a first for that area for Les Carlson.

Nov. 19, Karen Pickering and Cindy McCormack found 2 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at the intersection of Old Highway 8 and Major Creek Road and another eight of these colorful woodpeckers at the Lyle-Balch Cemetery in Klickitat County. I am surprised by the

large number of them present with reports of these birds coming from Clark, King, Snohomish and Chelan counties I thought this colony had dispersed.

Nov. 20, 6 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** were seen at one time at the Fort Vancouver NHS by Cindy McCormack.

Nov. 21, a **GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (5) was reported by Drew Kelly on 44th near Arnold Park in Vancouver. This may have been one of the two that had been at the Steigerwald Lake NWR earlier this fall.

There have been four new birds added to the Clark County checklist this year, Brown Booby, Tropical Kingbird, Tennessee Warbler and Great-tailed Grackle bringing the county checklist to 334 species. Skamania County also added four new birds to their checklist, Black-legged Kittiwake, Sabine's Gull, Northern Mockingbird and Northern Waterthrush for a new total of 302 species. I don't see any pattern of vagrancy in these sightings with the warbler in Clark County being an East Coast species, the Booby coming from south of the Mexican border and the Kingbird and Grackle are found in the southwest from southern California into Texas. In Skamania County, the gull and Kittiwake are Arctic nesters and the Mockingbird and Waterthrush are East Coast species with some nesting records in eastern and northeastern Washington.

Please continue to send me your sightings or enter them into eBird for use in this column and the year list project of compiling all of the species seen in each county by anyone this year. I would also appreciate any photos of any Code 3 and higher birds for use in this column. The 2022 Washington County Cumulative Year List Project has tallied 229 species seen in Clark County for the year and in Skamania County list is now at 203. These lists of all of the birds reported in each county are updated every two months and can be seen at [WashingtonBirder \(wabirder.com\)](http://WashingtonBirder.com).

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.

Send questions, comments, and submissions to [Cindy](mailto:Cindy@vancouveraudubon.org) at vas@vancouveraudubon.org.

Can you identify the bird in this photo? Identification and discussion will be in the next newsletter.



Quiz photo by Greg Johnson

November's Bird ID Challenge Discussion

It seems a bit macabre to just use a museum specimen body part for a bird quiz, but I thought this would be a great way to work on the identification of some of our regulars in this family just by the pattern in the wing!

The key for many in this family is to look for the contrasts. In less-than-ideal lighting conditions, color can be difficult to see. Especially, as you can see in this bird's wing, when there is iridescence. Iridescent feathers are a structural effect, dependent on light. If your angle is wrong, or the lighting poor, you may only see a dark patch instead of this beautiful metallic green. You have probably noticed this in our Anna's Hummingbirds—the head looks dark, even black, until it turns just right, then ... WOW! A brilliant pink!

So, back to this wing. How do we know what families to consider? The iridescent feathers can help you there. Besides hummingbirds, which will not have this robust of a wing, nor any patterns like this in the wing, what birds do we have with iridescent feathering? Some non-native gallinaceous birds (pheasant, turkey, peafowl, chickens), ducks, cormorants, pigeons/doves, European Starling, Brewer's Blackbird...to name a few. Whew! That didn't seem to help at all! The elimination of most of these birds is relatively easy though. The gallinaceous birds all have very rounded wings. Their wings are designed for short bursts of flight, not extended periods of powered flight or for long migrations, such as the wing in our photo here.



November's Challenge

They also typically have a rather uniform pattern through the wing (often barred). As for cormorants, pigeons and doves, starling, and Brewer's Blackbird all have a rather plain wing, no distinct patterns), so we can eliminate them without even considering shape!

So, that leaves us with the ducks. But which duck wing are we seeing

here? How can we possibly tell which species wing we are viewing without the rest of the duck? That's where the contrast pattern will help—or look for the white! Some ducks can be difficult to get to species just with the wing view, so other field marks are helpful.

When this duck is flying, you will not likely see the rich brown at the base of the wing, and it would be very difficult to make out that beautiful iridescent green at the tips of the flight feathers or in the inner secondaries and the coverts. But, the overall dark surface of the wing with a white trailing edge will get you an identification.

For the bad news: there can be variations in amount (sometimes by quite a bit!) in individual birds because of the age of the bird, the age of the feathers, and the sex of the duck. However, the general location of the contrast should remain the same. The quiz photo wing is quite a beautiful specimen, with very extensive white at the base of those secondaries. Let's look at the patterns on some of our local ducks.

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)



PSM 17157

Mallard—double white lines, one at the trailing edge of the secondaries, the other along the base of the greater coverts, blue speculum. They are a bulky-appearing duck with a slower, shallower wing beat that most other ducks.



PSM 21425

American Wigeon—white secondary coverts with a dark speculum (often appears black)



PSM 12357

Northern Pintail is a very distinctive-shaped duck in flight, slender with a long neck and long, pointed tail. The white trailing border with the rich tan covert border (wing bar) is unique. Note how narrow the speculum appears.

Based on the patterns we see here on our dabbling ducks, it becomes very easy to pick out our quiz bird's identity!

The WOOD DUCK has an overall all dark appearance to the wing with a trailing edge of white on the secondaries! Notice how thin the above ex-

Green-winged Teal: note the superficially similar pattern to Mallard. Mallards are stout ducks, Green-winged Teal petite and they fly very fast with their head slightly raised in flight. They fly with frequent, almost tumbling, twists in tight groups.



PSM 12434

Gadwall—white block in the secondaries closest to the body, Black on the bordering greater coverts and secondaries. Note the rich brown on the median and lesser coverts—they are very beautiful when visible!



PSM 12604

Wood Duck—white trailing edge of secondaries, sometimes very thin. Green iridescence on inner primaries and coverts, can be difficult to see. Note the otherwise dark appearance to the upper wing.



PSM 23013



PSM 20166



PSM 17245



PSM 17484

Spatula ducks: Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler
Dusty blue coverts, triangle of white in greater coverts, iridescent speculum.
Note the similar wing. We can say these wings belong to a *Spatula* duck, but would need to see the body plumage and/or bill to identify to species.
It sure makes the name "Blue-winged Teal" confusing, since they all have blue wings!

ample's white is compared to the quiz photo. In flight, the bird above would appear to have a mostly dark upper wing, the white very difficult to see, but the all-dark appearing upper wing is helpful alone!

These patterns can be very useful in our dabbling ducks, so they are a good characteristic to learn to help you identify them in flight.

As we start looking at the diving ducks, the patterns overlap in appearance considerably, as you can see in the photo study on the next page, so aren't nearly as helpful. But, in the case of the scaup, which are notoriously tricky to identify, the open wing can be quite useful!

Wood Duck
in flight
Photo: Mick
Thompson





PSM 20319

Ruddy Duck has a very plain wing. These small, compact ducks hold their large-appearing heads up a little in flight have a very rapid wingbeat.



PSM 17237



UWBM 32181

Redhead and Canvasback

Although superficially similar, Redhead show a distinctively darker gray on the secondary coverts than a Canvasback, which will have much lighter, even whiter on adult males, coverts.



PSM 20574

Bufflehead examples showing some of the variation in white between and adult male and female.



PSM 11262

Bufflehead are a very small duck with a rapid wingbeat and appear to hold their bodies at a slight upward angle when flying.



PSM 12380



UWBM 63732

Hooded Merganser

Our smallest merganser. They have a relatively distinct wing pattern, the white edges on the secondaries and greater coverts are striking.



Common Goldeneye



UWBM 40396

Ah, darn. The diving ducks are not as distinctive as the dabblers in the wing. They will give us a bit more trouble...

Notice the similarities between the Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, and the Common Merganser.

Looking at overall shape, flight style, and body plumage will be needed here.



Barrow's Goldeneye



UWBM 48042



Common Merganser



PSM 20039

The wing pattern in the primaries and secondaries in the scaup can be particular helpful in identification.

Lesser Scaup have bright white in the secondaries, barely entering the primaries.

Greater Scaup have bright white extending from the secondaries well into the primaries.



Lesser Scaup

PSM 21888

Ring-necked Duck (no photo) do not have the bright white, only the dull gray uniform through the flight feathers.



Greater Scaup

PSM 22758

Tufted Duck (rare, but found most winters) has much more extensive white in the flight feathers.

Wing Photos courtesy of Slater Museum wing collection

	2021 Actual	2022 Budget	2023 Budget
Revenue			
Amazon Smile	\$6	\$10	\$10
Bank interest	13	20	100
Refreshment donations		10	25
Memberships	1,448	1,800	1,615
Donations	1,133	1,500	1,500
Doris Troxel Trust	3,368	700	500
Backyard Bird Shop	600	500	200
Nat'l Audubon Society	1,786	1,785	1,785
Comm Foundation Drawdown	10,000	7,000	5,300
Total Revenue	\$18,354	\$13,325	\$11,035
Expenses			
Supplies/software	75	100	100
PO Box fee	166	175	210
Non-profit filing fee		10	40
Refreshments		35	60
Mtg. room rental	25	150	400
Bank fee	35		
Audubon Washington	2,000	2,000	3,000
PDX Wildlife Care Center	10,000	500	1,000
Young Birders Club		200	250
Insurance	1,602	1,400	1,675
Community Journalism			2,000
Columbia Land Trust	100	100	200
WA Environmental Council	100	100	200
Friends of Columbia Gorge	100	100	200
Nature Conservancy	100	100	200
Columbia Springs	100	100	200
Postage	11	30	30
Grants		7,000	
Speaker travel		500	250
Volunteer travel			300
Website	104	125	120
Zoom fee	596	600	600
Total Expenses	\$15,114	\$13,325	\$11,035

Attention all members!

It is time for the annual posting of the board's proposed budget for 2023. It will be printed again in the December newsletter for your convenience.

Please contact our treasurer, Joan Durgin @ treasurer@vancouveraudubon.org with any questions or comments.

We will have a vote on the proposed budget at the December general meeting. All members present will be asked to vote on the adoption of the budget.



Link with Rewards Programs to donate when you shop

You can make a difference for Vancouver Audubon while you shop. Through a one-time linking, you can trigger an automatic donation by participating in the [Fred Meyer Community Rewards Program](#) and [AmazonSmile](#). Thanks to all of you who've signed up for the Fred Meyer Community Rewards Program. Vancouver Audubon receives a check 4 times per year, based on how many people shop and how much they purchase at Fred Meyer stores. Please help us by

signing up for the [Fred Meyer Community Rewards Program](#) and selecting Vancouver Audubon Society as your charity of choice. The best part is that linking will not diminish any benefits or rewards you already receive.

Select the Vancouver Audubon Society as your [Amazon Smile](#) non-profit organization of choice and the VAS will automatically receive a donation from Amazon valued at 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases **at no cost to you.**



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

Foot traffic okay through Sept 30, then auto traffic only (remaining in vehicle) October 1 to April 30.

Kiwa Trail: open through BirdFest, then closed for season.

Carty Unit

Oak-to-Wetlands Trail: Open

Port entrance Lookout: Open year-round

Port entrance & Carty Trail: Seasonal trail open through Sept 30, then closed for season.

Steigerwald Lake NWR

Open Daily, check website for gate times.

Be sure to check the website before a planned visit for changes in status, as some final portions of habitat work may call for temporary closures.

Wildlife Art Trail (between gates) is closed for the season, will reopen on April 1st.

Vancouver Audubon Society Support & Donation Form

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

**Renewal date:
September 1st**

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

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 2022						
Nov 27	Nov 28	Nov 29 Board Mtg	Nov 30	Dec 1 Bird Walk	2	3 Young Birders' Bird Walk
4	5	6 Program	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 Lyle CBC	19 Ridgefield CBC	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Portland CBC



Nov 29 (TUE): Board Meeting via Zoom, 6:30pm

Dec 1 (TUE): Bird Walk: Ft. Vancouver NHS, 8am

Dec 3 (SAT): Young Birders' Club Bird Walk: Frenchman's Bar Regional Park, 8am

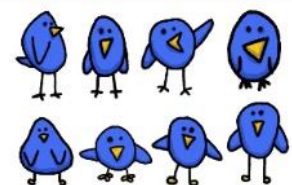
Dec 6 (TUE): Monthly Program: 6:30pm social/program 7pm (Zoom only this month)

Dec 18 (SUN): Lyle Christmas Bird Count

Dec 19 (MON): Ridgefield/Sauvie/Vancouver Lk. Christmas Bird Count

Dec 31 (SAT): Portland Christmas Bird Count

Jan 1 (SUN): First-of-Month Bird Walk, Frenchman's Bar Regional Park, 9am



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