

Columbia Flyway



VANCOUVER AUDUBON *A chapter of the National Audubon Society*

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vancouveraudubon.org

VAS in the Global Community

VAS member and photographer, Steve Bredthauer, is traveling to Zimbabwe soon with [Volunteer Encounter](#) to teach wildlife photography at a local school, helping students prepare for potential wildlife conservation jobs in nearby national parks and wildlife preserves. To donate binoculars or photography equipment for the students, please contact [Steve](#). Below is Steve's photo of an **African Hoopoe** from his 2022 trip to Botswana.



VAS in our Local Community

On March 11, VAS members Jackson Wolfe, Molly (and McKenzie) Williams, and other volunteers planted more than 1,000 native plants and trees that were donated by VAS to improve habitat along Burnt Bridge Creek.



Photos (l. to r.) by Steve Bredthauer and Jean Avery (right).

Flyway is Getting a New Look

Over the next few months, the *Columbia Flyway* newsletter will have a different look – for two reasons:

Vancouver Audubon Society (VAS) is transitioning to new software, which will combine our mailing list with our newsletter, response emails, and more.

Also, the VAS website will be the primary go-to site for information that is repeated or unchanging. (You'll notice that the VAS website has additional information about local birding activities.)

Going forward, please look first at vancouveraudubon.org for information about:

- ⇒ Officers and Board members
- ⇒ Membership, with Donation Form
- ⇒ Location of in-person meetings
- ⇒ Injured wildlife and what to do
- ⇒ Fred Meyer rewards
- ⇒ Information about local birding, including Steigerwald NWR
(For information about Ridgefield NWR, see Ridgefieldfriends.org.)

The *Flyway* newsletter will continue to keep you informed about current, recent, and upcoming events and activities. Thank you for your patience while we continue this transition.



From the VAS Board

by Karen Pickering, Membership Chair

We are often asked, does membership in National Audubon also include membership in Vancouver Audubon?

Membership in Vancouver Audubon is separate from National Audubon.

By joining your local chapter, you support education and conservation close to home. At the same time, Vancouver Audubon conservation programs align with National Audubon's Pacific Flyways strategy. Thus, your membership at the local level has hemispheric significance! We hope that you will consider donating or renewing your membership to both Vancouver Audubon and National Audubon.

What areas does Vancouver Audubon serve?

Vancouver Audubon is the National Audubon Society chapter serving Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz and parts of Klickitat County communities. (Portland has its own chapter, as well).

How does my membership help Vancouver Audubon?

Your local \$20 annual membership dues support our local programs, education, conservation projects, and grants! Vancouver Audubon is a volunteer nonprofit organization that advocates for our local and state wildlife, habitat, and environmental issues. Our mission statement is shown below in blue type. We are so grateful for support from people in our community who have a similar vision. Please donate to your local Vancouver Audubon chapter [here](#).

Your support of National Audubon is also vital in their mission.

"The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation."

If you aren't already a member, or wish to renew your National Audubon membership, you can do so [here](#) at a suggested \$20 or higher annual donation.

Karen Pickering at a VAS-funded tree-planting event to improve habitat for the Burnt Bridge Creek watershed and birds.
Photo by Steve Bredthauer.



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

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Website | vancouveraudubon.org

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

Chartered December 18, 1975

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

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).

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

VAS Programs

Upcoming Programs

Our April meeting will be in-person at

[Evergreen Public Schools Administration](#)
[13413 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive](#)

See the map below.

For the time being, planning for hybrid meetings is being suspended. All upcoming meetings will be either in-person or online only. Please pay attention to the format listed for upcoming meetings.

April 4, 2023—Cranes' Landing—In-person meeting



Sanoe Keliinoi, the new Natural Area Manager for the Cranes' Landing property in the Vancouver lowlands, and **Cindy McCormack**, VAS President and monitoring biologist, will give an overview of Columbia Land Trust's habitat work and monitoring efforts for Sandhill Cranes and other birds/wildlife.

After joining the Land Trust in 2017, Sanoe worked her way up through the ranks from Stewardship Assistant to Natural Area Manager and now oversees two large, complex properties in the Land Trust's portfolio. She enjoys the physicality of on-the-ground restoration and revels in the meticulous detail that landscape-scale conservation requires.

May 2, 2023—Nathan Ulrich, Conservation Lead, Columbia Land Trust. Klickitat Oaks property's role for avian species as well as its broader habitat characteristics and benefits and the award of the WA Wildlife and Recreation Program's Critical Habitat grant. (In-person event)

June 6, 2023—Kim Adelson, *"Who are You Calling a Birdbrain?"* (virtual presentation via Zoom)

The location of the IN-PERSON meeting is:

[Evergreen Public Schools Administration](#)
[13413 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive](#)

Vancouver, WA

6:30 pm – 7:00 pm - Social time to share bird sightings, stories, and upcoming events

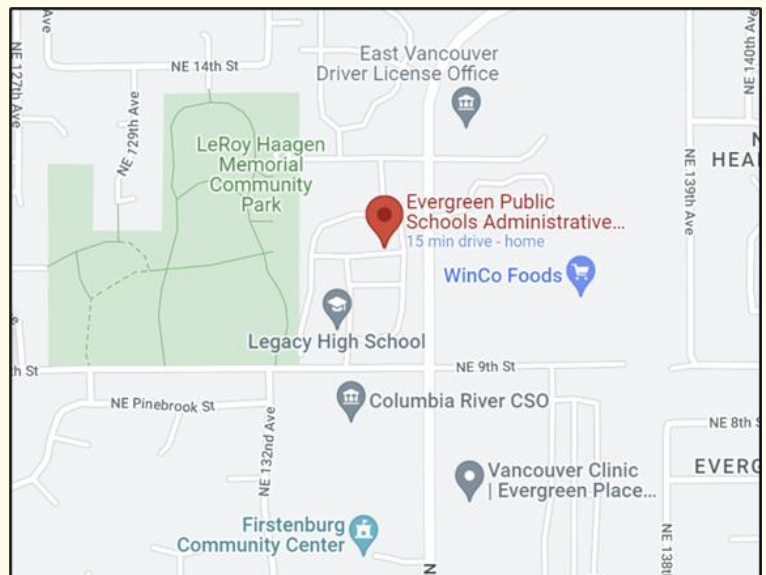
7:00 pm – 8:15 pm - Program

Programs are held the first Tuesday of the month except Jan, July, & August. 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 meetings@vancouveraudubon.org



Enter the parking lot on the LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive side.

VAS Bird Walks & Field Trips

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

Saturday, April 1

First-of-Month Bird Walk

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Meeting time: 7:30 a.m.

Meeting Location: Ridgefield NWR Carty Unit

Register: vas@vancouveraudubon.org

April's bird walk: Ridgefield NWR Carty Unit

We will walk the Oaks-to-Wetlands Trail, enjoy the Spring atmosphere and resident bird songs, and look for early migrating arrivals.

Meet in the [Carty parking lot](#), 28908 NW Main Ave.

Monday, May 1

First-of-Month Bird Walk

Leader: Cindy McCormack

Meeting time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting Location: [Round Lake Parking lot](#)

Register: vas@vancouveraudubon.org

It's prime migration time! The Round Lake trail provides birding through a variety of habitats, including city park, open water, evergreen forest, wildflower meadow, and oak woodland. On the Round Lake trail, we'll enjoy the wonderful spring bird songs, look for Spring arrivals, and wildflowers. Light boots are recommended, as some of the trail can be a bit rocky.

Upcoming Events

Mid-April Migration Watch

In mid-April, Jim Danzenbaker will lead a VAS field trip concentrating on a "migration watch." The location will be determined by the weather (wind, thermals, topographic corridors).

Some recent locations have been the north end of Woodland Bottoms, Paradise Point State Park, and a few areas toward Larch Mountain on Yacolt Burn State Forest.

These locations typically have raptors and songbirds, although floodplain areas can have quite a diversity.

The primary date is April 19 as a starting point, with April 20 and 22 as backup dates. As the date gets closer there could be updates on the VAS website. To register, contact Jim directly at jdanzenbaker@gmail.com.

Grays Harbor Shorebird /Nature Festival

The 27th annual Festival will be held in person on May 5-7, 2023 in Hoquiam, Washington. The program includes speakers, the annual dinner, field trips, and guided walks on the Sandpiper Trail at Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. The deadline for the dinner and speaker is April 13. Other festival events remain open until they fill. To register, please go to <https://www.shorebirdfestival.com>.

Wenas Campout June 2-5

Join other Audubon chapters and friends for camping, birding, and exploring the Wenas Wildlife Area near Ellensburg, Washington. There is no charge to attend, and no registration is required (although donations are accepted). For information, see the [web-site](http://www.wenasaudubon.org), www.wenasaudubon.org.

Vancouver Audubon Young Birder's Club

April 15th and 19th



Get Your Birding Caps On!



Put your birding caps on and join us this month for three fun and interesting events! On April 15th we will be hosting a guided bird walk at *Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge*, with binoculars and spotting scopes supplied. Avid birder and photographer Ken Pitts will lead the walk. Then, on April 19th we will be hosting an *online Zoom meeting* where we can talk about birds and learn about setting up the perfect bird feeder from the feeder specialist at Backyard Bird Shop Vancouver. Lastly, be sure to check out our booth at the City of Vancouver's Earth Day event on April 22nd, at *Bagley Park*!

Questions or comments? Feel free to email Jared Strawderman at vp@vancouveraudubon.org and be sure to check out our website at vancouveraudubon.org/young-birders-club or by scanning the QR code above.

April 15th Bird Walk @ 8 a.m.

Location: Steigerwald NWR

Open to anyone 10-18 years old (with guardian)

Contact
youngbirders@vancouveraudubon.org to register

April 19th Zoom Meeting @ 6 p.m.

Location: Online Zoom Meeting

Open to anyone 10-18 years old

Contact
youngbirders@vancouveraudubon.org to register

World Migratory Bird Day 2023

by Jean M. Avery

One of the marvels of birds is how they migrate many thousands of miles – across countries and continents. So it's no surprise that bird-watching is a world-wide activity.

People around the world will be celebrating birds and migration on World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD). This annual celebration is coordinated by Environment for the Americas (EFTA), an organization that seeks to connect a diversity of people to birds and nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

According to EFTA's website, [Migratory-BirdDay.org](https://migratorybirdday.org), WMBD celebrates the migration of nearly 350 species of migratory birds between nesting habitats in North America and non-breeding grounds in Latin America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Migratory Bird Day is celebrated in the U.S. in May, and in October elsewhere – depending on the dates when birds migrate in different regions.

Water Sustains Bird Life

Each year WMBD explores a different aspect of migratory birds and their conservation. This year's focus is water and its importance for migratory birds, with the theme: *"Water Sustains Bird Life."*

As EFTA reminds us, "the vast majority of migratory birds rely on aquatic ecosystems during their life cycles. Inland and coastal wetlands, rivers, lakes, streams, marshes, and ponds are all vital for feeding, drinking, or nesting, and also as places to rest and refuel during their long journeys. Unfortunately, aquatic ecosystems are becoming increasingly threatened around the world and so are the migratory birds that depend on them. The increasing human demand for water, as well as pollution and climate change, are having a direct impact on the availability of clean water and the conservation status of many migratory birds."

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Snowy Egrets by Brian Rivera, Audubon Photography Awards



Snow Geese by Gary Kachadurian, Audubon Photography Awards

Migrating Birds Also Need Dark Skies

"Dim the Lights for Birds at Night" was the theme of last year's World Migratory Bird Day. Regardless of the year, or where in the world we live, we can help birds by turning out the lights.

According to EFTA's Dr. Susan Bonfield, artificial light is increasing globally by at least two percent a year. Light pollution from homes, businesses, and other infrastructure disorients nocturnally migrating birds, making them more vulnerable to collisions and other dangers. Artificial light also impacts birds in the breeding and winter seasons, disrupting feeding and other vital behaviors.

Individuals, communities, and local governments can all act to reduce light pollution by dimming, shielding, and turning off external lighting. To get involved, see the website of the International Dark-Sky Association: darksky.org/get-involved.



Sandhill Cranes

*Photo by Janelle Schroeder
Audubon Photography Awards*

For upcoming events taking place around the world for World Migratory Bird day, visit the [Global Event Map](#).

Software Programs Let You Follow Migrating Birds and Their Flight Paths

Follow Migrating Birds with BirdCast

Are you curious about which birds are migrating in your area overnight? Cornell Lab's [BirdCast](#) program shows night-time migration patterns in near-real time, based on radar measurements.

As explained on eBird's website, the [Migration Dashboard](#) shows the estimated number of birds flying over a particular county in the lower 48 U.S. states on any night, how fast the birds are going, what direction they are headed, how high they're flying, and how their movements compare to historic patterns.

In addition, BirdCast shows which nocturnally migrating species are likely to arrive or depart from a certain region at a certain time of year. The live data is available March 1 to June 15 during spring migration and from August 1 to November 15 during fall migration.

Audubon Tool Puts You in the Flight Path

The National Audubon Society (Audubon) launched the [Bird Migration Explorer](#) (Explorer) last September. The Explorer combines data from actual tracked birds and eBird information in an informative mapping tool.

According to Audubon's website, the latest update allows you to explore species migration maps on mobile devices, filter lists for relative abundance of birds by location and conservation statistics, and link to conservation challenges associated with different locations. There are also articles about how you can help birds in your area.

Audubon will continue to improve this platform, so you can fully immerse yourself in the wonder of migration. Visit [What's New](#) for the latest Explorer updates. Follow hundreds of bird species on their epic journeys and discover the challenges they face along the way.

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

Is this little squirt trying to put out a fire? **Identification and discussion will be in the next newsletter.**



March's Bird ID Challenge Discussion

Who is this peeking out from between the leaves? It appears to be an amorphous pile of fuzz with eyes! The loose texture of the feathers of this bird are typical of juvenile down feathering, so it is safe to say we have a juvenile bird here. Owls hatch with a short, whitish down before growing in the mottled cryptic down. The remnants of the white down can remain at the tips of the subsequent feather growth, which is what likely gives this bird the "frosty" look.

The most prominent features we see are two large yellow eyes and a dark triangular (and sharp!) bill. Notice the eyes are close together and oriented forward, similar to our own. The forward-facing large eyes and the downward pointed bill are quite typical of the owls (ever see a kindergartener's

drawing of owl? A texter's version of an owl? —two circles and a triangle seem to be the universal symbol for an owl!).

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March's Challenge
Quiz photo by Bud McCormack

So, what type of owl do we have here? There are actually quite a few owls possible in the northwest: Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl, Great Gray Owl, Barred Owl, Spotted Owl, Short-eared Owl, Long-eared Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Flammulated Owl, and Burrowing Owl. Wow! So

many wonderful fascinating owls!

However, several of these owls are not typically found nesting in our area of southwest Washington. Since we have a juvenile bird here, we can eliminate any we wouldn't typically see nesting here: Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-Owl, Great Gray Owl, Flammulated Owl, Boreal Owl, Short-eared Owl, Long-eared Owl, and Burrowing Owl.

We can further eliminate several species just by eye color—owls are usually easily divided into the dark-eyed and the yellow-eyed owls. The dark-eyed owls include Barn Owl, Spotted Owl, Barred Owl, and

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Owlet resting in the road
Photo by Bud McCormack

Flammulated Owl.

We have narrowed the possibilities down to Great Horned Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, and Northern Pygmy-Owl.

Now this is where it gets a little tricky. Downy nestlings can be notoriously difficult to identify. The formative characteristics are not present and we don't really have a great way to judge the size of this owlet. Fortunately, a few of the owl species remaining for consideration have some distinctive looks to their juvenile plumage. Northern Saw-whet Owls have a solid chocolate-brown down on the upper breast, a solid dark buffy abdomen, and a bright white "Y" between the eyes. Northern Pygmy-Owls have distinctive "brows" that circle from the sides of the bill over the eyes. Western Screech-Owls have very uniform barring on the forehead, breast and abdomen and obvious erect half-circle feather tufts between the eyes. Additionally, all three of these are quite small owls—smaller in length than an American Robin!



Juvenile Great Horned Owl in a defensive posture. If you look closely, you can see the fuzzy edging on the flight feathers that helps give the owl silent flight.

Photo by Bud McCormack

Even though we can't get a true indication of size from this photo, the owl pictured appears quite robust, especially in comparison with the budding leaves, so it's not likely one of the small owls. This bulky owlet also has very dark brown/black feathering around the eyes and a very broad but round face. Not only have we eliminated the other possibilities, we have described the characteristics of a juvenile GREAT HORNED OWL.

This particular owlet was found in the middle of a gravel road. At this age, the owlets often start trial

flights, but can't always sustain flight long or get lift off after a faulty landing attempt. They simply rest (and often walk/run to hide) and may even climb a tree trunk with their feet (often with wing-flapping). They just vocalize (a very harsh screech) to let the parents know where to bring their next meal.

Since this owlet was in the middle of a road, a good Samaritan carefully shifted it to the relative safety of the adjacent vegetation (the view from the quiz photo). Note the defensive posture when approached, often accompanied by hissing and screeching—a great way to surprise and discourage any curious predators!

Our Great Horned Owls start nesting in mid-winter but they do not build their own nests. They typically use usurped nests (such as a previous year's Red-tailed Hawk nest), snags or broken-topped trees, cliffs, and even human-made structures.

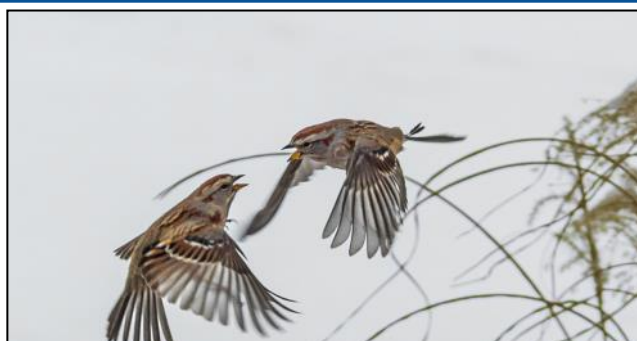
We should start seeing our Great Horned Owl owlets start "branching" within the next month, with trial flights to follow. Be sure to watch for these short, clumsy flights!



Adult Great Horned Owl. This adult was out during the day hunting voles for two recently fledged owlets, both regularly emitting begging screeches from fence posts. The "horns" are just long feathers. The ears are actually located at the edge of the facial discs (just under the black edge along the sides of the face). Note the impressive talons!

Photo digiscoped by Cindy McCormack

This is the time of the year when birding will switch from viewing wintering waterfowl and raptors as they leave for their northern nesting grounds and are replaced by the neotropical migrant species that will continue to arrive through the end of May. It is always a joy to see them again each year, like welcoming old friends back home. I look forward to seeing and hearing the colorful warblers, tanagers, and other neo-tropical birds as they return and fill the mornings with their dawn songs. Among the migrants there are always a few birds that stray and show up in unexpected places to keep things interesting. During this season, many of the birds in this report are returning migrants and not necessarily rare birds. If you are curious about the abundance of any species, you can find a checklist with rarity codes for each of the 39 WA counties at Checklists on www.wabirder.com. You can also view the status



American Tree Sparrows
Photo by Dori Eldridge
Audubon Photography Awards

of any bird through the seasons on the eBird bar charts — helpful for seeing when migrant birds are due to return or leave. Here is the link to Clark County's bar chart: [Bar Charts - eBird Pacific Northwest](#).

Feb 24, a **BRANT** was found with **CAACKLING GEESE** by Tina and Gregory Johnson at the Ridgefield NWR-River S Unit. It was also seen by Jim Danzenbaker. *The Brant species is usually found in saltwater and not seen annually in our area.*

Feb. 25, 3 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at Fort Vancouver NHS and the continuing **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** at Shillapoo Lake were the target species for a group of birders including Cindy McCormack, Jayson D, Thomas Tinsley, Randy Hill, Erik Brown, April Brown, Andy C, Hayley Lester, Chris Nixon, Becky Kent, and Tom Merritt.

Feb. 26, Cindy McCormack counted 8 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at the Fort Vancouver NHS, with 2 in the trees near building 405 and a minimum of 6 in trees between the buildings just north of that area. *This was the highest number of these birds reported so far from Clark County. It raises the odds of their attempting to nest here for the first Washington nesting record outside of Klickitat County.*

Feb. 27, Audrey Addison never could find the **AMERI-**

CAN TREE SPARROW foraging with the other sparrows at Shillapoo Lake, but eventually saw it preening, perched in shrubs near there.

Feb. 27, Cindy McCormack heard the characteristic upward tinkle of a **HORNED LARK** in the Vancouver Lake lowlands. She said it was likely the same bird heard and seen there previously this winter.

Feb. 27, the continuing male **REDHEAD** was located in the Rock Creek Mill Pond in Stevenson by Tom Schooley and Sheila McCartan.



Brant Goose, Yukon Delta, Alaska
Photo by Tim Bowman

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Feb. 27, Stacy Simanonok of White Salmon, in Klickitat County, reported an immature **HARRIS'S SPARROW** visiting their thistle feeder.

March 1, the **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** was seen by Cindy McCormack, Gregory Johnson, Susan Saul, Paul Slichter, and Robin Bradford at Shillapoo Lake.

March 1, Chris Nixon got a recording of an **ACORN WOODPECKER** at Fort Vancouver NHS.

(Besides being able to download photos with your eBird reports, you can also save sound recordings there.)

March 2, Craig R. Miller visited the Fort Vancouver NHS, but was only able to locate one **ACORN WOODPECKER** flying between trees near the officers quarters area. He did find the **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** at Shillapoo Lake feeding in the dirt road with a large flock of **WHITE-CROWNED** and **GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROWS**.

March 2, in the Vancouver Lake lowlands, Cindy McCormack spotted a **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE x CACKLING GOOSE** hybrid: likely one of the wintering birds previously reported in the lowlands.

March 3, Cindy McCormack again reported 8 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at Fort Vancouver NHS. At least 7 were seen at one time in the vicinity of building 405, and at least one was found on the north side of Officers Row.



Slaty-Backed Gull
Photo by Randy Hill

March 4, the **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** was seen by Douglas McKay at Shillapoo Lake. It was in a flock of **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS** feeding along the fence near the collapsed shed.

March 4, John Davis also saw the Shillapoo Lake **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** foraging with a mixed flock of **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS**, **GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROWS**, and a few **SONG SPARROWS**.



Acorn Woodpecker
by Heather Roskelley
Audubon Photography Awards

March 5, Valita Volkman visited the Vancouver Lake lowlands in a successful search for the **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW**.

March 5, another **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** was found by Samuel Holman at Swale Creek in Klickitat County.

March 5, Stacy Simanonok of White Salmon, Klickitat County, reported that the immature **HARRIS'S SPARROW** continued to visit her thistle feeder.

March 6, Russ Koppendrayer of Longview found 4 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at the Fort Vancouver NHS. *These birds have brought dozens of visitors to Clark County.*

March 6, a **SLATY-BACKED GULL**, a species from Siberia, was found by Andrew S. Aldrich at the Vancouver Plaza Mall parking lot. It was an adult in mostly breeding plumage that he first noticed due to mantle color and size. It is the darkest gull by far — much larger than nearby **RING-BILLED GULLS** — with a smaller narrower bill than on Western or Olympic Gulls. *They have bright pink legs and what is referred to as "a string of pearls" pattern on their wingtips and a streaked head and neck. There have only been a couple of prior records of the bird in Clark County. After the word got out, Win Wheeler, Bob Flores, Randy Hill, Gregory Johnson, Jim Danzenbaker, and Ryan Abe all reported getting to see this rare visitor from Eurasia.*

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Eared Grebes

Photo by Willie Hall

Audubon Photography Awards

March 7, the first **SAY'S PHOEBE** of the year in Clark County was found by Don Rose at the Steigerwald Lake NWR. These members of the Flycatcher family are one of the earliest migrants to come through our area, heading for their nesting grounds east of the Cascades. 2 **HORNED LARKS** were also seen feeding in the grass along the levee trail.

March 7, a **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE x CACKLING GOOSE** hybrid was seen again by Cindy McCormack in the Vancouver Lake lowlands – likely one of the same individuals noted there all winter. It had a white head and bill, and legs similar to a Greater White-fronted Goose – but with the body and most of the neck similar to a Cackling Goose.

March 10, Andrew S. Aldrich checked Fort Vancouver NHS, finding single **ACORN WOODPECKERS** in two widely separated locations.

March 13, 1 **GREATER YELLOWLEGS** was found by John Davis at the Bingen Pond in Klickitat County. He initially heard the 3-part *tut-tut-tut* call as it flew directly overhead. It possibly landed at the east end of the pond.

March 14, **EARED GREBES** are the least reported of the six members of this Family in our area, so one found at the Wind River mouth by Nancy & Bill LaFramboise was notable (but not the first one at this location). *The only safe places to bird here are from the pull-off on Highway 14, just before the Wind River*

bridge, or from the parking lot at the boat ramp on the northeast side of the bridge.

March 14, at the Home Valley Park, David Poortinga spotted the first Skamania County **SAY'S PHOEBE** for the year, fly-catching around the eastern ballfields. In Stevenson, at the Rock Creek Mill Pond, he spotted the continuing male **REDHEAD** and an **EURASIAN WIGEON**.

March 14, the 2 **TURKEY VULTURES** that flew over our field were the first reported from Skamania County this year.

March 15, another **SAY'S PHOEBE** was seen by Ken Pitts at the Ridgefield NWR-River S Unit.

March 15, a **CLIFF SWALLOW** was seen by Cindy McCormack in the Vancouver Lake lowlands: the first of the year in Clark County.

March 16, a **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** was reported from Ridgefield by Thomas Tinsley: the first of the year Clark County.

March 16, a single report of a Black-crowned Night-Heron at Ridgefield NWR-River S Unit is still unconfirmed, waiting for the reported photo to be uploaded into the eBird observation.

March 16, the Home Valley Park **SAY'S PHOEBE**, first spotted by David Poortinga, was seen by Josh Barstow. Josh thought there may be two birds at this location, because in one of his sightings, the bird appeared to have a more salmon-colored belly.

March 16, Christopher Warren was birding at the Steigerwald Lake NWR when he had a fly-by of two **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS** in good light. He said when he saw the brilliant blue on the back, he expected to see the rustic breast of a Western Bluebird – only to be



Black-Crowned Night-Heron

Photo by Diane Taylor

Audubon Photography Awards

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Say's Phoebe
Photo by John Terry
Audubon Photography Awards

surprised to see a brilliant blue breast/vest. Both birds appeared to be males and were seen just south of the forested section along the Dike Trail just north of the river.

March 17, John Davis visited Home Valley Park, finding 4 **SAY'S PHOEBES** at the same time perched on fences at the east ballpark area. He also had good looks at 2 **HORNED LARKS**, but was unable to get close enough for a photo because of off-leash dogs.

March 17, Cindy McCormack spotted the *first OSPREY of the year in the Vancouver Lake lowlands*. While there, she also encountered a flock of 70 **SAVANNAH SPARROWS**.

March 17, we had 2 male **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRDS** fighting at our feeders for the *first of the year sighting in Skamania County*.

March 18, John Davis was birding on Strawberry Island below Bonneville Dam when he spotted 2 **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS**.

March 18, following up on the earlier eBird report, Josh Barstow checked Strawberry Island and saw a female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD**, which he described as having a gray underside with no brown on the belly.

March 18, Les Carlson found a **BARRED OWL** near Blue Lake just west of Stevenson.

March 19, 4 **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS** were reported from the Steigerwald Lake NWR by John Bishop.

There were 3 males and a female in this group.

March 20, our *first of the year BAND-TAILED PIGEONS* arrived at our feeders, at least two weeks later than normal. *These birds are very skittish after spending the winter in the southwest and Mexico, where they are a hunted species.*

March 20, Ryan Abe birded Frenchman's Bar Park for two hours and identified 47 species that included 2 **TURKEY VULTURES**, 1 **OSPREY**, 1 **BARRED OWL**, and a **MERLIN**.

March 20, a visit to the Steigerwald Lake NWR by Cindy McCormack was very productive with 67 species seen, including 5 **SAY'S PHOEBES**, 1 **HORNED LARK**, 1 **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD**, 2 **COMMON YELLOW-THROATS**, and a mixed flock of 24 **AMERICAN PIPITS** and 17 **SAVANNAH SPARROWS**. *This refuge was established through the efforts of the Vancouver Audubon Society. The birding there has greatly improved after this floodplain was reconnected to the Columbia River and replanted by the Lower Columbia Estuary Project. It will only get better as the plantings mature.*

March 20, April Brown made a quick stop to the Steigerwald Lake NWR and saw 1 **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** and 2 **SAY'S PHOEBES**.

For a calendar view of what the average return date is for some birds in various locations in the Willamette Valley, go to this link. The bird names that are in a blue font are for Portland/Vancouver: <https://birdsoverportland.wordpress.com/oregon-migration-phenology/>. Please keep an eye out for migrants and post them on eBird or the Vancouver Audubon Afield Facebook page, or email them to me for inclusion in this column and the Cumulative County Year List project, which compiles all of the species seen in each county by anyone this year.

As of March 20, the 2023 Washington County Cumulative Year List Project has tallied 152 species reported in Clark County. The Skamania County list is now at 103. These lists of all of the birds reported in each county are updated every two months and can be seen on the Vancouver Audubon Afield Facebook site or at [Washington Birder \(wabirder.com\)](http://WashingtonBirder(wabirder.com)).

VAS Crane Hunting on March 9

WAIT! Don't be deceived by the title. Yes, I have lived in states where crane hunting with a shotgun was allowed. Not here; we use cameras, binoculars, and scopes. Our VAS field trip on March 9 was a trek to Grays Harbor, where a flock of **Sandhill Cranes** has hosted a much more unusual **Common Crane** since early January. (I had been with a Portland Audubon group that found the Crane flock six days earlier in a corn field.)

So, rain or shine, five of us in two cars left Ridgefield late enough (after sunrise) to expect a window of decent viewing conditions near Elma, where the flock has used fields along the Chehalis River since mid-January. With most of the day ahead of us, we headed seven miles west of Elma to the Brady Loop Road, where the Cranes were first found. We had immediate success! We had much better open looks than the week before, when corn stalks had hidden the crane heads for all but brief moments. Waterfowl were still using the farm fields in small numbers, but large flocks of **Dusky Canada Geese** were also quite visible.

Although the weather window was closing and rain began to come down, we were all in for driving another hour west to Westport, hoping a **Yellow-billed Loon** seen off and on at the harbor would be there when we arrived. Saltwater certainly hosts different birds, and we quickly doubled our species tally for the trip with **Grebes, Harlequin Ducks, and Loons**. It took a few repositions around the harbor, and constant wiping of optics, to locate the big pale-billed loon as the strong wind and moisture were soaking our raingear.

Options for getting back to Clark County were discussed, and we all decided a route that included Tokeland was in order. Tom, Jim, and Greg wound up at the marina, where they quickly found the resident flock of **Willetts**. Les and I stopped at Graveyard Spit, where the high tide had concentrated gulls and a flock of **Marbled Godwits** that totaled over 900! We traded positions, then all returned to the spit where the outgoing tide produced even more gulls and shorebirds.

We started for home after 2:30. Les and I headed south on Hwy 101 to Bay Center, where waterfowl and shorebirds were numerous — including **Dunlin** flocks in the

thousands and a Wigeon flock that included six adult male **Eurasian Wigeons**. This trip was before Daylight Savings Time, so we arrived home after dark: wet, tired, but smiling after our successful day of bird hunting.

For results from eBird checklists, see: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/113459>.

WOS Weekend Withstands Weird Weather Warnings

Following postponement due to COVID, the field trip for Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) was set for the weekend of February 25.

What do you do when a field trip has been scheduled nearly three months ahead of time, and the local weather delivers snow and ice? Roll with the punches. History lesson to follow.

The weekend offered a Friday afternoon trip around Woodland Bottoms for those coming south the day before, and a Sunday morning supplement to areas we didn't get to on Saturday. The Sunday morning locations varied quite a bit in the past, with up the Columbia River and up into the mountains the two popular choices.

While attendance was lower than the sign-up predicted, Woodland Bottoms on Friday went without incident. I deferred sole leadership of this trip to Russ Koppendrayer from Longview for his knowledge of pullouts, parking areas, and where the active owl nest is. The Trip Report in eBird included 55 species (<https://ebird.org/tripreport/110214>).

On Saturday, seven of us headed to Salmon Creek, Burnt Bridge Creek, and Shillapoo Wildlife Area (including views of the continuing American Tree Sparrow), Fort Vancouver for Acorn Woodpeckers, and around River S at Ridgefield NWR to finish the day with 97 species (<https://ebird.org/tripreport/110535>).

With another weather system coming in Saturday evening, we canceled for Sunday. Expect a similar scenario next year—but without Weird Weather.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
April 2023						
Mar 26	Mar 27	Mar 28 Board Mtg	Mar 29	Mar 30	Mar 31	1 Bird Walk
2	3	4 Program	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15 Young Birders Walk
16	17	18	19 Young Birders Meeting	20	21	22 Earth Day
23 30	24	25 Board Mtg	26	27	28	29

April 1 (Saturday): First-of-Month Bird Walk, Ridgefield Carty Unit

April 4 (Tuesday): Monthly Program, Cranes' Landing, 6:30 p.m. social / 7 p.m. meeting **in-person**

April 15 (Saturday): Young Birder's Walk, 8am, Steigerwald NWR

April 19 (Wed): Young Birder's Meeting via Zoom, 6pm

April 22 (Saturday): Earth Day

April 25 (Tuesday): Board Meeting via Zoom, 6:30 p.m.

May 1 (Monday): First-of-Month-Bird Walk, Round Lake

May 2 (Tuesday): Monthly Program, Klickitat Oaks

May 13 (Saturday): World Migratory Bird Day

June 2-5: Wenas Campout

