

# Columbia Flyway



**VANCOUVER AUDUBON** *A chapter of the National Audubon Society*

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[vancouveraudubon.org](http://vancouveraudubon.org)

## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Wenas Audubon Campout June 2-5, 2023



Red-breasted Sapsucker Photo by Don Rose

You are invited to a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

This year marks 60 years since Bea Buzzetti, Ruth Anderson, and Hazel Wolf wandered serendipitously into the Wenas Creek area on a camping trip. They reported back to Seattle Audubon on their discovery of a diverse variety of birds and plants. Nearly every year since then, Washington Audubon and Washington Native Plant Society members and their friends have gathered on Memorial Day Weekend for a few days of birding, botanizing, camping, and exploring the Wenas area near Yakima.

This year the campout will be held the first weekend in June, avoiding the growing crowds of Memorial Day weekend. It takes place at the Hazel Wolf Bird Sanctuary at Wenas Creek Campground southwest of Ellensburg, WA.

The casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, wildflower walks, field sketching, and evening campfire presentations. Come for the weekend or a single day. There

is no charge to attend and no registration is required. Donations are accepted for organizing costs, including sanitation service.

Information on dispersed camping, activities schedule, driving directions, and what to expect are on the [Wenas Audubon Campout website](http://Wenas Audubon Campout website), or follow the [Wenas Audubon Campout](https://www.facebook.com/WenasAudubonCampout) group on Facebook for current information.



Bitterroot Photo by Susan Saul

### *Update on the Columbia Flyway*

The VAS website ([vancouveraudubon.org](http://vancouveraudubon.org)) is now the primary go-to site for information about:

- ⇒ Officers and Board members
- ⇒ Membership, with Donation Form
- ⇒ Injured wildlife and what to do
- ⇒ Fred Meyer rewards

The *Flyway* newsletter will continue to keep you informed about current, recent, and upcoming events and activities.



## From the VAS Board

by Don Rose, Programs Chair and Editor

Hi, I am your new newsletter editor. One of the joys I have of taking on editor of this Newsletter is choosing which photos to highlight. Back in October, we hosted a Fotofest - favorite photographs submitted by chapter members to share in our monthly meeting. In this Newsletter and future newsletters, I will use some of those photos to highlight the talented photographers in our group, and hopefully inspire others to submit photos this year.

Vancouver Audubon had five board members attend all or part of the Southwest Washington Regional Audubon meeting last month, along with representatives from Willapa Hills, Grays Harbor, Black Hills, and Tahoma Audubon Societies. The first topic addressed was an in-depth discussion about the National Audubon Society decision to retain its name. Some chapters in Washington, including Seattle and Willapa Hills, and across the river in Portland, have already voted to change their name due to the antagonistic views and actions of John James Audubon regarding race. We discussed ways to maintain the flock of chapters in the state as a cohesive group even if their names change. Read the statement from Deborah Jensen, Executive Director of Washington Audubon [here](#), and the description of the National Audubon decision process [here](#).

Washington Audubon is exploring ways to improve communications between chapters. Currently, there is a monthly "Birds of a Feather" conference call with chapter leaders and there are two LISTSERVs to share information across the state, one for General discussion and one for those interested in Conservation issues. Contact Teri Anderson at [Tere-sa.Anderson@audubon.org](mailto:Tere-sa.Anderson@audubon.org) if you are interested in being on one of these lists or learning more.

Our local Board is looking for someone interested in heading our Community Outreach program and also volunteers who want to help with this effort. We are hoping to expand our presence in the community and need your help. Contact any one of Vancouver Audubon Board members if you are interested.

We have created a new database of chapter members in Constant Contact. This service will aid in sending out annual dues reminders, mailing announcements and newsletters, and tracking National and local chapter memberships. If you are a member of National Audubon, please consider joining our local chapter as well.

Finally, get out there and bird as tens of millions of birds fly through the area over the next couple months. Use the tools described in last month's Newsletter to follow migration. Cornell Lab's [BirdCast](#) program shows night-time migration patterns in near-real time, based on radar measurements. The [Migration Dashboard](#) shows the estimated number of birds flying over a particular county in the lower 48 U.S. states on any night. 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.



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Website | [vancouveraudubon.org](http://vancouveraudubon.org)

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

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

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**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

### May 2, 2023—IN PERSON Nathan Ulrich, Conservation Lead, Columbia Land Trust

Nate will talk about Oregon White oak and the characteristics that make it such good habitat for wildlife and birds. Nathan will describe why the purchase and conservation of a property in the Klickitat River drainage known as Klickitat Oaks, that Vancouver Audubon supported with a large donation, was rated as top priority for Critical Habitat protection in the state by Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's 2023-2025 grants program. Vancouver Audubon board members will be visiting the property on April 27th.

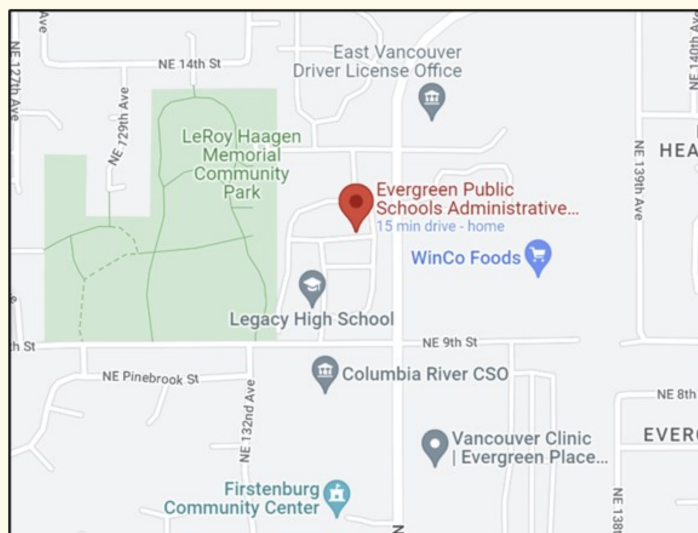
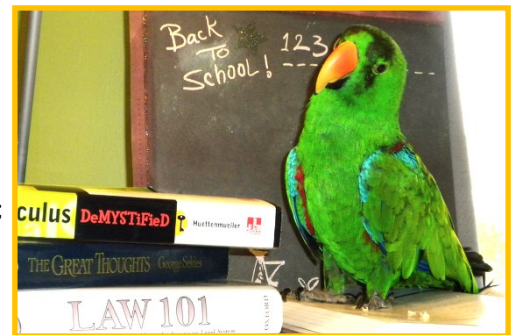


Nate manages conservation planning and land acquisitions in the East Cascades ecoregion for Columbia Land Trust. His role is to develop and implement conservation priorities. He has a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Oregon with an emphasis on development of conservation tools that facilitate landowner and community priorities.

### June 6, 2023—ZOOM Kim Adelson, "Who are You Calling a Birdbrain?"

For hundreds of years, birds have been considered stupid and incapable of advanced thought or learning. This is why the phrase "bird brain" became commonly used to denote persons of below average intelligence. But... do birds really deserve this bad rap? Are they truly less intelligent than mammals? THEY ARE NOT! In fact, recent research has consistently demonstrated that some birds have remarkably strong cognitive skills, comparable to monkeys and even apes. Some can form abstract concepts; some display prodigious memories; some make and use tools; and some can make complex inferences. Watch this presentation and you will discover the surprisingly strong mental abilities exhibited by a wide variety of birds.

Kim Adelson has been studying animal intelligence her entire adult life. She earned a master's degree in evolutionary biology and a Ph.D. in psychology; her master's thesis concerned how animals learn through play behavior and her Ph.D. was on abstract thinking in apes. Now retired, she is the Acting President and Education Chair of the Black Hills Audubon Society.



### Evergreen Public Schools Administration 13413 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive

#### Location of In-Person Meetings in 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 at**  
**[meetings@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:meetings@vancouveraudubon.org)**

*Please send all topic, speaker, and program suggestions and requests to Don Rose*



## At Our Last Program—Cranes Landing

Sanoe Keliinoi, manager of the Cranes' Landing site owned by Columbia Land Trust, gave us a thorough description of how the land is managed for the benefit of Sandhill Cranes. Located between Vancouver Lake County Park and Frenchmen's Bar County Park lies 541 acres specifically set aside for feeding and loafing habitat for the cranes. The Port of Vancouver agreed to set aside these acres for conservation in 2016 as part of a lawsuit settlement, along with \$2 million to establish the wildlife habitat and \$5.5 million over time for stewardship projects. Since 2016, a variety of crops and planting spacings have been tested to determine what the cranes like best. Currently, 477 acres is farmland with crops including corn, nutsedge, spring wheat, alfalfa, and oats being foraged by the cranes.

In 2023, plans are to restore 6 acres of native prairie, and if that goes well, more planned for the future. Additional activities accomplished thus far include construction of screening berms, removal of 6000' linear feet of overhead powerline (to reduce crane collisions with the wires), native tree & shrub planting for screening & habitat, weed control to enhance overall habitat value, and enhancing low areas and depressions to create shallow open water areas. The cranes moved immediately to these shallow wet depressions the first time it was tried.

Since 2016, the average number of cranes visiting the site in the fall and winter months has increased from about 400 birds to over 1200 in the 2021-22 season. There are no designated viewing spots, but you can see the cranes from Frenchman's Bar Picnic Shelter and higher vantage points from the Frenchmen's Bar trail. Sanoe is contemplating how viewing can be improved in the future. Please DO NOT approach fences or disturb the birds as this is meant to be a sanctuary/resting place for Sandhill Cranes.



Sandhill Cranes Gary Grossman/Audubon Photography Awards

## We Have a New Sign!

Look for this sign outside of our meeting location.



Fotofest—Barred Owl photo by Jared Strawderman



## Urge Clark County to Integrate Climate Resiliency Into Its Comprehensive Plan

By Susan Saul

Clark County is updating its Comprehensive Plan, as required by the Washington Growth Management Act. This plan will guide the county for the next 20 years as it plans for growth.

Please ask the County Council to add a climate and resiliency action plan that includes a greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal to its 2025 Comprehensive Plan update and prioritize this work with adequate resources and staffing. Integrating climate into the plan will result in a more accurate and thoughtful ap-

proach to growth, including addressing challenges such as air pollution, affordable housing, health impacts on overburdened communities, protection of farmland and local food systems, increased potential for flooding, droughts, wildfires and heat waves, decreased stream flows and water supply, loss of open spaces, traffic congestion, and the general health and well-being of local communities.

Anyone living in Clark County may sign this [petition](#) to the Clark County Council.



Fotofest—Northern Harrier  
Photo by Steve Bredthauer



Fotofest—Black Oystercatcher  
Photo by Sherry Hagen

## First Wolf Pack Confirmed in South Cascades of Washington

By Susan Saul

A long absent keystone species has returned to Washington's South Cascades. On April 7, 2023, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) confirmed the existence of the Big Muddy Pack east of Mount Adams in the upper Klickitat River drainage on the Yakama Reservation.

The Big Muddy Pack consists of only two individuals. One is a young male, WA109M, who set off from his central Washington pack in 2021 and eventually wandered more than 300 miles to Klickitat County. In April 2022, biologists observed WA109M traveling with another wolf who was later confirmed to be female. Two wolves traveling together in winter meet the state's definition for a pack. The pair have now established a territory and it's possible they will have pups soon.

Migrating wolves began returning to Washington in the 2000s from packs in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, and British Columbia. Their recovery has been closely monitored ever since.

Washington's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, adopted in 2011, divides the state into three zones: Eastern Washington (where most of the state's wolves reside), Northern Cascades, and Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast. This is the first confirmed pack in the Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast zone. Wolves in this zone are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act.

WDFW's goal has been for wolves to spread into all three recovery zones and recolonize their former range. Since the largest elk herd in the state is around Mount St. Helens, a lot of wildlife biologists have been anticipating this event for a long time. They expect more wolf sightings almost anywhere in the state at this stage of recovery.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, WDFW and Tribes counted 216 wolves in 37 packs in Washington. Twenty-six of these packs were successful breeding pairs. These numbers compare with the previous year's count of 206 wolves in 33 packs and 19 breeding pairs.

## LIGHTS OUT FOR SAFER MIGRATIONS *by Susan Saul*

Every spring and fall, billions of birds migrate through the US, mostly under the cover of darkness. National Audubon and its partners launched Lights Out more than twenty years ago, aiming to shield, reduce, and eliminate unnecessary light during spring and fall migration months.

Following the moon and stars at night, birds in today's modern world now also encounter light pollution along their routes. These distractions can lead to confusion, distress, and exhaustion due to lengthened migration times.

Currently, 45 cities are implementing Lights Out efforts, and there are already several state- and regional-level efforts underway. Recent studies have shown that bird collisions at a monitored site in Philadelphia are down 70 percent, a direct result of Lights Out Philadelphia!

Thanks to advocacy by Vancouver Audubon, the City of Vancouver has adopted a Climate Action Framework that includes green building policies for the public and private sectors calling for "smart lighting strategies in accordance with Dark Sky and Bird Safe light pollution reduction principles." City staff are currently researching and developing best practices and standards to incorporate into ordinances.

You can help darken skies for safer migration by practicing Lights Out at your homes and businesses. In our area, peak bird migration occurs between April 15-May 19 and September 19-October 19. Turning off unnecessary overnight lighting also helps save energy (and money!), reduces your carbon footprint, and protects our view of the stars.

## New Motus Tower to Track Shorebirds in Ocean Shores, WA

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus) is an international collaborative research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry to facilitate research and education on the ecology and conservation of migratory animals. Motus is a program of Birds Canada in partnership with collaborating researchers and organizations.

Recently, a new steel tower was installed at the Coastal Interpretive Center in Ocean Shores, WA. This is one of nearly 1,500 similar towers in 34 different countries that are part of the Motus network. These towers track migrations of shorebirds and other birds that travel thousands of miles from South America and Mexico to Alaska.

In Ocean Shores, this new addition will pick up shorebirds fitted with lightweight tags, as they feed on the mudflats or continue up the coast of Grays Harbor each spring and fall. The Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge is a key area for Red Knots and other shorebirds to rest and eat during spring migration. The area is a designated site of hemispheric importance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Red Knots winter in Mexico and breed in the Copper River Delta of Alaska.

A bird, such as the Red Knot, traveling from Mexico to Alaska might register on dozens of towers along the West Coast. From those radio hits, the Motus system creates an estimated migration route for each bird. The more towers that exist, the more precise those maps become. There are currently 8 towers in Washington and 8 in Oregon. Birds Canada has a goal to add 1,000 towers to the network in the next eight years.

The public can view data collected by the tower and track migrations of individual shorebirds on the [Motus](#) website. (From an article by Clayton Frank at *The Daily World*).



Red Knot—Audubon Photography Awards



# VAS Bird Walks & Field Trips

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

## 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](mailto: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.

## Thursday, June 1

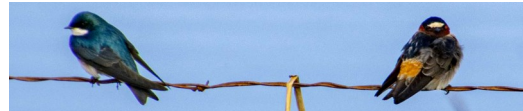
### First-of-Month Bird Walk

**Leader:** Cindy McCormack

**Meeting time and Location:** TBD.

**Check our website for up to date information.**

Are you interested in being on an email list for **short-notice field trips**? Randy Hill is soliciting for members who want to be notified when a field trip opportunity arises on short notice. If you want to be on this list, contact Randy Hill at [re\\_hill@q.com](mailto:re_hill@q.com).



## Upcoming Events

### Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest

North Central Washington Audubon Society invites you to join us and Wenatchee River Institute for the 21st annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest from May 18th-21st, 2023! Celebrate the return of migratory birds in the midst of peak wildflower season. Enjoy the excitement of birding field trips and workshops. Take part in speaker events, music, visual arts, picnics, and activities for all ages and abilities. All of this is happening in beautiful Leavenworth, WA and throughout the Wenatchee River Valley.

Registration for all events is open. All current information and details can be found at <https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/education-programs/community-programs/bird-fest.html>.

May 12-14 **Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest**, Ellensburg, WA. Go to <https://www.ycic.org/giss-and-birdfest> for more info.

May 20 **Tualatin River Bird Festival**. Information is [here](#).

### 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, field trips, and guided walks on the Sandpiper Trail at Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. Festival events remain open until they fill. You can register [here](#).

Jun 1 -4 **Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival**, Sisters, OR.

Sponsored by East Cascades Audubon Society. Register [Here](#).



## WINTER RAPTOR SURVEYS IN CLARK COUNTY

Five years ago I heard about several winter raptor survey routes being run in Clark County, and in 2019 I tried to acquire one (no success; all of interest were taken.) In 2020, Jim Danzenbaker asked if I wanted to record on his 53-mile Brush Prairie-Battle Ground route and help spot birds. Hmm, a good excuse to go birding! By the end of the season he “gifted it to me” for the 2021-22 season after I learned the route during the winter. About the same time, I acquired the 31-mile Ridgefield route when it came available. Hey, yet another excuse to go birding! So I’ve been the owner of two routes for the last two years, and they typically last 2½ to 5 hours.

A little background first. The Winter Raptor Survey Project was born almost 20 years ago by Jeff Fleischer in Bend, OR and sponsored by East Cascades Audubon Society. It turns out I probably met Jeff way back in 1978 shortly after Elaine and I were married and worked the fall waterfowl hunt season on a steel shot study at Tulelake NWR in the Klamath Basin. Jeff was an Assistant Manager there issuing ammo to hunters selected for the study while we accompanied those hunters to their blinds to record data, hoping they were good shots so we could actually evaluate steel vs lead shot. He eventually left Refuges but kept the passion for wildlife. I eventually got a permanent job and wandered several western states before winding up in Washington for the last 33 years. We’re both retired now but still “participate” in our chosen roles.

The data form uses six key species: Red-tailed Hawk (RTHA), American Kestrel (AMKE), Northern Harrier (NOHA), Bald Eagle (BAEA—adult, immature or not determined), Rough-legged Hawk (RLHA), and Red-shouldered Hawk (RSHA), plus groupings of falcons, accipiters, and owls. The groupings include UNID or to species (if the ID is confirmed.) Results are submitted on-line with a copy of the data sheets emailed as documentation. December, January and February are the core months, with November and March as optional for good reason as the purpose is to survey wintering birds rather than still migrating or already nesting pairs.

So, my first year I pretty much used Elaine as a spotter and recorder for the two routes. Four of the six jobs that we worked together before parenthood were raptor survey oriented, so she’s no rookie. This past season I took a different approach, trying to add a “birding opportunity” for individuals that might have an interest (or just help!) to collect data, with great success; we all benefitted! I’d love to draw from a young birder list next year, but the survey needs to run on weekdays “during school hours” for efficiency due to traffic and safety concerns. These routes were pre-determined from aerial photos and revised as needed locally, but some connecting segments go quickly where

Red-tailed Hawk, Hagerman  
National Wildlife Refuge, Texas

Photo by James Waghorne/  
Audubon Photography Awards





pullouts are few and far between.

Results have varied (sometimes dramatically) based on a few factors, but especially weather. Several factors that include visibility (fog, low clouds, “precipitation curtain”), detectability (thermal uplift, bright sunshine/shadows), wind (moving perches and faster disappearance), snow, ice, freeze (route access, tree leaf retention), and rain accumulation (wetland and field prey availability) come to mind. Development has caused temporary road closures along the routes. This includes 2 of 3 years on the BP-BG route, and although not a key area, 9 of 35 segments on one RDG survey this year. And an accident caused a 5 mile reroute to get around a 100 yard accident scene near Battle Ground. Time of day also affects numbers, with later afternoon traffic and early sunsets and cold sending birds to roost earlier. The following tables summarize the monthly survey data over the last two seasons.

BRUSH PRAIRIE—BATTLE GROUND ROUTE													
DATE	START	TIME	MILE	RTHA	AMKE	NOHA	BAEA	RSHA	RLHA	FALC	ACCIP	OWLS	OTHER
12/23/2021	11:24	3:28	53.2	7	15	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	
1/14/2022	11:03	3:48	53.3	12	12	0	8A	0	0	0	1 COHA	0	
2/3/2022	13:23	3:46	56.7	19	9	1	1A	0	0	0	2 COHA	0	
3/4/2022	8:30	4:12	53.2	16	8	1	5A, 4i	0	0	0	0	0	
11/23/2022	8:59	4:31	52.6	13	18	0	2A, 1i	0	0	1 PE-FA	0	0	
12/28/2022	9:20	4:13	53.6	8	20	1	2A, 1i	0	0	0	1CO-HA1SSHA	0	
1/20/2023	11:17	4:43	53.7	20	10	1	1A	0	0	1 MERL	0	0	
2/28/2023	8:42	4:58	52.1	17	11	0	3A			1 MERL	0	1GHO W	*on nest
3/17/2023	10:04	4:58	53.8	33	13	0	3A	0	0	1 MERL	2 COHA	1GHO W	BNOW - roadkill
RIDGEFIELD ROUTE													
11/26/2021	10:20	2:56	30.9	13	15	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
12/21/2021	12:13	2:41	30.5	14	13	2	0	0	0	2 MERL	2COHA 1SSHA	0	
1/25/2022	13:14	2:31	30.7	12	11	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	
2/11/2022	10:15	3:20	30.5	18	15	3	4A,1i,1U	0	0	0	1 UNID	0	
3/31/2022	14:00	2:35	30.5	13	18	0	11A,6i,1 U	0	0	0	0	0	2 TU-VU
11/28/2022	8:52	3:41	30.9	17	19	4	4A, 1i	0	0	0	1 UNID	0	
12/16/2022	12:26	3:25	30.8	16	17	9	7A, 2i	0	0	0	2 COHA	0	
1/10/2023	9:27	4:00	30.8	16	22	3	10A, 4i	0	0	0	1COHA 1UNID	0	
2/17/2023	11:42	3:44	31.1	14	22	4	8A, 1i	0	0	1 MERL	1 SSHA	0	1 UNID hawk
3/10/2023	11:08	3:33	28.3	44	15	7	7A, 4i	0	0	0	1 UNID	0	

Some notable numbers are red-tailed hawks (RTHA) in March, when paired nesting birds are frequently seen together, either soaring or flying near a nest. The 3/10 Ridgefield high count was also due to uplift and perfect soaring weather. Ridgefield also has several BAEA nests along the Lake River portion of the count, although waterfowl abundance can be a large contribution.

For more information on this project visit the East Cascades Audubon site at the following link:

[Winter Raptor Surveys - East Cascades Audubon Society \(ecaudubon.org\)](http://ecaudubon.org)



*American Bittern*  
Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge  
Photo by Jackson Wolfe



# Young Birder's Club



**FREE** for ages 10-18



**2 to 3 meetings monthly,**  
in the field and online



**Learn from bird experts**



**Bird watching walks, art  
programs, research, and  
habitat restoration**



SCAN ME

## Join us at our next meeting!

See our website for schedule

[vancouveraudubon.org/young-birders-club](https://vancouveraudubon.org/young-birders-club)

[youngbirders@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:youngbirders@vancouveraudubon.org)



## April's Bird ID Challenge Discussion

Last month's photo doesn't present a big challenge, but it was such a fun photo that I had to include it!

The pictured bird is wading in some water, but does not appear to be any sort of waterfowl—the shape doesn't fit any typical waterfowl and the feathers are clumped where they are wet, which typically doesn't happen in waterbirds. The wings are also very short and appear rounded (very little difference in the length of the primaries and secondaries).

Most of our waterfowl are longer-distance migrants and have wings that are longer and more pointed—typical for extended powered flight.

If it's not some type of waterfowl, why is this bird in water? It's taking a bath! Birds use water, typically in shallow puddles, to clean their feathers and remove parasites. After splashing around in a bath for a few minutes, a bird usually perches in a sunny spot and fluffs its feathers out to dry. Then it carefully preens each feather, adding a protective coating of oil secreted by a gland at the base of its tail.

So far, environment isn't helping with identification—all we have to go on is some shallow water and some mostly bare soil. There are numerous evergreen needles on the ground which can help a bit with size, since they appear to be quite short needles (using the width as a gauge). It helps at least give the hint that we are looking at a very small bird.



*April's Challenge  
Quiz photo by Bud McCormack*

Of course, the part that stands out is the beautiful, striking color on the head. Wow! The black, yellow and orange not only will give us the species, but the sex of this bird as well!

Looking at the entire bird, we can see that the back have a greenish-yellow coloration that also shows on the wing coverts and the edges of the secondaries and the rectrices (tail feathers). The short, round wing also has a bold white and black bar in the wing. (continued )

*Note the white and gray showing at the edge of the face and along the sides of the neck.*

*The view of the head shows the crown all the way to the nape of the neck. Note the black lateral stripes with a stripe of yellow, then a central patch of orange.*



*A white bar is formed in the wing by the white tips of the secondary coverts (also known as the greater coverts).*

*The black bar seen here is formed by the dark color at the base of the secondaries.*

*We can tell this bird has a rounded wing due to the way the flight feathers stack together on a folded wing. There is very little difference in the length of the primaries and secondaries. (Short primary extension).*



(from page 11) Looking closely, we can see the black bar is actually the base of the secondaries. If we couldn't see the head at all, we would still be able to tell which type of bird this was just from that information! Both of our kinglets (Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Golden-crowned Kinglet) have a white wing bar on the coverts with a bold dark bar formed by the base of the secondaries. If we didn't have a view of the head and neck, this photo would be very difficult to tell which kinglet we have—mostly due to the wet feathers clumping around the base of the primaries. However, we do have the neck and crown visible, making this a simple choice!

Ruby-crowned Kinglets have a bold white eye-ring—we can't see the eye, so that doesn't help! But they otherwise have a rather uniform yellowish-green head and neck. The males will have a bright ruby-red patch of feathers on the top of the head, but it doesn't have any contrasting border color.

Since this bird obviously doesn't have a uniform head and neck color and has a rather striking pattern on the crown, we can easily eliminate Ruby-crowned Kinglet!

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS** have a crown with lateral black stripes and a center of bright yellow in females and a center of bright orange bordered with bright yellow in males—as we see in the quiz photo. They also have a rather bold pattern of black, white, and gray on the face. These birds tend to prefer wooded areas, especially areas of mature conifers. They can often be spotted flitting through the conifers, foraging for insects, although it is often difficult to get a great look at them. It's a rare treat to see them bathing in the sunshine!



*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](mailto:vas@vancouveraudubon.org).*



Barn Swallows  
Fotofest Photo by Don Rose



Many of the birds in this report are returning migrants and not necessarily rare birds, but if you are curious about the abundance of any species you can find a checklist with rarity codes for each of the 39 counties at Checklists on [www.wabirder.com](http://www.wabirder.com)

You can also view the status of any bird through the seasons on the eBird bar charts which are 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](#)



Fotofest—Hepatic Tanager—Photo by Becky Boley

**Mar 17**, Dave Miller found an amazing 25 **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS** at the Steigerwald Lake NWR, the largest number ever reported from Clark County.

**March 18**, the **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** that spent the winter at Shillapoo Lake was last reported by Mike Clarke.

**March 18**, Karen Pickering found a **SAY'S PHOEBE** at Strawberry Island below Bonneville Dam in Skamania County.

**Mar 20**, 5 **SAY'S PHOEBE** were seen by Cindy McCormack at the Steigerwald Lake NWR. She saw 2 of these migrating birds near the parking area, and at least 3 were seen at one time along Mountain View dike trail. She also spotted 1 of the continuing **HORNED LARKS** flying low over dike trail showing its black mask and necklace. Near the parking area there was a continuing female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD**.

**March 20**, The Steigerwald Lake NWR female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** was also reported by Mike Clarke, Thomas Tinsley, April Brown and Gregory Johnson.

**March 21**, Erin Madden was able to view 2 **SAY'S PHOEBE** and the female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** at close range perched on native tree stakes near the parking lot at the Steigerwald Lake NWR.

**March 21**, Les Carlson spotted 2 **SAY'S PHOEBE** and the female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** at the Steigerwald NWR.

**March 21**, Ryan Abe counted 7 **SAY'S PHOEBES** and the female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** at the Steigerwald Lake NWR and John Martin found 2 of these members of the flycatcher family there and the female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD**

**March 21**, Josh Barstow birded on Strawberry Island, where he found 6 **SAY'S PHOEBES** and a **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD**.

**March 21**, Cindy McCormack reported a continuing **HORNED LARK** in the Vancouver Lake lowlands.

**March 22**, the VAS Columbia Gorge field trip party consisting of Cindy McCormack, Randy Hill, Thomas Tinsley, Don Rose, Gregory Johnson, Jared Strawderman, Les Carlson and I also found multiple **SAY'S PHOEBES**, 1 at Skamania Landing and 2 at Beacon Rock State Park and 1 more at Strawberry Island. Further east we had a **CANYON WREN** calling from the cliffs at the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery. We continued east into Klickitat County finding a **GOLDEN EAGLE**, **ACORN WOODPECKERS** and **WESTERN BLUEBIRDS** at the Lyle-Balch Cemetery.

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**March 24**, Andrew S. Aldrich posted an eBird report of another **SAY'S PHOEBE** flycatching about .2 miles east of the Steigerwald Lake NWR parking lot entrance.

**March 24**, Brent Angelo spotted a **SAY'S PHOEBE** alongside of the levee trail at the Steigerwald Lake NWR.

**March 25**, at the Steigerwald Lake NWR, 6 **SAY'S PHOEBES** were found flycatching from the pole plantings along both sides of the Mtn View Trail levee from the parking lot to the first trees 3/4 mile in by Karen York, Cheri Gavin and Ken Pitts.

**March 25**, Michelle Maani found a **SAYS PHOEBE** along the Salmon Creek Greenway Trail, an area where they hadn't been reported from before.

**March 25**, Steven Clark and Cherie Kearney walked out on the Washougal Dike Trail and saw another **SAY'S PHOEBE** and a **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE**.

**March 25**, Ed Newbold and Delia Scholes visited the Steigerwald Lake NWR to add the **SAY'S PHOEBE** to their lists of birds they have seen in Clark County.

**March 27**, At the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery, John Davis photographed the first Eurasian **GREEN-WINGED TEAL** ever reported from Skamania County. These ducks used to be considered a separate species of their own called a Common Teal until they were lumped as a subspecies of the Green-winged Teal. They differ from our subspecies by having a bright white horizontal stripe above the wing instead of the vertical white stripe in front of the wing on our Green-winged Teal.

**March 28**, Eric Nordby saw 7 **SAY'S PHOEBES** along the Steigerwald Lake NWR Mountain View Trail at one time. He had four of them within sixty feet of him at one point.

**March 29**, Josh Barstow birded the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery in Skamania County, adding a **CANYON WREN** to his year list that was calling



from the cliffs across Highway 14 near the office buildings.

**March 29**, The Steigerwald Lake NWR female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** was still present near the parking lot and reported by both Ken Pitts and Debbie Meader.

**March 30**, The Steigerwald Lake NWR female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** continued to the east of the parking lot and was seen by Jim Danzenbaker, Debbie, Meader, Tom Rien, Tina and Gregory Johnson.

**April 1**, John Davis, Andrew S. Aldrich, Daniel Newberry, Ken Pitts, and Dennis Rogers all reported the Steigerwald Lake NWR female **MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** was still feeding from the plantings just east of bathrooms. Everyone also reported seeing a **SAY'S PHOEBE**.

**April 4**, 2 **SAY'S PHOEBES** were seen by Sierra Bangs and Carlos Splitstoser at the Steigerwald Lake NWR.

**April 5**, Robert Vanderkamp spotted one of the **SAY'S PHOEBES** feeding between the highway and the restrooms at the Steigerwald Lake NWR.

**April 5**, Cindy McCormack saw what at first appeared to be an odd, small goose flying after a Bald Eagle hazed a field's low wet area "pond" in the Vancouver Lake lowlands then realized it was a large shorebird with an obvious long decurved bill that circled before she lost sight of it

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to east. Later she saw it on the ground at a distance, a **WHIMBREL**, identified by a strong facial stripe and median crown stripe, long wings when folded and black primaries that were visible.

**April 6**, in White Salmon, Klickitat County, Stacy Simanonok reported that the wintering immature **HARRIS'S SPARROW** continued at their feeder.

**April 7**, Mike Green counted 11 **BARROW'S GOLDENEYES** in the Columbia River near the Vancouver Water Resources Education Center. He said that they were mostly females but there were at least two males with the large white crescent behind bill.

**April 8**, when Dave Hayden visited the Ridgefield NWR-Carty Unit, a **SAY'S PHOEBE** was in the parking lot when he arrived.

**April 9**, Norman Eshoo got his "lifer" **ACORN WOODPECKERS** at the Fort Vancouver NHS, when he saw one fly onto a tall old mossy deciduous tree that was shortly joined by a second one.

**April 9**, Abby Haight birded the Shillapoo Wildlife Area in the Vancouver Lake lowlands. where she found 2 **SAY'S PHOEBES**. One was flycatching in a field east of the Shillapoo parking area and the second was at a drainage just off Lower River Road.

**April 9**, another **SAY'S PHOEBE** was found by Norman Eshoo at the Vancouver Waterfront Park



Say's Phoebe—Photo by Ann Kramer/Audubon Photography Awards

where he saw it perched on the railings next to Willamette Winery down from the Grant Street Pier, he said that it was still there two days later.

**April 9**, John Davis heard the **CANYON WREN** calling from the cliffs above the hatchery houses at the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery.

**April 8**, 3 **SAY'S PHOEBES** including a mating pair were seen by Cindy McCormack, Thomas Tinsley and Karen Pickering at Beacon Rock State Park.

**April 10**, Sherry and Arden Hagen reported a **CHIPPING SPARROW** in their Cascade Park yard, they said that they used to nest at their place in the 1970's. They are almost gone as a breeding species in Clark County as their preferred habitat was the grasslands under the oak forests that have been converted to housing in the last fifty years.

**April 11**, Cindy McCormack said that 4 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** were still at the Fort Vancouver NHS. If they are nesting there it will be the first record for that in Washington outside of Klickitat County.

**April 12**, We had three Audubon's **YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS** drop into our yard despite it snowing here at the time.

**April 12**, a lingering **SWAMP SPARROW** was spotted by Tina and Gregory Johnson at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit, it should be heading back to their breeding range east of the Great Plains.

**April 13**, the first **PURPLE MARTINS** of 2023 were found at Steigerwald Lake by Ken Vanderkamp, this is one of the few sites in Washington where they are known to use natural cavities and not just bird houses.

**April 13**, Abby Haight found the first returning migrant **GREEN HERON** at the Vancouver Lake Rowing Club.

**April 14**, While birding Shillapoo Lake in the Vancouver Lake lowlands Debbie Meader spot-

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ted a **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER**, another first of the year bird.

**April 14**, although there were reports of at least one **WILSON'S WARBLER** that wintered here, one seen in LaCenter by Susan Remmen was most likely a migrant.

**April 14**, Luke Hanes spotted the first **VAUX'S SWIFT** reported in the county this year at his home in Vancouver.

The cool and snowy Spring slowed down the migration and may have been what led to the remarkable number of Say's Phoebes and Mountain Bluebirds reported from multiple locations this year. There were more sightings of these two birds than in any of the forty-eight years that I have been compiling this column. Until the last couple of days there were few other species mentioned this month. Now that the vegetation has grown enough to support the newly hatching insects there will be enough food to support the

insect eating species that will now be arriving like the flycatchers, vireos and warblers. A good spot to look for these birds is around flowering trees like maples and oaks where there will be insects feeding on the nectar.

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 the Portland/Vancouver area. <https://birdsoverportland.wordpress.com/oregon-migration-phenology/>

Please keep an eye out for returning migrants and out of place vagrants and either post them on eBird, 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 April 15th, the 2023 Washington County Cumulative Year List Project has tallied 168 species reported in Clark County and the Skamania County list is now at 126. These lists of all of the birds reported in each county are updated every two months and can be seen at [Washington Birder \(wabirder.com\)](http://WashingtonBirder(wabirder.com)).



Green Heron  
Fotofest Photo by Greg Johnson



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

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

**May 2 (Tuesday):** Monthly Program, Klickitat Oaks

**May 13 (Saturday):** World Migratory Bird Day

**May 17 (Wednesday):** Young Birders Meeting

**May 20 (Saturday):** Young Birders Walk

**May 30 (Tuesday):** Board Meeting via Zoom, 6:30 p.m.

**June 1 (Thursday):** First-of-Month-Bird Walk

**June 2-5:** Wenas Campout

