

# Columbia Flyway

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



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## From the VAS Board

By Craig Wallace, Secretary

We are in the home stretch of winter, and it's time to begin preparing for the spring nesting season. This includes cleaning and preparing your existing birdhouses and maybe putting up some new birdhouses. While there is no bad time to put out birdhouses, putting up new birdhouses in advance of spring's arrival gives the birds a chance to investigate new houses and learn where they are located. They may also use them as roost shelters if needed. Late winter is also a good time to do some spring cleaning of your existing birdhouses. This includes taking them down, removing any old nesting material, and then re-hanging them. You may also want to consider placing fresh wood chips in the birdhouses before re-hanging them.

Encourage birds to in your yard by providing a supportive habitat—plant native plants, offer a variety of habitat structures, and refrain from using pesticides.

You can also offer your feathered friends some choice nesting material. The most common materials birds use to construct a nest are available naturally in the bird's natural environment. Bird lovers who wish to encourage birds nest in their backyard can provide supplementary sources of natural, chemical-free nesting materials, such as twigs, pine needles, mosses, lichens, dead leaves, cattail fluff, straw, and native plants. Avoid string, twine, yarn, plastic, or human hair, pet hair, dry lint. Many of these including human hair, can pose entanglement risk to both adult birds and nestlings, by trapping, cutting or acting as a tourniquet. Brightly colored items can advertise the nest location to predators, and dryer lint will dissolve in wet weather. Most pets in our area are treated regularly with flea and tick treatments which can be dangerous to birds.

You can provide nesting materials in piles on the ground (works well for leaves and twigs), in clean wire-mesh suet cages, or in mess bags hung on tree trunks, fence posts, or railings, pushed into tree crevices, draped over vegetation, in open-topped berry baskets, or in spiral wire hangers made especially for putting out nesting material from our local Backyard Bird Shop.

Now all that is left for you to do is to sit back and enjoy watching your own backyard bird show.



Photo by Jeff Blake Audubon South Carolina

## A Great Opportunity!

If you have always had a desire to be a CBC compiler, now is your chance. After eight years, Susan Setterberg is retiring from the position. It is very interesting and you meet a lot of great birders. And you are the first to know the results! Please let the Vancouver Audubon President at [vas@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:vas@vancouveraudubon.org) or Susan [smsetterberg@yahoo.com](mailto:smsetterberg@yahoo.com) know of your interest. If you have a friend that is thinking about it, twist their arm a bit. Susan is available to answer any questions about what the compiler does, call at 856-701-2542. A replacement should be in place this summer, so there is time to transfer all Susan's information. **Don't delay!**

# *Election of Club Officers in April*

**Biographies and photos of candidates running for office in Vancouver Audubon Society this spring. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please email [vas@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:vas@vancouveraudubon.org) for more info.**

**President—Tom Tinsley.** Greetings. I have been the acting Vice President of the Vancouver Audubon Society for approximately 8 months now. My wife, Suzanne, and I both retired in November 2021 and moved to the Pacific Northwest to be closer to our two married adult children. We have lived in Ridgefield a little over two years now and with any luck will never move again. I have been a birder all of my adult life, birding in the time my life allowed, which I never thought was enough. Now my life allows a lot more time for me to pursue my passion, sometimes obsession, for birding, nature, and the outdoors in general. One of the first things I did upon moving to Washington was join the Vancouver Audubon Society. My first field trip was the “First of the Month” January 1, 2022 to Frenchman’s Bar. It was 24 degrees!! Aside from the frigid temperature, there were 15 or 16 people in the parking lot—all very welcoming and friendly, and many were knowledgeable birders. I lasted about 3 hours before the cold had cut through my four layers of clothing. Regardless, it was then that I told myself given the opportunity to become more involved with the Vancouver chapter I would do so. Since that first field trip I’ve been on many with Vancouver Audubon and other day trips with local birders. I have met many more welcoming, knowledgeable avid birders who I have learned a lot from. My hope is, given the opportunity, to continue my involvement with the Vancouver Audubon Society and convey to others the same welcoming, friendly attitude and a little bit about birds.



**Vice President—Don Rose** I first discovered Vancouver Audubon in late 2019 after being a National Audubon member since the 1980s. I became Program Chair just before the Pandemic and quickly learned the world of Zoom programming. For the past year, I have been the Newsletter editor and Program Chair while also serving as a southwest Washington representative on Washington Audubon board. I was a hobby birder until the Pandemic, and then truly have focused on improving my birding skills for the past 3 years. I have a son attending Western Washington University and a daughter attending Washington State University here in Vancouver. Both are strongly interested in Science and Biology. As Vice President, I want to focus to educate more people about birds, recruit new members, and support the rest of the board in conserving birds and the habitat they need to survive.



**Treasurer—Joan Durgin.** For 35 years my professional life was a CPA. I audited governmental organizations and non-profits for ten years then served as the Finance Director for the City of Camas for 20 years until retirement. During this time I volunteered as treasurer for the Vancouver Audubon for 10 years, until 2016 when I stepped aside for 2 years until I was re-elected in 2018 and have served ever since. I am willing to serve another term as treasurer because I feel it is an important function of our chapter. I will strive to retain our sound financial condition and continue good accounting practices. I’m not acting alone in this function, it benefits from a team, the Finance Committee. I appreciate their time to audit my accounting and all detailed transactions several times a year.



**Secretary—VACANT**

**Members At Large**—If, as a member, you are interested in finding out more what the Board does, or you have a specific task or activity you would be interested in taking the lead on and seek Board approval, perhaps you could seek to be a Member At Large and attend a Board meeting.

# More Chapter Opportunities

## Seeking Volunteers for World Water Day BioBlitz

**Saturday, March 23!** The City of Vancouver Water Resources Education Center is hosting a World Water Day BioBlitz at Vancouver's Water Center (4600 S. Columbia Way, Vancouver) – and VAS is participating!

This is a family-friendly event for anyone age 6 and older. The event includes guided nature walks (topics vary) to focus on finding specific types of species. Nature walks focused on birds are 9:30-10:45am and 11am-12:15pm. The maximum group size is 10.

We're looking for VAS volunteers to help at this event (taking a 1 or 2 hour shift at the VAS table, or leading or co-leading a nature walk). To volunteer at the BioBlitz or learn more about being a VAS volunteer for the BioBlitz, please email Becky Boley at [CommunityOutreach@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:CommunityOutreach@vancouveraudubon.org).

Learn more about the event at: <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/events/world-water-day-bioblitz>. Attendees must register in advance at this website (VAS volunteers do not need to register).

## Other volunteer opportunities

We are working on opportunities to partner with different parts of our community. If you are interested in volunteering for a future event, please email Becky Boley at [CommunityOutreach@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:CommunityOutreach@vancouveraudubon.org). She will contact you to find out what types of volunteer work you are interested in (i.e., staffing a table at an event like BioBlitz, leading a bird walk, presenting at a classroom, planting trees). When future opportunities become available, you'll hear about it first and can get involved if it's something you want to do!



## Wenas Campout May 31 - June 2, 2024



*Bullock's Oriole* Photo by Carol Kohler

You are invited to a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington. Each year, Audubon chapters and their friends gather for a few days of camping, birding, and exploring the Wenas Wildlife Area near Ellensburg, WA. 2024 marks 61 years since Bea Buzzetti, Ruth Anderson, and Hazel Wolf wandered serendipitously into the Wenas Creek area on a camping trip, and Audubon chapters and other nature-loving groups have gathered (almost) annually ever since.

The casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, wild-

flower walks, field sketching, activities for the youngest explorers, 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, and what to expect are on the website, [wenasaudubon.org](http://wenasaudubon.org), or [follow the group on Facebook](#) for current information.



*White-headed Woodpecker* Photo -Carol Kohler



## Young Birders' Club

### News & Updates

Tweet, tweet and a big hello to you from the YBC! We hope you had an excellent Valentine's day, and are ready for Spring. We certainly are! February brought us a tree planting with the Watershed Alliance on the 18th, a Zoom meeting on the 21st, and a bird walk on the 24th at Ridgefield Carty Unit. We have also begun working with the Clark County Juvenile Court to provide bird walks for kids and teens in need on a walk in nature. We will be leading an owl pellet dissection in March with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at Fort Vancouver Library in the Vancouver Mall as well. And, with better weather comes field trip season! Sign up your youth for updates, field trips, and volunteer opportunities this spring! And kids—remember to send in your artwork! We want to include it in next month's newsletter!

### Important Upcoming Events and Dates

Please contact us to sign up for any of these events!

- 02/21 Monthly Zoom Meeting @ 6:00 pm
- 02/24 Bird Walk @ Ridgefield Carty Unit @ 8:00 am
- 03/20 Monthly Zoom Meeting @ 6:00 pm
- 03/23 Bio-Blitz with City of Vancouver @ Water Resource Center — Sign Up [Here](#).

To sign up for Young Birders, [click here to complete this form](#).

If you have any questions, comments, or ideas for our club, please feel free to share them with

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

As always, tell your friends about us, and happy birding!

*Jackson and Katie, YBC Leads*



*Sanderling*

*Phil Fowler/Audubon Photography Awards*



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*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.*

## ***CBC Summary for December 31, 2023 – Vancouver Lake Bottoms, Ridgefield, Sauvie Island and in between (ORSI)***

*By Susan Setterberg*



***The Gates Family on Salmon Creek in Felida doing their first CBC***

This year, Mother Nature gave us fog to start the day with low clouds continuing through the afternoon. Temperatures ranged from 43°F in the early hours to 48° in some spots with calm to slight breezes. Some counters experienced wetness which was more a matter of walking through the fog or very low clouds than a rain event. Depending on where you were, the fog density muted sounds, made roads disappear or masked birds at a distance, making identification and counting a bit challenging. Some teams compensated by starting a little later than usual.

We had 85 people in 29 teams counting out on trails or roads and 2 feeder watchers. Fifty-four were on the Washington side in 19 separate teams. That's another new high for our participant count. Several counters were new to the Christmas Bird Count, and I hope they enjoyed it enough to continue. We were able to add two new territories along Cougar Creek and Salmon Creek on the Washington side, which was helpful. We placed some of

our new birders with experienced team leaders to show them the ropes. By the end of the day we had walked 95 miles, drove 146 miles, and birded 142 plus hours. That effort gave us 123 species this year.

A big challenge, besides just trying to see birds across foggy fields and lakes, was trying to accomplish a count of Sandhills, Snow Geese and Cacklers on the Columbia Land Trust (CLT) property in Vancouver Lake Bottoms (VLB). The six-person team (Arden Hagan, Ken Pitts, Fred Dobson, Stella Walk, Mark Singer and Ellen Jones) split up the task, estimating broadly and counting sections specifically



***Bondi and Kathleen on Salmon Creek Trail***

to come up with a count of 2546 Sandhills, 8440 Cacklers and 12600 Snow Geese. Now, were there? Last year we had larger numbers settling on 23381 as the total count for Snow Geese. But that was most likely high. This year, there were 5000 counted in fields around Oak Island on Sauvie Island. That was a count about 7:45 am compared to the 10:30 am count on CLT. Talking to the team at CLT and the team covering Frenchman's Bar and north along 501 plus seeing other e-bird account comments, a very impressive movement of birds (Sandhills, snows and cacklers) occurred in those early morning hours from Sauvie Island to VLB/CLT fields. This is a common pattern of movement we have seen over the years on the CBC and by those who count regularly in the VLB/CLT area. So, I settled on a number for these three species that

didn't include the major early morning flocks on Sauvie Is. There was also a big movement over Plas Newydd Farm crossing the Louis River into Woodland. The Sandhills probably came off some of the night roosts on the north end of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (RNWR). The flyers weren't counted in that case either and we used early count numbers from the refuge teams; all part of the review to bridge the gap between the number of sightings and the number of individuals.

Gleaning through your notes and some of your e-bird trip lists, the review of over 200 sightings of Bald Eagles was pared down to a count of individuals of 146. These birds just don't sit still, as you know. Last year's batch of young eagles seem to enjoy harassing ducks and geese. Nothing more frustrating than an eagle flyover when you are halfway through counting a flock of cacklers. One disap-



***Susie, Jane, Dick, Mark, Karen, and Nancy Jane were counting WMAs south of Rentenaar on Sauvie Island***



***Tom and Amy Meier spotted a Short-eared Owl at the end of the day on Sauvie Is.***

*(Continued on page 6)*

pointment regarding the raptors was no Rough-legged Hawks this year. Only one year, 2017, since 1967 has not documented a Rough-legged. Thirty-one were counted in 1987, but in more recent years we have been seeing single numbers; the most recent high of 12 on the 2003 count. Maybe food sources were good this year farther north? Or we could be losing birds too. Something to watch.



**Joan, Kate, Jean and Sandy at Whipple Creek**

A few teams commented on a “slow day” seeing few sparrows, finch, and such. Yet there were several teams that had big counts of Golden-crowned Sparrows (1123 total), Song Sparrows (655 total) and Black-capped Chickadees (438 total). We missed a couple of the song birds we usually ferret out such as Vesper Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat and Evening Grosbeak. However, we added Red Crossbill on the Plas Newydd Farm and Barn Swallow on the River S and VLB. Orange-crowned Warbler was found also on Plas Newydd and Bachelor Island and submitted for count week on Sauvie Island.

For the ducks, Ring-necked Duck (4758), Mallard (4725), and Northern Pintail (4705) were virtually a three-way tie. While Mallard and Northern Pintail were down in numbers compared to last year, Ring-necked Ducks were three times more this year than last. Waterfowl in general appeared to move into the area later than usual this winter which might explain some of the variation, although this year’s count was on the 31<sup>st</sup> while last year was the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Last year we had our highest total swan count of 6387; this year was only 5032. Of those swans last year, 1100 were trumpeters (our highest count), but this year only 691 Trumpeters were counted. Like other waterfowl, they were also slow to arrive this year and may have stayed farther north. For both years, about 12.6% of the flocks were unidentified to species. Last year, 60% of those identified were Tundra, while this year 73% were identified as Tundra. Last year, the Trumpeters were increasing overall in northern Washington counts (Skagit) and that seemed to be the case here too. But reports of this year’s swan counts in north Washington were low overall compared to last. Also, those counts had a much lower number of young birds so that may have an overall effect next year too. I think it is important for next year to really check over our flocks of swans to discern which species we have. It is not easy and requires patience. It was often assumed they were Tundra, but it is changing. If you are interested in the state of PNW swans, Martha Jordan of the NW Swan Conservation Association gave a presentation to Washington Ornithological Society in February and can be found here: <https://wos.org/wos-online/>. Martha will also be speaking at the Othello Crane Festival.



**People watcher on Sauvie Island by Tom Myers**



Saving the best for last. The BIG and very exciting addition to our list this year was the Black-necked Stilt (BNST) found by Tom Myers on the south shore of Sauvie Island’s Race-track Lake. These photos were taken by Tom to document the sighting. Many birders have been chasing the BNST on RNWR River S since early December. Occasionally, it would go missing, maybe seen in the early morning, then not again. Count day, nothing on the refuge. Then Tom found it across the Columbia River. I can’t say with certainty that it was the same stilt. At some point, someone doing River S had said there were two stilts one day; however, all the e-bird reports December through January have been for a single bird mostly on RNWR; probably the most photographed bird this season. OK, maybe that’s the Short-eared Owls. This is the first time Black-necked Stilt has been seen in our CBC circle. Of course, it returned to River S after the count and has been seen intermittently since. Sometimes I think they know and have a weird sense of humor. And on that high note, I will sign off for this year’s count. I want to say how much I appreciate all the participants, new and very long-time CBCers.





**Final Count—December 31, 2023, Christmas Bird Count, ORSI Circle, Sauvie Island, Vancouver Lake  
Bottoms and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Count</b>				
Greater White-fronted Goose	7	Virginia Rail	6	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	60
Snow Goose	13252	American Coot	1516	Bushtit	319
Cackling Goose	24871	Sandhill Crane	5250	Red-breasted Nuthatch	26
Canada Goose	868	Black-necked Stilt	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	67
<b>Cackling/Canada Species</b>	1437	Killdeer	106	Brown Creeper	75
Trumpeter Swan	691	Greater Yellowlegs	56	Pacific Wren	62
Tundra Swan	3707	Dunlin	1	Marsh Wren	42
<b>Swan species</b>	634	Least Sandpiper	18	Bewick's Wren	106
Wood Duck	59	Long-billed Dowitcher	15	Golden-crowned Kinglet	218
Gadwall	607	Wilson's Snipe	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	175
Eurasian Wigeon	12	Mew Gull (Short-billed)	65	Hermit Thrush	6
American Wigeon	3235	Ring-billed Gull	217	American Robin	392
Mallard	4725	California Gull	19	Varied Thrush	100
Northern Shoveler	1897	Herring Gull	7	European Starling	3675
Northern Pintail	4705	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	5	American Pipit	178
Green-winged Teal	1195	Western Gull	2	Cedar Waxwing	14
Canvasback	348	Glaucous-winged Gull	33	Orange-crowned Warbler	6
Ring-necked Duck	4758	<b>Olympic Gull (GW x W)</b>	3	Yellow-rumped Warbler	75
Greater Scaup	31	<b>Gull species</b>	49	Townsend's Warbler	6
Lesser Scaup	558	Rock Pigeon	45	Fox Sparrow	76
Bufflehead	191	Eurasian Collared-Dove	31	Dark-eyed Junco	1025
Common Goldeneye	83	Mourning Dove	192	White-crowned Sparrow	144
Barrow's Goldeneye	5	Barn Owl	6	Golden-crowned Sparrow	1123
Hooded Merganser	85	Great Horned Owl	16	White-throated Sparrow	4
Common Merganser	110	Barred Owl	2	Savannah Sparrow	13
Red-breasted Merganser	2	Short-eared Owl	15	Song Sparrow	655
Ruddy Duck	82	<b>Owl Species</b>	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	13
Duck species	100	Anna's Hummingbird	49	Spotted Towhee	258
California Quail	6	Belted Kingfisher	40	<b>Sparrow species</b>	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	5	Red-breasted Sapsucker	23	Red-winged Blackbird	1886
Pied-billed Grebe	118	Downy Woodpecker	68	Western Meadowlark	65
Horned Grebe	20	Hairy Woodpecker	16	Brewer's Blackbird	469
Western Grebe	5	Northern Flicker	190	Brown-headed Cowbird	31
Double-crested Cormorant	370	Pileated Woodpecker	16	House Finch	258
American White Pelican	2	American Kestrel	104	Purple Finch	83
American Bittern	1	Merlin	3	Red Crossbill	1
Great Blue Heron	120	Peregrine Falcon	2	Pine Siskin	54
Great Egret	199	Black Phoebe	22	Lesser Goldfinch	22
Northern Harrier	70	Northern Shrike	4	American Goldfinch	12
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Hutton's Vireo	1	House Sparrow	41
Cooper's Hawk	9	Steller's Jay	133	<b>Total</b>	<b>90877</b>
<b>Bald Eagle - Adult</b>	112	California Scrub-Jay	339		
<b>Bald Eagle - Subadult</b>	34	American Crow	418		
Red-shouldered Hawk	13	Common Raven	41		
Red-tailed Hawk	107	Barn Swallow	5		
		<b>Swallow Species</b>	1		
		Black-capped Chickadee	438		

## March 5, 2024—Bird Language Basics: Unraveling the Storylines of Nature Through Birds Speaker: Ashley Conley



Birds are one of the most vocal animals on Earth. Slowing down and tuning into their vocalizations offers a glimpse into the rich and dramatic storylines of their lives and the animals they share space with. In this class, learn how keying into the calls, postures, and behaviors of songbirds can help you see more wildlife, unravel fascinating stories, deepen your connection to nature, and increase your awareness skills.

Ashley Conley has been leading groups of people outdoors for over 20 years. She is a naturalist and educator with a passion for teaching about birds and bird language, animal tracking, botany and herbalism, and much more. She is currently an educator at the City of Vancouver's Water Resources Education Center.

The location of this IN-PERSON meeting March 5 is:

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

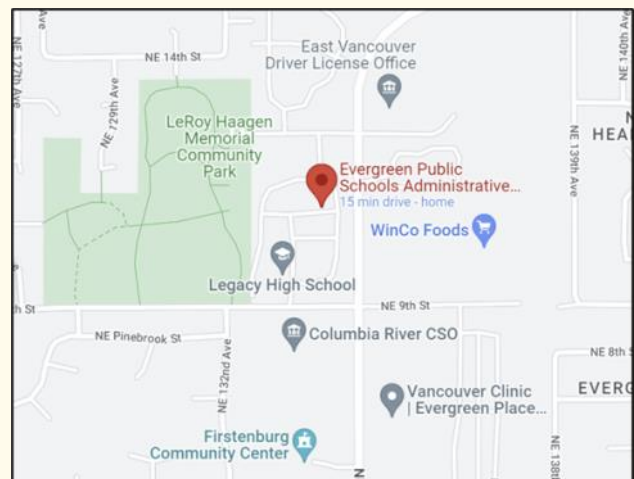
Vancouver, WA

**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 at**  
[meetings@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:meetings@vancouveraudubon.org). Please send all topic, speaker, and program suggestions and requests to Don



Rose. Enter the parking lot on the LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive side. (If you navigate to LeRoy Haagen Park, your Google Maps should take you to the correct road).



Photo: Steve Bredthauer, Fotofest 2023. Great Egret - Chobe National Park, Botswana



## Wild Ways: Why Keeping Washington's Habitat Connected Matters

by Susan Saul

Birds, fish and animals need room to roam. They make daily movements to find food and mates, seasonal migrations as conditions change, and generational shifts claiming new territory for population dispersal. Providing a connected network of habitats to allow for their safe movement is called habitat connectivity. It also supports natural processes such as seed dispersal and nutrient cycling.

Wildlife habitat becomes disconnected when land is developed with housing, roads and businesses. When development creates barriers to wildlife movement, it can result in tragedy. Habitat connectivity becomes even more important as the climate changes and wildlife move to adapt to a changing environment or to escape wildfires or other disasters.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), in partnership with Conservation Northwest, recently produced a video about habitat connectivity called [“Wild Ways – Why Keeping Washington’s Habitat Connected Matters.”](#) The video highlights examples of successful habitat connectivity such as the Interstate 90 wildlife crossing project that enables wildlife to access the habitats they need while allowing human use of the land.

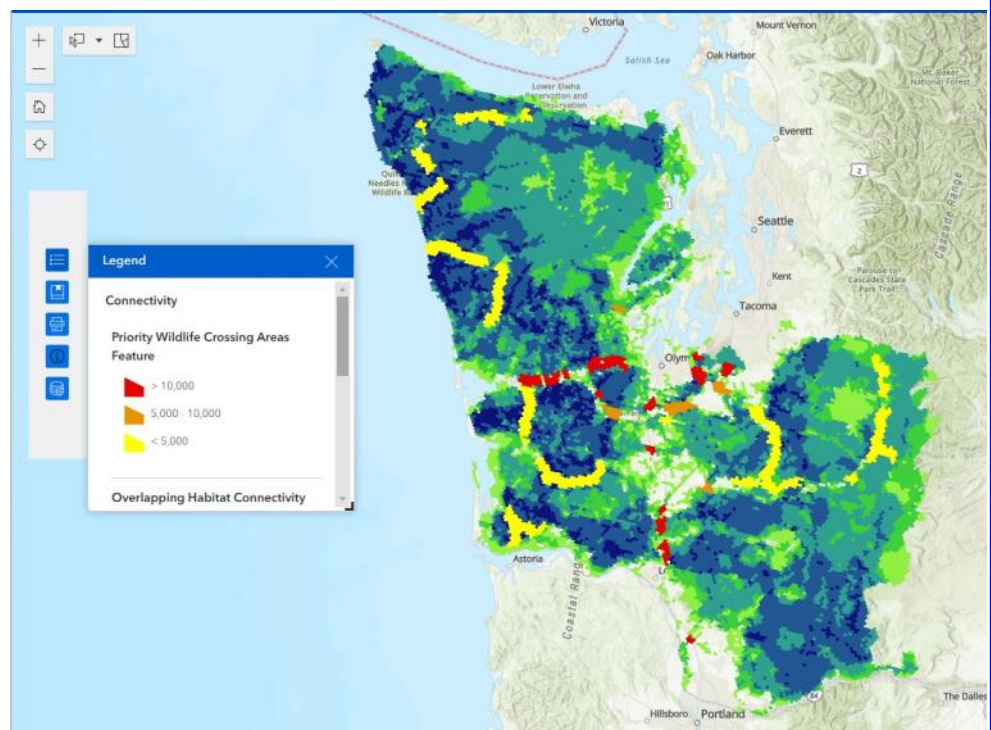
Habitat connectivity is also important for safety and economics. The estimated number of mule deer killed annually on state highways is approximately half of what hunters harvest annually.

WDFW, Conservation Northwest, and the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) are developing a state Habitat Connectivity Action Plan to identify priority locations that need protection, restoration, and connectivity.

In Southwest Washington, government agencies, conservation partners and private landowners are working together on the [Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative](#). The collaborative has produced a habitat connectivity analysis to identify geographic and human barriers, threats and opportunities, as shown on the [map](#) accompanying this article.

The biggest barrier separating the Cascades from the Coast is the Interstate 5 (I-5) freeway corridor. Increasing suburban sprawl, major flooding, and changing forestry and agricultural uses also impact connectivity. Several locations along the I-5 corridor have been identified as the best opportunities for enhancing and restoring connectivity. The highest priority connectivity areas nearest to Vancouver are the I-5 crossing of the East Fork Lewis River, along the Cowlitz River north of Longview-Kelso and the vicinity of the Toutle Rest Area north of Castle Rock on I-5 where forests connect to both sides of the freeway.

You can help by supporting state funding for WDFW and WSDOT to continue this important landscape conservation work.



Map of Priority Wildlife Crossing Areas

# VAS Bird Walks & Field Trips

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

**Friday, March 1**

## First-of-Month Bird Walk—Salmon Creek Greenway

**Meeting time:** 7:30am

**Leader:** Cindy McCormack

**Register:** Cindy at [vas@vancouveraudubon.org](mailto:vas@vancouveraudubon.org)

**Meeting Location:** Meet at the west trailhead (parking available along the roadside of NW 36 th Ave, just south of the bridge crossing Salmon Creek.

We are in the late winter phase of birding with a few of our earliest migrants trickling in and many of our wintering birds still lingering. The anticipation of spring birding! The west end of Salmon Creek Greenway is usually excellent for viewing water birds and enjoying a variety of woodland species. We should encounter our resident bird in full song.

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, 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.



Golden-crowned Kinglet

Ken Pitts—Fotofest 2023

## JOIN WOS WEEKEND: CLARK COUNTY+ March 8-10, 2024

Washington Ornithological Society has a scheduled 3-day weekend of birding in early March, and VAS members will have an opportunity to participate by filling any remaining slots not filled by WOS members. The original posting in early February follows:

*Join Randy Hill and one or more co-leaders to explore the diversity of Clark County in the transition from late winter to early spring. This trip will concentrate on finding resident, wintering and early-arriving Vancouver area specialties. Target species include early flycatchers, Red-shouldered Hawk, diving ducks and other waterfowl, loons, grebes, shore-birds and possibly owls.*

*We will meet at the I-5 Salmon Creek Park-and-Ride off NE 134 th St at 7:15 AM and explore areas that could include Ridgefield NWR, Vancouver Lake and lowlands and portions of the Columbia River. Depending on conditions, a Sunday morning trip along the Vancouver waterfront that may reach as far upstream as Steigerwald Lake NWR, or an upland forest trip might be added. A Friday afternoon exploration of the Woodland Bottoms also is scheduled. For more information and to sign up, contact Randy Hill by email at [randy.hill.98642@gmail.com](mailto:randy.hill.98642@gmail.com), or at 360-975-2573 (text preferred.)*

Russ Koppendrayer will co-lead the Friday trip to Woodland Bottoms. Others will co-lead Saturday/Sunday. We will utilize a wait-list and begin filling unused spaces beginning March 5. The Woodland Bottoms route on Friday 3/8 will begin at noon and go until 4-4:30 pm. Russ has offered to meet an early group around 10am at Kalama for waterbirds. The primary day is Saturday 3/9 and will concentrate on Ridgefield NWR south to the Vancouver Lowlands; that date likely will have the fewest available open spaces. Sunday morning 3/10 will meet at 7am (location to be determined) and finish areas west of I-5, look at Fort Vancouver, the Vancouver Waterfront to Marine Park and could possibly continue as far upstream as Steigerwald Lake, ending during the noon hour. An alternative option if conditions are favorable, a trip upslope to Yacolt Burn State Forest.

**Carty Unit trail bird walks** take place at Ridgefield NWR (registration required): 3/2/2024 (Ron Escano); 3/9/2024 (Robert Vanderkamp). Check out <https://ridgefieldfriends.org/news/naturalist-led-walks/>.



# 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)

*American Bittern*  
Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge  
Photo by Jackson Wolfe



For any unusual birds in this report, I use the following rarity codes which are used on the state checklist as well as on each of the 39 county checklists available at:

www.wabirder.com

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

**Jan 22**, while visiting Frenchman's Bar Regional Park, Jim Danzenbaker picked out an adult **ROSS'S GOOSE** (3) in a large **SNOW GOOSE** flock. He said it was about 3/4 of the size of the surrounding Snow Geese with a very round head and a short stubby bill. He also heard and saw 12 **HORNED LARKS** (4) flying over going from the Columbia Land Trust property to Sauvie Island. He said the calls were richer flutier notes than an American Pipit and that they were a bulkier bird with a shorter tail than American Pipits have. Several other people posted follow-up sighting reports of these birds that only seem to show up here in extreme winter conditions except for a subspecies, the Streaked Horn Lark that nests on sandy islands in the Columbia River and a few other spots in western Washington. Here is a link to more information on this subspecies that is on the Washington State Endangered Species List.

<https://www.eopugetsound.org/articles/streaked-horned-lark-eremophila-alpestris-strigata>



Horned Lark at Palouse Falls State Park, WA  
J. D. Gantz/Audubon Photography Awards

**Jan 22**, a **MERLIN** (3) of the taiga subspecies continued at Brent Angelo's home in Orchards. He described this small falcon as brown and white streaked on the belly area with the upper parts medium grey with a pale mustache and thin white eyebrow. He didn't think it was light enough to be a Prairie type and not dark enough to be a Pacific (Black) version. The bird spent part of the day hunting from the top of a tall conifer and he saw it consume several prey items.

**Jan 22**, Bart Valentine was at Ridgefield NWR, when a flock of 11 **HORNED LARKS** flew in and landed on the ice on the east side of the road on the back stretch of the auto tour route. This flock of birds continued for several days allowing many people to see these uncommon visitors.

**Jan. 23**, while conducting surveys on Cranes Landing in the Vancouver Lake lowlands, Cindy McCormack found a massive number of **HORNED LARKS**, counting 198 birds in one flock. This is Columbia Land Trust property which is closed to the public. One of the areas where they have been seen is the crane and goose field which is visible looking east from the south end of the road and trail at Frenchman's Bar Park.

**Jan. 23**, Roger Windemuth heard a **SWAMP SPARROW** (3) calling right after marker 9 on the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit,

**Jan. 26**, a continuing male **TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD** (5) was spotted at a feeder in Murdock in Klickitat County by Becky Kent and Russ Koppendrayar. These birds have bright white shoulder patches, instead of yellow like the Red-winged Blackbirds. There used to be a small population of these blackbirds nesting in colonies across the Columbia River from the Vancouver Lake lowlands and we used to find a few in the flocks of blackbirds around the cattle feeding areas although the last accepted sighting in the county was in 2008.

**Jan. 26**, Eric Stahlfeld added Skamania County to the

(Continued on page 11)

areas hosting **HORNED LARKS** (3) when he spotted seven of them at the Fairgrounds at the Rock Creek Mill Pond.

**Jan 28**, a **TREE SWALLOW** was seen at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit, by Dave Hayden. These swallows are among the earliest returning migrants. When they first arrive, they can often be found feeding on insects over ponds and other bodies of water where it is slightly warmer.

**Jan 28**, the overwintering **BLACK-NECKED STILT** at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit was seen napping at the edge of the pond at marker 8 by Fred Howay. This is a Code 4 species that is even more unusual here in the winter.

**Jan 29**, the **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (1) that has spent the winter at the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit was reported by Tina and Gregory Johnson. It is usually seen in with a small flock of **GREATER YELLOWLEGS**, which are a more common wintering species, the Lesser Yellowlegs can be picked out by its smaller size and shorter thin bill.

**Jan. 31**, CJ Flick and Stewart Fletcher observed 5 **BARN SWALLOWS** foraging low over Bingen Pond in Klickitat County. They were following the long white streak of ice present near open water, landing on the ice briefly, then taking off, flying low over the pond and then circling back, landing on ice, and repeating this same behavior again and again, which suggesting that there might be insect hatches occurring.

**Feb. 1**, John Davis counted 42 **HORNED LARKS** foraging in a wet field at the Rock Creek Mill Pond, Skamania County.

**Feb. 1**, a **SAY'S PHOEBE** (3), the first of 2024, was seen flycatching from fence posts and broken corn stalks at Shillapoo Lake in the Vancouver Lake lowlands by the 16 participants on the first of the Month VAS Bird Walk led by Cindy McCormack. While not a rare species here, these early migrants are only in our area for a short period of time while heading to their

breeding grounds east of the Cascades.

**Feb. 3**, either the earlier reported or another **SAY'S PHOEBE** was spotted by Tim Shelmerdine at Frenchman's Bar Regional Park.

**Feb. 4**, at Steigerwald Lake NWR. 7 **HORNED LARKS** were identified by Lorin Wilkerson as being of the Streaked subspecies from the streaking seen on upper flanks and across top of breast.

**Feb. 4**, Jeff Hayes was glassing ducks on the cove at the mouth of the Wind River when he glimpsed some birds flying just past the Highway 14 bridge. He got his bins on 12 **SNOW GEESE** (4) as they flew down the Columbia River flying about 30 feet above the surface of the river westward and out of sight. This was the first report of this species in Skamania County this year.

**Feb. 6**, the continuing male **REDHEAD** (3) at the Rock Creek Mill Pond in Stevenson was spotted by Jenny Jones.



Say's Phoebe Photo by Don Rose

(Continued on page 14)

**Feb 10**, Cindy McCormack, Les Carlson and I birded Skamania County on a rare sunny and nearly windless day. At the Rock Creek Mill Pond, we found the continuing male **REDHEAD** which was now accompanied now by a female. Among the hundreds of waterfowl on the pond we picked out a **RUDDY DUCK** (4). From the Stevenson waterfront we spotted a **RED-NECKED GREBE** (3) far out in the Columbia River. We ended up with a total of 70 species of birds for the day which set a new County Big Day record for the month of February.

**Feb. 10**, Ken Pitts and Stella Walk led a VAS outing on the Salmon Creek Trail and tallied 55 species for the 17 participants. I highly recommend joining in on these chapter led outings, birding with others is one of the best ways to learn bird identification while exploring our local birding areas.

**Feb. 12**, a **CLARK'S GREBE** (3) was spotted in the Columbia River offshore of the Tidewater Cove viewpoint by Fred Howay. Occasionally they can be found in with the Western Grebes that gather on Vancouver Lake and can be picked out by their paler body color, yellow to orangish bill and how the black of the cap on their head ends above their eye, unlike the Western Grebe with a greenish bill the eye is surrounded by black. These grebes were thought to be just plumage variations of one species until they were split into separate species in 1985 based on more studies.

**Feb. 13**, 2 early **CLIFF SWALLOWS** were reported from the Ridgefield NWR-River 'S' Unit by Walter Shriner, this is usually the last swallow species to return in the Spring with an average return date of April 2.

**Feb. 14**, the 2 **CLIFF SWALLOWS** at the Ridgefield NWR-River "S" Unit were confirmed by Roger Windemuth.

The spitting and lumping of species continue as more information is gathered on birds including DNA testing. Sometimes those decisions are changed by additional studies like last year when the Pacific-Slope Flycatcher and the Cordilleran Flycatcher were re-

combined back into the Western Flycatcher that they were before being split. Here is a link to this year's name change proposals which include splitting the European subspecies of Green-winged Teal back into the Common Teal it was before they combined them into one species. One of the proposed changes that affects us is to split the western form of Red-shouldered Hawk from the east coast subspecies into a species of its own, I wonder what its new name will be? [American Ornithological Society proposed name changes.](#)

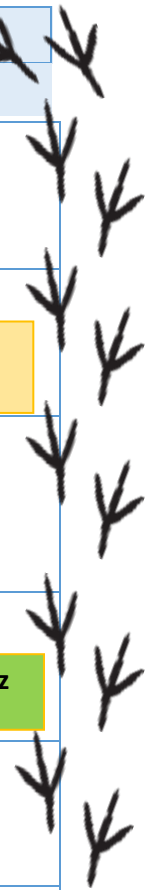
From now through the end of May with the arrival of migrants from their wintering grounds to our south and the departure of most of the waterfowl is my favorite time of the year. There is a calendar of the average return date of many of our local birds available online at: [Willamette Valley Spring Migration Phenology | birds over portland \(wordpress.com\)](#)

You can also follow the migration on eBird.org where they display the sighting reports of each species on maps so that you can see the waves of birds moving north. I also like to check BirdCast each morning from March 1 to June 15 to see how many birds were detected by weather radars as they passed over the county. [BirdCast - Bird migration forecasts in real-time](#)

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 the species seen in each county by anyone this year. As of February 15<sup>th</sup>, there has been 145 species reported from Clark County for the 2024 Washington County Cumulative Year List Project and in Skamania County the list is now at 102. These lists of all the birds reported in each county are updated every two months and can be seen at [Washington Birder \(wabirder.com\)](#)



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>March 2024</b>						
					Mar 1 Bird Walk— Salmon Creek	2
3	4	5 Program— Bird Language	6	7	8 WOS Field Trip	9 WOS Field Trip
10 WOS Field Trip	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 YBC Zoom Meeting—6 pm	21	22	23 Bio Blitz
24	25	26 Board Meeting	27	28	29	30
31						



**Mar 1 (Friday):** First-of-Month-Bird Walk, Salmon Creek

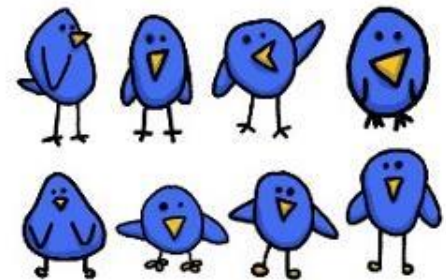
**Mar 5 (Tuesday):** Monthly Program—Bird Language

**Mar 8-10—** WOS Field Trip opportunities

**Mar 20 (Wed):** Young Birders Meeting

**Mar 23 (Sat):** BioBlitz at Water Resource Center

**Mar 26 (Tuesday):** Board Meeting



[backyardbirdshop.com](http://backyardbirdshop.com)



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