



Calliope Crier

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society is people dedicated to the enjoyment and preservation of the natural world. Through birding, education and conservation activities in our community, we raise awareness and promote the cause of global environmental protection.

Volume 43, Number 08

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

September 2014



PROGRAM ARTICLE

BILL DRENGUIS

Bobolinks—A Citizen Science Project on Toppenish Creek

Bobolink populations on Toppenish Creek have been in decline over the past 15 to 20 years and perhaps much longer. Concern about this decline motivated Washington Audubon to organize an effort to learn more about this bird's use of the grasslands here. Over the past five years, Yakima Valley Audubon members and student volunteers, working with Yakama Nation wildlife biologists, have conducted a Citizen Science Project to survey Bobolink habitat use, population trends and nesting success on the Yakama Nation. The continued annual return of the Bobolinks has been in great doubt.

Jan Gano has led this local group's monitoring efforts and will describe the Bobolink story in the Yakima Valley at the next Yakima Valley Audubon Society Chapter meeting on September 25.

Bobolinks are in the Blackbird family. They are very striking birds with the male's breeding plumage on its backside, exactly opposite of most songbirds. The male has been described as wearing a tuxedo backwards. The female's plumage, while subdued, is also unusual with a buff fuzzy back of the head.

Bobolinks have an extraordinary annual journey of migration of about 12,000 miles. Each year they move from the Southern Hemisphere to North America and then return.

Bobolinks face many challenges in their long commute. They must endure the long flight across the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. As mainly seed eating birds, they are hazed by landowners in South America to keep them from grain fields in December through February. Efficient farming practices in North America have reduced the availability of grains on their southern migration. Bobolinks typically nest in grass lands. Here they face death and disruption by the physical disturbance of hay cutting and livestock grazing.

This bird is found in high numbers and is very common on the plains of the American Mid-west. It is not so common in the Western U.S. Migrating from central South America each year, small numbers of Bobolinks venture west of the Rocky



Jan "Bobolink Whisperer" Gano

Mountains to nest. Bobolinks occur in only a handful of locations in all of Washington. Their presence here is rather unique. The grassland habitat in the lower Yakima Valley is perhaps the western most location for a breeding population of Bobolinks in the U.S. if not in all of North America.

Mr. Gano will report the findings of five seasons of study of this beautiful blackbird.

**Mark Your calendar for Thursday,
September, 25, at 7:00pm to see this
presentation at the Yakima Area Arboretum**

Visit the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's website at: <http://www.yakimaaudubon.org>



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

ANDY STEPNIEWSKI



September in the bird world around Yakima is a month of transitions. Fall migration is in full swing. This month we see the disappearance of most of the Neotropical migrants, the colorful (and some not-so-colorful) birds that make spring and summer so joyous to the birder. Thus, an array of flycatchers, vireos, swallows, warblers, orioles, buntings, and tanagers all depart southwards to warmer latitudes in a big way this month. Winter visitors, such as White-crowned Sparrows, first make their appearance.

Transition is also a theme this month with your chapter's leadership. After more than eight years as Membership Chair, Debie Brown is stepping down. Debie's diligence in keeping track of the membership roster, both its local and National categories, is much appreciated. Thank You Debie! We know Debie will continue to be an active contributor to the local bird scene as her home on Konnowac Pass lies along a great migration corridor. Just this week, proof of this came again as Debie reported an American Redstart in her maple trees. Upwards of two dozen Yakima birders saw this beautiful bird. Though very common in deciduous forests east of the Rocky Mountains, this species becomes steadily more uncommon and localized to the west of those mountains. The nearest known breeding redstarts to Yakima is in southern Okanogan County.

Joy McKinney has volunteered to assume the Membership Committee Chair. Though there are technological hurdles to overcome (Debie was on a PC platform; Joy has a Mac), we're all hoping these challenges can be overcome. Thank You Joy!

Another transition is on the radar. Luke Safford, our energetic Field Trip Committee Chair, has given notice he and his family plan to move to Tucson, Arizona, to start a new Southern Baptist Church. Luke's energy and enthusiasm will be missed. Not only did he organize the chapter's fieldtrips, including the Poppoff Trail walks, he also organized and compiled the Toppenish Christmas Bird Count. Thank You Luke! Best wishes in Tucson, too, near the heart of some of North America's great birding regions. Scott Downes has volunteered to assume Luke's position as Field Trip Committee Chair. Scott has proven ability in this field, having organized the past three annual conferences of the Washington Ornithological Society. The last conference was in Yakima in June. For that event, he planned 52 field trips for this four-day event. Say that to

yourself again, 52! Scott's skills in logistics and his intimate knowledge of birds and birding sites has enabled him to craft exciting trips to proven venues that yield great birds and birding experiences. YVAS is lucky to have Scott on board!

Bluebirds. Richard Repp, Bluebird Committee Chair reports well over 500 bluebirds fledged on the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail, making it a "good year." Richard notes there was a strong "second brood occurrence and this second nesting is usually very successful." This assertion would not be possible without the meticulous monitoring and data gathering Rich coordinates.

Fieldtrips. See the Fieldtrip schedule on page 4 for details on great slate of trips offered in September and October. Please consider planning on joining some or all of the exciting trips.

Hoeger Property. Jan Gano, Chair of the Hoeger Preserve Committee, reports he will begin investigating legal and tax implications regarding a proposal to dispose the Hoeger Preserve. After a number of years, the YVAS board has not listed a truly compelling rationale for retaining this property. The board wishes to know the actual process and cost should the chapter decide to divest the property. With this information in hand, YVAS will ponder its options.

Audubon Council Meeting of Washington will be in Ocean Shores September 20 and will feature a WA State Audubon Conservation Committee meeting, followed by a day focused on National Audubon's just released focus on Climate Change and its effects on our habitats and their birdlife. Contact Jen Syrowitz (jsyrowitz@audubon.org) if you are interested in attending.

Programs. Bill Drenguis, Program Chair announces Jan Gano, who has spear-headed YVAS's Bobolink surveys, will be speaking at our September chapter meeting. Jan presented a well-received banquet program at the recent Washington Ornithological Conference in June in Yakima.

Vaux's Swifts. An exciting project underway where YVAS volunteers Teresa Lorenz, Philip Fischer, and Kevin Lucas, teamed with Audubon Vaux's Happening Coordinator Larry Schwitters (who presented our August program) to put radio transmitters on six Vaux's Swifts they captured September 6, at the Johnson Auto Glass chimney. Radio buffs have been listening for these birds to the south of Yakima. As this newsletter goes to press, there is breaking news that two of these radio-outfitted Vaux's Swift were detected in Roseburg, Oregon! Stay tuned to further news on this exciting project.

By-law changes proposed. Please read the article by our proficient secretary, Vera Backstrom, on page 3.

PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGES

Periodically we find it time to amend our Bylaws to meet our chapter's changing needs.

Currently we are submitting the following changes for your consideration. The floor will be open for discussion at our October general meeting, and the members present will vote on these proposed changes by show of hands.

Article IV: Board of Directors, Section 1, to be amended from "not more than three (3) Directors" to "**not more than five (5) Directors.**"

Article IV: Board of Directors, Section 2, to be amended from "Meetings of the Board shall be held in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October and November" to "**Meetings of the Board shall be held in January, February, March, April, May, June, September, October, and November and once during the summer (July/August).**"

Article IV: Board of Directors, Section 3, to be amended from "Eight members of the Board shall constitute a quorum at any meeting or for phone voting" to "**Six members shall constitute a quorum at any meeting or for phone voting.**"

Article V: Officers, Section 8, to be amended from "All checks and drafts of the Society may be signed by the Treasurer, the President, or Vice-President" to "**All checks and drafts of the Society may be signed by the Treasurer, the Secretary, the President, or the Vice-President.**"

Article VI: Committees. Add a Standing Committee Called "**Environment Science Committee**" whose purpose shall be "**To coordinate science-based projects focusing on birds, their habitats, and bird conservation.**"

Please talk with any board member if you have questions on these items.

- Vera Backstrom -

ELECTIONS

This year, an even-numbered year, it's time to elect our chapter's President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. Vera Backstrom, current secretary, is a candidate for re-election. Karen Zook, current treasurer, assumed her post midway through the

last election cycle and is a candidate for election. However, we have no current candidates for President-Elect. Further nominations will be taken at the October general meeting, and elections will be held by show of hands.



The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum, located at 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA. Guests are welcome at these meetings. The Annual Meeting of the Society is held the first Thursday of December at 6 pm. The Board of Directors meets each month **except** December at 7 pm at locations announced in the *Calliope Crier*. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.



MEMBERSHIP
DEBIE BROWN

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Yakima: Terry Morrill

Thank you for renewing your Membership!

Seattle: Jon Leland

Selah: Joan Matson

Yakima: Joyce Hernandez, Horst Loechelt,
Betty Peterson, Joe and Karen Zook

Please note that the above membership renewals are for Yakima Valley Audubon membership. Renewals to National Audubon are separate and are not listed here.



THIS MONTH'S YVAS
CALENDAR

Sept 25 Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at **7:00 pm.**

Oct 14 Board Meeting at **Greg and Elizabeth Bohn's** house at 709 N. Naches Ave. Yakima, WA at **7:00 pm.**

Sept 25 Oct 2, Oct 9, Oct 16, Oct 23
Thursday Morning Birdwalk

Sept 27 Bear Creek Mountain Trail

Oct 1 Rimrock/Clear Lake

Oct 4 Grays Harbor County Shorebirds and Pelagic Trip



FIELD TRIPS LUKE SAFFORD



PLEASE CALL THE LEADER BEFORE THE TRIP TO LET HIM/HER KNOW YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GOING.

That way, if plans need to be changed, he/she can call you. Also, if no one calls, the leader will know to cancel the field trip and won't be sitting around at the meeting place all alone! Be sure to wear clothing appropriate for the weather and take lunch, snacks and beverages.

Sept 25, Oct 2, Oct 9, Oct 16, Oct 23 - Thursday Morning Birdwalk – 8:30 a.m. Meet the group at the Poppoff Trail/Jewett Pathway parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd., at the north side of the eastern most roundabout. Join us for leisurely birding and good company! Contact Luke if you have any questions at luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com.

Sept 27, 2014 Bear Creek Mountain Trail – Will this be the year we find the elusive White-tailed Ptarmigan in Yakima County? Join us on this intense hike into the heart of the Cascades. Plan on an all day hike and contact trip leaders Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com or 453-2500) or Luke Safford (luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com or 833-6081) for more information.

Oct 1 - Rimrock/Clear Lake - A mid-week excursion to the gull capital of Yakima County. The past few years these two lakes have produced exciting rarities such as Sabine's Gull and Parasitic Jaeger among the more common California Gulls during the annual fall kokanee run. Join us as we look for unusual grebes, scoters, and gulls, as well as mountain passerines. Contact trip leaders Joe and Karen Zook (gadzooks@charter.net or 225-9494) or Luke Safford (luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com or 833-6081) for trip details.

Oct 3-5 - Grays Harbor County Shorebirds and Pelagic Trip - We will join a Westport Seabirds Pelagic Trip (<http://www.westportseabirds.com>) on Oct. 4. Contact Westport Seabirds as soon as possible to reserve your spot on the boat. After the boat trip and Sunday morning we will scour the top shorebird locations in the Grays Harbor area. Contact Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com or 53-2500) for more information and motel ideas.

Woodpecker Tracking Project

As summer turns to autumn, we continue to learn new and amazing facts about the lives of the young woodpeckers in the Yakima Valley. This project started in summer 2014, when we decided to radio-track 13 young white-headed woodpeckers from the Naches Ranger District, just west of Yakima. With the help of our volunteers we have been tracking these chicks for three months. It has been interesting to see variation in dispersal by different chicks. Some chicks left home within three weeks of fledging and without a backwards glance, moving as far as 20 miles from their homes. Others – some of them siblings of the long-distance dispersers – stayed at home for two months before slowly moving off. We are pleased that no chicks have yet died from predation – a surprise that has added to the challenge of tracking, since it means that we have many chicks to track!

This project is 100% volunteer-based, and could not operate without the help we've received from Yakima Valley Audubon. We would like to give a big thank you to the team of volunteers who have helped. Karen and Joe Zook have shown intrepid tracking abilities, battling the elements (including a torrential thundershower on Cleman Mountain) to search for dispersing woodpeckers from the Wenas to Rimrock Lake. With their help, we've documented the continued dis-

persal of one female chick from Nile Creek. At the age of 21 days she left home to disperse across the mountains to Cliffdell, up to Bald Mountain, and then down to Ellensburg Pass – a movement of over 15 miles in less than 10 days! We are hoping to team up with volunteer trackers in Wenatchee to monitor her progress northward.

Meanwhile, Kevin Lucas has demonstrated his remarkable technical skills fixing up receivers and cables for the trackers. Bob Rutherford with the Yakima Amateur Radio Club has gathered a small army of radio enthusiasts to help tracking both our woodpeckers and Larry Schwitter's Vaux's swifts. Jerred Seveyka from Yakima Valley Community College helped us home-in on one of our missing chicks. We also gratefully acknowledge help from our birding friends on the west-side. Cathy Clark from Pilchuck Audubon has undertaken the task of reviewing photos at nests, and Cathy along with Kelli Young and Dan Reiff assisted with chick tagging.



If you are interested in helping with this project, we need you! You can contact either Philip Fischer (pcfischer@gmail.com; 509-731-0211) or Teresa Lorenz (lore5748@vandals.uidaho.edu; 509-731-5226).

- Teresa Lorenz -



BIRD SIGHTINGS

DENNY GRANSTRAND

Debie Brown lives on Konnowac Pass, which one would have to say is a bona fide migrant trap. That accounts for the 184 species of birds that have been seen in or from her yard. That is the second highest yard list for anyone in Washington State. The leader on that list lived at Point No Point, a famous migrant trap, on the Kitsap peninsula and has 243 species on his yard list. It helped that the house looked out into the Strait of Juan De Fuca and the north Puget Sound, so he was able to get lots of species on his list that don't come anywhere near Konnowac Pass.

The latest addition to Debie's yard list is the third Chestnut-sided Warbler to be seen in Yakima County, which showed up on Sept. 15. Birders flocked to see this incredible rarity after Debie started making calls. It was fun sitting on the deck overhanging the Brown's pond, watching the Chestnut-sided Warbler catching insects in the bushes along the rail fence at the north side of the pond. While we were enjoying glimpses of the warbler, Debie pointed out two Red-necked Phalaropes on the mud at the edge of the pond.

Chestnut-sided Warblers nest in the northern United States east of the Rocky Mountains and across Canada to eastern Alberta. A few of them get confused and migrate southwest and end up in California. Bob Boekeleide, who was a member of Yakima Audubon some years ago, worked on the Farallon Islands off the California coast and said that almost every one of the 36 species of eastern warblers have been seen on the Farallons. It is at migrant traps like the Brown's yard were they are found as they journey south. If birders spent more time in the spring and fall at places like Fort Simcoe and the Moxee Experimental Station, we might discover more rare migrants.

Most of the birders who were at Debie and Ron's to see the warbler when I was there have been friends for many years, which makes sharing a sighting like this one very special. Sitting on the deck, chatting with friends and basking in the glory of everyone getting a new bird on their Yakima County list was a special time. We all thank Debie for sharing it with us.

Nine days earlier, Debie found an American Redstart in the

maple tree by her house. She called everyone that day, too, and that warbler also obliged by staying two days. That was the first American Redstart on my Yakima County list after having chased every one reported in our area in the last ten years. Adding two species to my Yakima County list in nine days in the same yard was swell!

The Vaux's Swift watchers have been busy with swifts showing up at three places—the Triumph Treatment Center, Johnson's Glass and at a chimney at a house near the east end of Scenic Drive that was discovered by Paul Huffman. The swifts have been putting on quite a show with 1643 dropping into the Johnson Glass chimney on Sept. 3 being the highest total.

An enthusiastic group gathered at Johnson's recently and caught some Vaux's Swifts, loaded them with radio transmitters and let them go. Several days later, someone with a radio receiver got a signal from radio-tagged swifts in Eugene and Roseburg, Oregon.

On Sept. 13 Andy Stepniewski and I paddled around Priest Rapids Lake in a canoe and had a great time. The highlight were two flocks of Common Terns in flight and sitting on the water. A flock of 22 was in the middle of the lake catching bugs that were flying low over the water.

We also found all six of the species of grebes to be seen in Washington. Two Clark's Grebes, one a juvenile, were close to the shore on the west side of the lake.

I never appreciated how difficult it is to tell Horned and Eared Grebes apart in the fall. It takes a close study to discern between the two species. Three Red-necked Grebes, also near the west bank, finished off our grebe six-fecta.

There are many signs that fall migration is going in full force. Scott Downes found a Mountain Chickadee in his yard. White-crowned Sparrows and several species of warblers are being seen in the valley. And if you want to get your feet muddy, a trip to Wenas Lake will turn up some interesting shorebirds.



Immature Chestnut-sided Warbler
Borrowed from the Internet



Immature American Redstart
Photo borrowed from the Internet

Young Birders Spread Their Wings!

By Eric Heisey

I began birding at the age of 6, when I was gifted a small bird book by a family friend. I poured over this book and ultimately learned how to read by flipping through the pages, with dreams of one day discovering a Golden-winged Warbler or Pileated Woodpecker. I of course carried on this passion, and at the age of 11, became intensely interested in photography when I got my first camera. Since then, I've gradually worked my way towards being a better photographer, all while learning more about birds. In 2012, I went on a birding trip to Skagit County with Andy Stepniewski (our grand leader here at the Audubon Society), which immersed me in the idea of identification and listing, which differed greatly from my previously casual approach to birds. Since this trip, I like to think that I've greatly improved my knowledge on many aspects of bird life and identification. I've found birding the area right below my house to be especially helpful in fine-tuning my birding skills, having a birding hotspot right in your backyard is a great way to increase your skills through experience. Today, I aim to get out into nature as much as school and sports allow, and have had the great pleasure to bird alongside many older birders as they help me towards my goal of being a field ornithologist.

This summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, attending their annual Young Birders Event. This event selects young birders from all over the world and educates them about careers involving birds, what to do in order to work towards those careers, and most importantly, just about birds in general! Out of almost 100 applicants from several countries, 16 of us were chosen to attend the event. This included two young birders that came all the way from India, and another from Guatemala, as well as people from all across the United States.

The four days that I spent at the Lab of Ornithology was an experience that I'll remember for the rest of my life. Not only was this time extremely educational and insightful, it was extremely fun! It was also amazing to be able to meet so many other people my age, just as intensely interested in birds as I am! Whether passionately arguing over the latest taxonomical updates, or conversing about our favorite birds (which, by the way, none of us could narrow down to less than five species), meeting these other young birders was by far the best part of this trip. All of us have kept in touch, and have become good friends. Undoubtedly, we'll meet again at some point for some huge birding bonanza.

Now, on to what we actually did! Not surprisingly, a large portion of our limited time was spent birding. With our two chaperones being Chris Wood and Jessie Barry (two members of Team Sapsucker, which if you haven't heard of, I invite you to re-



The young birders at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Young Birders Event

search!), we saw our fair share of good birds! My personal highlight bird of the trip was a stunningly gorgeous male Canada Warbler, which seemed bewildered by Chris's spot on imitation of a Barred Owl, eventually coming within about 20 feet of the group, giving all of us fantastic views! Although there were many great birds seen while in the field, one of the most interesting things we did was take audio recordings of birds. We were given the chance to use some of Cornell's Grade-A recording gear, and learned from some of the foremost experts on the subject. I, personally, did not excel at this task, although it was hugely enjoyable! For those interested, a recording I took of a singing Blackburnian Warbler can be found on the Macauley Library website.

At the event, almost all of our remaining time was spent at the lab, from exploring the Lab's massive collection of preserved birds (this might have been the most fun that any of us had, believe it or not; holding dead birds is a lot more fun than it sounds), to listening to lectures given by people like John Fitzpatrick and Tom Schulenburg. Although some of the lectures seemed to drag on and on, all of this was hugely informational and gave almost all of us more of an idea into what we wanted to pursue in our future careers. It was also fascinating to learn about the research projects that some of our speakers had taken part in, things like researching Fairy-Wren call notes and analyzing Whimbrel migration patterns! Guess what I want to do when I'm older?

What I would consider to have been the highlight of the event was the entire day that we spent birding the wonderful paradise of birdlife called Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. If you're ever in central New York, this is THE place for birding. I'd been to Montezuma several times before the event, and every time I've visited, it has sported spectacular birding. In this amazing place, we had the opportunities to view some amazing birds, such as Upland Sandpiper, Least Bittern, Cerulean Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, Stilt Sandpiper, and many, many more! Per usual, having Chris and Jessie as our fearless leaders was a fantastic experience, as they pointed out little known facts about even the most common of birds. Montezuma is always a treat, and was probably my favorite outing of the four-day event.

All in all, this was a fantastic learning experience, and was just plain fun! It has introduced me to the line of work I hope to pursue later on in my life, and has given me the tools I need to achieve it. It really was an incredible experience—I wish I could go back and do it all over again! For those of you who know any young birders, I highly suggest you recommend applying for this to them. 'll never forget it, and I wish all of you could experience it!



**Canada Warbler
Photo By Eric Heisey**

Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Join/renew your annual membership to YVAS to receive ten issues of the *Crier* and all chapter membership benefits.

Yakima Valley Audubon Membership\$ 25

Yakima Valley Audubon Senior (62+)/Student Membership\$ 15

Yakima Valley Audubon Life Membership\$ 500/household

I do not wish to receive any solicitation/communications from NAS check if applicable)

NAME _____ PHONE _____

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Please make your check payable to: **Yakima Valley Audubon Society**

Send the form and your check to: YVAS Membership
P. O. Box 2823
Yakima, WA 98907-2823

*** If you have any questions on membership, please call Joy McKinney at 698-4110**

2014 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

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			Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand (<i>dgranstrand@gmail.com</i>)	453-2500
			YVAS Email	(<i>birds@yakimaaudubon.org</i>)	

SPECIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT FOR SEPTEMBER

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER

LAST SEEN AT RON AND DEBIE
BROWNS' HOUSE

VAUX' S SWIFT

LAST SEEN EITHER AT JOHNSON'S AUTO GLASS OR
YAKIMA HERALD REPUBLIC

PEREGRINE FALCON

LAST SEEN AT THE LARSON BUILDING

Coming Attractions:

Sept 25, Oct 2, 9, 16, 23 - Thursday Morning Birdwalk

Sept 27, 2014 Bear Creek Mountain Trail

Oct 1 - Rimrock/Clear Lake

Oct 4 - Grays Harbor County Shorebirds and Pelagic Trip

Sept 25 - Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm.