



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 44, Number 01

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

January 2015



JANUARY PROGRAM BILL DRENGUIS

Wild Horses—Hooves and Habitat A Yakama Nation Dilemma With Jim Stephenson



According to the Yakama Nation Wildlife webpage, their oral history “tells of the cultural and traditional value this prized animal has among the Yakama people.”

How many "wild" horses are there?
What is their impact on the land?
How much does it cost to manage

them?

Yakima Audubon is pleased to bring Jim Stephenson back. Jim is a large animal biologist who has worked with the Yakama Nation and was on the advisory board for the Bureau of Land Management. Last May he gave YVAS a program about the reintroduction of pronghorns to the Yakama Reservation.

Jim will be discussing the impact of feral horses. The magnitude of this issue escapes most. From habitat disturbance to the disruption of other species including birds, achieving a balance is a challenge. Please join us for what will be an educational, thought-provoking presentation.

**Mark your calendar for Thursday, January 22,
at 7:00 pm to see this presentation at the
Yakima Area Arboretum**



THIS MONTH'S YVAS CALENDAR

- Jan 22** Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm.
- Feb 10** Board Meeting at Vera Backstrom's house (9770 US Highway 12) at 7:00 pm.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN ANDY STEPNIIEWSKI

The Christmas Banquet was well attended and enjoyed by all! Following our yummy dinner, we were treated to a wonderful tour to Costa Rica by George Vlahakis. George shared gorgeous images of not only the many colorful and exotic birds, but also the landscape, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and even some of the stunning insects. After our incredible vicarious tour to Costa Rica, I'm certain this country will be on the "bucket list" for of many more of us. It sure is for Ellen and me! Not only were dinner and the program a success, but we had a very successful Silent Auction raising over \$1500. A heartfelt "Thank You" to all who donated!

Read in this Crier details on the Toppenish Christmas Bird Count held December 20 and organized by Luke Safford. Rain was in the forecast but thankfully it held off for most of the day. Twenty-two observers canvassed the Toppenish area finding a respectable 79 species, about the average for this count over its 32-year run. Once again, "Thank You" Luke for organizing and compiling this count. And, again, our best wishes for you and your family in Tucson.

Also in this Crier read about the January 3 Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count, organized by Denny Granstrand. A near-record 94 species were observed including two species never before tallied on this count!

By the time you read this article, the Field Trip Committee will have met and roughed in a schedule for 2015. I look forward to another season of popular trips to many of the local areas we cherish and perhaps a few to far-flung corners of the Pacific Northwest.

President's Column (continued on page 2)

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

President's Column (continued on page 2)

In March, those participating in the "Sagebrush Songbirds," a project co-sponsored by the Washington Audubon and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will be heading to Wenatchee for training. This will be Year 2 of this project that focuses on censusing key species in the beleaguered shrub-steppe ecosystem. Our chapter received a grant of \$650 from WA Audubon to purchase GPS units to assist in these surveys.

Speaking of contributions, our chapter received \$1000 from National Audubon, about the usual amount we receive from our parent organization annually.

The Education Committee, chaired by Ellen Stepniewski, will be meeting soon to organize their events for the first part of 2015. We look forward to hearing of their plans to inspire and educate folks in our region in "The World of Birds."



MEMBERSHIP
JOY MCKINNEY

Welcome New YVAS Members!**Yakima:** Chandra Anderson**Yakima/Talkeetna AK:** Kevin FitzGerald**Thank you for renewing your YVAS Membership!****Naches:** Thomas Thrush**Richland:** Connie Estep**Seattle:** Martha Taylor**Selah:** Helen and Norb John

Yakima: Grace Anderson, Robert Bisschoff, Rosemary Jones, Terry Shelton, Diana Bailey and Stan Belsher, Vera Backstrom and Dotty Armstrong, G. Ann Duncan, Eileen Gavin, Denny Granstrand, Pam and John Henderson, Kathy Hennessy, Larry Hook, Stan and Lori Isley, Ken Meier, John and Elaine Pigion, Tom Elliott and Katrina Strathmann, Ellen and Andy Stepniewski

Youth Environmental Summit

In November The Yakima County Solid Waste Division presented the 4th Annual Youth Environmental Summit (Y.E.S.) at the Yakima Convention Center in recognition of America Recycles Day. This year the Summit empowered over 700 middle, junior and senior high students and school staff to be environmental advocates in their schools, homes and communities.

The Youth Environmental Summit featured two guest speakers. Author Beth Terry told her story of living her life without plastics, and has dedicated her life to researching plastic-free alternatives for everyday items. Dr. Marcus Eriksen is Executive Director

and Co-Founder of The 5Gyres Institute, www.5gyres.org, an organization who conducts research about the global impact of plastic pollution in the world's oceans. Gyres are circular ocean currents that draw trash and debris consisting mostly of plastic which breaks into smaller and smaller pieces that cre-



Ellen Stepniewski talks about plastics to students.

ated a "garbage patch" in the ocean. There are now five of these garbage patches in the world's oceans. Dr. Eriksen sailed from Los Angeles to Hawaii on a craft made from 15,000 plastic bottles to call attention to plastics in our oceans.

The event also featured exhibits from 21 local environmental organizations including the Yakima Valley Audubon Society. Our exhibit covered plastic related risk to birds – with a display board showing fishing line and twine entanglements encountered by Osprey, and another display showing the hazards encountered by seabirds from ingesting plastic. The exhibit was well received by the students, and our Audubon

Volunteers enjoyed our interactions with the students. Thanks to our Audubon Volunteers, Ellen Stepniewski, April Adamson, Susan Paoella, and Dan Kinney.

— Dan Kinney —

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.

A Promising Step Toward Improving Power Grid

This article by the Yakima Herald Republic editorial board appeared in the January 7, 2015 edition.

In a classic case of what was old is new again, officials seem to have plugged into a northerly route for a much-needed Pacific Power transmission line that would serve the Yakima Valley. If so, that is good news for a proposal that has been around since 2008 and has been too long in coming to fruition.

The federal Bureau of Land Management announced last week that it will consider a route across the Yakima Training Center for the 230-kilovolt transmission line, which would connect Pacific Power's Pomona Heights substation east of Selah to the Bonneville Power Administration's substation in Vantage. It would be the first new transmission line to serve the Yakima Valley since the mid-1970s.

That route may sound familiar. Call it Plan A; it was proposed more than six years ago, but it ran into opposition from the Army and raised concerns about its impact on sage grouse habitat. Then came Plan B, which would take the route south through Grant County, then follow a course along mostly private land east of Moxee.

Plan B also had issues related to its impact on private landowners and agricultural interests. Meanwhile, the Western Electricity Coordinating Council changed some of its standards, a development that would allow construction on a reduced footprint through the training center. So Plan A is back in the picture.

The training center route still has its challenges; while the route is shorter, it also traverses very hilly terrain and still would pass through sage grouse habitat - parts of the transmission line may have to go underground to allay those environmental concerns. Both plans will be the topic of a public hearing from 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 29 in the Selah Civic Center.

As noted above, the Valley is operating on a mid-'70s era transmission line. Obviously, the need for power has only increased in the past 40 years; population has grown, an increasingly wired world places new demands on power facilities, and the proliferation of wind and solar power generating facilities in Central Washington puts a heavier load on the existing grid.

People tend not to appreciate the ease and convenience of our power-supply system until something disrupts it - a wind-storm, for example - and our lights go out and computer/cell phone batteries run low. The new line's increased carrying capacity will assure that the lights stay on and the batteries remain charged in the Yakima Valley. The BLM's move is one hopeful sign that a necessary infrastructure enhancement will come to pass.

Plans for the project may be viewed at www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans/vph230



FIELD TRIPS SCOTT DOWNES

- Jan 22, 29, Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 - Thursday Morning Bird Walk** - Weather permitting! Meet the group at the new Poppoff Trail/Jewett Pathway parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd., at the north side of the easternmost round about at **8:30 am**. These walks now include a sparrow feeding area and a fourth pond with diving ducks. Contact Karen if you have questions – gadzooks7@charter.net
- Jan 31 McNary NWR and Tri-Cities** - The first field trip of the year will be to the McNary Wildlife Refuge near the Tri Cities. (Why are they called the Tri Cities? Because they try to be cities!) The goal is to search for waterfowl. Are you crazy? It is going to be freezing and there are no birds now! Actually there are often large flocks of ducks at this time of year. And unlike the other birds around, many are already in their brilliant breeding plumage, making them easier to identify. So dress warm, and bring your scopes and books. Oh yeah, bring lunch and beverages. We will be stopping at several spots with toilet facilities. We are going to leave the BiMart parking lot (on 40th) at 8am on Saturday the 31st. (The day before the Super Bowl). Carpooling is encouraged. The goal is to be back by 4:30. Of course if you need to leave early, it's no problem. Although the leader believes there is only one species of gull, we may stop to look for these. Some people claim that it is a great spot to see them. For more information, contact trip leader Bill Drenguis (bdrenguis@gmail.com)
- Feb 13-16 Great Backyard Bird Count** - On Your Own. For details see www.birdsource.org/gbbc.
- Feb 14 Yakima Area Arboretum** – Meet leader Richard Repp at the gravel parking area north of the main building at 8:30 am. A tour of the grounds including the feeding area at the bird blind and perhaps a quick scan of Buchanan Lake. A low key intro to basic sparrow identification and a primer on GBBC participation. For details, contact Richard –rich712@aol.com
- Feb 22 Raptors and more!** A trip through the Yakima River Canyon to the Kittitas Valley where calving season at tracts dozens of eagles. More details in the Feb Crier. Save the date. Contact is Scott Downes at downes@charter.net

Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count 2014 finds 77 species

On December 20th 22 birders left the Branding Iron Restaurant with the goal of counting every single bird in the 15 mile diameter circle known as the Toppenish Christmas Bird Count area. Hopes were high for beginning and experienced birders alike; there are few other birding experiences that combine scientific research, camaraderie, and unabashed ‘ticking’ together quite like the Christmas Bird Counts.

We ended up with a total of 14,428 individual birds counted, which is a significantly lower number than our average (20,435) for this yearly count. Our total of 79 species is in line with our average over the past 32 years but relatively low compared to more recent years. The mild weather and large amounts of open water may have contributed to the decreased species and individual counts this year. We did have higher waterfowl numbers than last year but missed on Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser. The miss on Bufflehead was interesting because we had an all-time high of 25 last year. This year we had high counts of Bald Eagles (10), Eurasian Collared Dove (378), and Savannah Sparrow (68). For four consecutive years we have

increased our count of Eurasian Collared Doves, proving their continued expansion throughout the Yakima Valley. The most notable species seen was a Northern Pygmy Owl discovered on the upper Dry Creek route by Stan and Lori Isley and Ryan Munes. This was only the second sighting of this small owl on the Toppenish CBC, the first being in 1990. Another great sighting was a Northern Goshawk seen by two different teams south of Wapato.



Northern Pygmy-Owl
Photo by Denny Granstrand

I want to give a big thank you to Andy and Ellen Stepniewski for opening up their house for the post-count recap and dinner. Andy began this CBC in 1983 and we thank him for his continued involvement and expertise. 2015 will mark the 33rd year of counting within the Toppenish circle and we hope to see you participating with us this December. I encourage you to go to <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count> to learn more about the value of conducting Christmas Bird Counts.

— Luke Safford —

2014 Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count tallies 94 species

The birders on the 2014 Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count, which was done on Jan. 3, 2015, accomplished something that seems quite difficult for a count in its 45th year—we saw two species that have never been seen on a Yakima Valley count before! A Mountain Bluebird, which is common in Yakima County in breeding season but rare in winter, was seen in the grassland north of the Terrace Heights Cemetery, and a Lesser Goldfinch, a much rarer species in Yakima County, was seen at Scott Downes’s feeder, which it had been visiting for a week or so.

The two new species brings the all-time total species count to 151 for the Yakima Valley CBC.

We had 27 participants who spent a chilly but dry day scouring their routes trying to find every bird out there. This is about the average number of participants for the last ten years.

Stan and Lori Isley deserve the “CBC Heroes” award for their effort this year. Car trouble stranded them on Vashon Island the day before the count. They rode to Yakima with a friend, then rushed out to their route midway through the afternoon, a Bureau of Reclamation property south of Hwy 24 and east of the Yakima River. They were able to spend several hours hurrying through the property, walking the entire distance. And they found some great birds, including an American Tree Sparrow, a rare species in

our area.

A Greater Yellowlegs and two Spotted Sandpipers were seen along the Yakima River, the first found on the count since 2004 and 2006, respectively.

The Tahoma Cemetery seems to be a hotspot for sapsuckers. This year a Red-naped Sapsucker was seen in spruce trees along the east entry road. A Red-breasted Sapsucker was seen at the Garretson Mansion on Naches Heights, the second time that species has been seen there.



Female Lesser Goldfinch
Photo taken through a window
by Sierra Downes

Count-week birds (seen three days before or after the count but not on count day) were also a highlight. A Say’s Phoebe was found north of the Terrace Heights Cemetery, making that species first appearance on our CBC list. Savannah Sparrows were found the day after the count, the third time in the last five years they have been a count week bird. The only time one was seen on the count was in 1979!

Bewick’s Wrens found on the Yakima Valley CBC are an interesting study. For the first 11 years of the count (1970-1980), they were seen every year. For the next 14 years (1981-1994), they were seen only twice, with 2 one year and 1 the other. For the last 20 years, they have been seen every year in generally increasing numbers.

— Denny Granstrand —

The Data — The Christmas Bird Counts Species by Species

	<u>Yakima</u>	<u>Topp</u>		<u>Yakima</u>	<u>Topp</u>
ACKLING GOOSE	5	4	STELLER'S JAY	4	
CANADA GOOSE	1291	1812	WESTERN SCRUB-JAY	21	
TUNDRA SWAN		71	BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE	465	154
WOOD DUCK	73	1	AMERICAN CROW	136	32
GADWALL	25	3	COMMON RAVEN	62	50
AMERICAN WIGEON	86	21	HORNED LARK	8	193
MALLARD	1402	1336	BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	103	32
NORTHERN SHOVELER	25	13	MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE	4	
NORTHERN PINTAIL	2	179	RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	16	
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	29	142	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	CW	CW
RING-NECKED DUCK	38	4	BROWN CREEPER	CW	CW
LESSER SCAUP	3	1	ROCK WREN	1	4
COMMON GOLDENEYE	52		CANYON WREN		9
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE	3		BEWICK'S WREN	59	53
BUFFLEHEAD	49		PACIFIC WREN	10	1
HOODED MERGANSER	91		MARSH WREN	6	5
COMMON MERGANSER	125		GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	26	6
DUCK, SPECIES		529	RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	30	28
CALIFORNIA QUAIL	555	221	MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD	1N	
RING-NECKED PHEASANT	4	10	TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE	3	
PIED-BILLED GREBE	9	30	HERMIT THRUSH	15	2
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	2		AMERICAN ROBIN	2268	684
GREAT BLUE HERON	35	33	VARIED THRUSH	42	3
GREAT EGRET	3		EUROPEAN STARLING	3720	1761
BALD EAGLE	17	10H	BOHEMIAN WAXWING	1	
NORTHERN HARRIER	16	80	CEDAR WAXWING	332	200
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	14	4	ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER	3H	
COOPER'S HAWK	19	9	YEL.-RU. (MYRTLE) WARBLER	14	
NORTHERN GOSHAWK		2	YEL.-RU. (AUDUBON'S) WARBLER	48	32
ACCIPITER, SPECIES		1	SPOTTED TOWHEE	76	23
RED-TAILED HAWK	129	184	AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	1	
HARLAN'S RED-TAILED HAWK	1		SAVANNAH SPARROW	CW	68
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK		5	FOX SPARROW	10	
GOLDEN EAGLE	2	1	SONG SPARROW	225	111
AMERICAN KESTREL	84	142	LINCOLN'S SPARROW	2	1
MERLIN	7	3	SWAMP SPARROW	CW	
PEREGRINE FALCON		1	WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	CW	
PRAIRIE FALCON	2	2	HARRIS'S SPARROW	1	
VIRGINIA RAIL	4	3	WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	679	1135
AMERICAN COOT	20	18	GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW	87	37
KILLDEER	4	5	DARK-EYED (SLATE-COLORED) JUNCO	1	
SPOTTED SANDPIPER	2		DARK-EYED (OREGON) JUNCO	949	551
GREATER YELLOWLEGS	1		RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	422	1162
WILSON'S SNIPE	4	3	WESTERN MEADOWLARK		13
ROCK PIGEON	539	593	BREWER'S BLACKBIRD	109	425
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE	712H	378H	BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	5	1
MOURNING DOVE	263	171	PINE GROSBEAK	CW	
BARN OWL	2	2	PURPLE FINCH	9	26
WESTERN SCREECH-OWL	1		HOUSE FINCH	1306	687
GREAT HORNED OWL	12	7	PINE SISKIN	26	1
NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL		1	LESSER GOLDFINCH	1N	
NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL		1	AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	274	344
ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD	8H		HOUSE SPARROW	1001	372
BELTED KINGFISHER	25	18	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	18653	14428
RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER	1		TOTAL SPECIES	94	77
RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER	1			+2 FORMS	0 FORMS
DOWNY WOODPECKER	47	16	COUNT WEEK SPECIES	7	
NO. (RED-SHAFTED) FLICKER	219	176	TOTAL SPECIES SEEN ON BOTH COUNTS		102
NO. (YELLOW-SHAFTED) FLICKER	1				
SAY'S PHOEBE	CW				
NORTHERN SHRIKE	1	4			

N — New species or subspecies for the count

H — All-time high for individuals of that species

Luke's Last Poppoff Walk



A group of eight with Luke.
Photo by Karen Zook

Eight of us joined Luke Safford for his last Bird Walk on the Poppoff Trail on December 18. We started with donuts and the presentation of a Rabbit Remembrance (a little Poppoff walk humor), then we enjoyed birding together. Luke and his family moved to Tucson after Christmas. We are thankful for his leadership and camaraderie for the last few years, and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Jean Bradley Chott April 1, 1927 - December 9, 2014

I first became aware of Jean Chott when I assumed the task of coordinating monitors for the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail. My predecessor mentioned that Jean would likely contact me to volunteer her "team" for a week.

Having never met Jean, I queried about how I would recognize her. I don't recall the exact description given me, but I equated it with regal and sophisticated. Upon first contact, I was reminded of the aura of celebrities of the recent past . . . Grace Kelly, Cary Grant, Princess Diana and, more contemporary, Kate Middleton. All seemingly flawless and above reproach.

However, when one did talk to Jean, her eyes, smile and demeanor immediately put you at ease. She listened intently, valuing your words and giving the impression that you were enriching her. Charisma.

Jean wrote, "I want to be remembered as one who loved the snowy mountains and the hills in the spring when the snows go off and the wildflowers come." So it will be. I will see Jean in the fresh pedals of the Grass Widow and Buttercup, in the bright plumage of returning bluebirds.

I envision Jean hiking, akin to a panther...sleek, poised, and confident, with long smooth strides.

— Richard Repp —



Yakima Valley Audubon Society Volunteers in 2014

Thank You All! *You Make it Happen!*

April Adamson
Liz Angland
Dotty Armstrong
Vera Backstrom
Crookson Beecher
Mary Belzer
Marissa & Jim Benavente-Flynn
Elizabeth Bohn
Greg Bohn
Hannah & Nancy Born
Dorothy Brink
Ron & Debie Brown
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Bill Drenguis
Scott Downes
Martha Fleming
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Michele Gilbert
Denny Granstrand and Chris Reid
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Linda Knutson and Ron Sell
Jeff Kozma
Teresa Lorenz
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Richard Repp
Mike Roper
Luke Safford
Courtney, Doug & Brooke Schurman
Gilbert Smith
Andy and Ellen Stepniewski
Pat Stebling
Ellen Stevenson & Family
Linda Summer
Ken Tolonen
George and Susan Vlahakis
Kerry Turley
Joe & Karen Zook

Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Renew my annual membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society to receive 10 issues of the Calliope Crier and all chapter benefits. National Audubon membership and Audubon Magazine are not included.

Yakima Valley Audubon Membership\$ 25.00 per household
 Yakima Valley Audubon Senior (62+) OR Student Membership\$ 15.00 per household
 (please circle which apply)
 Yakima Valley Audubon Society Life Membership\$ 500.00 per household

I do not want to receive any solicitations or communications from NAS (please check if applicable)

I prefer to read the Crier online and not receive my copy by mail (please check if applicable)

Please make any corrections to your contact information as needed.

NAME _____ PHONE _____
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 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 Email address _____

Please return this form and your check payable to: **YVAS.**

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

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

2015 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

President	Andy Stepniewski	877-6639	Membership	Joy McKinney	698-4110
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	Denny Granstrand	453-2500	Bird Reports	Denny Granstrand	453-2500
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	<i>(lore5748@vandals.uidaho.edu)</i>		Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand	453-2500
Field Trips	Scott Downes	469-7807		<i>(dgranstrand@gmail.com)</i>	
	<i>(downess@charter.net)</i>		YVAS Email	<i>(birds@yakimaaudubon.org)</i>	

Harrier by day, Short-eared Owl by night.



Coming Attractions:

Chapter Meeting - Jan 22

Thursday Morning Birdwalks -

Jan 22, 29, Feb 5, 12, 19, 26

McNary NWR and Tri-Cities - Jan 31

GBBC - Feb 13-16

Yakima Area Arboretum - Feb 14

Raptors and More - Feb. 22