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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

April 2015



Come join David and Margie Van Cleve on a safari to Tanzania with pictures from Tarangire, Serengeti, Ruaha and hippopotamus, cape buffalo, greater kudu, topi, Thompson Ngorongoro Crater during Tanzania's 2014 dry season. We gazelle, impala, dik-dik, lion, cheetah, giraffe, and leopard. had wonderful encounters with many of the charismatic large Birds include ruaha red billed hornbill, gray crowned crane, creatures including rhinoceros, elephants, cheetah and lions. superb starling, white backed vulture, martial eagle, brown Birding was excellent with eagles, cranes, ibis, hornbills, snake eagle, secretary bird, egyptian geese (which are neither secretary birds, rollers and many others. The best part of the egyptian nor geese), white bellied go-away bird, lilac encounter was a walking safari with elephants in Ruaha Na- breasted roller, african spoonbill, glossy ibis, sacred ibis, tional Park. Learn about some of the conservation issues in hadada ibis, saddle billed stork and kori bustard. this part of Africa.

Mammals we saw include elephant, black rhinoceros,

Mark your calendar for Thursday, April 23, at 7:00 pm to see this presentation at the Yakima Area Arboretum



YVAS performed point counts on both the LT Murray and effort both Washington Audubon and WDFW is investing in the project to include the shrub-steppe ecosystem across the and presence/absence data on the shrub-steppe obligate songspecies such as the Sagebrush and Brewer's Sparrows, and WDFW and WA Audubon are seeking data on the entire Cothe shrub-steppe ecosystem.

Professor at Wenatchee Valley College. Organized by Christi of these sites can be accessed only by crossing private land. Norman, Project Director for Audubon Washington, the At this time, we are instructed not to contact landowners for meeting represented a diverse group from not only Yakima permission for entry to "land-locked" public lands. Valley Audubon, North Central Washington, and Seattle

This is the second year of the "Sagebrush Songbirds, a Audubon Societies. Matt and Dan gave tutorials on shrubjoint Washington Audubon and Washington Department of steppe species of special interest and mapping before we Fish and Wildlife project to gather information on key song- headed out to Saddle Rocks Natural Area to receive training birds of the threatened shrub-steppe ecosystem. In 2014, in GIS technology. I was impressed by the magnitude of the Oak Creek Wildlife Areas. This year, WDFW has expanded this project which will should yield important information entire Columbia Plateau. This effort focuses on key songbird birds and aid in the management of these species. Because Sage Thrasher. These species have greatly declined because lumbia Basin, we folks out here in the trenches are finding it of loss of 60% of the Columbia Basin and degradation a supreme challenge to find accessible sites to census from (fragmentation, grazing, and invasion by weedy species) of all their randomized "dots on the map." Though an admirable "Citizen Science" project, the scope and effort required to On March 21, Ellen and I, and Jenny Howland travelled compile meaningful and accurate data is proving challenging. to Wenatchee to spend the day getting training from Matt We are now "ground truthing" for access and suitability the Vanderhagen, WDFW biologist and Dan Stephens, Biology points on public lands selected by WDFW. It turns out many

President's Column (continued on page 2)

President's Column (continued from page 1)

Saturday March 28, YVS hosted a "Waterbirds around Please consider volunteering to help staff the refuge on Sun-Yakima" class at the Yakima Area Arboretum. With 20 days. Contact Kerry: kdturley@embargmail.com. 837-6930. "students," we began with a class session by presenters Jeff Kozma, Denny Granstrand, and Andy Stepniewski, who fo- Repp, had its box cleanout day on April 4. Nine YVAS membirds, grebes, loons, gulls, and terns were also dealt with to an early start, as the bluebirds returned early this year. briefly. Then, we headed out to Toppenish NWR to view this imposing bird, they brought their spouse out the next day recap of this event in a future Crier. to show off the owl! Our thanks to the presenters and Ellen with the class.

Visitors have been increasing steadily and all come away their most stunning plumage and many bursting with song. pleased with their close views of the nesting Great Horned Make plans to attend some of these fieldtrips! Owls (fuzzy babies were peeking out the nest on March 28!) and the waterbird extravaganza. Kerry welcomes your help! 23. The program: Tanzania Safari with David and Margie You certainly don't need to be an expert birder to help. Van Cleve.

The Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail, chaired by Richard cused on waterfowl, especially swans, geese, and ducks. bers patrolled the entire trail of 132 boxes and all are in good Other waterbirds such as pelicans, cormorants, herons, shore- shape for the upcoming nesting season, which should get off

On April 11, YVAS participated in the Yakima Area Arwaterbirds. Waterfowl were the stars of the show, as ex- boretum's Arborfest, attended by upwards of 2000 kids from pected. Other waterbirds class attendees were able to view south-central Washington. This is an event to foster environincluded a grebe (Pied-billed), herons (both Great Blue and mental awareness among the valley's grade school-age kids. American Bittern), and shorebirds (Killdeer, Black-necked The theme this year was the "Giving Tree." Birds, of course, Stilt, Dunlin, and Wilson's Snipe). Of course we took time to are hugely dependent on trees for food, nesting sites, and get intimate looks at the nesting Great Horned Owls at the shelter. Kids made buttons of their favorite birds to help keep visitor center. Some students were so impressed and awed by them remember our feathered neighbors. Stay tuned for a

Scott Downes, Field Trip chair, reports a "full" program Stepniewski, Education Chair and Karen Zook, who assisted of field trips is on the schedule for late April and May in addition to the weekly Poppoff Walks led by Karen Zook. The Sunday Open House at Toppenish National Wildlife Ref- end of April through May boasts the highest species diversity uge continues 10-2 pm. Kerry Turley, YVAS "Refuge in south-central Washington. If you have time for only a few Keeper," began the pilot program in mid-February aimed at birding trips, this is the time to do it. The birding scene is increasing public access to the refuge on Sundays this spring. enlivened with lots of colorful Neotropical migrants, all in

Remember the YVAS chapter meeting on Thursday, April



Welcome New YVAS Members! Goldendale: Mary-Lane Baker

Thank you for renewing your YVAS Membership! **Ellensburg:** Bruce Fairbanks Grandview: Bill Sable Naches: David Churchill Seattle: Martha Fleming Selah: Lynne Alvord Sunnyside: Donna Homer, Kerry Turley Yakima: Bill Jacobs, Kelly Kindlespire, Kim Cody, Rebecca Buell Zillah: Bill Hudson

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



April 23 Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm.

May 12 Board Meeting at Teresa Lorenz's house (22620 US Highway 12) at 7:00 pm.

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.

Why did the chicken cross the street, er ... Ocean? In Hawaii, its complicated



Red Jungle Fowl prepares to cross road

In an April 7 article in Conservation Magazine below, Sarah DeWeerdt examines the origin of chickens (or eggs?) in the land of grass skirts. It seems a bit scrambled.

Chickens roam the Hawaiian island of Kauai, and people disagree about where these birds came from. Sure, this sounds like just another tongue-in-cheek joke about the origin and movements of the world's most common bird, but it's a question with real conservation import.

Some people say the birds are escaped domestic chickens and view them as invasive pests to be eradicated. Others believe they descend from red junglefowl, the domestic chicken's wild ancestor, brought by Polynesian settlers to the islands over 800 years ago. They see the free-ranging chickens as part of the island's Polynesian heritage to be preserved.

In a study published last month in *Molecular Ecology*, researchers turned to DNA to illuminate the debate. They analyzed genetic material of 23 chickens from eight different areas of the island, and made notes on plumage, leg color, and vocalizations of 21 additional birds.

fowl, with striking red, black, and green plumage. A few are Asia. speckled with white and reddish-brown, the colors characterplumage sound roughly like domestic chickens.

birds' mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited only from the mother, reveals that two different lineages of chickens are belong to a tribe called haplogroup E, similar to Europeanderived domestic chickens. Only 3 belong to haplogroup D, allied with red junglefowl from Asia and similar to specimens ral. from archaeological sites dating prior to European contact.

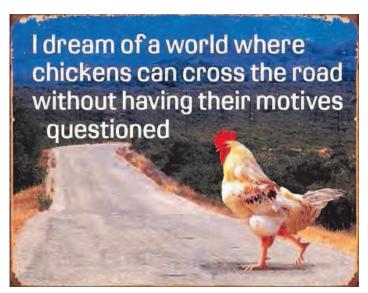
ancient Polynesian mitochondrial lineage is rare, but wild red able as, well, chicken versus egg. junglefowl plumage is common, meaning that some birds with the wild appearance actually represent a domestic mater-

nal line. That's surprising, the researchers say, because usually hybrids of red junglefowl and domestic chickens look more like the domestic birds.

Legally speaking, Kauai's free-ranging chickens have a complex, contradictory status: state law protects the birds in natural areas, but those in developed areas are considered pests. Yet analysis of a large number of markers across the genome shows that all the birds are part of a single, continuous population.

This population has lots of genetic diversity, with genes of both domestic and wild origin, and probably resulted from interbreeding of escaped domestic chickens with wild red junglefowl. In other words, the birds on Kauai are like Schrödinger's chickens, simultaneously wild and invasive.

Red junglefowl and domestic chickens are members of the same species, Gallus gallus. Domestic chickens are the most numerous birds on the planet, but wild red junglefowl are



Most of the birds on the island look like wild red jungle- considered threatened across much of their native range in

Interbreeding with escaped domestic birds is thought to be istic of most domestic breeds. These plumage patterns tend to a major threat to red junglefowl. The new study both confirms match the birds' calls: those kitted out like red junglefowl also that this is a problem and offers a possible solution. Because crow like the wild birds, while birds with more chicken-like they bear ancient DNA, the researchers say, Kauai's feral birds represent genetic reservoirs that could aid conservation But genetics tells a more complex story. Analysis of the of wild red junglefowl. These genes might also help improve domestic breeds.

Studying Kauai's chickens could help illuminate broader present on the island. The researchers identified 20 birds that issues in ecology as well, such as what determines how and why invasive species become established in a new area, and what happens genetically when a domestic species goes fe-

But as to whether Kauai's free-ranging chickens should be You can't judge a chicken by its feathers, it seems. The conserved or eradicated, that question remains as unanswer-

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- April 23, 30, May 7, 14, 28- Thursday Morning Bird Walk (Note the May 21 walk will start at 5:00 AM, see description below) 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 roundabout at 8:30 am. Tour Yakima's birdiest close in venue with folks that know it best! If you have questions, contact the Zooks at gadzooks7@charter.net.
- April 27 (Monday)- Snow Mountain Ranch. Please note that this is a Monday. Join Joe and Karen Zook for a hike around this parcel of land west of Yakima, which is preserved by the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy. We will be looking at all birds, but specifically passerine migrants, such as Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, Loggerhead Shrike, flycatchers, sparrows and warblers. Perhaps even an early Oriole? Snow Mountain Ranch is also a great place for Horned Larks. Meet at the trailhead on Cowiche Mill Road at 7:30 AM. Be prepared for 2-3 miles of hiking, and bring sunscreen and insect repellant, as mosquito and tick season will be upon us by then. Trails at Snow Mountain are narrow and somewhat uneven (rocky) but otherwise they are in good shape.
 - Questions? Contact the Zooks at gadzooks7@charter.net.
- May 9 (Saturday)- Migratory Bird Day. Toppenish NWR. May 9 Migratory Bird Day at the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge - Every year the National Wildlife Refuge system celebrates Migratory Bird Day on the second Saturday of May. We are very fortunate to have a refuge just south of Toppenish on Highway 97. YVAS will team with refuge personnel to showcase this unique wildlife habitat with and open house 8 am to 1 pm. This is a fun day with a variety of activities including field trips onto parts of the refuge normally closed to the public. A pleasant part day outing and very family friendly. No charge for a do not miss event. Contact Kerry Turley (837-6930 or email him at: kdturley@embarqmail.
- May 16 (Saturday)- Migration Bird Count. YVAS's annual "Birdathon" will be a county-wide bird count, as we try to tally species from different sectors in the county. Scott Downes will be putting teams together to cover all of the best areas to bird around Yakima including the White Pass, Chinook Pass, Lower Valley, Yakima Training Center, Toppenish and Wenas areas. If you are interested in participating, contact Scott Downes (downess@charter.net).
- May 21 (Thursday)- Dawn Chorus Poppoff Trail Walk. Have you ever noticed that birds like to greet the sunrise by bursting into song? Would you like to experience being surrounded by birds singing to greet the day? Then join us as we replace the usual Poppoff walk with a "dawn chorus walk" on May 21. We will start at dawn, which I suspect will be about 5:00 AM. Meet at the parking area for the Poppoff trail in Union Gap. We will walk the usual Poppoff Walk route. Even if you cannot hear well, it won't stay dawn all morning, and we will be looking at birds as well as listening to them. We will have fun with this unique Poppoff walk experience. If you have questions, please contact the Zooks via email at gadzooks7@charter.net, or call us at 509-225-9494.
- May 22 25 (Friday thru Monday) The annual Memorial Day weekend Wenas Audubon Campout at the Wenas Creek Campground on Audubon Road. This casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. You can drive up for a day or camp. All are welcome. For directions and complete information, visit the Wenas Audubon website (www.wenasaudubon.org).
- May 23 (Saturday) Oak Creek Canyon. Oak Creek Canyon is an under-birded area with lots of potential. A couple of years ago, a Chestnut-sided Warbler and Eastern Phoebe were found there! Regular nesting species include Lewis's Woodpecker, Cassin's Vireo, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak and Lazuli Bunting. We will traverse a variety of habitats, ending in the coniferous forest. If you are interested going on this all-day field trip, contact Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com) for the meeting time and place.
- **May 30 (Saturday)- Cowiche Canyon.** Join Joe and Karen Zook on May 30 for a trip through Cowiche Canyon. This riparian gem is full of birds, with interesting plants and scenic beauty as a bonus. We will be looking for Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting, Bullock's oriole, and Rock and Canyon wrens. There are many other interesting birds to be found there as well. The trail through Cowiche Canyon runs along Cowiche creek for approx. three miles. The trail crosses the creek nine times as it winds its way through the canyon. We will meet at the East trailhead on Cowiche Canyon Road (directions to follow) at 7 AM. We will hike to the Weikel trailhead, then turn around and hike back, for a six mile round trip. The trail is mostly flat with loose gravel in places. Bring snacks, water, and lunch if you would like. You should also have insect repellent, sunscreen and dress for the weather. We should be done by 12:00 or 1:00 PM. **If you have questions, please contact the Zooks via email at gadzooks7@charter.net, or call us at 509-225-9494**. Directions to Cowiche Canyon Road trailhead: From 40th Ave (going North), turn left onto W. Powerhouse Road. If you are going South on 40th, you will turn right onto W. Powerhouse Road, take the 2nd left onto Cowiche Canyon Road, and follow it to the parking area at the end of the road.

Spring Cleanout on the Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail



Female Western Bluebird patiently waits for monitors to finish at Box 39A. Photo by Karen Zook

well as shore up the support of pect on cleanout day.

At Box 98, I found a few

seemingly a possibility, I gazed down at a female Mountain so. Bluebird. That was cool! As I started to lower the lid, it occurred to me that she was sitting chest down so I paused and rolled out the red carpet to welcome the bluebirds! If the took another look. Sure enough, the feathers on her flanks weather cooperates, it could be

The annual spring cleanout of appeared to be pushed outward as if she was on eggs. Just nest boxes was scheduled for Sat- then she decided to exit and there in the nest were five urday, April 4. Having driven the eggs. To find a female incubating a clutch this early really road in late March, I elected to go surprised me. The upper trail historically has featured our up on April 2 to replace one earliest nests as the habitat there favors Mountain Bluebirds busted and one missing box as and they seem to lay earlier than Westerns.

When the group of nine gathered on Saturday morning, it another that was leaning badly. was a bit cool. But the weather got better as the day pro-As two of these were at the start gressed making the task far more enjoyable. Old, well trodof the fourth section, I decided to den chipmunk nests were removed from 19 boxes. Fourteen check and clean a few of the boxes had starts of fresh bluebird nests while another six had boxes to get a feel of what to ex- complete nests, though no more eggs were found making Box 104 unique in that respect.

Joining trail veterans Gus and Mary Pooler, Jan and Judy sprigs in the box...not unexpected Gano, Joe and Karen Zook were Kim Cody and Susie Lattofor early April. Box 99 had a mus. Kim was treated to her first ever view of a bluebird. complete nest...a bit of a surprise Susie on the other hand was among the group of twenty-one but not unprecedented. Box 101 members who put up the first nest boxes on the trail back in also came in at 100%. When I 1982. As she has recently retired, Susie is looking forward to lifted the lid at 104, using caution as finding a bird was helping out on the trail after an absence of twenty years or

Thanks to the efforts of these volunteers, the trail has now

- Richard Repp -

Burrowing Owl is a species in decline in Yakima County, as well as in much of the rest of their range in the Western United States. The past couple of years a pair or two have nested in Black Rock Valley on private property. It was exciting news when one was seen by a west side birder in that area on March 29. Ellen Stepniewski and a friend found another Burrowing Owl just west of Sheep Company Road north of Selah on April 4. There were several pairs of Burrowing Owls that nested along Sheep Company Road in the years before a fire damaged the area about 15 years ago.

Anna's Hummingbirds have be-

come much more numerous in the Yakima area in the past 6- steppe-nesting species to be visiting. 8 years. There have been some that have over-wintered successfully, thanks to people maintaining their hummingbird 32nd Ave. and Summitview in Yakima was still there. It feeders throughout the winter. Scott Downes had several at showed up there on about February 14, so it evidently has his feeders all winter and he saw a male Anna's Humming- found something it likes about the neighborhood. bird displaying on April 6. A female was still visiting the





Common Poorwill in the Wenas Campground Photo by Stephanie Blehm

As of April 9, the Blue Jay that was hanging out near

feeders at that time, an indication that a pair might be nesting in or near his yard. So far, there has been no other evidence of nesting Anna's Hummingbirds in Yakima County.

Tuck Russell heard a Common Poorwill calling near his house on Ahtanum Ridge on April 6. This is a very early record for this species in Washington.

A friend of mine, who lives on 9th Ave. north of Tieton Drive. sent a photo to me on April 13 of a dead Common Poorwill he found in his yard. This is a very unusual location for this shrub

Sunday Opening of Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center a Hit!

It appears that the public likes having access to the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on Sundays. Since to provide wintering habitat for ducks and geese (primarily the middle of February we have had over 60 Sunday visitors mallards), protection and habitat for other wildlife species, to the refuge which Yakima Audubon now staffs with volun- and opportunities to the public for a variety of wildlifeteers from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

The most popular attraction so far has been the great- In 2001 the TNWR was designated an Important Bird and horned owl nest, in a locust tree right next to the center, that Biodiversity Area (IBA), an area recognized as being globhas two fuzzy owlets that are about to outgrow the nest. ally important habitat for the conservation of birds popula-Soon the focus will turn to the many migrating birds that use tions. this great area.

The Toppenish NWR was established on April 27, 1964 oriented recreational activities.

International Migratory Bird Day—May 9

and learning materials.

Come celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at Top- second Saturday in May, is an invitation to celebrate and penish National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on Saturday, May support migratory bird conservation. It was created specifi-9, from 8:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Activities will include bird cally to highlight the migration of nearly 350 species of mibanding, guided bird walks, live raptor program, children's gratory birds between nesting habitats in North America and games, and hay rides. The bird banding demonstration and non-breeding grounds in South and Central America, Mexfirst bird walk begin at 8:00 a.m. Bring your binoculars! The ico, and the Caribbean. However, the day serves as an opporrefuge visitor center will be open with children's activities tunity to celebrate all the species of birds whose annual movements enliven our lands, waters, and skies.

- Kerry Turley -

International Migratory Bird Day, held annually on the

YVAS Hoeger Preserve

signing their distinctive Spring tune.

Army's Yakima Training Center. It is owned by the Yakima down. Valley Audubon Society and is Shrub-Steppe habitat on genble of casting thousands of seeds into the wind when mature dry. Cheat grass is unusually short and is headed out, meanin the Summer.

There has been an ongoing small infestation on the preserve for the past several years. Vigilance in the form of two Board staff has informed us that seeds can lay dormant on ing new Scotch Thistle is a necessary annual task.

In 2014, there were three visits made to the preserve to deal with this thistle. Near the eastern boundary, a serious, but small, patch of new plants were found in mid-April. They were dug out with shovels, thus destroying them. Fortu- this time. nately, the plant expires quite readily when it is severed at

It is spring and trees and shrubs are budding out, leaves the base. It will not sprout from the roots. A check visit in are forming and flowers are beginning to put on a show. At late June revealed a substantial dense patch straddling the the Hoeger Preserve, the hillsides are green and lush. Big south property line. A work party of Richard Repp, Dan Sage and Rabbitbrush are showing new growth. Various Kinney and Jan Gano collected and removed 70 pounds(!) of forbs and native grasses are green and lush. Meadowlarks are mature but unopened seed heads from these plants. Fortunately, they had not yet cast any seed. The location of this The Hoeger Preserve is a 75 acre conservation area east of infestation was positioned to cast seed downwind across the the end of Mieras Road in East Valley adjacent to the U.S. entire preserve. The "headless" plants were then knocked

On April 9 this year Jan Gano and Bill Drenguis visited tly sloping ground. One of our duties as stewards of this land the Preserve and searched the entire property for new Scotch is to be vigilant for the presence of noxious weeds. The only Thistle plants. The news is good. Only a couple dozen new noxious weed we are aware of on the preserve is Scotch plants were found. They were destroyed. The effect of the This is a very large this with oversized notched dry and warm winter and spring is evident. While the grasses and thorny leaves. An adult plant can reach five feet in are green, they are not very tall. The soil is very dry. A hole height and will produce a few dozen large seed heads capa- was dug to about 18 inches depth and the soil was essentially ing it may not get much taller unless significant rain occurs in the next few weeks.

The specific locations of mature plants found last year are to three visits each year to search out and destroy new plants known. These sites are always checked for the possibility seems to be keeping this weed in check. The Noxious Weed that if seed was cast, new plants may be found in the vicinity.

With persistent vigilance, we should be able to eradicate the soil for up to twenty years. Thus, monitoring and destroy- Scotch Thistle from the preserve. Anyone interested in assisting with dealing with this noxious plant, please contact Jan Gano. It is a 2-4 hour endeavor to walk across the property and check for weeds. The next visit will be in mid-May.

Unfortunately, there is no public access to the preserve at

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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				
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(please circle which apply)		-				
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Please return this form and your check payable to: Yakima Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) Send the form and your check to: YVAS Membership, P. O. Box 2823, Yakima, WA 98907						

If you have any membership questions, contact Joy McKinney at joycatbird@gmail.com or 698-4110.

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Sassy Spring Nigrants

Help us find them on the Bird-a-thon

Saturday May 16