



# 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.

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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## AUGUST PROGRAM

**BILL DRENGUIS**

"It takes a thief to catch a thief!" We have all heard that. How about "Start a fire to stop a fire?" Considering our recent Smokey skies, we are very fortunate to have Assistant Fire Management Officer for the Naches Ranger District, Brad Wagner as our speaker for the August meeting

"Prescribed fire is one of the most effective tools we have to manage fuel accumulation in the forest," Brad Wagner states. "Often we can impact the severity and size

of a future wildfire by managing fuel conditions with prescribed fire."

We are all vaguely familiar with this idea, but how does it actually work? How do you choose an area for burning? How is it contained? How long does it take to return to "normal"?

Come join us on August 27th for a very topical talk. Warning: If the fires flair, Brad will be working and we will find a fill in.



Come to the Yakima Area Arboretum on Aug 27, at 7:00 pm to see this program.



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

**ANDY STEPNIEWSKI**



Yakima Audubon has real reason to be excited and proud with the huge progress Teresa Lorenz has made raising awareness on the importance of snags in our forest landscape. Teresa has been spearheading our chapter's efforts to

ramp up attention to the value of snags in our forests and the need to preserve them. As I write this, Audubon Washington is putting the finishing touches on their website drawing attention to the threats that face this critical element of our forests. Here is the beginning paragraph: "Yakima Valley Audubon Society is working to stop the culling of forest snags in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest of Eastern Washington. The Okanogan Wenatchee manages nearly 1.5 million acres and some of the most beautiful pine forests of the east-

ern Cascade Range. This forest is home to five at-risk woodpecker species in Washington State, including the Black-backed Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Lewis' Woodpecker, and American Three-toed Woodpecker. Other cavity-nesting birds threatened by snag-habitat loss include the Flammulated Owl, Mountain Bluebird, and Pygmy Nuthatch. Yet every year, hundreds to thousands of snags in these birds' home territories are cut down by woodcutters, hunters, and campers, while nearly every other land management agency in Washington prohibits snag felling because of the value of snags for wildlife."

While conducting research in the forests north of Bethel Ridge this spring, Teresa noticed snags from a prescribed burn being felled by woodcutters and drew attention to the fact nests of three species of rare woodpeckers in our area were in jeopardy by these actions: White-headed, Black-backed and American Three-toed. Due to Teresa's efforts, a front-page article appeared in the Yakima Herald-Republic on the importance of these snags to these woodpeckers and other

*President's Column (continued on page 2)*

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

*President's Column (continued from page 1)*

wildlife. I focused on woodpeckers in my monthly Wildlife Moment column in the Herald, covering all three species in consecutive months this year. Stemming from these efforts, we can safely state awareness of the importance of snags for woodpeckers and other wildlife by south-central Washington citizens is higher now. You can read more at: <http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-conservation-projects-programs>

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of snags by biologists and conservationists, this critical component of our forests surprisingly still lacks formal protection in the Wenatchee-Okanogan National Forest due to the popularity of wood-cutting. With the exception of private land owners, every other major land management agency in Washington State recognizes the irreplaceable value of snags for wildlife and prohibits snag felling, including the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the National Park Service. It is also noteworthy that the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and Olympic National Forests prohibit snag felling. As the only land management agency in Washington that is home to every state sensitive woodpecker and forest owl and raptor species, it is time for the Okanogan-Wenatchee to do the same.

What can we do to help stem the loss of snags in the Naches District? Audubon Washington has begun a petition to submit to the US Forest Service to halt cutting of snags on all National Forests in the Pacific Northwest. To sign it, go to: <https://works.audubon.org/petition/snagged-end-snag-cutting-federal-lands>. The complete text of the petition can be found on page 6. Please read and sign today!

Audubon Washington's conservation committee (WSACC) has also been formulating a resolution, to be presented at this fall's Audubon Council Meeting. This resolution would like Audubon Washington to take a policy position that opposes all snag-felling and pressures the USFS to enact a policy that bans all snag felling.

YVAS elections are fast approaching and it is time for the YVAS board and membership to present candidates for President, Vice President, and at least two Director Positions in addition to the two where incumbents Denny Granstrand and Ken Tolonen have agreed to seek re-election. Please take a moment to reflect on the qualifications and abilities of people you know who could help provide insight and direction for our organization. Don't forget to include yourself as a possibility!

YVAS is also in the midst of redesigning its website which was ably developed and maintained by John Hebert. John and others advised we update the website to allow changes to be made more easily. So, we're utilizing *Word Press* to craft a new website. As others have noted, even though website design has become simpler over the past few years, it is still a challenging project. John and Denny are hard at work on this project but invite others to help particularly if you have experience with *Word Press*.

YVAS has its first fall chapter meeting August 27 with a program on Fire in our forests by Brad Wagner with the US Forest Service. With the record heat and protracted drought this summer, the issue of fire and its role in forest ecology has never been more pertinent.

**Thank you for renewing your YVAS Membership!**



**MEMBERSHIP**

**JOY MCKINNEY**

**Naches:** Philip Fischer

**Yakima:** Betty Peterson, George and Delia Roulston, Lamont McLachlan, Terry and Sherri Dahlin, Joe and Karen Zook, Jennifer Lee, Loretta and Lee Olson, Mike and Alice Roper, Jennifer Kauffman

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



## Date change for Virginia Vredenburgh's service

The graveside service for Virginia Vredenburgh, who passed away on May 25, has been moved to September 19 at 11:30 at Terrace Heights Memorial Park.

Virginia and her husband Harold were a driving force behind the creation in 1982 of the bluebird nest box trail in the Wenas area. After Harold's passing in 1983, Virginia continued to be the point person for the trail well into the late 1990s. To honor the efforts of Virginia and Harold in what has become YVAS's longest running conservation outreach program, the "club" trail was named the Vredenburgh Bluebird trail in 1995.

## Loss of Forest Snags in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest



Did you know that trees can be more important for wildlife dead than alive? When trees die, their wood softens and rots providing places for animals to create cavities that are used as nest and shelter sites. In the northwest, nearly 100 species of wildlife use snags including some of our favorite birds such as woodpeckers, bluebirds, owls, nuthatches, chickadees, wrens, ducks, swifts, swallows, and kestrels.

But did you also know that due to outdated policies, the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest allows the public to cut down snags? The Okanogan Wenatchee manages nearly 1.5 million acres and some of the most beautiful pine forests of the eastern Cascade Range. This forest is home to five at-risk woodpecker species in Washington State, including the black-backed woodpecker, white-headed woodpecker, Pileated woodpecker, Lewis' woodpecker, and American three-toed woodpecker. Other cavity-nesting birds threatened by snag-habitat loss include the flammulated owl, mountain bluebird, and pygmy nuthatch. Yet every year, hundreds to thousands of snags in these birds' home territories are cut down by woodcutters, hunters, and campers.

Join us in a campaign to educate land managers with the Okanogan-Wenatchee to let them know the value of snags in our forests. Let them know that snags are vital components of our forests and snag felling should not be permitted for healthy forest management.

Nearly every other land management agency in Washington prohibits snag felling because of the value of snags for wildlife. Agencies that prohibit snag felling include Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington De-

partment of Fish and Wildlife, Olympic National Forest, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, Mount Saint Helens National Volcanic Monument, North Cascades National Park, Mount Rainier National Park, and Olympic National Park.

The Okanogan-Wenatchee allows snag-felling under conditions of a woodcutting permit. However, snag-felling is not regulated leading to overharvest of snags each year.

Illegal woodcutting is common, includes other illegal activities such as off-road driving, cutting within streams and water, cutting in areas marked 'closed to woodcutting', and cutting of snags with white-headed and black-backed woodpecker nests.

Woodcutting is allowed during the sensitive nesting season for birds and woodcutters are allowed to cut snags immediately adjacent to active nest trees. The noise and disturbance caused to nesting birds can be extreme and has led to nest abandonment in black-backed woodpecker, three-toed woodpecker, and bluebirds.

The collective power of the Audubon network in Washington can make a difference. Please consider contacting the local forest staff and let them know that the loss of snags means the loss of forest birds and the loss of overall forest biodiversity and resilience.

Below is the contact information for Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters staff:

**Mike Williams**  
**Forest Supervisor**  
 Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest  
 215 Melody Lane  
 Wenatchee, WA 98801  
 Mrwilliams01@fs.fed.us  
 509-664-9323

**Kelly Lawrence**  
**District Ranger**  
 Naches Ranger District  
 10237 US Highway 12  
 Naches, WA 98937  
[kellylawrence@fs.fed.us](mailto:kellylawrence@fs.fed.us)  
 509-653-1415



*A black-backed woodpecker nest tree that was cut by woodcutters on Bethel Ridge and left to rot on the ground*



*Northern Flicker*  
 Photo by George Vlahakis



*Amer. Three-toed Woodpecker*  
 Photo by George Vlahakis

For more information please contact woodpecker biologist, Philip Fischer, at [pcfischer@gmail.com](mailto:pcfischer@gmail.com).



## Wildlife That Use Snags

*The following was snipped from a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife web page entitled Living With Wildlife...Snags - The Wildlife Tree*

West of the Cascade Mts 39 species of birds and 14 species of mammals depend on tree cavities for their survival. East of the Cascades 39 bird species and 23 mammal species depend on these snags (Pederson, USDA Forest Service). In total, more than 100 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians need snags for nesting, roosting, shelter, denning, and feeding (Bottorff, WSU, Snohomish Co. Ext); nearly 45 species alone forage for food in them. Hollow snags and large knot-holes are used by many species of mammals such as squirrels, marten, porcupine, and raccoons.

In winter when snow covers the ground, northern flickers and other common backyard wildlife depend heavily on insects and other foods found in snags. Brown creepers, bats, and other small animals will roost behind loose bark and bark slits for winter warmth and shelter. Hollow snags are very valuable in winter as they are used by many species such as squirrels, raccoons, owls, and bear for denning and roosting.

Large snags more than 12 inches in diameter and 15 feet tall offer ideal hunting perches for hawks, eagles, and owls. They function as resting perches for swallows, band-tailed pigeons, mourning doves and other birds; food storage areas for mice, squirrels, woodpeckers, and jays; and song perches for tanagers and flycatchers. Woodpeckers use large dead tree trunks as a way to announce their presence during courtship, hammering their bills against the tree's resonating surface. Small snags may be used as song posts by bluebirds, hum-

mingbirds, and other songbirds to attract mates and proclaim nesting territories. This high use of snags by a myriad of species underscores the importance of preserving them wherever they occur.

### The Woodpecker - Cavity Creator

Woodpeckers such as the northern flicker create new cavities in snags and are thus referred to as "primary cavity nesters." They have thick-walled skulls supported by powerful neck muscles, and a beveled, chisel-like bill. A woodpecker's strong, grasping feet with sharp, curved nails form a triangular base for support in the vertical position along with specially adapted tail feathers. The woodpecker's barb-tipped tongue and sticky saliva help it get insects from deep crevices. Unlike other cavity-nesting birds, woodpeckers rarely use nest boxes because they are biologically conditioned to dig their own cavities: the physical motions of cavity excavation stimulate reproduction.

Woodpeckers excavate several holes each year and rarely nest in the same one in consecutive years, thus creating many cavities for secondary cavity nesters such as bluebirds, tree and violet-green swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, house wrens, wood ducks, squirrels, and owls who cannot excavate cavities themselves. Secondary cavity nesting wildlife are highly dependent upon the availability of these abandoned nest cavities.



**FIELD TRIPS**  
**SCOTT DOWNES**

**Poppoff Walks: August 27, September 3, 10, 17 and 24.** Thursday Morning Birdwalks start at 6:30. As we get into September, time will be moving back, so contact the leader for time. 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. For more information, contact the Zooks either by phone at (509) 225-9494 or by email at [gadzooks7@charter.net](mailto:gadzooks7@charter.net)

**Fort Simcoe (Saturday, August 29):** Leader: Eric Heisey. Fort Simcoe can be an interesting place to explore in fall migration, and can have some fantastic fall birding. The main interest with this field trip will be passage migrants, particularly birds like Warblers, Vireos, Flycatchers, and Sparrows. Fort Simcoe is a place to experience fall migration, as the large copses of oak trees in the middle of a shrub steppe desert make a wonderful magnet for migrants. We should rack up a good tally of migrants, including many regular birds. Potential for a rare vagrant warbler or other rare migrant is at its peak! This trip will take up most of the day as we thoroughly check Fort Simcoe and surrounding areas for migrants, so remember to bring a lunch and beverages. This trip will be meeting at 6:30 am at the Branding Iron restaurant in Toppenish. So, if you plan on attending or if you have any further questions, please email trip leader Eric Heisey at [magicman32@rocketmail.com](mailto:magicman32@rocketmail.com).

**Westport Pelagic and Washington Coast Shorebirding, September 18-20. (Friday-Sunday).** Leaders: Andy and Ellen Stepniewski. This trip features an offshore boat trip from Westport that goes 35 miles west to deep water beyond the Continental Shelf. **The pelagic trip is sold out, but people can still join the trip for the birding on Friday, Saturday afternoon and Sunday, contact Andy or Ellen for Saturday activities on land.** This period in September is exciting for the variety and number of shorebirds migrating south along the coast. On Friday afternoon, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning, we will search the area's prime shorebird sites. More than 20 species are expected. A rare Asiatic species is possible! This trip involves two nights in a Westport hotel or motel. If interested in this trip, please contact Andy or Ellen promptly at ([steppie@nwinfo.net](mailto:steppie@nwinfo.net)).

## Auduboners enjoy great birds and spectacular views, and a Mountain Goat, too, at Sheep Lake and Sourdough Gap

Ten Yakima Auduboners and guests had a beautiful hike today north from Chinook Pass on the Pacific Crest Trail three miles to Sourdough Gap. Though there was smoke from the big forest fire on the south side of Mt. Adams not far off to the south, the views all around us were crisp and brilliant. We tallied 35 species of birds. While traversing the initial stretch of trail, along south slopes grown to huckleberry bushes and Mountain Ash, interspersed with thickets of Subalpine Fir and Alaska Cedar, we noted lots of migrating birds, especially American Robins, Orange-crowned Warblers, Western Tanagers, and Dark-eyed Juncos. Birds seemed to be zipping southwest, almost at a frantic clip. I thought the north wind might be prompting these birds to keep pressing on south, unusual for mid-morning. The pace these birds were moving meant it was a challenge to actually view them! There were finches, too, especially Cassin's ("cheedle-up") and a lone Purple ("tick"), Red Crossbills ("kip...kip...kip"), and a single Pine Grosbeak ("chee-vleel!"), along with a few Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins. I suspect this fall will yield more of this clan than last year in these upper forests, as the cone crop looks more bountiful.

Sheep Lake had throngs of campers, with many kids, great to see away from their electronic devices and the strip malls! Gray Jays and Clark's Nutcrackers (and chipmunks and squirrels) were busy seeking handouts from the masses of two-legged creatures.

Higher, at Sourdough Gap, some went on to a great viewpoint of Mt. Rainier, while others lounged in the warm sunshine hawk watching. Those seeking raptors were rewarded with good numbers of Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks,, a single Northern Harrier, and the odd American Kestrel. Beautiful Mountain Bluebirds certainly caught our attention, as did a shining white Mountain Goat on the high ledges of Yakima Peak. A Gray-crowned Rosy Finch or two flew over, giving their distinctive "chew" call, reminiscent of the House Sparrow.

We really enjoyed bumping into "through PCT-ers," some ultra hard-core hikers undertaking the grueling Mexico-Canada trek, and others, attempting shorter segments such as "just" Washington, still many hundreds of miles with tens of thousands of feet both up and down. Ah, to be young with a free spirit again!



**Clark's Nutcracker (left) and Gray Jay (below) two of the target species seen on the hike**



**Field trip participants (well, most of them, anyway) get a look at one of the many Western Tanagers seen migrating through the Chinook Pass area.**





## Snagged! End snag-cutting on Federal Lands

Below is the text of an online petition YVAS is coordinating with Washington Audubon seeking signatures. To sign and find additional information go to: <http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-conservation-projects-programs>.

Teresa Lorenz, YVAS Environmental Science Chair, has worked diligently on this and the board strongly recommends your support! Do it today!

**All signed petition forms will be sent to Jim Pena, Director, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region.**

Dear Mr. Pena: We are asking the U.S. Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest, which manages 25 million acres of public land, to ban snag-felling on all National Forest lands in its jurisdiction. The practice of snag-felling for home firewood use destroys hundreds to thousands of snags each year. These snags provide critical breeding habitat for sensitive wildlife, including bluebirds, woodpeckers, owls, swallows, and swifts. It also leads to the removal of downed wood important for mammalian forest carnivores and rodents used as prey for spotted owls, northern goshawks, and other at-risk raptors. The loss of forest snags means the loss of forest birds and the loss of overall forest biodiversity and resilience. We urge Region 6 of the U.S. Forest Service to ban the antiquated practice of snag-felling by the public, and to enact fines for individuals found felling snags.

## Register Now for Fall 2015 ACOW



Register now for the 2015 annual meeting of the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW), hosted by Skagit Audubon Society and the NW I Chapters! ACOW is our annual state-wide meeting where members from all Audubon Chapters in Washington gather together for a weekend of information sharing, knowledge gathering, and fellowship. This year's meeting will focus on state and federal level policy actions around Audubon's climate initiative, as well as showcase chapter work being done to educate communities about the impact of climate change on birds.

**Date:** Saturday, October 24, 2015

**Location:** Best Western Plus, Skagit Valley Inn, 2300 Market Street, Mount Vernon, WA

**Agenda and Information:**

<http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-meetings>

**Registration:** \$40 at <http://ow.ly/QSS6w>

In an effort to curb the impacts of climate change on birds and people, Audubon is working to increase the use of renewable energy while reducing carbon emissions output. Learn about multiple carbon reduction action plans being proposed in Washington State including the Governor's carbon cap, the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy's cap-and-trade, and Car-

bon WA's carbon tax (learn more at <http://wa.audubon.org/carbon-and-clean-energy>). We will also host staff from National Audubon's Policy Office in Washington, DC who will provide the inside scoop regarding federal action on carbon emissions, and how Audubon's grassroots network can be effective advocates for change at the local, state, and national level.

Presentations from Kittitas Audubon Society and Black Hills Audubon Society will highlight just some of the exciting work being done by chapters on behalf of birds in Washington State. Take home tips and tricks on how to engage reluctant audiences in climate action, and how to transform your neighborhoods into a true bird-friendly community, one backyard at a time.

Expect a dynamic day of discussion and collaboration around meaningful actions we can take together to augment our conservation impact, creating places where birds and people prosper. Additional weekend activities include:

### WSACC Meeting

Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:30pm at the Port of Skagit County

### Audubon Works Tutorial

Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30am before ACOW begins

**Field Trips** – Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am, Deception Pass State Park or Washington Park and Ship Harbor

A block of rooms at \$79 per night is being held at the [Best Western Plus, Skagit Valley Inn](#), conveniently located at Exit 227 just off I-405. Hotel reservations may be made by calling (360) 428-5678. AUDUBON SOCIETY is the group name.

All meeting information, including the agenda, accommodations, and weekend logistics may be found on the Audubon Washington website: <http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-meetings>. See you there!

### 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)

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Please make any corrections to your contact information as needed.

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 EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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](mailto:joycatbird@gmail.com) or 698-4110.**

### **2015 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD**

President	Andy Stepniewski ( <a href="mailto:steppie@nwinfo.net">steppie@nwinfo.net</a> )	877-6639	Membership	Joy McKinney ( <a href="mailto:joycatbird@gmail.com">joycatbird@gmail.com</a> )	698-4110
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Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp ( <a href="mailto:rich712@aol.com">rich712@aol.com</a> )	965-1134	Social	Vacant	
Conservation	Greg Bohn ( <a href="mailto:gsanpdro@charter.net">gsanpdro@charter.net</a> )	901-1882	Volunteer Rec.	Vacant	
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			YVAS Email	( <a href="mailto:birds@yakimaaudubon.org">birds@yakimaaudubon.org</a> )	



## Snags, Saws, Shameful Switchbacks



**Left:** Male three-toed woodpecker excavating a nest cavity on May 18, 2015 in the Tieton River watershed. This nest cavity was abandoned 6 days later, presumably because of disturbance caused by woodcutters around his nest. **Right:** A pair of woodcutters felling and cutting fallen snags on May 24, 2015 with the three-toed woodpecker nest cavity visible in the foreground (cavity indicated by white arrow). You can see that the snag directly behind and to the right of the nest (in the left-hand photo) was felled and removed by this date. Under current USFS woodcutting rules, such activities are legal provided there are no cavities in a snag. However a road was illegally constructed by woodcutters to access this site. Three-toed woodpeckers are listed as a species of concern in Washington.



**Left:** An example of a road illegally constructed by woodcutters in the Tieton River watershed to cut and haul snags; the road network is ~ ½ mile long. Woodcutting permits specify in writing that cross-country travel (off designated roads) is prohibited but enforcement appears woefully inadequate. The site was used by nesting black-backed and American three-toed woodpeckers in the past. **Right:** A road and bridge constructed by woodcutters in the Naches River watershed. This road network is ~ 1 ¼ miles long and the site was used by white-headed and black-backed woodpeckers in the past. No nesting woodpeckers were documented in 2015.

**Photos By Phil Fischer**