



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 45, Number 03

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

March 2016



MARCH PROGRAM

BILL DRENGUIS

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

KERRY TURLEY

Wildlife Crossings on I-90

Our speaker for March is Brian White, the acting regional administrator for WSDOT. Background below was captured from a June 7, 2015 Seattle Times article.

Interstate 90 is a lifeline for the Northwest, connecting people and economies across the Cascades and linking the region to the rest of the country.

For wildlife, though, it's a killer — and not just because many of them wind up squashed. Multiple lanes of pavement and high-speed traffic bisect habitat more ruthlessly than any fence, isolating populations and undermining the genetic vigor that's key to long-term survival.

The Washington State Department of Transportation broke ground east of Snoqualmie Pass on the state's first freeway overpass for animals. The 150-foot-long structure is designed to provide safe passage for species ranging from black bear and cougar to deer, elk — and even squirrels, mice and lizards.

It's part of an ambitious project to convert a 15-mile stretch of interstate into one of the world's most wildlife-friendly highways.

"This is really a remarkable effort," said Patricia Garvey-Darda, a biologist for the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest. "The goal is to connect all the species and all the habitat."

When finished, the section of I-90 from Hyak to Easton will incorporate more than 20 major underpasses and overpasses engineered partly or wholly with wildlife in mind. Dozens of small culverts will also be rebuilt to allow easier passage.

Four new underpasses are already open, and cameras are capturing images of deer, ducks, coyotes and river otters moving through.

"We think this is going to make a lot of difference for wildlife," said WSDOT project manager Brian White.

Mr. White will undoubtedly give us updates on the progress of this project and will, perhaps touch on other wildlife crossings planned for I-90 across the state.

Mark your calendar for Thursday, March 24, at 7:00 to see this presentation at the Yakima Area Arboretum

I am very happy and honored to be writing my first column as the new President of the Yakima Valley Audubon Society (YVAS). As I begin my two-year term I want to start by thanking everyone who has contributed in the past year to the success of YVAS.

In particular, I thank Andy Stepniewski for serving as our previous President and all of our board members for all the work they have put into maintaining the high quality of the YVAS's efforts in the areas of programs, conservation, education and field trips.

From its inception the YVAS has been active in issues of conservation and I see a great correlation between the efforts of YVAS in the 1980s, when the chapter worked to preserve habitat for the spotted owl, and now when we are called to urge the U.S. Forest Service to ban woodcutters from cutting snags in our forests so as to help all cavity nesters to thrive. I hope we can continue the legacy of giving a voice to the birds and wildlife who cannot speak for themselves.

As the recent occupation and damage of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge starts to fade from our memory, I would like you to remember that we also have a gem of a refuge in the area, the Toppish National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR). The YVAS worked hard for many years to successfully hammer out a "Memo of Understanding" with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and I invite you to join us in our efforts to enhance the public's knowledge and appreciation for what the TNWR has to offer, not only to wildlife but to our children as well. If our children and grandchildren don't have the opportunity to enjoy and learn about the environment they will have no reason to preserve it when they are adults.

Finally, I'm excited to join the board in working to further our mission. Though I may be at the helm, the fuel for YVAS comes from you - the members and volunteers. Without you we wouldn't have so much fun watching birds, or cleaning out blue bird houses, or stuffing envelopes. So, thank you.

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



MEMBERSHIP

JOY MCKINNEY

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Sunnyside: Lori Gilmur-Dillman
Yakima: Jennie Hodge

Thank you for renewing your YVAS Membership!

Seattle: Martha Fleming
Selah: Cindi Confer Morris, Gus & Mary Pooler, and Clara Eustis
Yakima: Rebecca Buell, Jim Christensen, Fern Sule & Lance Chamberlin, Bill Jacobs, Lee & Edith Hunsperger

Meet Our Newest Directors on the Board: Renee Navarrete and Bob Chicken

I was born in Cle Elum, Washington, the day before Valentine's in 1985. My family moved to the Yakima area in 1996 and has grown to love it. I was lucky to grow up with a Dad who loved nature, and was excited to share that love with his four kids. Whenever we drove to our grandparent's house, we played the 'hawk game'. Before we left, we had to guess how many hawks we would see on the way, and whoever got closest without going over, won. I still play it whenever I go to Ellensburg. Now I'm the one teaching my three kids the 'hawk game', and helping them to notice the deer in the fields, or the bird on the fence post. I want to pass on that love of "noticing" to my kids. My Dad was always pointing out hard-to-see animals and birds, and beautiful plants. He had the patience and practice to look past the obvious and find the beauty wherever he was. Because I homeschool my kids, we get to do a lot of nature walks and practice "noticing" as often as we can.

So far my two eldest love birds as much as I do, so I have a few companions whenever I go on a 'birding adventure', as my middle child, Eliza, calls it. My kids love to guess at what

we are hearing or seeing. My favorite things I've heard them say about birds, are: "I think I saw a Eurasian pigeon!", and "I think that's an American Crit" Eliza sees an American Crit an awful lot. She has a great imagination.

My obsessive interest in birds began during a beach vacation, last August 2015. Seeing all those amazing shore birds just woke something up inside of me. I consider myself a beginner, and it's exciting that each season brings many new 'lifers' to my list. Luckily, my husband likes to accompany me and be my photographer.

Although my family is extremely supportive, I wanted to have some friends that loved birding the same way I did, so that's what led me to YVAS. I've met a lot of wonderful people, and look forward to contributing whatever skills I have to the team.



Renee with her youngest child.

--- Renee Navarrete ---

Bob Chicken enjoyed a long career in a field that exposed him to the bountiful forested landscape of North America.

After serving in the U.S. Navy, he began his career in northwest Ontario, Canada, before returning to the states to work for the U.S. Forest Service as a planner and silviculturist. (Editor's note: Silviculturists are the people who look after our trees, specifically, the trees in our forests. They attempt to control forest regeneration, composition, growth, and quality. Specially trained in identifying disease and pests, they help keep the trees on our planet healthy and growing.) His assignments took him to the Siuslaw, Wallowa-Whitman and Colville National Forests; his last Forest Service assignment was on the communication team with the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project in Walla Walla.

After leaving the Forest Service in 1995, Bob became a natural resource educator in the Milton-Freewater, Oregon area working in local schools both in the classrooms and outdoor venues. He finally fully retired in 2012 while with the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council.

Bob emphasizes that snag density and quality has become an important part of forest planning and treatments, sparked by Evelyn Bull's studies of the pileated woodpecker beginning in the 1970s on the Starkey Experimental Forest and

Range, located on the LaGrande Ranger District. Of note, his last assignment on the Colville National Forest included assembling snag data to be included in the forest plan monitoring report.

Bob and his wife Carrie moved to Yakima in 2012 to be closer to family. They became familiar with the Yakima Valley Audubon Society through Denny Granstrand who was employed as the home inspector for a North 27th Avenue house they eventually purchased. Denny obviously tweaked an interest in birds as both Bob and Carrie attended the birding class YVAS conducted in 2014. Bob is also a volunteer naturalist at the Yakima Area Arboretum and enjoys hiking with the Cascadian's Pokies.

Confessing that he has removed two large trees from their yard, Bob quickly notes that he planted three new ones. Given his extensive background in forestry, we are confident that the neighborhood habitat will be improved rather than degraded.



Bob enjoying a hike.

--- Bob Chicken ---

Vantage Field Trip Recap

Kittitas Valley and Vantage Field Trip, February 21st, 2016

The trip headed to Vantage, making stops in the Yakima Canyon, Kittitas Valley and the Vantage Highway. Weather was generally pleasant, though a bit breezy in the Yakima Canyon in the morning. In general, the theme of the day seemed to be that spring had arrived with many of the winter visitors seemingly moved out. In the Kittitas Valley, many of the Red-tailed Hawks seemed to be nesting and we managed to only find one Rough-legged Hawk. On the Vantage Highway we found some spring return visitors to the shrub-steppe with both



Rock Wren
Photo by
Karen Zook

Sagebrush Sparrow and Mountain Bluebirds.

At Vantage we found a general lack of waterbirds, but did note Say's Phoebe's, Rock Wren and several flocks of Violet-green Swallows. Among waterbirds left there were several flocks of scaup, both Greater and Lesser Scaup with a Surf Scoter present with

scaup just above the Wanapum Dam. Below the dam, we found a female Red-breasted Merganser along with numbers of goldeneyes, both Common and Barrow's Goldeneye. Common Loons seemed to be present in decent numbers, with some starting into alternate (breeding plumage). A large group of Yellow-rumped Warbler was noted below the dam.

Our last stop of the day was at the newly renovated Jackson Creek Fish Camp below Priest Rapids Dam. Here it is easily possible to scan the waters of both Grant and Yakima County as the Columbia River starts its free-flowing stretch. The most notable bird here was a very striking male Red-breasted Merganser. Multiple groups of Chukar decided to sound off in the late afternoon sun. It was a very nice day with a great group of people!

--- Scott Downes ---



Say's Phoebe
Photo by
Karen Zook



FIELD TRIPS
SCOTT DOWNES

Mar 24, 31; Apr 7, 14, 21- Thurs. Morning Bird Walk. 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 easternmost roundabout at **8:30 am**. This walk is a great chance to check out a diverse habitat area in Yakima with local birders. There is a small change this year for Poppoff walks. There is a commitment to have a leader for the first Thursday of the month (April 7th for this newsletter), but the remaining walks will be group led. Group led is whoever shows up at the meeting time, start the walk, don't wait for a designated leader. Contact Karen Zook if you have questions – gadzooks7@charter.net.

April 2 (Saturday) Bluebird Box Cleanout - It is spring and once again time to clean out and inspect the 132 nest boxes on the Vredenburg Bluebird Trail in preparation for the upcoming nesting season. To facilitate the assignment of boxes to teams, please contact Richard Repp (rich712@aol.com or 965-1134) if you wish to help or for further info. A half-day event but bring snacks, drinks, and work gloves. Clothing for wind and rain protection recommended as are sturdy footwear.

April 16 (Saturday) Arborfest – Great family event...see article elsewhere in this Crier.

April 17 (Sunday)- Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Join Bill Drenguis and Joe and Karen Zook on a trip to Conboy NWR in Klickitat County. We will be enjoying the beautiful scenery and hoping to spot Sandhill Cranes, which nest on the refuge. Some other great birds which may be found there include American Bittern, Sora, Lincoln's Sparrow, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Western Bluebird, Common Yellowthroat, and the fabulous Marsh Wren. In addition to the birds, we may also spot the Mardon Skipper. It is a small orange butterfly which is on the state endangered species list, and this refuge is one of the few places in the state where it can be found. Just gazing at the view of Mount Adams will be worth the trip. Do you know what the term is for a juvenile crane? Join us and find out. Contact leaders Bill Drenguis at 965-5808, or email the Zooks at gadzooks7@charter.net for meeting place and time. We will be carpooling, and this will be an all day trip.

April 23 (Saturday)- Zimmerman Ponds and Toppenish NWR - Each spring, the snowmelt in the Cascades rushes down Toppenish Creek filling ponds and flooding valley bottoms, creating a bonanza for water and marsh birds. The marshes, fields, and riparian patches in the lower valley rise to their birding peak in late April. Look for Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Cinnamon Teal, Virginia Rails and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. The Zimmerman property is being restored by the Yakima Nation and is normally closed to the public. This is a great half day field trip with birding opportunities close by for those who want to extend the day. Meet at 7:30 am at the Valley Mall parking lot north of Sears (old IHOP location). Contact Kerry Turley (837-6930 or you can send him an email at kdturley@gmail.com)

President's Weekend field trip to Okanogan County found great birds, beautiful scenery and lots of fog

Okanogan County is a beautiful place to bird, especially during the winter. Over the long President's Weekend, nine YVAS members and four west-siders explored our state's largest county. The birds were exciting, the scenery was spectacular and it was foggy!

We started the bird list with stops at Soap and Lenore Lakes, Dry Falls Interpretive Center and the Cassimer Bar Wildlife Area. A surprise at Lenore Lake was a flock of Gray Partridges!

Our first goal was to search for Snowy Owls and Gyrfalcon on the Waterville Plateau. The extensive fog reduced our visibility to less than 100 yards and made viewing all but impossible. We bailed out and went searching for another of the plateau's rarities—Sharp-tailed Grouse. We found them the way birders frequently find rare birds, ... we found the people who were looking at them. Members of a WOS field trip found a small flock uphill from Bridgeport Hill Road as we were searching the downhill area. We saw another group of grouse later in the afternoon when we returned after it appeared the fog had cleared, but alas, it hadn't.

We explored the evergreen trees at Bridgeport State Park and found five Northern Saw-Whet Owls! Most were well-concealed in the tree branches but one posed especially nicely. A Barn Owl, a winter rarity in Okanogan County, flushed from one of the trees, for our second owl species.

The Okanogan Highlands are spectacular in the winter. Many areas again were foggy, which hampered our birding. Early starts on Saturday and Sunday mornings gave us the best chances of finding a Great Gray Owl, one of the specialties of the Highlands but it eluded us. It wasn't for lack of trying, though. We searched to no avail two mornings and late one afternoon. Sharp-eyed Lamont McLachlan spotted a Great Horned Owl on top of a power pole at a farm well off the road when it was nearly dark, our third owl species.

One highlight of the weekend were six or seven Northern Pygmy-Owls that were scattered around the Highlands. These cute owls are fierce predators and are more plentiful in the north than they

are in Yakima County. Several perched nicely for photos.

There is a house on Nealy Road in the Highlands where the owners feed birds and don't mind if birders stop by. We went there several times. Many in the group were treated to a flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches. Four Ruffed Grouse were discovered roosting in a large bush near the driveway.

Other sought-after species we found included Pine Grosbeaks along Mary Anne Creek Road, Common Redpolls in Chewaw, and a large flock of Snow Buntings at a farm north of the Sitzmark Ski Area. I have seen that ski area many times but this was the first time I have seen people skiing there.

On Sunday morning we drove west towards Oroville along Nine Mile Rd., a new experience for most of us. The road comes within a few yards of the Canadian border, which we all thought pretty cool. Lamont was excited to nab some "life" birds for his Canada list as Common Ravens and Clark's Nutcrackers flew north across the border. We noted lots of Red Crossbills and a few Pygmy Nuthatches at a couple stops amid Ponderosa Pines and Western Larch.

A stop at Osoyoos Lake State Park produced Red-breasted Mergansers and Thayer's and Herring Gulls. In the afternoon we drove along the magnificent Similkameen River, which added Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser and Canyon Wren to our trip list.

On the way home Monday we went through a totally clear and sunny Waterville Plateau and finally found a Snowy Owl! It was a great bird with which to end the trip.

Possibly the number one highlight occurred on Cameron Lake Road where we watched an immature Northern Goshawk chasing a Eurasian Collared-Dove. The dove was flying for its life with the goshawk nipping at its tail feathers. Lamont got some incredible photos of the chase!

Many thanks go to Andy and Ellen Stepniewski for guiding us through many beautiful and birdy areas over the weekend. Their knowledge of Okanogan County is extensive and they are the reason our trip listed an impressive total of 96 species!



Northern Pygmy-Owl
Photo by Denny Granstrand

— Denny Granstrand —



Northern Goshawk chasing a Eurasian Collared-Dove
Photos by Lamont McLachlan



CONSERVATION

Op-ed: Sage-grouse decision is a call to action for western lands

By Noreen Walsh First Published Feb 22 2016

As Westerners gather this week in Salt Lake City to chart the future of sagebrush conservation, it's a good time to take stock of where we are and where we need to go.

In 2010, many thought it was a foregone conclusion that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would soon list the greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. This prospect catalyzed the most ambitious and far-reaching conservation effort in the act's history.

The service's September 2015 decision to not list the greater sage grouse was a remarkable moment in wildlife conservation. The thousand-plus private landowners who signed up to protect habitat, the federal and state sage grouse plans and the scores of non-profit conservation efforts amount to an epic promise from this generation to the next. A promise to conserve and restore the vast sweep of sagebrush that's supported people and wildlife for generations.

Now, it's up to all of us to keep that promise.

While the service sees our "not warranted" finding as a victory for collaborative conservation, it really must be the beginning of a much bigger success story. By leading the restoration of healthy sagebrush communities and the wildlife that depends on them, Westerners can protect our future and a landscape that's given so much for so long.

But first, several things need to happen.

Full and timely implementation of state and federal sage-grouse plans is imperative. While the threats to the bird have been reduced, they have not been eliminated. We applaud the budget approved by Congress, which includes increased funding to help the Bureau of Land Management control invasive weeds, remove encroaching juniper, and support local collaborative efforts with public lands grazers to maintain or restore healthy sagebrush communities for people and wildlife. The service is standing by to help our partners during this process.

We must corral the scourge of cheatgrass and other invasive weeds, which out-compete native vegetation while providing the fuel that turns small fires into a landscape-scale threat. More than 10 million acres of existing sagebrush habitat in the Great Basin are at moderate or high risk of being overrun by cheatgrass. This is our most pressing challenge and we must attack it like never before.

Together, state and federal agencies are also focusing on suppressing fires in the best sage grouse habitat and doubling down on post-fire rehabilitation to give native bunchgrass communities a fighting chance to get back on their feet.

Our goal is healthy sagebrush landscapes that support abundant, well-distributed, state-managed sage grouse populations across the range. Healthy sagebrush will mean abundant mule deer, elk, pronghorn, golden eagles and hundreds of other wildlife species — and healthy ranching communities.

We are all partners in an historic effort. We're showing the nation that by working together, we can tackle intractable issues. If we can live up to the responsibilities of stewardship, we can shape our future and ensure that this land — with all its bountiful gifts — will continue to prosper. Together, our success will improve the productivity of the land, preserve a working landscape, and make the prospect of future ESA fights far less likely.

I know Westerners have the determination to make it happen. It is not just the sage grouse that is counting on us — future generations will look back to see if we kept our promise.

Noreen Walsh is regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mountain-Prairie Region, which encompasses Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas.

Sage grouse addition.....

The following was clipped from a September 22, 2015 article by Alisa Opar, articles editor for Audubon magazine.

The majority of the bird's habitat, 64 percent, is on federal lands, and the Bureau of Land Management controls most of those approximately 60 million acres. Earlier this year, the BLM and U.S. Forest Service released management plans for public lands in 10 states. The plans, developed over the past three years with the states and with in-

put from local stakeholders, including ranchers, conservationists, and industry representatives, place restrictions on 35 million acres of priority bird habitat to prevent degradation. Even though the plans weren't formalized until today (late September, 2015), the drafts were taken into consideration, says Pat Deibert, national sage-grouse coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service, who was responsible for crafting the sprawling species report—chock full of information on the major threats facing the bird and efforts to combat them—that drove the listing decision.

Arborfest - "After the Fire"

Once again, it is almost time to celebrate nature with families at the Yakima Area Arboretum's annual

Arborfest, on **Saturday, April 16th from 10am to 3 pm**, at the Yakima Area Arboretum. This is a **free** community event, celebrating Arbor Day, spring, conservation and nature.

The theme this year is "After the Fire", emphasizing what happens to the trees, habitat and wildlife after a fire. The Yakima Valley Audubon will host a booth displaying the benefits of SNAGS that are left after the fire, including the woodpeckers that excavate cavities plus the myriad other birds, mammals and bugs that utilize these dead trees. We will be making the ever-popular buttons, allowing participants to select a drawing of a bird species that benefits from snags, color it using



President Kerry in Action

their imagination, and then press it into a button they may proudly wear. Yakima Valley Audubon's newly created brochure touting the value of snags for wildlife should be printed and available as a hand-out to attendees. Be sure to swing by to "snag" a copy for yourself!

Hundreds of kids and families annually participate in our activity and we need volunteers to help. Please consider joining us for this fun and educational activity. We will need **VOLUNTEERS** to help

for all or part of the event assisting with setting up, taking down the booth as well as interacting with participants. Consider spending an hour or more to help spread the joy. Let's "smoke" this celebration! Set up will start at 8:30. Please contact Ellen Stepniewski at 877-6639 or stepnie@nwinfo.net for more information or to volunteer.

--- Ellen Stepniewski --



THIS MONTH'S YVAS CALENDAR

- Mar 24** **Audubon Chapter Meeting** at the Yakima Area Arboretum at **7:00 pm**.
- Apr 9** **Board Meeting** at Andy and Ellen Stepniewski's house (2011 S. 47th Ave. Yakima, WA) 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.

It's Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Mammals, Bugs and more...

"Dead trees in the forest: not wasted wood but Creators of life."

A class sponsored by the Yakima Valley Audubon Society and Yakima Area Arboretum.

Sign-up is through the Yakima Area Arboretum: 248-7337.

Sat, March 26th 9-11 am, followed by optional field trip

Cost will be \$20 for Arboretum or YVAS members, \$25 for non-members. Student discount available.

Dead trees in our forests serve critically important roles in ecosystem processes. Snags are standing dead trees and provide nest sites and homes for woodpeckers and other

species of birds, small mammals, bats, and insects. Woodpeckers are the primary group which creates cavities in snags, which are in turn used by species which cannot create the cavities themselves. Due to the extraordinary diversity of eastern Cascade forests, an amazing 13 species of woodpeckers nest nearby, which is among the highest count anywhere in North America. Chickadees, nuthatches, and bluebirds are among other birds that use these cavities.

Jeff Kozma, a wildlife biologist with the Yakama Nation, will be the instructor for this class.

After the indoor session, Jeff will lead you out to the arboretum natural area where riparian forest displays snags and fallen dead wood and hosts lots of wildlife including Western Screech-Owls, Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, and Black-capped Chickadees.

Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Join or 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

New Member Renewing Member (Please check one)

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.

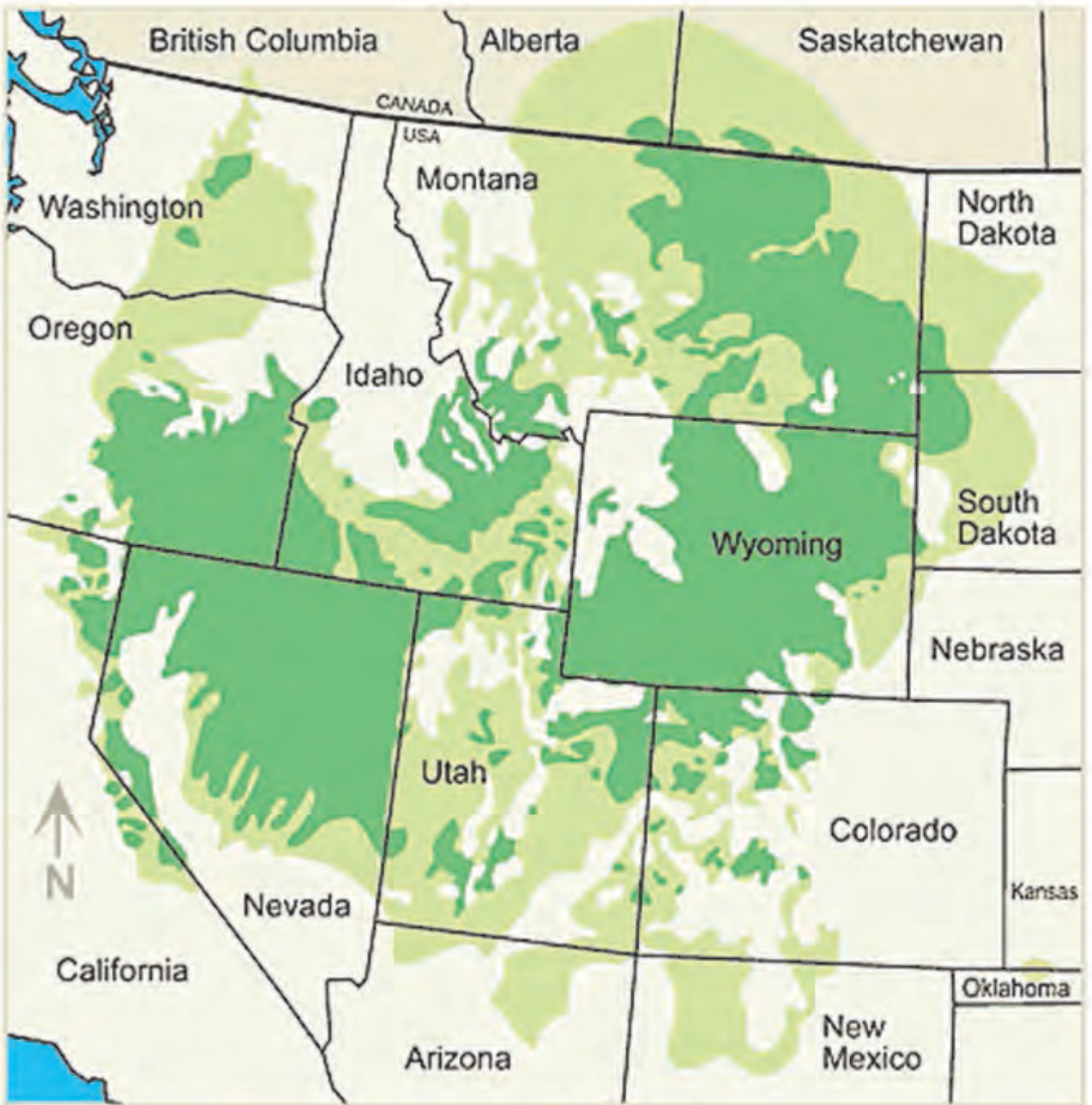
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Please return this form and your check payable to: YVAS Membership
 P.O. Box 2823
 Yakima, WA 98907

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

2016 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>)	



Historic Range
 Current Range

Map courtesy: Dr. M. Schroeder, Washington Department of Wildlife.

Map above depicts Sage Grouse shrinking range

Quote from this Month's Conservation Article:

We must corral the scourge of cheatgrass and other invasive weeds, which outcompete native vegetation while providing the fuel that turns small fires into a landscape scale threat. More than 10 million acres of existing sagebrush habitat in the Great Basin are at moderate or high risk of being overrun by cheatgrass.