



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 07

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

August 2016



AUGUST PROGRAM

BILL DRENGUIS

Blue Mountain Wildlife to the Rescue



A Golden Eagle successfully released
Photo by Blue Mountain Staff



An Osprey flying successfully after being released
Photo by Blue Mountain Staff

Remember when an injured Snowy Owl was found in Yakima near Costco? The owl was sent to our only "local" rehab center. Come to our August meeting and learn about this amazing center in Pendleton, OR.

Blue Mountain Wildlife's mission is to preserve wildlife and the habitats in which they live. A healthy world will support healthy, thriving wildlife and healthy, thriving humans. Blue Mountain Wildlife strives to make a meaningful contribution through wildlife rehabilitation and public education.

Orphaned, injured or sick wildlife are provided the necessary treatment and care to enable their return to the wild.

Outreach and educational programs enhance people's understanding of the impact human actions have on wildlife and the natural environment.

Most of the animals brought to BMW have had negative encounters with humans, such as collisions with vehicles or manmade structures, gunshot wounds, poisoning or destruction of nests. Wildlife has not evolved to coexist with these situations, and humans have a responsibility to both understand and ameliorate their impacts.

Upon receiving an injured, ill or orphaned animal, a trained rehabilitator evaluates the condition of the animal and provides medical treatment. Animals requiring specialized care are taken to Pendleton Veterinary Clinic. Feeding, administering medication, physical therapy and reconditioning

are among the many daily care tasks that are necessary for restoring an animal to a releasable condition.

Blue Mountain Wildlife serves the region with facilities in Oregon and Washington. The headquarters or primary center is located five miles south of Pendleton, OR at the foothills of the Blue Mountains. With a 1-room medical clinic in a private residence, very functional, but aging, conditioning and display pens, the facility represents the love and labor of countless volunteers and contributors.

The Washington center was established in 2005 in the Tri-Cities area to function as a triage center for injured raptors, providing more timely treatment and facilitating the successful transportation to Pendleton for those birds requiring medical care. The facility includes a small intake building and a flight pen, and hosts a hack site where baby raptors are raised and released in a manner that simulates the care they would have received from their parents.

Since 1990, Blue Mountain Wildlife has admitted more than 5000 animals to the centers with a successful release rate of 50%, one of the highest release rates in the industry.

Mark your calendar for Thursday, August 25, at 7:00 to see this presentation at the Yakima Area Arboretum

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



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

KERRY TURLEY

In light of the recent rescue near Granger of an Osprey found hanging from the nest, tangled in twine, I thought it would be timely to offer some guidelines for what to do if you find an injured or endangered bird. The following information comes from the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>

What do I do if I find injured wildlife?

Injured wildlife can be reported to a local wildlife rehabilitator. A list of active wildlife rehabilitators nearest to Yakima County can be found below.

All native wild birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians are protected by Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). Anyone wishing to possess injured native wildlife and/or practice wildlife rehabilitation must obtain a permit from WDFW. A wildlife rehabilitator permit authorizes a person to temporarily possess injured, diseased, oiled, or abandoned wildlife for the purpose of wild release. Individuals must meet several requirements to obtain this permit.

Those who work with native migratory birds must also have a US Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird rehabilitation permit.

Seriously wounded wildlife can be reported to WDFW WILDCOMM at (360) 902-2936. Ask that the observation be reported to a local Fish and Wildlife Officer.

Another option upon finding injured wildlife is to contact a WDFW regional office or the Wildlife Program at (360) 902-2515. Regional office contact information can be found on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regions/>

Here is a list of several wildlife rehabbers in our area:

Blue Mountain Wildlife Hack Site

Benton City, WA 99320

541-278-0215

Alt Phone: 509-366-0888

Notes: Birds of prey; some birds

INITIAL CARE ONLY - Prosser Animal Clinic

PO Box 231

Prosser, WA 99350

509-786-1393

Notes: Birds;

Ellensburg Animal Hospital

1800 Vantage Hwy

Ellensburg, WA 98926

509-925-2833

Notes: INITIAL CARE ONLY All species

Most wildlife rehabilitators are unable to provide services to pick up wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitators, including veterinarians, are volunteers and by law may not be paid for their services except by donation. They are not on call 24 hours/day and many of them have their facilities at their home. Please respect their time, compassion, and personal expense put into every animal they care for and please consider donating to these caregivers.

Wildlife Rehabilitators are limited by their state and federal permits as to how many and what species of animals they may admit to their facility.

If you find an injured bird, carefully put it in a cardboard box with a lid or a towel over the top, and place in a cool, safe place. Birds go into shock very easily when injured, and often die from the shock. If a bird has hit a window and is still alive, it may just need a little time to regain its senses, then may be able to fly away. Do not try to force feed or give water to the bird. Keep the bird outside and open the box every fifteen minutes to see if it is able to fly away. If it is still alive after a few hours but cannot fly away, you can try to find a local wildlife rehabilitator.

Most rehabbers do not want to treat birds like geese, ducks, starlings, house sparrows, etc. Their time and resources are limited and treating the very common species cuts into both of those to the detriment of the birds that they prefer to specialize in treating.



MEMBERSHIP

JOY MCKINNEY

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Yakima: Thomas McIntyre

Thank you for renewing your YVAS Membership!

Naches: Teresa Lorenz and Phil Fischer

Yakima: Bill and Edith Ryan, Carol Licht,

Jennifer Lee, and Warren and Sue Terrell

And Lee Olson In Memory of Loretta Olson

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

Range 12 Fire – Yakima Training Center to Hanford

In the early evening of July 30, a fire erupted on the Yakima Training Center. High winds and dry fuel enabled the fire to push unabated to the southeast. The next evening, a decision was made to start a backfire on Rattlesnake Mountain to prevent the fire from pushing onto contaminated areas of the Hanford nuclear reservation. The two fires merged on Aug. 1 effectively limiting fuel and the fire was basically contained by Aug. 4. The fire covered 177,000 acres (including 55,100 acres of Sage Grouse habitat) within a 117 mile perimeter.

Referring to a map, it appeared the burned area was approximately 37 miles long and as wide as 15 miles in places. I visually superimposed the area onto Interstate 82. It stretched from I-82's intersection with North First Street to Sunnyside and at its widest, reached from Sawyer to Harrah. How many humans live in that I-82 corridor? No human homes were lost in the fire but think of the loss to wildlife.

On August 2, Denny Granstrand drove north from Sunnyside on Hwy 241 and then turned west on Hwy 24 to continue to Yakima. From his BirdYak post, he commented that Ferruginous Hawks, a species that has dwindled dramatically in Yakima County, have recently been seen (and historically documented to nest), in a small canyon along Lewandowski Road which spurs off Hwy 241. The fire burned to within 100 yards of the northeast end of this canyon.

Two miles north of Lewandowski Rd, the west side of Hwy 241 was scorched and at four miles both sides were burned, with occasional skips, all the way to Hwy 24.

Denny stated, "Coming west on Hwy 24 from Hwy 241, the south side of the road in the Black Rock Valley bottom was mostly not burned. The north slope of the ridge was. On the north side of Hwy 24, the burned area varied from fairly close to the highway to nearly a mile north of it."

"For the past several years, I have been going to a DNR property at about milepost 18.5 on the south side of Hwy 24. I think it is over 100 acres in size. It was very nice shrub-steppe habitat with large sagebrush and hosted most of the shrub-steppe bird species. The entire property (see photo) and the area at least half a mile east of it, burned. Totally! It was depressing to see."

Though the black trail of the fire can be seen on the ridge north of Hwy 24 at milepost 13, it did not reach the highway



Burned DNA parcel along Hwy 24. Prior to the fire, the sagebrush component was thicker and taller than the "spared" habitat to the right of the fence.

Photo by Elizabeth Bohn

until milepost 18 and crossed at exact spot Denny mentions above.

The backfire mentioned in the first paragraph was set on the Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) Reserve. The ALE, owned by the U S Department of Energy, starts at the intersection of Hwy 24 and Hwy 240, the roadway that stretches south to Richland. It encompasses 77,000 acres west of Hwy 240 and is a part of the Hanford Reach National Monument. At the time of its creation in 1967, it was the only remaining sizeable acreage of Washington steppe landscape that was still in a nearly pristine state of vegetation.

According to an article in the Tri-City Herald by Annette Cary, this is the third time a devastating fire has occurred on the ALE. In 2000, the entire Reserve burned followed by a 2007 event that destroyed 55,000 acres. This time 35,000 acres were blackened.

The article elaborated that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Heidi Newsome has witnessed all three fires. Reviewing damage, she stated, "It looks like a moonscape, to be quite honest. It looks like you are on another planet." As for restoration efforts, she admits, "It's emotionally hard. It's deflating to put so much work in and see it happen again."

"The hope is that for plants at least, since fire is a natural process, they will be able to recover..." Newsome said. Walking across the blackened earth, Newsome saw dead grasshoppers, praying mantises, beetles and crickets, the foundation of the food chain for birds and mammals on the reserve.

Song birds, like meadowlarks, will move to other areas, increasing competition for food there. They may have trouble gaining the weight they need to sustain their migration. They may migrate early.

The biggest impact may be on small mammals, Newsome said. The seeds they eat are gone and so are the bushes they depend on for shade. Usually they blend into the tans and browns of the shrub steppe habitat. But against the now-blackened earth, voles, gophers and mice will be easy prey for coyotes and hawks.

Two of Newsome's biggest concerns are wind and cheat grass. Cheat grass, which is not native, moves in quickly after fires, carpeting the ground with grass that spreads, once it dries, any fire quickly. It also will crowd out native grasses, which grow in bunches. And wind could blow off the topsoil that plants need to germinate and grow, she said.

Historically, many native plants have coexisted with fire. But those fires happened only every 80 to 100 years. The question now is if they can adapt to fires that are burning across their habitat on average every decade, Newsome said.

Range 12 Fire (continued from page 4)

Any Wyoming big sagebrush, the most common sage in this area that burned at lower elevations of the fire will not recover. But three-tip sagebrush, a smaller sage that grows at higher elevations, should come back on its own.

The issue is time.

Following the 2000 fire and some other smaller fires, \$6 million was spent to restore the Hanford Reach National Monument, including planting Wyoming big sagebrush. But the Wyoming big sagebrush and three-tip sagebrush coming back after the 2000 fire had yet to reach full maturity, Newhouse said. That can take 25 years. The native bunch

grasses took three to four years to recover from the 2000 and 2007 fires.

Biologists began a burn-severity assessment last week on the reserve, and initial results are promising. They found low to moderate severity, Newsome said, as the fire was not as fast-moving and hot as earlier fires.

No cause of this latest fire has been determined. With warm and dry years seemingly our future, should we not be focused on prevention? Restoration efforts alone...do they just add the fuel for future repeats?

--- Richard Repp ---

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge - Will collaboration succeed?

In January a group of armed men took control of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in the high desert of southeast Oregon. For 41 days they occupied its headquarters, looting electronics, overflowing the septic system, bulldozing over Native American artifacts—all told, doing \$6 million worth of damage—and deploying armed guards to patrol the 300 square miles of sagebrush meadows and river valleys where 320 bird species occur. High among their demands was for the feds to turn over control of Malheur to surrounding Harney County. In a Facebook video (now deleted), Ammon Bundy, one of the group's leaders, explained, "We're doing this so the people can have their land and their resources back where they belong."

Locals, however, had little interest in their help. That's because Malheur doesn't exemplify the classic hard-drawn battle lines in the West, but exactly the opposite—a growing trend of joint rancher-conservationist initiatives. Over the past decade a group called the High Desert Partnership has brought together people from more than 30 organizations, including ranchers, refuge biologists, and greens, who are working to find solutions that allow both birds and beef to thrive. "It is ironic that they picked Malheur," says partnership member Bob Sallinger, conservation director at Portland Audubon. "In a landscape that is very conflicted, it is a place of collaboration."

Gary Marshall, a rancher who grazes cattle on the refuge, was among the first to sign on when the High Desert Partnership formed in 2005. He was tired of seeing land-use conflicts play out in faraway courts. "We have intelligent people right here," he says. The group's first effort was to create a 15-year Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the refuge. People fought. But they also listened. Everyone agreed on the final plan, under which grazing permits are issued every five years instead of annually, and cattle are kept in higher pasture into the summer to allow the chicks of Sandhill Cranes, Bobolinks, and other birds to hatch in the wet meadows.

Since then the group has launched restoration projects on more than 100,000 acres of forests and wetlands. Hours before one of the occupiers was shot and killed in a standoff with police, the group received news that it had won a \$4.8 million



grant from the state of Oregon to improve bird habitat on private pastureland and remove invasive fish from the refuge's waterways. The death made headlines; the grant, unsurprisingly, did not.

About half of the new funds will go toward maintaining flood irrigation. Unlike massive sprinklers, these systems spread spring snowmelt into a thin layer over hay fields, creating what looks like an expansive grass-pierced mirror. Invertebrates flourish, offering up a feast for migrating cranes and curlews. When the water evaporates, fresh grass explodes, providing cover

for nesting birds. Once chicks fledge, hay is gathered for winter feed, and throughout late summer and fall, cattle forage on a second round of growth.

The rest of the money will go toward combating common carp. The invasive bottom-feeders have taken over Malheur Lake, which historically supported hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. Carp uproot aquatic plants (called tules), devour invertebrates, and muddy the water, which has led to a shocking drop in Malheur's birdlife. Over four decades the number of ducks and geese hatched at Malheur has dropped tenfold and migratory birds have declined up to 90 percent.

In early April, soon after U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish biologist Linda Beck regained access to the refuge, she toured the eight-inch-deep lake by airboat. She made a butt-rattling loop around an artificial island built for Caspian Terns and cut the motor. The chocolate-milk-colored water was flat and silent, the lone bird a gull flying overhead. "In summer there are pods of carp by the thousands," Beck says. "You look over the water and see them gulping for air." This summer she'll attack the fish on multiple fronts: permit recreational and commercial fishing and herd carp with traps and screens into areas where they can be easily culled.

Back in 1908, when refuge champion William L. Finley visited the lake, he saw a maze of plants bursting with ducks, geese, grebes, pelicans, gulls, and herons: a "vast extent of green tules—acres, square miles of birds." With the help of the High Desert Partnership, multitudes of birds will occupy the refuge once again.

— Emma Marris in Summer 2016 Audubon Magazine —



FIELD TRIPS
SCOTT DOWNES

Sept. 17 (Saturday)-Andy and Ellen Stepniewski will lead a trip to Sheep Lake at Chinook Pass. This hike heads to the high country. We hike 2 miles along a good trail to Sheep Lake. We like this route because it encounters a mosaic of subalpine habitats. First we cross a beautiful wild flower-covered slope, then dry slopes with brushy huckleberry and mountain ash thickets. Next are stunted forest of firs, hemlocks, and Alaska cedars. Rounding a bend on the trail onto wetter slopes is a taller subalpine forest of subalpine firs, mountain hemlocks, and Pacific silver fir. Beautiful Sheep Lake is ringed by wet sedge meadows, with Yakima Peak's high cliffs looming.

An optional extension one mile extension up to the Sourdough Gap brings us to the edge of the treeless alpine zone. Birds we will search for include Sooty Grouse, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, and possibly Pine Grosbeak. Migrating warblers and sparrows should be about, too. Raptor migration should have begun, too, with Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, and Prairie Falcons possible. Great for Mountain Goat viewing too. Fall colors can be superb! We will return by mid-afternoon.

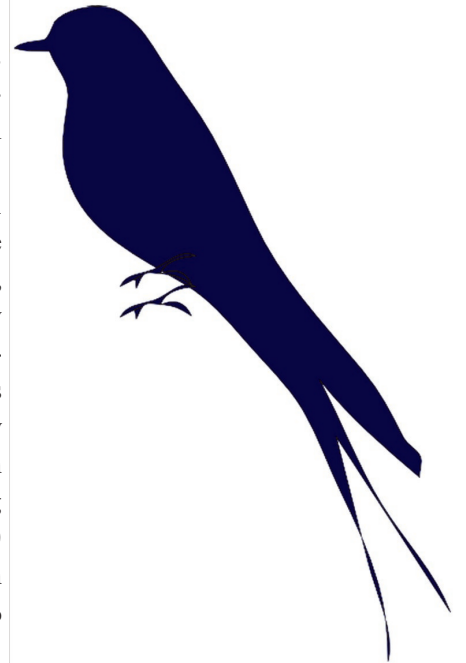
Meet at 7 am at 40th Ave Bi-mart, on the east side of McDonalds. Please contact Andy at steppie@nwinfo.net to sign-up. Pack a lunch with plenty of fluids. Bring clothing for both warm and cool weather and the possibility of rain.

Aug. 25; Sept. 1, 8, 15 and 22- Thursday Morning Bird Walk. Meet the group at the Poppoff Trail/Jewett Pathway parking lot at 7:30 am the east end of Valley Mall Blvd., at the north side of the easternmost roundabout. 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 (September 1st 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

The Ryan Bluebird Trail

In the early 1980s, Bill and Edith Ryan entered into an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service to install and monitor bluebird nest boxes along Forest Service roads that spur off of Highway 410 northwest of the Wenas Valley. After years of dedicated attention, the Ryans turned over stewardship of the trail to Dan and Eileen Kinney in 2013.

The analysis of this year's data of the 58 Nest boxes on the Ryan Bluebird Trail shows significant changes from last year. Overall there was a 24 % reduction in the number of fledglings for the three species we are monitoring - Western Bluebirds, Mountain Bluebirds and Mountain Chickadees. Since 2013, there had been a yearly increase in Western Bluebirds and corresponding decrease in Mountain Bluebirds. This year that trend reversed significantly. A prime reason for this decrease is the lower egg laying by Western Bluebirds – down from 180 eggs last year to only 108 eggs this year (a 40% reduction). A similar reduction of 28% in Mountain Chickadee egg laying was also observed. However, Mountain Bluebird egg laying increased by 160 %. Corresponding fledgling production was similar with only 50 Western Bluebird fledges (down 51%), and 37 Mountain Chickadees fledges (down 40%) . Meanwhile Mountain Bluebird production soared to 51 fledglings, up 155% over the prior year's poor production.



	EGGS					BIRDS			
	Western	Mountain	Chickadee	Total		Western	Mountain	Chickadee	Total
2013	117	80	24	221	2013	53	42	19	114
2014	160	42	21	223	2014	77	36	19	132
2015	180	31	84	295	2015	102	20	61	183
2016	108	82	59	249	2016	50	51	37	138

Cleman Mountain Bluebirds 2016 have a good year

It's been an interesting season for the Cleman Mountain Bluebirds. We have 35 boxes (one has gone missing along with its post, so only 34) from which 89 bluebirds have fledged this year. Five of the fledglings were Mountain Bluebirds, the rest were Western. We've seen fewer Mountain bluebirds up there than in the past two years.

As of August 10, all of our boxes are empty. We saw only 8 or so Bluebirds along the trail yesterday (one of them was immature – one of our “kids?”), and none near boxes, so it is doubtful that there will be more nesting efforts this year.

Last year, despite the very dry and hot conditions, we had no deaths at all in any of our boxes. This year we've had 16 dead birds, including one adult male dead in the box with 1 dead chick and 3 live chicks. It's hard to say whether the spells of cooler weather have had an impact, or predators, or disease, or all of the

above. Still, when you do the math, that means that 86% of our chicks have survived to fledge, which seems like a good average.

Three of our boxes have fledged a total of 12 Tree Swallows, and four have hosted nesting House Wrens. Five of our boxes were unused this year. So, we had 22 boxes with nesting Bluebirds and 89 fledglings, which averages four fledglings per box.

On a final note, we have also noticed that the other birds in the area have shifted a bit. We've seen very few Eastern Kingbirds up there this year, and fewer Western Tanagers and Bullock's Orioles. There have been more Western Kingbirds, Lewis's woodpeckers, American Kestrels and Common Nighthawks this year. The Chipping sparrows seem to be having a good year, too.



Western Bluebirds
Photo by Karen Zook

— Karen Zook —



Pine Grosbeak

Birds you might find on YVAS field trips and your own outings in the next month



Common Tern
(above)

Baird's Sandpiper
(left)



Semi-palmated Sandpiper



Pectoral Sandpiper

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.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Email address _____

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

President	Kerry Turley (kdturley@embarqmail.com)	837-6930	Membership	Joy McKinney (joycatbird@gmail.com)	698-4110
Past President	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinformail.net)	877-6639	Newsletter Editor	Elizabeth Bohn (elizabethannbohn@yahoo.com)	901-1886
Secretary	Vera Backstrom (vback47@gmail.com)	731-2103	Programs	Bill Drenguis (bdrenguis@gmail.com)	965-5808
Treasurer	Karen Zook (gadzooks7@charter.net)	225-9494	Fund Raising	Dan Kinney (insur3@gmail.com)	452-3260
Directors:	Ken Tolonen (trivard@gmail.com)	965-4584	Special Committees:		
	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	453-2500	Bird Rehabilitator	Connie Hughes (owlbirdlady@gmail.com)	457-5661
	Bob Chicken (robertchicken@msn.com)	457-2014	Bird Reports	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	453-2500
	Reneé Navarrete (renee@digitalcardboard.com)	654-9646	Important Bird Areas	Vacant	
Standing (Voting) Committee Chairs:			Publicity	Vacant	
Refuge Keeper	Kerry Turley (kdturley@embarqmail.com)	837-6930	Social	Vacant	
Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp (bbird247@gmail.com)	965-1134	Volunteer Rec.	Vacant	
Conservation	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinformail.net)	877-6639	Webmaster	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	453-2500
Education	Ellen Stepniewski (steppie@nwinformail.net)	877-6639	Website	www.yakimaaudubon.org	
Field Trips	Scott Downes (downess@charter.net)	469-7807	Toppenish NWR CBC	Eric Heisey (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	
			Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	453-2500
			YVAS Email	(birds@yakimaaudubon.org)	

BLUEBIRDS FLOURISH ON VREDENBURGH TRAIL BOOKENDS



A bluebird nest with eggs.

species that effectively out-competes bluebirds.

This year, bluebirds fledged 74 young from these boxes with Tree Swallows chipping in another dozen from the three boxes where they were successful. Of the ten successful bluebird boxes, six produced two clutches. Of particular note were five boxes along the fence line of the Wenas Creek Ranch (see page 8 of last month's online Crier for a recap of a YVAS field trip visiting this remarkable habitat). All five of these boxes featured two clutches each (though only three fledged two broods) for a grand total of 40 newly minted bluebirds. Originally only three boxes adorned this fence line but due to its historical production another two boxes were added...definitely a smart move.



Almost ready to go! Do you find these babies as adorable as monitors do?

be a result of habitat, this trail consistently hosts Mountain Bluebirds almost exclusively as the bluebird of record as Westerns rarely claim nest sites here.

This season, Tree Swallow utilized two nest boxes and a couple of boxes went unclaimed according to Mary. She also reported that Mountain Bluebirds responded with an unusual number of second nest efforts. The trail's total fledged birds was a very remarkable, make that astounding, 123 birds!!

As a side note, the Vredenburgh Trail fledged a most respectful 540 bluebirds this season...the seventh highest total in its 35 year history. Mountain Bluebirds accounted for 80, up a bit from each of the prior eight years.

When weather cooperates throughout the nesting season, the vision and dedication of YVAS nest box pioneers is vindicated. A tip of the hat to those who continue monitor and maintain these nest boxes.

The Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail is a string of 132 nest boxes that begins at the intersection of Audubon & North Wenas Road and extends 14 miles to the northeast to the intersection of Durr and Umtanum Roads overlooking Ellensburg. This trail was founded in 1982.

From that era, two other smaller trails were also launched. One terminated at the Vredenburgh's beginning at Audubon Road and extended downhill on North Wenas Road to Wenas Lake. The other started at Durr Road and wound a short distance into suitable bluebird habitat.

I inherited the North Wenas Trail from Mary Rasmusson in 2001. At that time it consisted of 37 nest boxes. It has since been trimmed to 21 boxes primarily due the burgeoning human and farm animal population...both of which attract House Sparrows – a



Tree Swallow nests start similar to bluebirds, feathers are the final touch.

Nestling mortality, as Karen Zook noted in her article, happens as part of nature but is a bit of a downer nonetheless. On this trail, three Tree Swallow and 19 Western Bluebird nestlings perished including a clutch of seven discovered on May 9.

The Durr Road Trail was established by Virginia Vredenburgh a bit after her husband Harold passed away. In the mid-nineties, Virginia turned these 21 boxes over to Gus and Mary Pooler who continue to provide excellent stewardship for the trail.

In what certainly must



A Western female incubating eggs.