



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 47, Number 08

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

September 2018



PROGRAM
PHIL FISCHER

Burrowing Owls: Another one of Washington State's birds that face special challenges

By Jason Fidorra

WDFW and partners from the Global Owl Project, <http://www.globalowlproject.com/>, have worked around the Tri-



**From the burrow...
what's up?**

cities to install and maintain artificial nesting burrows for Burrowing Owls. This species is a state Species of Concern which has lost nesting habitat due to persecution of burrowing mammals and conversion of habitat. The project includes nest monitoring, banding, and tracking owls over their

migration with GPS backpacks. Intense nest monitoring has been conducted in WA, OR, and BC, providing new insight into population connectivity across the region. Wildlife Biologist Jason Fidorra has been working on the project for 4 seasons and will share some of the techniques, stories, and photos from working with this species.

Jason Fidorra has been a WDFW Wildlife Biologist for 4 years based in Pasco, WA. Prior to this, he worked on avian research and conservation projects from the boreal forest to new world tropics, and as a birding guide in Central America.

Jason grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania on the Lake Erie shoreline well known for its great warbler spectacle in spring. However, it wasn't until after graduating college and



**Jason on the prowl for
species number 2478**

landing a job working with Golden-cheeked warblers in Texas that he first started birding.

He is a specialist on waterbirds and neotropical migrants--having followed warblers during research from the tropical wintering grounds to the breeding range and on several migration studies. He has birded from Bolivia to Alaska, but Central America is one of his all-time favorite destinations due to the high

species diversity in such a small and beautiful region. When not consumed by birding, field guides, or eBird, Jason may be found backcountry hiking, experimenting in the kitchen, or preparing for that upcoming triathlon that he always *says* he is going to do.

His current work in the field of conservation and wildlife management has introduced and challenged him to new ecosystems and the politics of government work. Jason has commented that the imperiled shrub-steppe communities, "are awesome but more people need to think so."

**Mark your calendar for Thursday, Sept 27
at 7 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum
to see this presentation**

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



MEMBERSHIP

JOY MCKINNEY

Welcome New Member!

Yakima: Cynthia Wilson

Thank you for renewing your membership:

Ellensburg: Steve Moore

Richland: Connie Estep

Yakima: Becky and Tom Boyd, Jim and Jackie Hertel, Jennifer Lee, Horst Loechelt, Jane Mortimer, Karen and Joe Zook



THIS MONTH'S YVAS CALENDAR

- Sept 27** YVAS Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum, 1401 Arboretum Dr., Yakima, at 7:00 pm.
Oct 9 Board Meeting—location to be determined

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum, located at 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA. Guests are welcome at these meetings. The Board of Directors meets each month except December at 7pm at locations announced in the Calliope Crier. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.



FROM THE BOARD

BOB CHICKEN

Be Safe Out There!

Those words from a TV police show came to mind recently when I picked up a brochure title "Risk / Resource Guide to Criminal Activity on Forestlands". I had stopped at the La Grande Ranger Station for a forest map before heading on up to Mount Emily for a family gathering. After a quick read, we decided to venture on anyway.

While most people we might encounter are there to enjoy leisure activities or to fulfill legal job duties, others have criminal intent. These include marijuana and poppy grows, clandestine labs, and other dangerous drugs such as hallucinogenic mushrooms. In addition, there are urban-associated crimes such as theft, vandalism, arson and acts of criminal extremism.

Prepared by the Oregon Department of Justice, the brochure is intended to provide precautionary guidelines to help prevent crimes from occurring and increase your safety while you visit or work in rural forest and parks. As a general rule...

- **Be aware of your surroundings at all times.**
- **Make sure people know where you are.**
- **Do not approach suspects or enter a suspicious area.**

- **Make every effort to avoid suspicious packages and equipment.** They may be highly volatile or toxic.
- **Do not take photographs or collect evidence.** Do not touch, smell or move anything. Immediately leave the area.
- **Immediately leave the area.** The safest exit point is typically along the same route you entered.
- **As soon as you are safe, write down a detailed description of the location (landmarks, GPS coordinates), people, vehicle(s), and signs of suspicious activity you observed.**
- **Report to local law enforcement agencies ASAP**

The brochure concluded with:

Don't let these precautions scare you away from visiting and enjoying Oregon's natural beauty - Just be aware!

How did our Mt. Emily day go? We had a delightful time enjoying one another's company in the forest, picking huckleberries and driving 40 miles on forest road with spectacular viewpoints of the Grande Ronde Valley. The people we saw were no more suspicious to us than we were probably to them.

YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30,

8:30AM – 2 PM

Every two years, the Yakima County Solid Waste sponsors an Environmental Summit at the convention center for youth in our area. Students from junior, middle and high schools attend. As well as listening to presentations by nationally recognized experts, the students share projects they plan or have accomplished in their own local schools. Students visit the booths set up by local groups such as Audubon. Here they learn about environmental issues and projects going on in our area.

This year's guest speakers are Dylan D'Haeze, and Roger Williams. Dylan, at 14 years of age, was the director of Kids Can Save the Planet, a three-part series of award-winning documentaries. Roger is an award-winning director, producer and cinematographer of the film, River Blue.

At previous environmental summits, I have been very impressed with the students who attended and their involvement. Not only did I learn from the presentations, I felt privileged to be able to add Audubon's voice to their program. You are invited to help with the Yakima Valley Audubon booth on October 30th. We need help setting up, and for any or all of the day. **Please contact Ellen Stepniewski to help volunteer or any if you have any questions email her at (steppie@nwinfo.net 509-731-6805).**



CONSERVATION
ANDY STEPNIEWSKI

BLM Plans Wild Horse Population Control Research



Feral horses and burros, including those legally designated as “wild,” have no natural predators and can damage ecosystems when populations grow too large. ©skeeze

Over the past 10 years or so, damage from the huge feral horse population to rangelands on the Yakama Indian Reservation has become all too apparent, obvious to all driving US-97 south from Toppenish. Extreme overgrazing of the shrub-steppe bunchgrasses becomes even more obvious if you drive along Pumphouse Road for this road provides an intimate view of Toppenish Ridge. The large population of wild horses on Toppenish Ridge and elsewhere on the reservation has prompted concern by many in the Yakama Nation. Strong action to curtail growth of the herd, numbering upwards of 10,000 or more animals, has eluded the Yakama Nation land use managers because of cultural and humane issues.

The story here on the Yakama Nation is much the same across the Great Basin, as feral horses and the damage they inflict on rangelands has continued to be a hugely challenging issue. The BLM estimates in March 2018 that nearly 82,000 wild horses and burros were on BLM-managed lands. The target population is less than 27,000.

A sterilization technique on wild horses on Oregon's BLM lands is being considered. The results of this test might be useful in managing the Yakama Nation horses. An updated draft environmental assessment has been issued which includes a finding of no significant impact for plans

to undertake test sterilizations. Researchers will permanently sterilize wild horse mares by removing their ovaries in a process expected to take about 15 minutes.

The U.S. Geological Survey will participate in the test to provide detailed observations of the mares' behavior after the procedure. This was originally to be a joint research project between BLM, U.S. Geological Survey and Colorado State University. The university dropped from the project after the proposal became too controversial.

The BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program is charged with managing the population growth of herds of wild horses and burros on public lands with the goal of protecting both the health of the herds and the environments in which they live. Be-

cause the horses and burros have no natural predators, herds have grown well beyond what the rangeland ecosystem can sustain and native wildlife is suffering.

Adapted from a notice posted by The Wildlife Society. September 4, 2018.

[Postscript. Several years ago the BLM considered sterilization of feral mustangs, in an article I reported on, concluding the feral horse issue would likely continue, so challenging and emotionally charged is the issue.]





FIELD TRIPS

SCOTT DOWNES



Oct 6 (Saturday) (In case of bad weather, backup date of Saturday, Oct 13).- Bird Banding at the Yakima Arboretum. A morning event that will conclude by noon...sign up in advance. Jeff Kozma will introduce participants to bird capture and banding using mist nets. The goal is to capture birds as they are migrating south through the Yakima Arboretum. Nets will be put up near the Yakima Arboretum Sparrow Patch feeding area to increase our chances of catching birds. YVAS members will sow this area with food a few weeks before the banding date. Jeff will explain various aspects of bird banding including different mesh/net sizes and their uses, how to remove birds from nets, performing measurements on birds (e.g., weighing, wing chord, bill length, etc), how to age birds, banding codes, affixing bands to legs, etc. The best thing about capturing birds is you never know what might show up in your nets! Potential birds that may be caught are White-crowned, Lincoln's, Song, Fox and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Spotted Towhee, Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco, etc. Dress appropriately for the weather and in layers as mornings can be cool before heating up during the day. A folding camp chair would be good unless you prefer to rough it on the ground. Bring your camera to capture close up images of birds. Also, bring food/snacks and beverage if you think you'll need them. Hand sanitizer would also be good to bring as birds like to poop! To sign up and get meeting place and time, contact **Jeff Kozma** at **509-225-3465** or **jcr_5105@charter.net**

Oct 7 (Sunday) - Rimrock and Clear Lakes. Gulls congregate on Rimrock Lake in the fall after spawning, attracted to the spent Kokanee salmon carcasses. This is the time when species unusual birds in the interior like scoters might be around. Clear Lake can have many types of waterfowl and various resident birds such as woodpeckers and finches. A full day trip, departing at 7:30am and returning by 3pm. For meeting location and to sign-up, email **Andy Stepniewski** at **steppie@nwinform.net** or phone: **509-949-7404**.

Green Heron makes up for missing boat trip

When Andy and Ellen Stepniewski decided to lead a weekend field trip to Grays Harbor County for the last weekend in August, including a pelagic boat trip with Westport Seabirds, I was excited to join in the fun. There is something very special about the Westport Seabirds trips, like seeing birds that you can only see on a boat and talking to birders who I don't see very often. Plus, just being on a boat out in the ocean is pretty cool.

Through Spring of this year, my right hip decided it wasn't very happy. I visited a surgeon in June and scheduled a hip replacement for July 24. As I thought about it, it occurred to me that spending a day on a boat only four weeks after hip replacement might not be the best idea. I reluctantly cancelled my spot on the boat. Oh, well. There were still birds for me to see in the Westport area that could fill my day while the rest of the group was on the boat.

While the group had to be on the boat before 6 am, I slept in. I started my day at the east end of Pacific Ave. in Westport at a spot I found by using Google Maps on my iphone. There is a small

natural area that runs to an overlook of an arm of Grays Harbor. The tide was way out and so were the birds. I was able to see many Great Blue Herons, pelicans, cormorants and gulls with my scope. Right above me, though, were 20 Purple Martins, catching the mosquitoes that were pestering me. Purple Martins are the largest member of the swallow family and they are only found in Washington west of the Cascades. It had been many years since I had had a good experience with martins. It was a great start of the day!

I worked my way to Tokeland, in Pacific County south of Westport. I got there just before noon and saw a birder looking at a bird in the corner of the marina. It was a Green Heron, the smallest member of the heron family. It was a very cooperative bird, perching on a piece of driftwood while catching fish, then stalking fish as it slowly walked in the shallow water where it posed nicely for photos!

While this heron is occasionally seen in Eastern Washington, it is quite rare in Yakima County. This Green Heron was the highlight of my weekend!



Green Heron
Photo by Denny Granstrand

— Denny Granstrand —

WESTPORT PELAGIC AND SHOREBIRDING THE OUTER WASHINGTON COAST 24-26 AUGUST 2018

24 August. Nine Yakima Auduboners and guests headed out to Westport on the Washington coast for a weekend of birding, targeting especially shorebirds and offshore pelagic species. We met Friday afternoon in Westport, first at Bottle Beach but the incoming tide had already inundated the mudflats so we headed to the marina and harbor entrance. Several hundred Marbled Godwits huddled on their usual Coast Guard jetty high tide roost, while out in the channel, we observed seabirds such as Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots



**The Good Ship Monte Carlo
Photo by Denny Granstrand**

plus all three of Washington's cormorants: Brandt's, Pelagic, and Double-crested. Brown Pelicans and Heermann's Gulls, both fall visitors from California and Mexico, were here in good numbers.

Hoping the outgoing tide would bring a bounty of shorebirds, we returned to Bottle Beach but again the flats were very quiet. Perhaps the stable weather pattern had not prompted big movements of shorebirds yet. Baird's Sandpipers, literally at our feet, were very photogenic. Our wader tally was only seven species, certainly the lowest I can ever recall here in fall migration: Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Killdeer, Baird's, Least, and Western Sandpipers, and Short-billed Dowitcher. A Peregrine Falcon circling overhead was a stirring sight, so, as usual, Bottle Beach is always worth a visit.

25 August. We assembled aboard the *Monte Carlo* on Float 10 well before dawn for our all-day pelagic boat trip. After our safety talk from Captain Phil Anderson, introductions were made to deckhand Chris Anderson, spotters Bill Shelmerdine, Bill Tweit, and Michael Donahue. We then set off to deep waters, more than 30 miles offshore. This was to be a day of excellent marine mammal watching, starting off with two Gray Whales just off the jetty ends. In the early light several hundred Heermann's Gull were feeding inside the harbor along one of the tide rips. Beyond the harbor buoy, we started tallying Sooty Shearwaters, a winter visitor to the North Pacific from the Southern Hemisphere oceans engulfing New Zealand. This

species is invariably the most abundant seabird on a Westport pelagic.

There was a Red-necked Grebe, in breeding plumage, fairly close to outer buoy off Grays Harbor. Beyond this buoy to the west end of Grays Canyon, there were many more pelagic bird species. The boat slowed to give everyone looks at several Red Phalaropes, the most pelagic of its clan. We had reasonable views of all three

jaegers: Pomarine, Parasitic, and the Long-tailed, piratical seabirds that breed in the arctic, now heading south to winter at sea in southern latitudes. The outsized the outsize thug of the jaeger clan, South Polar Skua, eluded us on this trip. In



**Black-footed Albatross
Photo taken by
Denny Granstrand**

the alcid family, we had good numbers of Common Murres and several Pigeon Guillemots, three adults near shore being expected but one well offshore being a little unusual. All were in breeding plumage and flying north. Other alcids included Cassin's Auklets and a handful of Rhinoceros Auklets. A flock of the incredibly striking Sabine's Gulls, always a thrill to spot, were loafing on the ocean surface, until all took flight, flashing their distinctive wing pattern. It was in this area where we had lots of Black-footed Albatrosses, 77 in all! Albatrosses always elicit gasps from observers. What a magnificent sight to see these very big, but ever so beautiful birds, soaring elegantly just over the water's surface. Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, the

"swallows of the sea," came close enough to the *Monte Carlo* to give everybody reasonable views. Northern Fulmar, one of the Northern Hemispheres most abundant seabirds, were everywhere around the several shrimp trawlers we motored by very slowly, as these trawlers were ejecting lots of bycatch, thus attracting many seabirds. Of the 628 fulmars counted, 47 were light phase. In the North Pacific Ocean, dark phase birds hugely outnumber light phase birds, which dominate North Atlantic populations. How the ratio of dark-to-light changes on boat trips is of interest. Four species of shearwaters, all Southern Hemisphere breeders, were noted on this segment: Pink-footed, Sooty, the very pretty Buller's, and the

WESTPORT PELAGIC AND SHOREBIRDING (*continued from page 5*)

uncommon Short-tailed, the latter a species which usually doesn't appear off Washington until later in the fall. A Townsend's Warbler, a juvenile appeared off the mouth of Grays Canyon, clearly a lost bird. It flitted low over the water around the boat for some minutes before landing on the boat. I always root for these misplaced waifs, hoping they stay on board until we return to land. This individual departed as we were steaming back, so we'll never know if this bird made it back to land safely.

Marine mammals put on a fantastic show, with five Humpback Whales, three Harbor Porpoises, 20 Dall's Porpoise, 30 Pacific White-sided Dolphin, and two Northern Fur Seals. We also observed a Blue Shark and four Ocean Sunfishes.

We began our shoreward return to Westport in late morning. En route, we rechecked the same shrimp trawler fleet that we had passed in the morning. We saw many of the same species of seabirds we noted out at Grays Canyon and were pleased the Townsend's Warbler was still with us. Marine mammals were in exceptional numbers on this leg of our voyage, with four Humpback Whales, two Harbor Porpoises, five Dall's Porpoises and a large aggregation of 300 Pacific White-sided Dolphins dashing and splashing about the boat! We also had five Northern Fur Seals. A Brown-headed Cowbird, not nearly as popular with us as the Townsend's Warbler, came aboard about 10 miles offshore, and rode back almost to the Harbor.

On our final leg of the trip, from the outer buoy off Grays Harbor into the boat basin, we tallied birds characteristic of near shore waters including many Brown Pelicans and Heermann's Gulls, along with Brandt's Cormorants. Shorebirds on the outer stretch of the jetty included a couple Wandering Tattlers. A lone Steller's Sea Lion was on a buoy and numerous barking California Sea Lions were in the basin. In the marina, we slowed by the Coast Guard jetty to check for a rare godwit, such as a Bar-tailed, among the 400 or so Marbleds, without any luck.

After the boat trip we drove south along the coast, stopping briefly at North Cove, where a huge flock of California Gulls were roosting and bathing on the sand flats and creek.

A continuous line of Sooty Shearwaters were heading southwards just off the outermost waves, a tiny part of the 30 million or so of this incredibly abundant seabird.

Tokeland has always been a "must" stop on a coastal birding trip, though the large shorebird flocks of recent years seem to have relocated to Westport. Still, it's THE dependable Washington site for Willets. Purple Martins, 11 in all, were the big news at the marina. It was misty weather, evidently grounding the high-flying martins, making it easier to count them. This is the most martins



Participants Scan The Beach
Photo by Lori Isley

I've ever seen here.

26 August. In the early morning, we ordered our breakfast at the Subway on the south side of town. In the trees and shrubbery outside were some of the usual resident songbirds of the outer coast Sitka Spruce forest: Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Pine Siskin.

On our way to Ocean Shores, we stopped at the Hoquiam Sewage Treatment Ponds, adding quite a few species to our trip list: ducks (Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, and Green-winged Teal), grebes (Pied-billed and Horned), Red-tailed Hawk, Cliff Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Swainson's Thrush, and Orange-crowned Warbler.

At Ocean Shores itself, we first walked out to the base of the Pt. Brown Jetty, where we scoped a distant Wandering Tattler plus our only Ruddy Turnstone of the trip. Sanderlings were running on the sandy beach, as entertaining as ever.

Next in Ocean Shores we hiked the Oyhut Wildlife Area, again finding disappointingly few shorebirds. We searched long and hard for the Pacific Golden-Plovers, noted by others in recent days, without any luck. We did add species to our trip list, though: White-winged Scoter, Red-throated and Common Loons, Osprey, Common Raven, House Finch, and Savannah Sparrow, giving us a respectable 95 species total.

Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Join/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 Society Membership.....\$ 25.00 per household
 YVAS Senior (62+) ____ OR Student Membership ____ (please check one).....\$ 15.00 per household
 Yakima Valley Audubon Society Life Membership\$ 500.00 per household

New Member ____ Renewing Member ____ (please check one)

In addition to my membership payment of \$ _____, my check includes an additional donation of \$ _____

____ 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 membership questions, contact Joy McKinney at joycatbird@gmail.com.

2017 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

President	Bill Drenguis (bdrenguis@gmail.com)	965-5808	Education	Ellen Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	731-6805
Past President	Kerry Turley (kdturley@gmail.com)	837-6930	Field Trips	Scott Downes (downess@charter.net)	469-7807
Vice President	Reneé Navarrete (renee@digitalcardboard.com)	654-9646	Membership	Joy McKinney (joycatbird@gmail.com)	
Secretary	Vera Backstrom (vback47@gmail.com)	731-2103	Newsletter Editor	Elizabeth Bohn (elizabethannbohn@yahoo.com)	
Treasurer	Karen Zook (gadzooks7@charter.net)	225-9494	Programs	Phil Fischer (bdrenguis@gmail.com)	731-0211
Directors:	Bob Chicken (robertchicken@msn.com)	457-2014	Fund Raising	Dan Kinney (insur3@gmail.com)	452-3260
	Phil Fischer (pcfischer@gmail.com)	731-0211	Special Committees:		
	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	952-2550	Bird Rehabilitator	Connie Hughes (owlbirdlady@gmail.com)	457-5661
	Ken Tolonen (8rivard@gmail.com)	965-4584	Bird Reports	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	952-2550
			Social	Nan Ide	952-9765
			Webmaster	Reneé Navarrete (renee@digitalcardboard.com)	654-9646
Standing (Voting) Committee Chairs:			Website	www.yakimaaudubon.org	
Refuge Keeper	Kerry Turley (kdturley@gmail.com)	837-6930	Toppenish CBC	Eric Heisey (magicman32@rocketmail.com)	
Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp (bbirder247@aol.com)	965-1134	Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com)	952-2550
Conservation	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	949-7404	YVAS Email	birds@yakimaaudubon.org	
			YVAS Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/yakimaaudubon	

Yakima Valley Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2823
Yakima, WA 98907

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Yakima, WA
Permit No. 38

Return Service Requested



Check your label—
has your membership expired?

 printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

Coming Attractions:
Sept 27 Chapter Meeting
Oct 6 Bird Banding at Arboretum
Oct 7 Rimrock and Clear Lake