



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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February 2019



FEBRUARY PROGRAM

PHIL FISCHER

Helping Ducks Become Unlimited

With

Tina Blewett

Tina Blewett, Regional Biologist for Eastern Washington of Ducks Unlimited, Inc. will present on restoration projects benefiting ducks and other aquatic species.

During her more than nine years in the restoration field, Ms. Blewett has helped lead and coordinate over 47 restoration projects that included a variety of wetland, floodplain, riparian, creek, and upland habitats. These projects have been on private and public lands, and required working with multiple entities and stakeholders to successfully accomplish. Projects range across eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and northern Oregon.

Ms. Blewett's duties range the gamut from project initiation to completion. Specific tasks include building landowner and partner relations, investigating new projects, evaluating sites for potential projects, designing restoration plans, writing grant proposals, contracting with funding sources and sub-contractors, budgeting and reporting of grant agreements, collaborating with landowners (private individuals, corporations, state, federal, tribal, and local agencies), bidding, selecting and hiring of contractors to perform restoration work, completing applications for regulatory compliance and permits, developing proposals, designing and performing field research to monitor waterfowl or wetland responses to restoration and writing technical reports of the results, performing outreach and education to private individuals and the public, presenting at meetings, tracking and managing projects, liaising with partners and funding agencies.

Before working for Ducks Unlimited she accumulated a wide variety of experiences with birds and other wildlife. She has performed international bird research: twice living and working in Panama, and once in Costa Rica. She learned large game management issues in Africa, and handled and transported various antelope species such as nyala, eland, impala, and giraffe. She has accomplished



Tina Blewett scoping out waterfowl during a survey in March 2018.

over 750 scuba dives in numerous countries around the world and many parts of the US. She worked for the State of Washington as a research diver. She performed cavity-nesting bird research in Western Washington to quantify impacts of urbanization on this guild of snag-dependent birds. She has volunteered for many other wildlife projects, including short-eared owl population surveys, Yuma myotis (a species of bat native to the Western United States) maternity colony population surveys, and a Trumpeter Swan lead poisoning study. She and her 9-year old son enjoy hiking, kayaking, skiing, birding, and all manner of wildlife watching.

She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Biological Oceanography and a Master's of Science in Wildlife Ecology, both from the University of Washington.

Mark your calendar for Thursday, February 28, 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>



CONSERVATION
ANDY STEPNIIEWSKI

Wildlife and the Southern Border Wall

All Photos by Ellen Stepniewski

Ellen and I have visited the border between the United States and Mexico on birding trips a number of times over the past couple years. We've observed first hand the tremendous biodiversity along the borderlands, where subtropical flora and fauna extends north from Mexico into the United States. Birders and naturalists are drawn in huge numbers to visit refuges and preserves all along our southern border, to see and photograph the amazing birds and plants found only there in our country. Over the past 75 years, conservationists have tirelessly worked to preserve samples of the most important examples of these ecosystems. However, enlarging and expanding the border wall threatens these refuges and preserves with habitat destruction.

An effective border wall already exists along long stretches of the nearly 2,000-mile border as seen south of Sierra Vista in Arizona (Photo 1). Biologists are very concerned this expanding barrier imposes a barrier to migration of flora and fauna and thus will be a huge disruption to natural ecosystem processes.

In the El Paso region in westernmost Texas, a long wall is also in place (Photo 2). In the Rio Bosque Preserve here, conservationists have restored a chunk of Rio Grande floodplain ecosystem with treated wastewater.

A very curious area of border wall is in place at Sabal Palms Sanctuary, outside Brownsville, TX (Photo 3, on page 3). There is no gate there and visitors from the United States side currently pass freely here to enjoy the wonderful preserve south of the wall. Each afternoon, however, all visitors must depart promptly by 5:00 pm, and the Border Patrol arrives to monitor the area through the night.

Farther upstream on the Rio Grande River, border walls are planned in areas presently without the barrier. Bentsen State Park has, for generations, attracted birders and naturalists to its extensive subtropical woodland and Rio Grande River oxbows (resacas). Ellen snapped this photo of a Hook-billed Kite (Photo 4, on page 3), very rare in the United States, with a tree snail, the



Photo 1 — The view south of Sierra Vista, AZ



Photo 2 — The border wall near El Paso, TX

This article continues on page 3



MEMBERSHIP
JOY MCKINNEY

Thanks for renewing your membership!

NACHES: Vera Backstrom and Dotty
Armstrong

YAKIMA: Mrs. George P. Thayer, Kathy and
Ed Medford, James and Mary
Stephenson, Karen Hyatt, Colleen
Kindelspire, Alice Presson, Cheryl
Meenach, Jack and Bev Vonfeld



THIS MONTH'S YVAS
CALENDAR

Feb 28 Audubon Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm. Great program scheduled!

Mar 12 Board Meeting at Starbucks on Summitview and 58th Ave 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 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.

Conservation — Wildlife and the Southern Border Wall continued

primary diet of this "light-duty" raptor. This park and the adjacent National Butterfly Preserve, will be bisected and significantly impacted by construction of a border wall. In fact, if current plans for the butterfly preserve are enacted, it will be, as one writer describes, a "huge lit war zone." Protest efforts have not yet swayed the US federal government to adopt a different border strategy here, such as technological methods of securing our border.

Santa Ana NWR is one of the area's largest preserves, protecting over 2,000 acres of subtropical woodlands and wetlands. This is my very favorite natural venue in all of south Texas and we spent an entire day walking the trails there in January. Protests to the plans for the wall through this refuge have been so great that the US Congress has, for the time being, backed off plans of constructing a wall here.

Farther upriver is the Salineño Wildlife Preserve near Salineño, a tiny village (2010 census listed the population as only 210 residents) famous for its birding as it is one of the best places to look for Audubon's Oriole (Photo 6), which has only a tiny foothold in the United States. If the wall is built as planned here, the preserve would be entirely destroyed.

The threats to biodiversity by expanding the border wall are greatest in South Texas because, by one very credible estimate, over 95% of these habitats have been converted to agriculture and/or other development. For too many decades, our dedicated conservationists have fought tirelessly to preserve *tiny* remnants of the select best of the remaining few precious examples of this once incredibly biodiverse region. The threats to these remaining areas is so great the National Audubon Society issued this statement in early February to draw attention to these natural gems:

"Construction is imminently set to begin on a section of a border wall at the National Butterfly Sanctuary in Mission, Texas, and threatens to close Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park in Texas, part of the World Birding Center, which hosts over 500 bird species. National Audubon Society has a position statement on this issue. As the voice of birds and as a community-builder for 114 years, Audubon opposes the construction of structures along the border that would:

- *destroy or fragment important bird habitat like Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, iconic National Wildlife Refuges like Santa Ana NWR in Texas, National Parks, National Forests, other public lands, or protected wetlands;*
- *block migration corridors for 111 endangered species, and 108 species of migratory birds;*
- *damage habitat for over 500 species of birds;*
- *create or worsen environmental risks like flooding that would threaten birds and people;*
- *result in waiving or weakening bedrock environmental protections, including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, or the National Environmental Policy Act;*
- *diminish outdoor recreation or ecotourism opportunities;*
- *sever connections between communities and natural resources; or harm the communities, landowners, tribes, or organizations with whom we partner and among whom we serve."*



Photo 3 — "Open wall" at Sabal Palms Sanctuary



Photo 4 — Hook-billed Kite at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park



Photo 5 — Audubon's Oriole at the Salineño Wildlife Preserve



**The Yakima Area Arboretum Presents a Class:
Attracting Birds to Your Yard
with Jeff Kozma**

When: March 17, 2019 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM
 Where: The Yakima Area Arboretum
 To Register: Call 248-7337
 How Much: General Public \$25
 YAA and YVAS Members \$20

Whether you have a small, urban back yard or a couple of acres, you can attract birds, butterflies and bumble bees to your yard! Join wildlife biologist Jeff Kozma for an informative class on the best ways to attract birds to your yard. Jeff will highlight native trees and shrubs attractive to birds, discuss the best foods to offer birds in feeders, the importance and ease of attracting birds with water, and how to identify some of the more common birds you can expect to visit your yard for your efforts. It can be as easy and simple as planting a single tree or hanging up a bird feeder, or as involved as completely landscaping your yard with trees, shrubs, feeders and a water feature. The best thing is, no matter how much time and effort you put in, the results are the same . . . attracting these winged wonders to your yard where they are easily viewed and marveled at!



Photos by George Vlahakis and Denny Granstrand

See bottom of page 5 for more photos for "Attracting Birds to Your Yard"



FIELD TRIPS

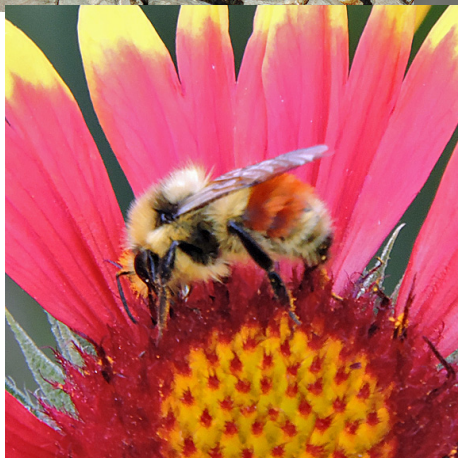
SCOTT DOWNES

March 2 (Saturday)- Toppenish NWR for raptors and waterfowl. Join Andy and Ellen Stepniewski for a tour of the Toppenish Creek bottomlands, featuring waterfowl and raptors. The creek has its source on the Lost Horse Plateau in the Yakama Indian Reservation west of White Swan. By early March in a typical year, snowmelt fills the creek and creates temporary wetlands in the valley bottom west of Toppenish, attracting big numbers of geese and ducks. We'll explore these ponds and man-made impoundments managed by the national wildlife refuge and Yakama Nation for waterfowl and raptors, ending at Fort Simcoe and its famous stand of Oregon White Oaks. Here, we'll have a picnic lunch while observing the Lewis's Woodpeckers and other birds. Contact Andy and Ellen at steppie@nwinfo.net or 509-949-7404, for meeting location and details for this trip, starting at 7:30 am.

March 23 (Saturday). Selah Cliffs Natural Area. Join Joe and Karen Zook on March 23 for a trip to the Selah Cliffs Natural Area. This will be a half day trip. We will not be focusing on finding any specific birds, but the cliffs are a great place to observe raptors, some of which nest on the cliffs. Raptors we may see include American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Golden and possibly Bald Eagles. We may also find Canyon and Rock Wrens, ground birds like California Quail and Chukar, White-throated Swifts, swallows, and sparrows. This is a fairly easy walk. The trail starts alongside the Yakima Canyon road (across the road from the Sundown M Ranch) and ends just west of the Redmon Bridge. We will start at 9:00 AM in the hopes that the air will warm and we will be able to spot soaring raptors. Bring optics, snacks and water. Wear good walking shoes and dress for the weather. A Discover Pass is required to park at the trailhead. If you plan on joining this trip or have questions, contact the Zooks via email (preferred) at gadzooks7@charter.net, or by phone at 509-225-9494.

March 29/30 (Friday/Saturday)- Bluebird Box Cleanout. Date TBD on participants and weather. 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 (bbirder247@gmail.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 is sturdy footwear.

Attracting Birds to Your Yard — continued from page 4



Flowers, fruit-bearing trees and bushes, water features and feeders will bring birds, butterflies and bumble bees into your yard and provide you with many enjoyable hours watching them.



2018 – A Record Year for Cleman Mountain Bluebirds

During this cold, sometimes gloomy, time of year, it is fun to look back at warmer, sunnier times, especially when they involve birds. Last year (2018) was the fifth year that Joe and I monitored and maintained our little trail on Cleman Mountain which is accessed through the WDFW gate at the hay barn storing feed for wintering elk. Like the Vredenburg Bluebird trail, we also had a record year. Our trail has thirty-five boxes that we monitor regularly. Four of those boxes were not used at all, so thirty-one boxes fledged 150 Western Bluebirds, a dozen Mountain Bluebirds and 13 Tree Swallows.

Mortality was low last year. We lost twelve Bluebird chicks, which is never a good thing, but some mortality is expected. The losses amounted to only seven percent of the chicks that hatched.

There are all sorts of interesting things to be discovered up there. We've been monitoring long enough that we found a few very fascinating trends last year. One was Mariposa Lilies. There were literally hundreds of them blooming up there this season! They are one of my favorite local wild flowers, and I don't ever recall seeing so many of them in bloom.



Mariposa Lilly being visited by a green bee



Joe Zook monitoring a nest box on Cleman Mountain

Great-horned Owl as it got to know its surroundings. We saw what we believe to be the same owl in almost the same spot on at least three different visits. We also located two pair of nesting Hairy Woodpeckers. We found a snag

which had nesting Lewis's Woodpeckers, and then noticed that a pair of Kestrels was using a different cavity in the same tree. That was an unexpected surprise. A closer inspection of the snag found that there was also a pair of House Wrens nesting in that same snag. Unusually brave wrens, to be sure. Perhaps this is a testament to the lack of cavities available for nesting.

Other trends include seeing significantly fewer House Wrens this year. There were also fewer Black-headed Grosbeaks and Bullock's Orioles than in years past.

One "non-bird" highlight was watching a beaver dam being built across Wenas Creek just northwest of the bridge. We only saw the beavers once, but we saw their progress each time we visited the area.

Taking care of this Bluebird trail is a joy. It's so fun to watch "our" chicks as they grow, change and fledge. Although the seven plus miles of roads we traverse on the slopes of Cleman Mountain are a bit rough, the scenery is beautiful. As with the rest of the beautiful Wenas Valley, the birds are varied and captivating. Other wildlife is plentiful to make this a very special location for a bluebird nest box trail. I hope 2019 is kind to everyone's birds.

— Karen Zook —

Butterflies were abundant up there as well.

Even though the Bluebirds are the reason we are up there, there are a lot of other fun and engaging birds to be found in the area. In 2018, we saw more Steller's Jays than in past years, more Lark Sparrows and more Lazuli Buntings. We had fun watching a juvenile



A striking Lark Sparrow perched and ready to break into song. All three photos by Karen Zook.

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 or 698-4110.

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Another visit to San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico

My wife and I are spending six weeks in San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico. It is our second visit to this area. While Yakima has been hit hard with snow in January and February, we are thinking that our decision to come south was a good one. I am hoping you will enjoy seeing photos of some of the birds I have seen here.

— Denny Granstrand —



Vermillion Flycatcher



White Ibis



Black-tailed Gnatcatcher



Cactus Wrens on a saguaro cactus



Reddish Egret



Greater Roadrunner

Coming Attractions:

Feb 28 Chapter Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

Mar 2 Toppenish NWR field trip

Mar 23 Selah Cliffs field trip

Mar 29-30 Bluebird Box Cleanout