



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 48, Number 08

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

September 2019



SEPTEMBER PROGRAM
PHIL FISCHER

Common Ravens on the YTC presented by Brandon Rossi

I live up US Highway 12 in the Rimrock area and got to listen to the raucous calling of a raven family group this spring and early summer. I have heard ravens calling sporadically while walking through the forests of the eastern Cascades and generally found them rare unless they were associated with human influences such as camp site trash and gut piles left by successful hunters. The family group making the noise this spring enjoyed handouts from over-flowing trash bins and intentional feeding by a few residents in the small community settlement I live in. When Brandon Rossi expressed willingness to talk about his work with ravens at the Yakima Training Center I jumped on it. What follows is a description of what he plans to present and a little background on Brandon himself.

The ecology and space use of Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*; hereafter ravens) is not well understood in the shrub-steppe of central Washington State. Raven populations in this region have increased by more than 254% since 1990. Researchers have related increased raven populations to human activities such as landfills, agriculture, and livestock operations. Ravens in central Washington are implicated as top predators of a small endemic population of greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), and increasing raven abundance may be contributing to low rates of sage-grouse nest success. In recent years researchers have discovered a correlation between raven abundance and sage-grouse nest success in Wyoming (Bui et al. 2010, Dinkins 2013).

Annual reproductive output of ravens on the Yakima Training Center (YTC) has been documented through nest monitoring since 2011. Raven populations have continually increased since nest monitoring was implemented. YTC has a relatively high density of nesting ravens. This research led to a better understanding of raven ecology in this region, and further research is needed to reveal



the relationship between ravens and sage-grouse in central Washington. Ravens are a charismatic and mysterious species, both reveled and feared in folklore, and I hope to pique your interest in this species.

Brandon Rossi began working at the Yakima Training Center in 2013 as a wildlife biologist. Brandon took advantage of the opportunity to advance his education when common raven research began at YTC in 2015. He began attending graduate school at Central Washington University, and recently graduated with his Master of Science in Biology. Brandon was born in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and believes being raised in this majestic part of the U.S. began his love of nature. His family moved to Ellensburg in 1991, and Brandon has resided there since. He recently celebrated his 10th anniversary with his wife and has two young boys (8 and 6) who all share a similar enthusiasm for nature.

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

Coming Attractions:

Sept 26 Chapter Meeting - 7 p.m.

at the Yakima Area Arbortem

Oct 5 Bird Banding at the Yakima Area Arbortetum

Oct 8 Board Meeting at Starbucks on Summitview

Oct 19 Conrad Meadows field trip

An Invitation to our Members

The YVAS Board needs YOU! We are looking for new people with new ideas to help lead this organization forward. All that is needed to join the board is enthusiasm and a desire to help. You don't even need to be a birder to be involved.

We are looking for a President. The president presides over the board and chapter meetings and is the "face" of YVAS. The term is two years. The president position is not especially time-consuming. The main responsibilities are running the chapter and board meetings. Past-presidents and other board members are always willing to assist. We understand that you may not want to start there, but it could be fun to just jump right in as President.

We are also looking for a Field Trip Chair and Directors. The Field Trip Chair is responsible for coordinating the field trips. This person works with the field trip leaders

to schedule and publicize our trips. You don't have to lead field trips unless you would like to.

Directors are not tied to any specific task. They can volunteer to help with other committees or come up with projects on their own. The most important thing that directors do is provide ideas and input. We need help with new ideas! This position is a good place to start on the Board if you want to help, but are not sure where, or if you just want to get the feel of how the Board works and how you can contribute.

If you are interested in or have questions about any of these positions, please feel free to contact Bill Drenguis (965-5808 or bdrenguis@gmail.com, or any of the other board members listed in the on page 6 of this Crier. You are also welcome to attend a board meeting to get the feel of how things work there before you volunteer.



MEMBERSHIP
JOY MCKINNEY

Thanks for renewing your membership!

Seattle: Mary Williamson

Yakima: Richard Repp, Susan Paoella

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
ANDY STEPNIIEWSKI

National Audubon Society Letter: Support the BEST Act of 2019

On behalf of our over 1.4 million members and the Audubon chapters and partner organizations and businesses, Audubon strongly encourages the passage of the Better Energy Storage Technology (“BEST”) Act of 2019 (S.1602/H.R.2986). This bipartisan bill will help improve energy storage technology critically needed to ensure emissions-free renewable energy is available around the clock.

Audubon’s 2014 Birds and Climate Change Report shows that more than half of the bird species in North America could lose at least 50% of their current ranges by 2080 due to rising temperatures. Audubon supports federal clean energy legislation including the BEST Act that will reduce carbon emissions at the speed and scale necessary to protect birds and the places they need.

If passed, the BEST Act would:

- 1) Authorize a research, development, and demonstration program within the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Electricity at \$60

million per year for five years.

- 2) Direct DOE to produce a 10-year strategic plan that includes timelines for the commencement and completion of important milestones for grid-scale energy storage research.

- 3) Focus DOE research on setting cost targets for energy storage systems that meet demands across daily, weekly, and seasonal timescales.

- 4) Require DOE to enter into agreements to carry out up to 5 grid-scale energy storage demonstration projects, which will test and address issues with the technologies at scale. This step is often overlooked, but it is essential in getting new technology to market.

We applaud the bipartisan legislators leading the BEST Act and strongly urge passage of this legislation as a standalone bill or part of a larger legislative package this Congress to ensure a clean energy future that’s good for birds and people.

Do Birds Return to the Same Feeders Every Winter?

Do you ever wonder if those White-crowned Sparrows or that Spotted Towhee you see show up at your feeders in the fall are the same ones/one that was at your feeder last year? Jeff Kozma, TFW Wildlife Biologist with the Yakama Nation, will attempt to answer that question by expanding bird banding efforts at the Yakima Area Arboretum Sparrow Patch this fall. The “Sparrow Patch” is located at the eastern edge of the Yakima Area Arboretum and adjacent to the Yakima Greenway. It has a wooden blind with fold down slats where people can observe birds at close range in a feeding area that is supplied with bird seed generously donated by the Yakima Valley Audubon Society. Last year, Jeff taught an introduction to bird banding class at the Sparrow Patch in October and will be continuing that class again this fall (October 5th). This year, Jeff hopes to set up his mist nets there multiple times to band a good quantity of birds that visit the Sparrow Patch. The hope is that in future years of the project, Jeff will be able to recapture some of those birds in order to get an understanding of the return rates of birds to the Sparrow Patch...also known as “site fidelity”. Are some species more apt to return to a site than others? How many years will individuals return? Are males more site specific than females? As keen-eyed birdwatchers, you can participate in this project by reporting birds/species that you see banded at the Sparrow Patch on your e-bird lists or directly to Jeff. Some observers last year actually



Joy McKinney with a White-crowned Sparrow that Jeff caught last year at the bird blind at the arboretum.

got such great photos, and enough of the band numbers could be seen, that Jeff could actually identify individual birds! Next time you are visiting the Sparrow Patch, make sure to look closely at the birds...some of them just might be sporting a shiny new silver leg band.



FIELD TRIPS

SCOTT DOWNES



Oct 19 (Saturday) — Conrad Meadows — Join us in the search of the elusive Spruce Grouse (subspecies *franklinii*) and other montane species. Conrad Meadows is located adjacent to the Goat Rocks Wilderness and is the largest subalpine meadow in the State of Washington. The meadows are at 4000' elevation, and the South Fork of the Tieton River meanders through it. The habitat includes lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann's spruce, and occasional mountain hemlock and, more importantly, patches of grouseberry (*vaccinium scoparium*), a very important indicator species for spruce grouse.

This will be a full day trip, departing at 7:30 am and returning by 3:00 pm, and will involve fairly easy hiking of around three miles. Pack a lunch, water and snacks and dress for changing weather. For meeting location and to sign-up, please contact field trip leader Kerry Turley at kdturley@gmail.com or 509-840-0980.

Upcoming Class at the Yakima Area Arboretum

October 5 (Saturday) — Bird Banding at the Yakima Arboretum (backup date of October 12 in case of bad weather) .

Jeff Kozma will lead a banding demonstration at the Yakima Arboretum. He 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 get the sparrow patch up and running with food a few weeks before the banding date.

Jeff will teach participants 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!

Birds we captured last year included Spotted Towhee, White-crowned Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, Song Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, 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 a 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 (e-mail preferred). Call soon because the class is limited to 12 people.



Spotted Towhee (above) and White-crowned Sparrow that Jeff caught in mist nets and banded.

Sheep Lake Hike on Sept. 6 Trip Report

Fourteen Yakima Auduboners headed up the Chinook Pass Highway to hike the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) to Sheep Lake and beyond. Rain threatened on the drive up to the pass and it began to rain lightly as we approached the parking area. I radioed the group spread out in four cars seeing if group consensus might be to head elsewhere, such as Bumping Lake. There seemed to be absolutely no interest in an alternate plan, which totally shocked me. At the parking lot at Chinook Pass, I noted everyone donning their water-proofs, so our course was determined. We set out on the trail in a steady, light rain, as if this was a completely normal activity.

After mid-August, PCT "through hikers" starting at the Mexico/California border (typically in mid-April) reach this part of the trail. We encountered a number of these intrepid folks hiking very briskly northwards. Most broke stride for only for the briefest moment, long enough to answer a couple questions such as "where and when did you start," and "where are you from?" As it turned out, the 10 or so I queried hailed mostly from various countries in western Europe!

We neither heard nor saw birds for the most part on the way into Sheep Lake, no doubt due to the rain. Ellen spotted an early migrant Golden-crowned Sparrow in the Mountain Ash thickets. Farther along the trail, we all stopped to hear a Sooty Grouse uttering its extraordinarily low-pitched hoot: "whump...whump...whump." September is indeed late for mating rituals by this "chicken," which more typically displays from April through July. We pressed on east along the side hill, grown to subalpine fir and Alaska cedar along with an understory of mountain ash (with a very mediocre berry crop this year), huckleberries (again a modest berry crop), and bear grass. The fabulous wildflower show was essentially over; this is a July and August phenomenon.

Farther along the sidehill traverse on the steep south-facing slope to Sheep Lake, Ellen heard the unmistakable ringing call "chee-vlee" from Pine Grosbeaks. In the rain we picked out three of these scarce boreal finches atop a fir tree. The views were poor due to the rain and poor light, but I was elated because this finch was my top target bird for the trip.

We made a stop in the dramatically different forest type not far below Sheep Lake. Here, snowline lasts much longer than on the initial traverse and the subalpine firs are largely replaced by mountain hemlock and Pacific silver fir, clearly a "wetside" community. The rain began to let up and soon it began to clear!

Four in the group headed on up to Sourdough Gap a mile and a half up the PCT. The "gap" group quickly reached their goal at the lower edge of the Alpine Zone. They added Cassin's Finch to our trip list. Too, as a bonus, they found the dwarfed huckleberries up high had a much more bountiful and tasty huckleberry crop!

The rest of us sauntered around pretty Sheep Lake or relaxed and watched Canada Jays (formerly Gray Jay) come in, expecting tasty morsels. Clark's Nutcrackers flew in to the scene, as if curious, but soon departed.

Meanwhile, the Sheep Lake contingent added an American Kestrel perched atop a hemlock on the skyline. A Cooper's Hawk also came in, and seemed to be intent on snatching a Canada Jay. Golden-mantled squirrels and chipmunks provided entertainment, too. By now it was bright, sunny, and warm, and we all were pleased we could dry out nicely. What a difference from the morning rain!



Rain dampened the jackets, and umbrellas, but not the spirits of the birders on the field trip.
Photo by Jan Gano



Juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk perched in a snag along the trail
Photo by Ross Bornfleth



Canada Jay at Sheep Lake
Photo by Ross Bornfleth

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)

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.

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