

the curlew

May 2009

Volume XLIV Number 9

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Bateman Island bird walk

with Lisa Hill

A beautiful, sunny April morning greeted about a 15 birders hoping to see some spring migrants. Bird activity in the water at the causeway was very quiet, but a WESTERN GREBE and a COMMON MERGANSER were found. The trees and shrubs though, were bustling with chirps and chatters. The whistling of a BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD led us to the first of the spring migrants. Plenty of AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, BEWICK'S WRENS, SONG SPARROWS and YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS sang from along both sides of the trail. The call of the RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS seemed to be coming from everywhere.

Since we came up short on scopes for this walk, several folks worked their way through the shrubs to get to the shore of the west side of the island. A good variety of ducks and one shorebird were identified with only binoculars. A blue-billed male RUDDY DUCK with a small harem of six females bobbed around with several pairs of RING-NECKED DUCKS. A few GADWALL, AMERICAN WIGEON, NORTHERN PINTAIL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, BUFFLEHEAD, and a HORNED GREBE hugged the shore of the small island across from Bateman. Two of our best migrant finds at this spot were a pair of AMERICAN AVOCETS and a fly-by CASPIAN TERN showing off its large, deep-orange bill.

Very few raptors were seen; a RED-TAILED HAWK and a COOPER'S HAWK. No Great Horned Owls were found in the locust grove, but

(Continued on page 2)

Membership Meeting Tuesday, May 26, 7 p.m.

BAT COLONY AT HANFORD

Reminder: The May general membership meeting will be held at the **Union St. Kennewick Library** big conference room because the church has another activity that evening.

The guest speaker at this month's meeting is bat biologist and Natural Resources Specialist for Washington Closure Hanford, **Cole Lindsey**. Cole will utilize a powerpoint presentation to explain bat morphology, the life cycle of bats from our area, and fun/interesting facts about bats.

Members may have read a recent article in the TriCity Herald regarding the bat colony found in a structure at Hanford. Cole Lindsey will discuss the two year process that led to protecting the roosting habitat of this bat colony. Cole's work includes communicating with natural resource agencies on behalf of Washington Closure Hanford to ensure that cleanup activities are being performed in a manner that restores without doing more damage to existing resources.

Cole graduated from Eastern Washington University in 2008 with a B.S. in Biology, Originally from Waitsburg, Washington, Cole has always been at home in the outdoors and appreciates the opportunity to explore this passion for the outdoors through his work.

AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT: To conserve and restore ecosystems, focusing on birds and wildlife, for the benefit of humanity and Earth's biological diversity. Audubon educates adults and children about the environment, advocates responsible public policy and legislation for natural resources, and conducts science-based projects using birds as indicators of health of the natural world.

two DOWNY WOODPECKERS were in the trees. Off the north end of the island and out near the Pasco shore, the black and white neck patterns could be seen on a beautiful COMMON LOON in breeding plumage. Only two swallows were positively identified; VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW and TREE SWALLOW. The Tree Swallow perched high in a cottonwood on the back side of the island giving some great views of its iridescent blue feathers. Overall we found about 40 species.

The next Bateman Island Bird Walk is Saturday, May 2, 2009. We meet at 8:00am in the parking lot at Wye Park near the entrance to the island. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Binoculars are recommended.

Second Saturday at McNary

On May 9th, 2009 the McNary NWR will celebrate **International Songbird Migration Day**. Starting at 8 am, an Audubon member will lead a bird walk along the pond edge to the bird blind to listen and watch for nesting birds. The walk will help take a census of those species staking out territories within sight of the stump henge. This event is free and of interest to all ages. A tour of the McNary Discovery Center will occur after the walk.

<http://nwr.mcnaary.wa.us/>

Help for Injured Raptors:

If you find an injured raptor in the Tri-Cities or surrounding area you can call a local volunteer for advice. Injured raptors are usually transported to **Blue Mountain Wildlife in Pendleton, Oregon** for treatment and rehabilitation.

Who to call:

Michelle Caron.....(509) 366-0888
 Marilyn Hayes.....(509) 521-4648
 Suzanne Baird.....(509) 460-2434
 Blue Mountain Wildlife....(541) 278-0215

For more information see **Lower Columbia Basin Audubon website** and click on the [Help for Injured Birds](#) link.

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Bird Sightings - March 2008

Bill LaFramboise - (billnanl@verizon.net)

Bird Sightings– March 2009

Bill LaFramboise (billnanl@verizon.net)

(See the LCBAS webpage for directions to locations cited in this column)

There were several sightings of Greater White-fronted Geese (mob). The high count was 46 at Two Rivers HMU on 03/28 (M&MD). There were 200 Snow Geese at McNary NWR on 03/01 (BD), 1 was at Scootney Reservoir on 03/16 (RH), and 1 was at Columbia NWR on 03/22 (fide RH). The Ross' Goose that has been seen at Royal Lake since last month, continued to be seen there until at least 03/22 (RH).

There were 4 Trumpeter Swans along Dodson Road on 03/12 (RH) and 3 were at McNary NWR from 03/23 until the end of the month (HB, M&MD, GSho, JBra, KBU, BW). That species is uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin during winter. There were 12 Tundra Swans along Dodson Road on 03/12 (RH), 18 were along the Hanford Reach on 03/08 (JA, KA, JBra), and 4 were at McNary NWR on 03/12 (NL, RF).

There have been good numbers of Eurasian Wigeon. Sightings of that species included 1 at Two Rivers Park on 03/14 (NL), 1 at the Walla Walla Delta on 03/22 (HB), 4 at Tyson Ponds on 03/22 (HB), 2 there on 03/26 (M&MD, GSho), and 3 at the Wallula Grain Terminal on 03/28 (M&MD). The high count of American Wigeon was 2000 at the Walla Walla Delta on 03/28 (M&MD). The first Cinnamon Teal of the season was at the Yakima Delta on 03/26 (BW). There continued to be 13 Red-breasted Mergansers at Two Rivers HMU since last month. They were seen again on 03/25 (M&MD) and 2 were at Crow Butte on 03/25 (RT, TT).

One to two Chukars were observed on Badger Mountain several days during March (SW).

Uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin during winter, there was a Pacific Loon at Two Rivers Park on 03/27 (RT, TT). The high count of Horned Grebes was 10 at Burbank on 03/12 (NL, RF). There were several sightings of Eared Grebes (mob) with a high count of 36 at McNary NWR on 03/28 (M&MD). That species is uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin during winter. The high count of Western Grebes was 50 at Two River HMU on 03/28 (M&MD). A Clark's Grebe was at the Yakima Delta from 03/20 until the end of the month (BW, NL, MFM).

Uncommon in the Lower Columbia Basin, there was an American Bittern at McNary NWR on 03/26 (RH). A Black-crowned Night-Heron was at Scootney Reservoir on 03/28 (MFM).

There were several sightings of Bald Eagles (mob). A

Cooper's Hawk was observed with nesting material at McNary NWR on 03/12 (HN). That species has recently become an annual nester in the Lower Columbia Basin. The first Ferruginous Hawk on the season was in Touchet on 03/14 when 2 were observed (M&MD). A Merlin was at the Richland Landfill on 03/15 (JA) and 1 was at Columbia Crest Winery on 03/27 (RT, TT). A Prairie Falcon was on Badger Mountain on 03/14 (DR).

There were several sightings of Sandhill Cranes (mob).

The high count of Killdeer was 25 at the Yakima Delta on 03/27 (NL). The first American Avocets of the season were at the Yakima Delta on 03/20 when 3 were observed (BW). The high count of Greater Yellowlegs was 5 at the Yakima Delta on 03/28 (BW). The first Long-billed Curlews of the season were at Othello on 03/14 when 3 were observed (RH, KBU, JBra). The high count of Dunlin was 50 at the Walla Walla Delta on 03/12 (M&MD).

A Bonaparte's Gull and 2 Mew Gulls were near Wallula on 03/08 (M&MD). Rare inland, a Western Gull was near Wallula on 03/08 (M&MD), 1 was at the Walla Walla Delta on 03/08 (M&MD), and 2 were McNary NWR on 03/28 (M&MD). There have been good numbers of Glaucous Gulls this winter. There were 2 near Wallula on 03/08 (M&MD), 3 were at Fourth Island in the Columbia River on 03/21 (JA), and 1 was at Two Rivers HMU on 03/28 (M&MD). The first Caspian Terns of the season arrived at the Yakima Delta where 3 were observed (BW, RL, CL) and at the Walla Delta when 2 were observed (M&MD, GSho), both on 03/26.

A Barn Owl was along Iowa Dodd on 03/22 (HB).

The first Tree Swallows of the season were at the Yakima Delta on 03/14 when 15 were observed (NL) and the first Violet-green Swallows were at Canyon Terrace on 03/04 when 6 were observed (BL, NL). The first Northern Rough-winged Swallows were Madame Dorian Park on 03/28 when 2 were observed (M&MD, BW) and the first Cliff Swallows were at McNary NWR on 03/28 when 10 were observed (M&MD).

Up to 2 Brown Creepers were at Two Rivers Park from 03/04 until at least 03/20 (NL, DR) and 1 was at Columbia Park on 03/29 (NL, MFM). A Golden-crowned Kinglet was at Two Rivers Park on 03/20 (DR) and 1 was at Columbia Crest Winery on 03/27 (RT, TT). A Ruby-crowned Kinglet was at Two Rivers Park on 03/04 (NL) and 1 was again seen there on 03/20 (DR).

Uncommon migrants in the Lower Columbia Basin,

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

there were 3 Western Bluebirds near Two Rivers Park on 03/03 (DR), 2 were there on 03/14 (DR, NL), and 2 were at Johnson Park on 03/26 (LH, LU). There were 10 Mountain Bluebirds at Smith Canyon on 03/16 (RL, CL). A Townsend's Solitaire was in North Richland on 03/08 (JA, KA) and 1 was in Finley on 03/11 (BDu, NL, JorL). A Hermit Thrush was at Two Rivers Park on 03/20 (DR) and a Varied Thrush was in North Richland on 03/31 (JA, KA).

The first Sage Thrasher of the season was near Vantage on 03/14 (SD). The high count of Cedar Waxwings was 60 at Two Rivers Park on 03/20 (DR).

The first Vesper Sparrow of the season was at Smith Canyon on 03/16 (RL, CL). A Harris's Sparrow was near Two Rivers Park on 03/01 (DR), 1 was at Two Rivers Park on 03/04 (NL), 1 was at Red Mountain on 03/23 (HB) 1 was at Canyon Terrace the entire month (BL, NL). That species is uncommon during winter.

The high count of Tricolored Blackbirds was 50 at Para Ponds near Othello on 03/22 (M&MD). There were 30 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches as at the Wallula Gap on 03/14 (M&MD). White-winged Crossbills continued to be seen during March. There were 10 in North Richland on 03/02 (LN) and 2 were at the Othello Cemetery until at least 03/21 (mob). There were 30 Pine Siskins at Two Rivers Park on 03/04 (NL), 3 were in North Richland on 03/18 (JorL), and 1 was in North Richland on 03/20 (JorL).

Bird of the Month

The Birds of the Month are the Red-throated Loons found near Sacajawea Park. Rich and Tina Taylor saw 1 Red-throated Loon there on 03/27. The following day, Nancy LaFramboise found 2 at that location that were located across the river in Benton County. Red-throated Loons are common along the outer coast and in the Puget Sound during winter. There are rare east of the Cascade Mountains occurring less than annually in the Lower Columbia Basin.

Observers

JA Jane Abel, **KA** Keith Abel, **KBu** Kevin Burke, **JBra** Jennie Bradbury, **HB** Howard Browers, **M&MD** Mike and MerryLynn Denny, **BD** Bob Derting, **SD** Scott Downes, **BDu** Bonnie Dunham, **RF** Ruth Fischer, **LH** Lisa Hill, **RH** Randy Hill, **BL** Bill LaFramboise, **NL** Nancy LaFramboise, **CL** Carole Louderback, **RL** Ron Louderback, **JorL** Jordene Lucas, **MFm** MaryFrances Mathis, **LN** Laurie Ness, **HN** Heidi Newsome, **DR** Dennis Rockwell, **GSho** Ginger Shoemake, **RT** Rick Taylor, **TT** Tina Taylor, **LU** Larry Umthun, **SW** Steve Weiss, **BW** Bob Woodley

Volunteer Opportunities

Help with a celebration of **International Migratory Bird Day** on Saturday, May 9th, 10am-12 noon at the Rod Coler Audubon Nature Trail. Help with a learning activity for K-3rd grade Junior Audubon members. Students will do activities to learn about birds.

Volunteers needed to take educational display to the **Salmon Summit** Monday, May 11 and Tuesday, May 12. Salmon Summit is the culminating activity for "**Salmon in the Classroom**" schools. After raising fish, Salmon Summit provides students with an outdoor learning experience that enables them to release the fish into an approved water body. During Salmon Summit, students attend field stations to learn about wise use of water, fish tagging, hydroelectric dams, fish transport, agriculture, salmon recovery efforts, recreational fishing, local wildlife and other topics. Fifty entities, including federal, tribal, state, county, municipal, corporate and non-profit organizations contribute financial support, staffing, or goods and services to Salmon Summit. We'd like **LCBAS** to be represented.

Contact Cherie Baudrand cbaudrand@charter.net

ACOW

Audubon Council of Washington will hold a Spring meeting (ACOW) in Leavenworth, May 1, 2 and 3rd at the Tierra Learning Center. For more information: http://wa.audubon.org/chapters_ACOW.html

Spring Planting Time

While you are out planting your garden this spring, remember to plant more habitat for the birds. You could plant a hummingbird garden, some sunflowers, or Native grasses. Consider planting shrubs to provide nesting and hiding spots. Quail like piles of branches and trimmings to hide in. Sparrows like nesting in Oregon Grape. All birds like watering stations. Check the LCBAS website for ideas and information on planting for birds and feeding birds. Volunteers are needed to make and place nesting and hack boxes. Check the website for that information, too.

Junior Audubon News

We now have 24 Junior Audubon members. We met at Hawthorne Elementary School on March 24 for an after school meeting. We did an activity in our Junior Birder booklet, pledged to follow the Junior Birder rules while birding, and decided to participate in **National Audubon's Pennies for the Planet** as our conservation project. We will have a jar at the membership meeting and picnic. **Please save your pennies for us!**

The fledgling birders took a quiz to see if they could identify 10 birds. **Jacob Riggins, Luke Gorman, and Joey Chavez** got the most correct. They are trying to earn an Audubon pin. Junior Audubon members met Saturday, April 25 and practiced new birding and listening skills on the Dr. Rod Coler Audubon Nature Trail. We saw a Downey Woodpecker, Red-winged Blackbirds, Mourning Doves, Black-capped Chickadee, Song Sparrow, European Starlings, White-Crowned Sparrows, California Quail, American Robin, American Crows, Canada Geese, Ring-necked Pheasant, and best of all, a Yellow Warbler.

Join us on **International Migratory Bird Day** to see more birds and to play the **Great Migratory Bird Game**.

Sparrow Banding Study

Remember to watch for White-crowned Sparrows. If you see a color banded bird, please note the place, date, time, and band color (s) and send a report to Nancy LaFramboise. There is more information and a current report on the LCBAS website.

Save the Date

Heritage Days at Sacajawea State Park, September 25 and 26, 2009. Blue Mountain Wildlife will have a raptor display. Volunteers will be needed to man a table and hand out info for LCBAS. Come enjoy a day with the birds and tour the exhibits. Don't forget to allow time to go birding along the river.

Cornell Bird Guide

The on-line Cornell Bird Guide has been redone and is easier to navigate. This site contains loads of good information about birds and is a quick and easy way to find migration information and to identify migrating birds.

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search>

Looking up Western Bluebird, I found that it's habitat is open woodland, it eats insects, nests in cavities, behavior is flycatching, and it is listed as LC (least concern) under conservation. It ranges from the southern tip of Mexico up into the southern tip of British Columbia. You can hear the sound the bird makes and soon there will be videos. Some species have bird cams.

Board Briefs – April 14, 2009 Board Meeting

The **May general membership meeting** will be held at the **Union St. Kennewick Library** big conference room because the church has another activity that evening; **Cole Lawson** will be talking about bats. We will also be voting on new officers for next year. A nominating committee will be appointed shortly. If you're interested in getting involved as an officer or committee chair, contact the president (Ed) or secretary (Debbie).

Our finances are in good shape this year. Junior Audubon has had several activities including pennies for conservation; they are doing activities to earn a patch. The Education Committee is pulling a plan together for International Migratory Bird Day on May 9.

The WDOE decided they won't be doing large water projects off the main stem of the Columbia River, so it looks like Crab Creek is ok for now. We voted to support the Roosevelt Resolution to uphold the Roadless Rule.

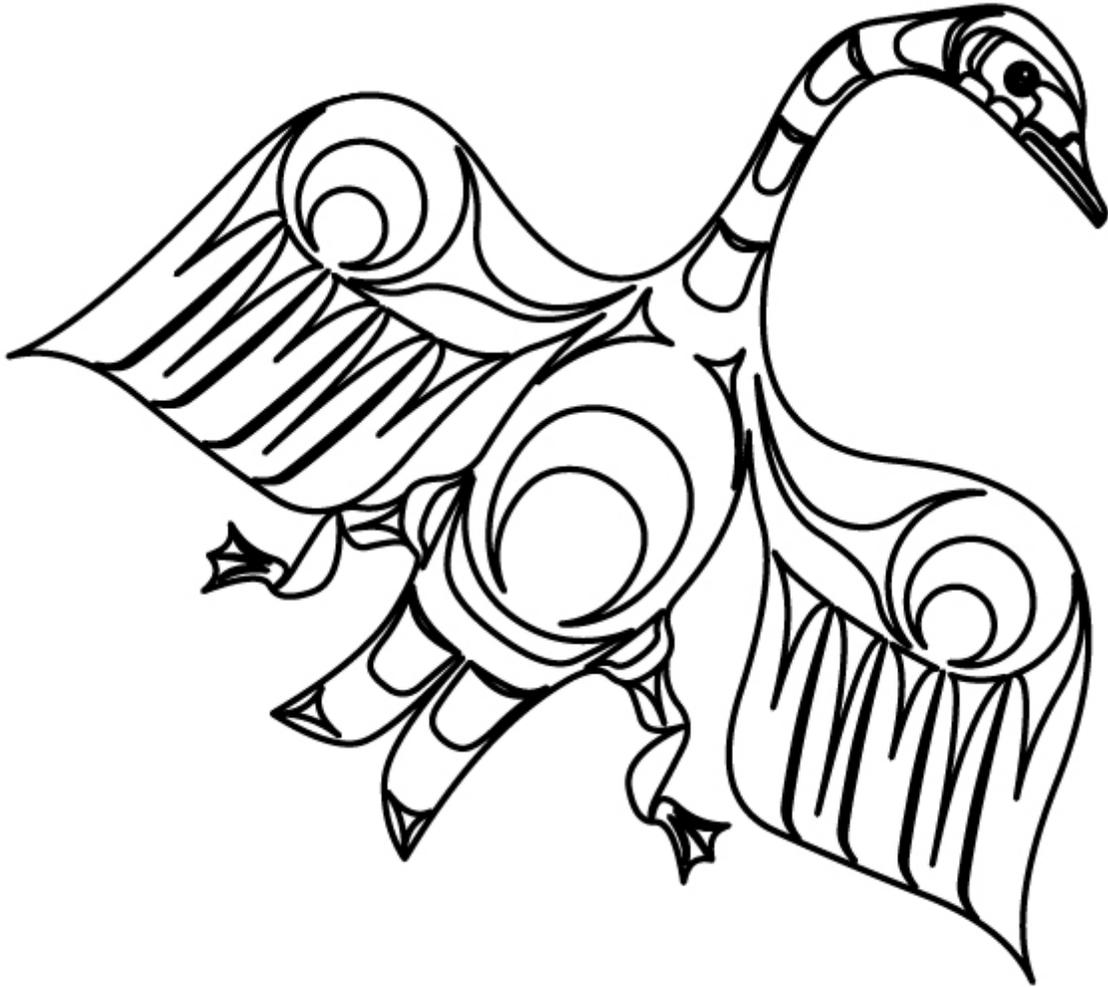
We voted to sponsor a table for Blue Mountain Wildlife at Heritage Days in Sacajawea Park; we will also have a table there.

The Corps has issued a stop work order for the cutting of trees/bushes in the riparian zone at Leslie Groves South. The Ridges to Rivers Open Space Network is looking at various possible organizational structures for their group and is also working on the format for their planning document.

The trip to Costa Rica went well, with the group tallying 308 bird species including the quetzal. An REI grant has been submitted for us; we would like to use it to purchase binoculars for Jr. Audubon. We will mail letters to NAS members who are not currently LCBAS members inviting them to join us. We are still working on the By-laws. The Spring ACOW (Audubon Council of WA) is on May 1-3 in Leavenworth. Blue Mountain Wildlife is having an open house at the Benton City facility on May 16.

The **next Board meeting** is on May 12 at 6:30 PM at the Hanford Reach Visitor's Center Office, 710 GWW Suite BB, north of NE corner of GWW and Lee). All are welcome to attend.

Celebrate Birds in Culture!
International Migratory Bird Day 2009



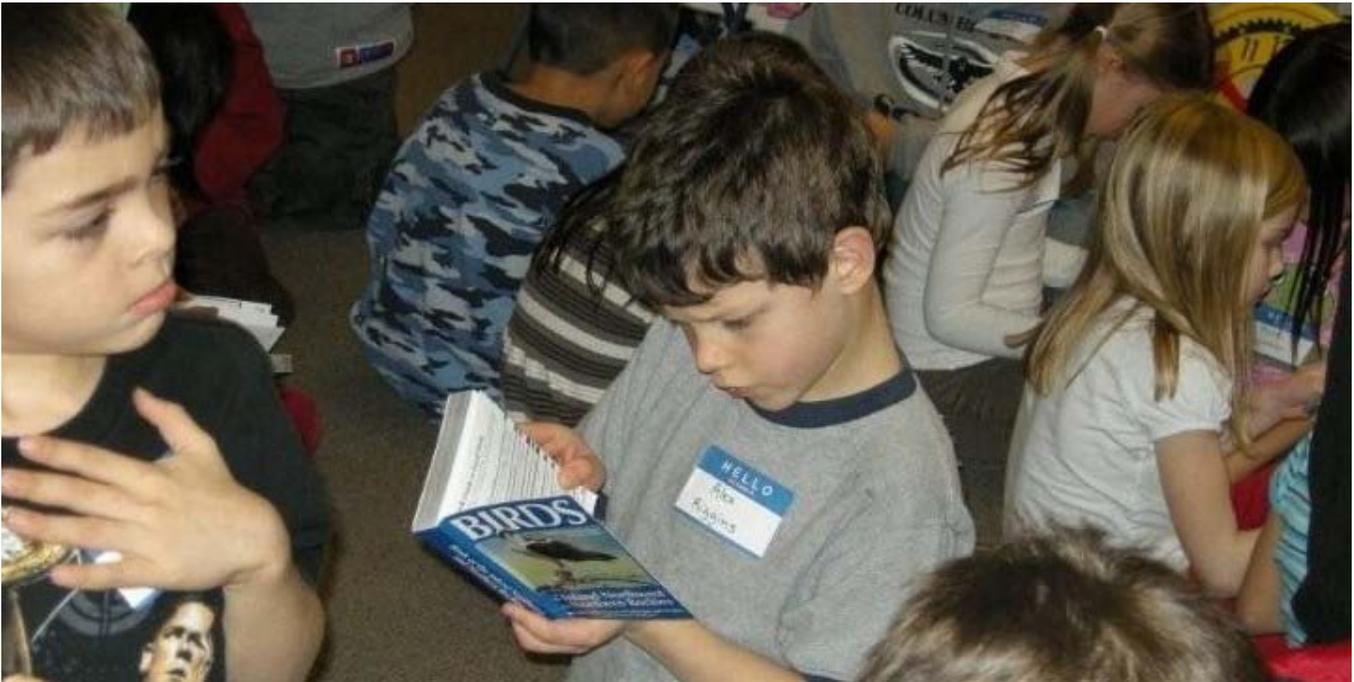
Swan

The swan is an important symbol to many native peoples. It represents "grace" to the Choctaw, Aztec, Lakota, Yaqui, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Iroquois, and Mayan. Its white color also symbolizes wisdom, strength, and purity. Three species of swans live in North America; Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, and Mute Swan. †

Swans are white, but this picture has shapes within the bird where color may be added, a style used by Native Americans of the Northwest Coast.

Environment for the Americas www.birdday.org art copyright Andy Everson





Alex Riggins is enjoying his new field guide, Birds of the Inland Northwest, by Harry Nehls, Mike Denny, and Dave Trochlell. Junior Audubon members receive a free copy of this book when they join LCBAS. Joey Chavez and Maggie Claybrook are also enjoying their books.

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY ROUTES OPEN

Mary Lilga

If you have an interest in early-morning birding and can devote a day or two every spring or early summer to bird science, consider taking on a breeding bird survey route. Ed Miller, the state coordinator/recruiter for BBS routes, has open routes just waiting for you! Breeding Bird Surveys involve driving an established 25-mile route on one day, beginning a half-hour before sunrise. You use maps and descriptions to locate each stop, which are at half-mile intervals, and count all the adult birds you hear and see for three minutes at that location. Then you move on to the next stops, finishing in a few hours. Submitting data online from home is quick and easy.

It works well to have two people doing the route, an observer and a recorder. Good bird and bird-song identification skills are essential for the observer, but the recorder can just assist as needed, help spot birds, keep track of the stops, record sightings, etc. There are routes currently available in a number of familiar birding spots, both near and far, such as Bickleton (bluebirds!), Quincy, Wapato, Harrington, Wilbur, near the Blue Mountains in Pomeroy and Waitsburg, in the mountains of northeastern Washington, down around Portland, and many locations in between.

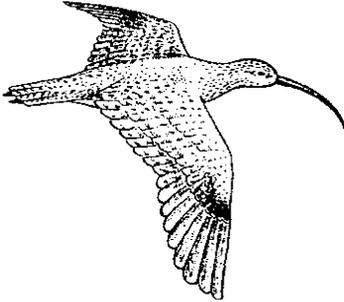
Ed says that a long-term commitment to the route by the same observers produces the most valuable data, but that it is OK to miss a year once in a while. Mike and I have been doing two BBS routes for quite a few years. One is local, in the Horse Heaven Hills beginning up above Mabton, that we do on a Sunday morning. The other is north of Winthrop in the North Cascades. We spend a couple of days there and have camped and birded in some gorgeous spots and have seen a huge variety of birds and other wildlife in quite varied habitat. We have gained a great deal of experience with the local birds and their calls. Thankfully there are a lot of great bird song and identification guides out there to help with learning.

Check out the BBS website, <<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/>><http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/> and call Ed Miller, 943-8538, with any questions or to sign up for a route.

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Please Note: Membership in National Audubon Society (NAS) and the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (LCBAS) are **separate memberships**.

Chapter Membership (includes a year's subscription [10 issues] to *The Curlew*)

- \$20. for annual membership dues or
- \$10. for full time students.

Please make check payable to **LCBAS**. I can help with an additional donation of \$_____

- Send *The Curlew* to my email address listed below. All my dues will go towards supporting LCBAS in local education and conservation efforts.

- I want to be on your Environmental Alert e-mail list to receive timely notices about issues/work parties. (Your e-mail address will not be shared.)

National Audubon Society Membership (includes annual subscription to *Audubon Magazine*)

- \$20. for one year new membership in the NAS. (Renewal of NAS membership is currently \$35.)
- \$15. for one year new senior or full time student membership in NAS.

Please make check payable to **National Audubon Society**. Please do not sent renewals to LCBAS.

For any of the options above check the appropriate boxes, clip the form and mail it with your check(s) to:

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