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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Special Interest Articles:

- Sage Grouse!
- Christmas Bird Count Results!
- Junior Audubon back "Going Ducky"
- Applebee's breakfast

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The Ecology and Management of Sage Grouse



Membership Meeting Tuesday January 24 7:00 p.m. Kennewick First Lutheran Church, corner of Yelm and Highway 395

This month's meeting will feature **Dr. Mike Schroeder**, a Certified Wildlife Biologist who has pursued research and management of grouse since 1981. Mike received his B. S. degree from Texas A&M University, his M.S. degree from the University of Alberta and his Ph.D. from Colorado State University. He joined the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in 1992 and has continued to focus most of his activities on the biology and management of grouse. His research has included studies of: (1) population dynamics and behavioral ecology of greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse; (2) greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse translocations; (3) effects of wind power on greater sage-

grouse and other species of shrub steppe wildlife; (4) conservation genetics of grouse; and (5) effects of farm programs on greater sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and other species of shrub steppe wildlife. Mike is also developing a monitoring and evaluation program for WDFW wildlife areas.

Greater sage-grouse are one of the most spectacular species in North America. They are closely tied to the distribution of big sagebrush throughout much of their range. Prior to settlement by people of European descent, sage-grouse were distributed from southern British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan to eastern California, northern Arizona, and western portions of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota. The core of the distribution was in Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. The

current distributions are dramatically reduced. Sage-grouse historically occurred throughout the shrub steppe and meadow-steppe communities of eastern Washington. They were observed in abundance in 1805 by members of the Lewis and Clark expedition near the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Currently, the state has two relatively isolated breeding populations; one in Douglas-Grant Counties, and one in Kittitas-Yakima Counties. In order to expand the distribution of sage-grouse in Washington, they have been translocated to Yakima and Lincoln counties. This talk will focus on the ecology of sage-grouse in Washington and the current efforts to manage them. *Continued Pg 2*

Bateman Island Walk *with Lisa Hill*

January 7, 2012



"Hooded Merganser" courtesy
www.birdinginformation.com*

The first Bateman walk of the New Year was cool and bright with a lot of bird activity. The species tally of 49 was down a bit from the last few months, but the overall bird count was very high with good numbers of waterfowl, mostly due to a large paddling of MALLARDS and a cushion of NORTHERN PINTAILS on the Yakima River delta. Let's have some fun with humorous, descriptive and obscure collective nouns for birds!

Near the causeway was a doppling of HOODED and COMMON MERGANSERS. All along the island's west trail were many songbirds; a banditry of BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, a bouquet of YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, a chorus of SONG and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS, a dynasty of RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS, a chime of BEWICK'S WRENS, a flash of AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES, a hermitage of HERMIT THRUSHES, and a worm of AMERICAN ROBINS.

A noisy rattle of BELTED KINGFISHERS joined a drumming of DOWNY WOODPECKERS and a menorah NORTHERN FLICKERS. One small fling of WESTERN SANDPIPERS was the only small shorebird seen. Many HORNED GREBES, PIED-BILLED GREBES, and one each WESTERN and CLARK'S GREBE formed a nice waterdance of grebes. There was a commotion of AMERICAN COOTS, a squabble of RING-BILLED, CALIFORNIA, and GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULLS, and a solemn rookery of AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS.

The best find of the day was an asylum of loons at the north end of the island in the Columbia River – two COMMON LOONS and one hard-to-find PACIFIC LOON. The merry month of May will be here before you know it and we will see a mewing of Gray Catbirds, a decoration of Lazuli Buntings, a gross of Black-headed Grosbeaks, and a pitch of Bullock's Orioles.

The next Bateman Island bird walk is **Saturday, February 4 at 8am**. Meet in the parking lot of **Wye Park** above the causeway to the island. **Also on Feb. 4, beginning at 9am, the Tapteal Greenway Association oversee a Bateman Island clean-up day.** Bird-watchers may choose to participate in one or both activities as they please. The clean-up crews will install new signs, trash bag dispensers, and pet waste stations in an effort to establish a new culture on Bateman Island that encourages users to pack out their trash and pet waste and increase stewardship of the island's natural resources.

Membership Meeting *continued from page 1*

Members are encouraged to attend this interesting and informative lecture. Please bring cookies or other snacks if you are able to do so. The short business meeting begins at 7:00 followed by a fifteen minute social. The speaker usually begins about 7:45 p.m. For more information go to the Icbas website: Icbas.org.

Greetings from the President! *With Robin Priddy*

Happy New Year!

The reports of a Snowy Owl in Badger Canyon resulted in many of us finding a bunch of Winco bags in trees, and transformers - but no owl. We just wish it had been a little further north, and in the Christmas Bird Count Circle!

The Christmas Bird count this year went well, it was a windy day; I went out with Bonnie Dunham and Sky Bradley. We seemed to see about the same number of species but fewer birds. Murrel and Jack Dawson kept the Grange warm and open for us all. I don't know else helped there; but thank

you. The potluck was wonderful; Dana Ward and Dennis Rockwell got us in order to count up the birds we saw. Rich Barchet gave an interesting analysis of CBC counts from previous years.

Rich told us about the first count, I think it was in 1943 - one lone birder in
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Amon Park, with twenty some species.

That fact made me think about who that lone birder may have been; based on our history they were probably far from home and carrying some of their own tradition with them to their new home. An bittersweet combination of the new and the familiar and our first recorded CBC.

We are starting to think about officers for the 2012-2013 years - we do need a treasurer - after two years of dedicated work, Katie Harris wants to be off to other activities. **Please think about how you might want to be involved, we'd love to have you.**

Thank you for the privilege of serving as President. All the best for a happy and healthy new year.

Robin

Book Table Talk

by Kathy Criddle

Sale! Sale! Sale!

Help me clean out the book storage closet! Every book on the book table will be on sale this month! All used books will be reduced to \$2 dollars or less. All new books will be at least 5% off the retail price. This is a great bargain because you don't pay tax either. We still have beautiful notecards for sale at \$1 each or 6 for \$5. There will be a few surprises too, so come early and check out the book table.

Check out our website:

<http://www.lcbas.org>

Osprey Pointe Update *by Kathy Criddle*

Thank you donors and helpers!

The Osprey Pointe plants look good and seem to be surviving the mild winter quite nicely.

There will be a Notebook & Photo Album on display near the Book Table showing all of the Osprey Pointe activities.



Bateman Island Clean Up

Date/Time: 9 AM February 4, 2012 (or, if you're going on the first Saturday Bateman Island bird walk, join in after the walk)

Where: Bateman Island parking lot across from Island View Market

Bateman Island is a very special place for wildlife on land and water. It is also greatly abused by some of us (and our pets) who don't pack out what we pack in. We want to establish a new culture on Bateman Island that encourages users to pack out their trash and pet waste and increase stewardship of the islands natural resources.

Please join us on February 4 to clean up the island, install new signs, trash bag dispensers, and pet waste

stations and send a message that we care about the resource. Bring footwear to manage the terrain and the weather, gloves, any tool you deem appropriate to pick up trash in hard to get places and water in a reusable container.

We are in need of vehicles that can go onto the island and shuttle trash to be deposited in the drop boxes at the parking lot. The smaller trash will be in bags, larger pieces such as concrete blocks may require a pick up bed. Please call Scott if you can provide a vehicle. We will go until the job is done but you can leave at your own discretion.

Sponsored by: Tapteal Greenway Association/Richland Parks and Recreation

Contact is Scott Woodward

woodfish24@charter.net

509-627-3621

Christmas Bird Count a Windy Success *with Dana Ward*

The Tri-Cities annual Christmas Bird Count was held on Friday, December 30, 2011. Nationally this was the 112th Christmas Bird Count which we held on a Friday rather than a weekend day. There were over 40 participants in various states of awareness. This number was slightly down from previous years and may have been due to the date rather than the windy conditions. Temperatures ranged from the upper 20s in the early morning to upper 40s later in the day with a few places exceeding 50 degrees. The skies were generally cloudy but some sun was seen during the day. The weather was actually grand considering the average temperatures for the day would have seen a high of 39 degrees and possible snow cover. The count took place in the traditional count circle which is a 7.5 mile radius centered just off Road 68 in the Columbia River. A **total of 102** different species of birds were sighted during the 24 hour official count period. This is down from a 106 species located last year.

Generally numbers of birds were at levels seen in previous years with some surprises, American Coot numbers were higher than normal with over 5,000 counted; Canada Goose numbers were down from last year (11,200) to this year just under 8,000; Wood Ducks were down slightly at 113 from 160 last year but only 16 were counted the year before; American Robin were up with 470 sighted last year to over 1800 this year; American Crows were up to over 300 this count compared to 197 last year; American Bald Eagle numbers were

up from 47 last year to 50 this year; American Kestrel numbers were down with 45 counted this year compared to 65 last year; White-crown Sparrows were down from 1560 last year to about 800 this year. Yellow-rump Warbler numbers were up from last year's 155 to 722 this year. This is very good number for Yellow-rumps compared to previous years when extremely cold temperatures impacted the warbler.

Owl numbers were down this year. This could be a factor of no night counts as had been conducted in previous years. We did manage to find one Northern Saw-whet Owl, one Western Screech-owl and some grand old Great Horned Owls. Sadly no Burrowing Owls, Long-eared Owls or Barn Owls were found although we know they are in the area. We did get a Long-eared Owl for the count week. Hawks and falcons cooperated fairly well with multiple sightings of Red-tailed Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Cooper's Hawks. A few Merlin were also sighted. We had some visitors from the north. Three Rough-legged Hawks were noted. A Logger-headed Shrike was also counted. Our count circle participants were hopeful that a Snowy Owl would be seen since some had been spotted outside the count loop but they did not show.

Ducks, geese and water birds were seen in abundance with some exceptions. There were very few Northern Pintails and Ruddy Ducks counted. Common Merganser numbers were up compared to past years. Loons, grebes, Belted Kingfishers and herons were found in good numbers. Great Egrets, which are always fun to see, were about the

same as last year with 6 counted. Virginia Rails and Greater Yellowlegs were spotted during the day, but no Dunlin could be located. A lone Snow Goose was spotted. This bird had not been seen in the count circle since the mid-1990s. Some greater White-fronted geese were spotted too. Cormorants were abundant along with American White Pelicans with 150 and 56 seen respectively.

Warblers and sparrow numbers were variable. There were a large numbers of Yellow-rumps sighted, with two Orange-crown Warblers noted. White-crown Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos were in abundance which is to be expected but always nice to see and hear. The customary less common sparrows did not cooperate – Savannah, American Tree Sparrow, Lincoln's, and Fox Sparrow – were not seen during the day. Golden-crowned (1) and Harris's Sparrow (3) were noted.

For blackbirds, Brewer's were located with nearly 400 spotted in one flock, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds were also noted in the flock of Brewer's with 13 and 17 respectively. Red-winged Blackbirds were prominent with over 600 spotted. European Starlings were in abundance with over 3,000 recorded.

Other interesting birds sighted during the day were Purple Finch (1), Pine Siskin (2), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Glaucous Gull (2), Mew Gull (3), Pacific Loon (1), and Least Sandpiper (2). Unfortunately no Red-breasted Nuthatches,

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BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR DECEMBER 2011

Thanks for posting your sightings on LCBirds2, e-mailing them to me (lanirock@charter.net) or calling them in (545-4898). Comments and suggestions are always welcome. –Lannie Smith

Johnson Park

birded by Larry Umthun, Lisa Hill and Margaret Ford.

Over the course of the month these birds were among those reported: Virginia Rail, White-crowned, Golden-Crowned, Fox, White-throated, and Song Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Black-capped Chickadees, Northern Shrike, Purple Finches, Pine Siskin, Orange-crowned Warblers, Pacific (Winter) Wren, Spotted Towhees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Varied and Hermit Thrush and Cedar Waxwings.

Richland

Joel Tinsley spotted a couple of MacGillivray's Warblers feeding in the leaves of his roses on December 4. Jane and Keith Abel had an Orange-crowned Warbler in their yard.

Leslie Groves Park

birded by Jane and Keith Abel

The Columbia River was host to a myriad of duck species this month including Mallards, Gadwalls, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Ruddy Ducks, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Barrow's and Common Goldeneye and Bufflehead. Both Common and Hooded Merganser were present, as were Horned and Pied-billed Grebes and Common Loons. Bald Eagles were seen on Nelson Island and in the trees on the Pasco side of the river. They also spotted at least 2 Merlin (one photographed while eating a Cedar Waxwing), American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned and Northern Harriers an Osprey and a Great Horned and Long-eared Owl. Black-capped Chickadees, Spotted Towhees, Hermit Thrush and Downy Woodpeckers rounded out the list.

Bateman Island

birded this month by Mark Gerber
Mark reported lots of bird activity including a Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a Black-capped Chickadee, 2 Horned Grebes, 2 Western Grebes and an immature Northern Shrike.

Yakima Delta Area (no reports)

Rancho Reata Area

Sharon and Neil Ofsthun reporting
Sharon and Neil reported that the usual winter birds are present in their yard, including Great-horned and Long-eared Owls, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Spotted Towhees, unidentified Kinglet, Pine Siskins and a Cooper's Hawk.

Kennewick

Cal Aylsworth, a first-time visitor to the LCBAS website, reported a male Purple Finch mixed with a flock of House Sparrows and House Finches at his feeder. Deb and Steve Devine took pictures of a Steller's Jay eating sunflower seeds on their patio. Bob Woodley and his son saw a Red-naped Sapsucker in Columbia Park on Dec. 10.

Finley Area

Kris Keating reported the usual birds in her yard as well: Dark-eyed Juncos, Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-crowned Sparrows and an occasional Song Sparrow. She has many Northern Flickers and 10-15 Eurasian-collared Doves. She's also seen a Great-Horned Owl, quite a few American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks as well as a Merlin and an immature Bald Eagle. Tim and Sue Hayes reported the presence of American White Pelicans on the river at Two Rivers Park. They often see them in spring and summer but winter sightings are new.

Sacajawea State Park

LCBAS birding trip led by Kevin Black
The group tallied 42 species including a Cackling Goose, Wood Duck, Common Loon, Pied-billed, Horned and Western Grebes, Virginia Rail (heard), Black-capped Chickadees, Bewick's Wren, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

Crow Butte State Park

Birded by Rich Barchet

2011 came to a close on New Year's Eve with two Great-horned Owls ... hootin' in the New Year.

Spring Migration at Malheur Wildlife Refuge *By Barbara Clarke*

The Spring Chicken Trek did not fill so has been cancelled. Let's go to Malheur Wildlife Refuge instead. Join the Lower Columbia Basin Far Away Field Trip to Malheur Wildlife Refuge on Mother's Day weekend, Friday, May 11, Saturday, May 12 and Sunday, May 13, 2012. We will be visiting Malheur Wildlife Refuge during prime Spring migration time. The refuge lists over 300 bird species on its bird list. The refuge is known as a migrant trap as well as "the birding hotspot" for the Northwest. The refuge is located 60 miles south of Burns, Oregon.

We will be staying in the updated "E" Dorm at the Malheur Field Station. Guy's are on one side and gals are on the other. There are two restroom and shower facilities, one for the guys and one for the gals. We will be doing our own cooking in the kitchen facility. The cost of the Field Trip is \$100.00 per person which includes Friday and Saturday night lodging, 2 breakfasts and 2 lunches (Saturday and Sunday) and Saturday evening Spaghetti Dinner. We will also have a movie on Saturday night. Cost does not include transportation to and from Malheur. A brochure will be available at the January membership meeting. Space is limited so secure your place now. Call Barbara Clarke at (509) 588-3362.

Living on the Wind Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds

by Scott Weidensaul reviewed by Lannie Smith

Has a book ever so enthralled you that you wanted other people (besides just your husband) to read it? This is one of those books. Weidensaul is a gifted writer who weaves together history, science, personal experience and humor, as he lays out the perils facing migrating birds. In one section he shows how scientists and people who love the same hawks are working together in Argentina and the Klamath National Forest. You get to travel with him from the Arctic to Mexico, Central America, to the tip of South America and back to the grasslands of the Platte, following the migrating birds. He brings to life the miracle of migration for song birds, shorebirds, raptors, pelagics, waterfowl, cranes and more...and it really is a miracle when you look at the distances, the obstacles, the pollution of traditional refueling stops, and the loss of habitat in both the areas they are leaving and heading toward. Cell towers and Brown-headed Cowbirds will haunt you after you finish this book.

Continued from page 4

Brown Creepers, Townsend's Solitaires or Bohemian Waxwings were located during the count day. I want to thank Ray, Tom, Barb and Dennis, the team leads for the three count areas; as well as Jack, Murrel, Charlotte, Barb and Marilyn for helping with the pot-luck and Grange Hall accommodations. I also want to thank Rich for the excellent presentation covering the historical perspective of the Tri-Cities Christmas Bird Count.

Tri-Cities Christmas Bird Count: Analysis of Historical Data

The Tri-Cities Christmas Bird Count (CBC) has been held continuously since the 1967-68 count. This year's count was number 112 for the CBC project by the National Audubon Society. Data from the 45 years since the 1967-68 count were analyzed by Rich Barchet and presented to the LCBAS membership at its November meeting and again at the pot luck dinner following the CBC on 12/30/2011. The presentation and some accompanying notes (both as PDF files) can be found on the LCBAS.org website by clicking on Christmas Bird Count under the LCBAS PROJECTS banner on the left side to the LCBAS.org home page. Contact the author if you are interested working with the dataset yourself.

Some of the findings from the analysis are:

- Up to mid 1990s, more participants and more hours in field yielded more reported species.
- Since late '90s, the number of species reported has reached a plateau of 103 ± 3 . After 2000, the number of reported species does not correlate with numbers of participants or hours in field.
- Weather is not an important factor affecting the number of species reported.
- Four species were seen more than 20% less frequently since 2001 than in the 1968-2000 period: Evening Grosbeak, Short-eared Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, and Ferruginous Hawk.
- There has been no significant trend in total number of birds counted in period since 2001 but there are large year-to-year variations.
- Only 8 species show a statistically significant (>95%) trend for numbers of birds counted:
 - 5 species increased: Cooper's Hawk (11%); Ring-necked Duck (12%); Bald Eagle (15%); Golden-crowned Sparrow (22%); and Ruddy Duck (27%)
 - 3 species decreased: Killdeer (-15%); Burrowing Owl (-20%); and Black-crowned Night-Heron (-28%).

COME HAVE BREAKFAST THE BIRDS WILL LOVE YOU!

On Saturday, **February 25**, the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society will again have a Fund Raiser Breakfast from 8:00 to 10:00 am at **Applebee's on Road 68 in Pasco, WA**. For \$7.00 you get a short stack (3) hot cakes, two large sausages and beverage. LCBAS keeps \$5.00 for every ticket sold. We have 300 tickets. Board members will have them for sale, and they will also be available at the January 24 meeting. This fundraising breakfast is a painless, easy way to earn big bucks for LCBAS' environmental projects. We made over \$1000 last year and had a lot of fun doing it. If each member sold tickets to friends and family, it would help this to be a very successful event for the chapter.

Thank you— Charlotte Reep

Thursday January 26, 7 PM, Mid-Columbia Library Kennewick Branch;

In Search of Theodore Roosevelt and a few other stops along the way

Scott and Pamela Woodward will be presenting a program on their recent trip to the Dakotas. In summary the primary motivation for the trip was to search for the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt by visiting the site of his conservation revelations at Theodore Roosevelt Memorial National Park in North Dakota. He also spent time in the Black Hills of South Dakota so we continued our quest hiking and camping in Badlands NP, SD, Mt Rushmore which has captured a likeness of TR, Wind Cave NP SD, Jewel Cave NM SD and Devils Tower NM WY., all of which were established during Theodore Roosevelt's administration. Nasty weather added to the adventure in TRNP and shortened our stay but the storm induced lighting and rain enriched soil brought out early fall colors creating viewscapes that are inspirational in the 21st century and no doubt stirred the inner buffalo of Theodore Roosevelt as he explored the plateaus, ridge tops and drainages of the Little Missouri in Western North Dakota.

Winter Birds, 9 AM to 12 Friends' Annual Meeting, 12 Noon-1 PM McNary Environmental Education Center Saturday February 18

Join us to learn more about the winter birds of the Mid-Columbia. Videographer Gaylord Mink will share his films of Bald Eagles and Northern Harriers. Participants will have a chance to join the Great Backyard Bird Count going on nationwide Feb. 17-20. No experience necessary! The count will be led by the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society. Binoculars, spotting scopes and bird guides will be available. Afterward, join the Friends of the Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges for their Annual Meeting. Food and beverages will be provided and the meeting will conclude by 1:00 PM. For questions - Call 509-546-8300

This event is sponsored by the Friends of Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges in partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The Education Center is located off Highway 12 near Burbank. From Tri-Cities take Highway I-182 East/Highway 12 East to Burbank. Turn left onto Humorist Rd. at second stoplight after the Snake River Bridge. Turn left onto Lake Rd. Look for Education Center on the left.

Junior Audubon News

With Cherie Beaurand

Junior Audubon will be "Going Ducky" on Saturday, January 21 in Columbia Park, to see ducks that winter in the Columbia River. We'll meet at 9 AM at either at the marina or the Family Fishing Pond, depending on where the ducks are. Members learned about dabblers and divers at our after school meeting in December.

The next event will be a practice bird count on Saturday, February 11. The location will be announced. Junior Audubon members are encouraged to be citizen scientists and participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 17 - 20. Get information and turn your counts in at www.birdcount.org. Attend the Saturday Event at McNary Environmental Education Center and count there, or count in your own yard or neighborhood.

The Curlew

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Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Curlew Subscription and Membership Information

Please Note: LCBAS Chapter Benefits (includes a year's subscription [10 issues] to *The Curlew*) this is an additional cost to membership in National Audubon Society.

\$20 annual LCBAS subscription (includes 1-year / 10 issues of the Curlew or eCurlew newsletter). (One subscription per address receiving the Curlew)

\$10. for full time students. (same benefits as above)

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

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

\$20 **Introductory** National Audubon Society (NAS) Membership; includes annual subscription to Audubon Magazine. This is **NOT** the same as LCBAS Curlew subscription above.

Checks for **NEW** NAS memberships should be made out to National Audubon Society and can be mailed to P.O. Box 1900 , Richland , WA with your LCBAS check. Do not combine LCBAS subscription and NAS membership in one check.

RENEWALS: We **cannot** process National Audubon Society Renewals which must be sent directly to NAS

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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