



Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

A chapter of the National Audubon Society

vancouveraudubon.org

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RESPONSIBLE BIRD FEEDING

By Cindy McCormack

Due to the recommendations posted by Washington's Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), there has been a lot of discussion lately on bird feeding. Last January, WDFW issued a recommendation that all feeders be removed due to an outbreak of salmonellosis in feeder birds, especially Pine Siskins. This has been a somewhat controversial position, but there is some validity to their concerns.



*Pine Siskins at a seed feeder
@Cynthia Raught/Great Backyard Bird Count*

A little background: the irruption of Pine Siskins this year is likely due to a failure of the seed crop in the northeast. Siskins tend to move west during these irruptive winters and we get the benefit of seeing dozens, if not hundreds, of siskins visiting our yards. Pine Siskins normally winter in fairly dense flocks and are particularly susceptible to salmonella infection when stressed. Winter is stressful enough on birds without having to add the burden of lack of food and having to travel great distances to find enough to sustain the flocks through winter!

Salmonella is a bacterium that normally resides in the intestinal tract of birds (it is one of the main reasons you want to cook your chicken and eggs thoroughly!) and can be spread through fecal contamination. A stressed bird can more easily succumb to infection. Wild animals are quite good at hiding weakness (there are a lot of predators out there looking for weakness!), so we often don't notice sick birds until it is too late. End-stage siskins will often not fly away when approached and sit lethargically on feeders for long periods.

Since feeders are an area where many birds gather, this can pose a risk. Fecal contamination and ingestion can be much more likely in areas of concentrated bird feeding activity.

Birds are accustomed to having a food source dissipate—they just move on to the next source, so removal of feeders shouldn't be a problem. However, winter is a lean

time of year and quite stressful on wildlife. Safe and responsible supplemental feeding should minimize risk and may even reduce winter stress.

Audubon promotes **responsible** bird feeding and focuses on minimizing hazards. It is important that we keep feeders and birdbaths clean to avoid

spreading disease and causing harm to birds. Here are some guidelines:

- Always remember to protect your own health by wearing gloves during or thoroughly washing hands after handling feeders and birdbaths.
- When selecting feeders and baths, look for products made with easy-to-clean designs and materials. Recycled plastic, acrylic, metal, glass, or glazed ceramic are easy to clean. *Hint: Having a second feeder ready-to-hang when the first needs cleaning can make cleaning and replacement much more efficient!*
- Use appropriate brushes for the feeder type and dedicate them to cleaning only your bird feeding/bathing equipment.
- If you see a diseased bird, remove all feeders and baths to clean and disinfect. You might want to leave them down for a few days to encourage dispersal.
- **SEED FEEDERS:** At a minimum, soak or scrub feeders with very hot water or a white vinegar solution. You can sanitize them with a dilute bleach solution (1:9), rinse them thoroughly, and let them dry before adding bird seed. *Or if dishwasher safe, take it apart and use a dishwasher on a hot setting!* Clean about once every 1-2 weeks, more often during times of heavy use, during wet weather, or if you see mold or a sick bird at the feeder. *Hint: make your life easier and purchase*

(Continued on page 5)



From the VAS Board

by Sam Neuffer

It may not seem like it after receiving 10 inches of snow recently, but spring is around the corner! With spring comes our migrating summer birds. Rufous Hummingbirds, Turkey Vultures, and a variety of swallows will begin to trickle in before our summer flycatchers and warblers start arriving in April. The arrival and departure of Ospreys always marks the beginning and end of my favorite birding time of the year. A time when I can go outside without a bulky coat and gloves. The camera, binoculars, and spotting scope are bulky enough for me!

We hope you will be able to spend some safe, socially-distanced time outdoors as the weather warms. With vaccination rates rising and the procurement of more vaccine, I am hopeful we will be able to see each other in person as soon as it is safe to do so! It feels cliché to say these times have been hard, but the isolation, tragedy, and fear that people have suffered over the course of this pandemic is immensely difficult. I am grateful to be able to run our meetings. Our meetings are a wonderful forum to connect with others about the birds we are all passionate about, and give us some needed social time that is so hard to come by these days. The wonderful programs Don puts on for us makes it all the better! I loved hearing about dinosaurs and birds at our last

meeting. Who wouldn't have fun learning about dinosaurs? Ask any kid, and I'm sure they couldn't give you a reason not to love dinosaurs.

Speaking of kids, Audubon Adventures has gone fully online this year! Typically, we collect money from our membership to buy educational materials from Audubon Adventures. These materials are then delivered to classrooms so teachers can educate 3rd-5th graders about the environment. This was not a typical year however, and with feedback from teachers, we decided to administer Audubon Adventures online. Thanks to our education committee member, Lissa Gienty, who put in so much work to get guides on how to use Audubon Adventures online to teachers! The program would have been on pause this year without her hard work.

As always, thank you for joining us for our monthly meetings and reading our newsletter! Vancouver Audubon is something special! If you want to get involved and help out with conservation efforts, diversity efforts, or education, please reach out to me at samneuffer@gmail.com. Thanks for making Vancouver Audubon fantastic!



Vancouver Audubon Society

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Program meetings are usually held at the [West Park Community Room at 610 Esther St.](#) (just across the street from the west end of Esther Short Park, or kitty-corner from City Hall). Parking lot can be accessed from Esther Street. There is an entrance at either side of the building.

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Vancouver Audubon believes in the wisdom of nature's design and promotes this through education, involvement, stewardship, enjoyment and advocacy.

VAS is a non-profit organization under US IRS Code Section 501(c)(3).

Programs

Upcoming Vancouver Audubon Programs

During pandemic restrictions, we will be presenting virtual meeting using Zoom, which allows Vancouver Audubon Chapter members to participate in meetings and educational presentations through their home computer, laptop, or even your smart phone. We will ask attendees to register in advance. VAS members will receive an invitation to the webinar through a link in their email, but invitations can be sent out on request.

Starting at 6:30pm, the first 30 minutes of this meeting will be a social time when members will be able to interact through live audio and video. During the presentation starting at 7:00, no audio or video will be allowed for attendees. Written questions submitted through Chat or Q & A can be answered at the end of the program.

The following programs are currently scheduled, all start at 7:00 pm (social time at 6:30pm). We hope you will join us!

Contact Don Rose for more information or to get a Zoom invitation: meetings@vancouveraudubon.org

March 2 – Curtis Helm, Steigerwald Habitat Restoration Project

Curtis will summarize the work performed this past construction season as well as what is planned for 2021.



In 2020, major project elements that were completed included realigning Gibbons Creek and constructing the floodwall and berm north of SR 14, raising...(more on pg 8).

Curtis Helm is Principal Restoration Ecologist for Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership. He was hired about 1.5 years ago, principally to work on the Steigerwald Floodplain Restoration Project. Previously, he worked for 8 years in the Urban Forestry and Ecosystem Management Division for the City of Philadelphia. He has also worked for 15 years at an environmental consulting firm in New Jersey, Amy S. Greene Env. Consultants, Inc. His focus was primarily on wetlands related issues, design/construction/planting as well as regulatory permitting and compliance.

April 6 – Darlene Betat, Bird Nesting Structures

Darlene Betat, Outreach Coordinator for Backyard Bird Shop, Inc. will talk about different types of bird nest structures and strategies used by our local songbirds and tips for helping nesting birds in your own backyard. Darlene has been a bird enthusiast for 45+ years, of which more than 30 years has been in Pacific Northwest.



Join the meeting early! At 6:30pm we would love to see and hear from you! We can use the first half hour to chat, hear about your sightings and look at photos!



Field Trip Update

As the vaccine rollout progresses and when COVID restrictions are lifted, the board will be discussing the possibility of resuming field trips and bird walks. We hope this will be an option in the near future!

Be sure to watch the newsletter, website, or the VAS Facebook page for updates!

Creating Communities Where Birds Flourish

By Susan
Saul

One of National Audubon Society's five conservation priorities is creating [Bird-friendly Communities](#). Over the past century, urbanization has occupied, fragmented, and transformed ecologically productive landscapes with buildings, pavement, sterile lawns and exotic ornamental plants. We've introduced walls of glass, toxic pesticides, and domestic predators. The human-dominated landscape no longer supports functioning ecosystems or provides healthy places for birds.

Creating Bird-Friendly Communities is Audubon's commitment to meeting birds' needs in the places where we live. We can restore and reconnect the ecological function of our communities by providing food, shelter, clean water for drinking and bathing, safe passage and safe places to raise young for birds in our communities. In return, birds give us richer, more beautiful, and healthful places to live.

Audubon's [Plants for Birds](#) program is designed to enable anyone to have a positive impact by planting native plants for birds right where they live. The native plants database offers a customized list of plants native to your area and a list of native plant nurseries. The goal is to get one million native plants in the ground for birds.

The other element of creating bird-friendly communities is making buildings safe for birds both day and night. Scientists estimate that up to one billion birds are killed each year by collisions with buildings. Birds hit buildings at all hours during the day and night.

At night migrating birds can be distracted by bright lights in our cities. Audubon's [Lights Out](#) program is a national effort to reduce this problem. The strategy is to convince building owners and managers to turn off excess lighting during the months migrating birds are flying overhead, helping to provide them safe passage between their nesting and wintering grounds.



*Western Tanagers feasting on native Red Elderberry
Photo by Mick Thompson*

Acting Locally for Bird-friendly Communities

Several Vancouver Audubon board members recently attended National Audubon's training session about how to raise local government and public awareness of the problems for birds and opportunities to create bird-friendly communities. Many Audubon chapters nationwide have achieved local government proclamations in support of a bird-friendly week to coincide with Earth Day week (April 19-25, 2021) or Native Plant Appreciation Month. Governor Inslee already has issued a [proclamation](#) for Native Plant Appreciation Month for April 2021.

If you would be interested in asking the mayor of your city to issue a Bird-friendly Community Proclamation during

April, contact

conservation@vancouveraudubon.org.

We will try to put together some teams to work on proclamations for cities in our chapter area.

Making Fort Vancouver National Historic Site More Bird-friendly

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is an oasis of green space and history in the midst of the City of Vancouver and a popular birding site. It is an [eBird hotspot](#) with over 500 checklists. The

three Acorn Woodpeckers that have spent the winter at Fort Vancouver have been attracting birders from across the state.

Susan Saul and Cindy McCormack recently met with Fort Vancouver staff to share ideas for making the 366-acre grounds more bird-friendly within the constraints of the cultural heritage of the site. The staff members were very receptive to their suggestions for providing more native plants, shrubs, snags and dead branches on trees, and fallen leaves and acorns on the ground. The visitor use ranger was very enthused about updating the Fort's website to include more information for birders.

This outreach effort confirmed that most people are happy to take simple acts to make their community more bird-friendly.

(Feeding, continued from page 1)

easy-to-clean feeders, such as Droll Yankee's ring-pull tube feeders or Aspects Quick-clean tube feeder.



Bushtits on suet
Photo by Mick Thompson

- **SUET FEEDERS:** Clean suet feeders using boiling hot water and a mild dish soap to cut through the film and stickiness. Let feeder soak for at least 15 minutes. Use a scrub brush or non-scratching scouring pad to clean. Soak in a dilute bleach solution, rinse well and allow to dry thoroughly before reloading suet. Cleaning frequency should be the same as seed feeders.
- Keep the area below your feeders clean and avoid build-up of hulls, uneaten seed and other waste. Moldy and spoiled food is unhealthy both for birds and for your outside pets. Bird food scattered on the ground can attract unwanted rodents. Rake away old seed and discarded hulls. *Hint: One big advantage of sunflower chips—very little to no waste under the feeder!*
- **BIRDBATHS:** Water in birdbaths should be changed at a minimum every week and more often with heavy use, in warm weather, or when debris falls in. (*I prefer rinsing daily, deep cleaning weekly*). Regular refreshing helps keep algae from growing and mosquitoes from breeding! To clean a birdbath, remove all water. Clean the bath basin as appropriate for the material composition.
- **HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS:** Clean hummingbird feeders every time you refresh the nectar. Hot tap water and a bottle brush or special sponge are usually all you need to clean hummingbird feeders regularly. White vinegar is safe and effective cleaner too. If your feeder has

hard-to-reach nooks and crannies, avoid using detergents as it can leave harmful residues.

**Refresh nectar daily during hot weather. Consider removing any feeders exposed to direct sun during warm weather.

**Nectar can be refreshed every 3-4 days in cool weather.

If the nectar is cloudy, has black mold deposits, or a beery odor, all are **dangerous to hummingbirds and are signs that your nectar needs refreshing more frequently. **If you cannot keep a clean and safe feeder, DO NOT use a feeder!** Try a hummingbird garden instead! (*I prefer both the garden and the feeder!*)

- **STORING SEED:** Store seed in metal containers with secure lids to protect it from squirrels and mice. Keep the cans in a cool, dry location; avoid storing in the heat. Damp seeds may grow mold that can be fatal to birds. Overheating and age can destroy the nutrition and taste of seeds and nuts. (*Think rancid!*)
- **LOCATE FEEDERS TO REDUCE WINDOW COLLISIONS:** In the United States, approximately one billion birds die from flying into windows each year. Reduce the risk of bird collisions by placing feeders less than three feet from a window or more than 30 feet away. There are also some [effective window collision prevention aids available](#).
- **KEEP CATS INDOORS!** Cats kill hundreds of millions of birds annually in the United States, often pouncing on ground-feeding birds, juvenile birds, and those dazed by window collisions. Responsible and caring cat owners keep their cats indoors, where they are also safer from traffic, disease, and fights with other animals. Bells on cat collars are usually ineffective for deterring predation.

By maintaining clean feeders and water source, and by having a wildlife-friendly property, you are doing your part as a responsible bird host!

Seeking Conservation Committee Members

VAS has formed a Conservation Committee to take the lead in planning and directing the environmental priorities and activities for the chapter.

Committee objectives are:

- Identify, study, and evaluate environmental problems and opportunities and select priorities for action.
- Inform members about conservation issues and projects and encourage them to act individually and in cooperation with other members.

- Represent the chapter's views by meeting with officials, speaking at hearings and other forums and submitting written comments when appropriate.
- Educate the public about conservation matters and urge them to act on priority issues.

VAS has a Zoom account so we should be able to meet virtually from the comfort and safety of our homes.

If you are interested or just want to find out more, please contact conservation@vancouveraudubon.org.

Abundance Codes used in this column:

(1) Common, (2) Uncommon, (3) Harder to find, usually seen annually, (4) Rare, 5+ records, (5) Fewer than 5 records

These codes vary for each county, to see all 39 WA county checklists go to wabirder.com and click on Checklists.

Jan. 20, a hybrid **GREEN-WINGED TEAL** (Eurasian x American) with an incomplete and faded bilateral white breast-side bar and conspicuous white lines on the face was found by Christopher Brown at the Ridgefield NWR--River 'S' Unit.

Jan. 22, Mike Clarke also saw the 2 **REDHEAD** at the Rock Creek Mill Pond in Skamania County.

Jan. 25, Nick Mrvelj reported the continuing **RED-NECKED GREBE** (3) along the Vancouver waterfront trail.

Jan. 26, A **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** was found in Camas by Lynda Lybeck-Robinson.

Jan. 26, Jim Danzenbaker birded in Yacolt finding 1 **MONK PARAKEET** and 45 **EVENING GROSBEAKS**. Yacolt has the only known nesting colonies of Monk Parakeets in Washington.

Jan. 26, an early **TURKEY VULTURE** was reported separately on Old Lower River Road, by Robin Rose and Randy Hill. These scavengers used to feed on the spawned out smelt that used to run up the Columbia River in huge numbers in the 1960's and 1970s, now that these fish are a threatened species, I am unsure what they now find to feed on when they first arrive in the Spring.

Jan. 30, Robin Rose saw another **TURKEY VULTURE** over the Fort Vancouver NHS.

Jan. 30, Jim Danzenbaker observed 4 early returning **VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOWS** over the Shillapoo Wildlife Area on LaFrambois Rd., their average return date is March 3rd.

Feb. 2. Carol Kohler spotted another **TURKEY VULTURE** over the Columbia on Marine Drive in Portland.

Feb. 5, Jason Vasallo picked out a **CLARK'S GREBE** among the Western Grebes on Vancouver Lake.

Feb. 6, The **TUFTED DUCK** (4) at Blurock Landing in the Van-

cover Lake lowlands was last reported by Ken Vanderkamp.

Feb. 7, one more **VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** was found at Vancouver Lake by Randy Hill.

Feb. 8, the **RED-THROATED LOON** (3) was last seen by Gen Nielsen at Blurock Landing but still may be still in the area. There are some smelt entering the Columbia River and this may draw some more loons and gulls into our area.

Feb. 9, a **BARN SWALLOW** was seen by Jim Danzenbaker at Shillapoo Lake in the Vancouver Lake lowlands their average return date is April 8th.

Feb. 9, the continuing 2 male **REDHEAD** were spotted among mixed the flock of coots and wigeons at the Rock Creek Mill Pond, Skamania by Hal Busch and Ruth Morton.

Feb. 10, Jen Sanford counted 7 **BARROW'S GOLDENEYES** at Marine Park. These gorgeous diving ducks nest locally in high mountain lakes in the Cascade Mountains.

Feb. 15, Paul Jacobsen picked out a **CASSIN'S FINCH** at his feeders on Reserve St. in Vancouver. These finches are usually found in Ponderosa Pine forests but occasionally show up here in the winter and migration making them a Code (4) here.

Feb. 15, Cindy McCormack posted that 2 **ACORN WOODPECKERS** (5) were still being seen at the Fort Vancouver National Historical Site Auditorium/Gymnasium at Ft. Vancouver Way and Hatheway.

Feb. 16, while out shoveling snow I heard a calling **TRUMPETER SWAN** in the low clouds over our property, a new yard bird for us.

Feb. 17, Cindy McCormack, Les Carlson and Jim Danzenbaker, and Randy Hill birded the Vancouver Lake area finding 6600 **SNOW GEESE**, a flock of 95 **RUDDY DUCKS** on Shillapoo Lake, 1318



"Bewick's" Tundra Swan
Photo by Mick Thompson, Nov 2012

(Continued on page 7)



(Afield, continued from page 6)

SANDHILL CRANES, 44 WHITE PELICANS, a BLACK PHOEBE, 2 TREE SWALLOWS, 1 HERMIT THRUSH and a WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. The best sighting was of a Bewick's **TUNDRA SWAN**, this is the Eurasian subspecies that has more yellow at base of the bill extending approximately a third of the way to the tip.

For the Washington Cumulative County List Project so far in 2021, 151 species have been reported in Clark County and 98 birds have been found in Skamania County so far this year.

Migrant birds begin arriving by the end of February which is when the first Rufous Hummingbirds should arrive, followed by Tree Swallows, Osprey and Say's Phoebe with new species arriving nearly every week through the end of May. Among the migrant flocks there are always a few birds that take a wrong turn or get pushed off of their usual migration route, so watch for out of place birds during migration.

Our location at the mouth of the Columbia River Gorge allows migrants on the eastside of the Cascades to easily show up here with sightings like Burrowing Owls, Sage Thrashers, Lark Sparrow and other dryland species. Please report the arrival dates of both the common and rare birds you see for this column and the [Cumulative County List Project](#).

By Wilson Cady

CALL FOR CLARK'S NUTCRACKER NEST SIGHTINGS

I'm seeking help in locating Clark's nutcracker nests for my Nutcracker Ecosystem Project and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Clark's Nutcracker/Whitebark Pine Ecosystem initiative. Nest sightings will assist studies of the role of Clark's Nutcrackers in conifer ecosystems, the effects of climate change on the birds and coniferous forests, and educational efforts to elevate awareness.

Very few nutcracker nests have ever been documented, so any and all new nest information is wonderfully helpful. Nests are made of twigs/sticks and are ~8-12" wide, ~4-9" high, and 8-60' off the ground, primarily in conifers. Nests can be found in live or dead trees, and dense or open stands of trees. Nest building tends to begin in late-February/early-March (but may be earlier or later depending on the location and year), and seeing nutcrackers carrying twigs for building is the most easily observable sign of nesting. Nestlings should all have fledged by mid-June.

If you spot Clark's Nutcrackers nesting, please send GPS point and/or other location information, such as tree species and height of nest in the tree, as well as nest status (building, eggs, nestlings), date located, and any other details to tazaschaming@gmail.com. I'd also love observations of juveniles. Please let me know if you have any questions!

For more information and photos of nests, see www.thenutcrackerecosystemproject.com.

Thank you!
Taza Schaming

Whitebark Pine and Clark's Nutcrackers

Whitebark pine and Clark's Nutcrackers have a fascinating relationship: the trees provide rich, fatty seeds (with more calories per pound than chocolate), and the birds "plant" the trees' seeds — a single bird may hide up to 98,000 seeds in a year. The food caches help the birds get through the winter, and the leftovers grow into new trees. In fact, whitebark pine trees sprout almost exclusively from nutcracker seed caches. This dependency has led to considerable concern for both species because whitebark pine ecosystems are rapidly disappearing in the western United States. This disappearance, largely due to mountain pine beetles and invasive blister rust, has caused concern for the entire ecosystem. While whitebark pine restoration efforts are underway, these efforts will not be effective if Clark's Nutcracker populations decline or their habitat selection changes to a degree that they are not available to disperse seeds. We have limited information on nutcracker population status and behavior, but evidence suggests that declining whitebark pine communities are leading to reduced local Clark's Nutcracker populations.

Excerpt from thenutcrackerecosystemproject.com

Steigerwald Habitat Restoration Project

In 2020, major project elements that were completed included realigning Gibbons Creek and constructing the floodwall and berm north of SR 14, raising the SR 14 roadway, constructing the foundations of the east and west setback levees, and excavating expanded habitat areas. Disturbed areas were hydro-mulched with native seed and wood habitat structures were installed within the realigned portions of Gibbons Creek and the expanded habitat areas.

This is what will be completed in 2021:

- Removal of 2.2 miles of the Columbia River Levee,
- Completion of the east and west setback levees,
- Excavation of three floodplain channels,
- Removal of Gibbons Creek diversion structures, elevated channel, and fish ladder along with reconnecting Gibbons creek through the site and out to the Columbia,
- Excavation of additional areas of expanded wetland habitat,
- Construction of upland habitat refugia, parking lot and architectural elements relocation,
- Trail and pedestrian bridge construction,
- Seeding, planting, and installing wood habitat structures within the three new channels and realigned Gibbons Creek.

See more about the project at [Refuge2020](https://www.refuge2020.com)

Birders and Photographers!

It's that time of year again! The first Purple Martins should start arriving in mid- to late-March.



We have several banded birds returning every year and need your help in getting the numbers recorded.

Birders will need a spotting scope to read the bands, photographers might be able to get photos of the bands good enough to read.

Every banded martin will have an aluminum band on one leg and a color band on another. The color band (green if banded in Washington) will have a single letter followed by three numbers. The aluminum band will have 9 digits; 4 on the top row, 5 on the bottom row.

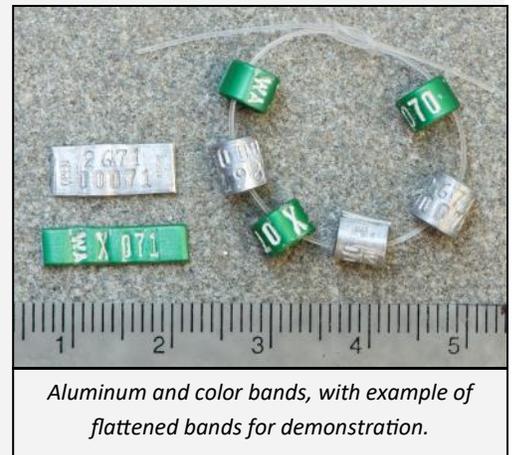
Any information on the banded birds would be appreciated!

Information needed:

- Location of bird
- Which leg has the color band
- Band numbers
- Sex/age of bird if possible

Any questions? Birds to report?

Please contact Cindy at nwbirder@gmail.com.



“This Land is Part of Us”

A SHORT FILM ABOUT WASHINGTON’S SHRUB-STEPPE ECOSYSTEM

The shrub-steppe of central Washington’s Columbia Basin is a land of rich biodiversity, vibrant communities, and poignant beauty. It is a place both iconic and increasingly at-risk.

Here, at the northern extent of the great “Sagebrush Sea” that once sprawled across much of the American West, growing collaboration between agencies, Native American tribes, conservation organizations, local landowners, and other partners seeks to preserve and restore shrubsteppe ecosystems while supporting cultural and economic values.

Despite impacts from severe wildfires and habitat fragmentation, recovery programs are underway for species such as the Greater Sage-Grouse, pygmy rabbits, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and pronghorn antelope, while efforts including the Arid Lands Initiative and Conservation Reserve Program foster constructive partnership for the future of Washington’s shrubsteppe.

For wildlife lovers, hunters and anglers, Indigenous peoples, farmers and ranchers, outdoor recreationists and so many others, this land is no desert devoid of life, This Land is Part of Us. <https://youtu.be/NfhM9vLQD-0>

Bird ID Challenge

By Cindy McCormack

Let's make use of those partial or poor photos or just birds that can be a challenge to ID! If there are identifiable features in the photo, submit your photo for our next challenge.

Uncertain about identification or if photo has enough info? Don't hesitate to send it in for discussion and review.

Of course, if you wish to share your good photos with your fellow VAS members, you are welcome to submit them for publishing. Send questions, comments, and submissions to [Cindy](mailto:Cindy@nwbirder@gmail.com) at nwbirder@gmail.com.

Can you identify the bird in this picture?

Identification and discussion will be in the next newsletter.



February's Bird ID Challenge Answer

It seemed time for a fairly straight-forward ID quiz. The only thing tricky about this photo is some strong side-lighting. It is also a bird not seen often in most of Clark County. However, many mountain campers and picnickers should be well-acquainted with this bird!

If you aren't familiar with this bird, you might think chickadee at first glance at the photo, but

this is definitely not a chickadee! Let's start with the characteristics you can see in this photo. Generally, it appears to be a fairly robust bird with black/gray/white plumage coloration. The black bill appears to be fairly stout, but length cannot be assessed in this photo. Note the pale forehead contrasting with a darker crown as well as a sharp contrast of the back and wing color from the whitish face, neck, breast and abdomen. If you look very closely, you can just make out some very narrow white edges on coverts on the shaded portion of the wing. Again, looking closely, you might also note that the feathering at the base of the bills extend onto the bill over the nares (nostrils).

The feathering covering the nostrils is common in the fam-



February's quiz bird
Photo by C. McCormack

ily of this bird, although this particular species does not have the appearance of most others in the family. It belongs to Corvidae, the family of crows, ravens, and jays.

The whitish face and throat that extends along the sides of the neck and the dark crown really give this bird away, even without the ability to assess bill length or tail length. This spe-

cies is very distinctive member of the jays, the only member of it's genus in the Americas. This **CANADA JAY** was photographed at Horseshoe Lake Campground in Skamania County. The most reliable place in Clark County I have found for these clever birds is the road up to Larch Mountain in the autumn. There appears to be a regular area road-killed deer are dumped off of the roadside, and the Canada Jays take advantage of this abundant food source.

The Canada Jay (formerly known as Gray Jay, changed in 2018) is also known as "Camp Robber" due to their frequent visit to campsites to collect (or steal) food handouts. They often travel in small family groups and will follow hikers along trails, often silently. Their voices include many

(Continued on page 10)

NWR Updates

Refuge Information current as of publication. Check the alerts on the [website](#) for current information.

Ridgefield NWR

The entrance fee that was previously postponed will be returning on March 1st.

Automatic Gate times for all units: 7:00am to 6:00pm

Note that gates close automatically. Vehicles must exit the Refuge before the gate closes and there is no entry before or after hours.

Restrooms now open and cleaned weekly. Supplies may run low.

"S" Unit

Auto Tour Route: Open Daily

Vehicle traffic only. No bike or pedestrian access.

Kiwa Trail: Closed for the season. Will reopen May 1st.

Auto Tour Route on the River "S" Unit is open to vehicle traffic **ONLY**. No bikes or pedestrian access at this time.

Carty Unit

****New Construction ****

The construction of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge's Multi-Purpose building is well underway! The main entrance looks a bit messy however you can still access the trail from the lower parking lot.

Spur trail from Main Street Bridge Closed During Construction

The pedestrian trail from Main Avenue to the trail head at the Carty Unit will remain closed during the duration of the construction. Visitors can still drive in or walk in from the sidewalk through the main entrance gate.

Port entrance: Lookout open year-round. Trail to Plankhouse closed for the season.

All other public use facilities and access to those facilities (including the Plankhouse and the Refuge Office) are not available to the public.

Steigerwald Lake NWR

Closed to All Public Access for Restoration

[Video update of the Steigerwald project link](#)

The Steigerwald Reconnection Project has begun. To ensure the safety of our visitors and our crews, the Refuge's trails are closed to all public access at this time. This closure includes the Refuge's parking lot, restrooms, and access to both the Refuge's interior trails (currently) and the Columbia River Dike Trail (the levee trail that parallels the Columbia River (as of July 6th, 2020).

The Refuge Trails and Dike Trail east of Captain William Clark Park, will be closed to all public access until the Spring of 2022. Please respect this closure while habitat and public use opportunities are enhanced. For more info, visit <https://www.refuge2020.info/steigerwald-reconnection-project>.

(Bird ID Challenge, continued from page 9)

some rather silly sounds—whistles, squeaks and soft noises, but they still have some more jay-like calls and are very adept at mimicry, like our other jays.



Canada Jay in flight
Photo by C. McCormack

NWR Mask requirement

While entering or remaining upon a National Wildlife Refuge, all visitors over the age of 2 years* must wear masks, except when actively eating or drinking, in the following locations:

1. All common areas and shared workspaces in buildings owned, rented, or leased by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including, but not limited to, visitor centers, administrative offices, and gift shops.
2. The following outdoor areas, when others are present and physical distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart) cannot reasonably be maintained:

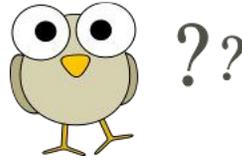
- Outdoor areas adjacent to visitor centers or administrative office entry areas.
- Parking lots or pull-off viewing areas when outside of an enclosed motor vehicle.
- Trailheads, trails, rest areas, fishing piers, boat ramps, and close proximity hunting areas.

Masks must cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face. Masks with ventilation valves and face shields do not meet the mask requirement.

INJURED WILDLIFE: WHAT TO DO?

Injured Wildlife Hotline: 503-292-0304

The nearest wildlife care and rehabilitation center is operated by Portland Audubon. Here are some general guidelines from their [Wildlife Care Center](#):



1. **Prioritize your safety**
 2. **Safely contain the animal**
 3. **Keep the animal calm and secure until you can take it to. Wildlife Care Center**
- **Do not handle the animal** any more than necessary to contain it – this is for your protection as well as for the animal’s well being. Wild animals are terrified of humans. They may fight back, try to flee, or freeze. Many people mistake the “freeze” behavior for tolerance or enjoyment of contact, when in reality it is a fear response. Limiting contact will reduce stress on the animal.
 - **Keep the animal in a warm, dark, and quiet space.** Keep them away from children and pets.
 - **Many animals benefit from a heating pad** set on low under half their enclosure, or a sock filled with dry rice and microwaved for 2-3 minutes.
 - **Do not feed the animal.**
 - **Be cautious when choosing to leave water.** Many wild animals do not drink standing water, and attempting to help them drink can result in pneumonia. In addition, if an animal spills its water and gets wet, it could get cold and may die. If in doubt, it is better not to leave water.

Bring the animal to the Wildlife Care Center as soon as you can. If you can’t bring it to the center during our open hours, or you believe the animal is in critical condition and needs immediate attention after hours, the Wildlife Care Center has a partnership with the [24 hour Emergency Veterinary Hospital Dove Lewis](#). To get in touch with them, call (503) 228-7281.

If you are unable to transport to the care center, try calling Arden 360-892-8872. If he is available to transport a bird, you will be asked to donate a gas mileage compensation and a small donation for the Care Center for the care of the bird at the time of pick up.

The Wildlife Care Center admits native wild patients and operates its Injured Wildlife Hotline from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., 365 days a year.

Lights Out!

Every year, billions of birds migrate north in the spring and south in the fall, the majority of them flying at night, navigating with the night sky. However, as they pass over big cities on their way, they can become disoriented by bright artificial lights and skyglow, often causing them to collide with buildings or windows. While lights can throw birds off their migration paths, bird fatalities are more directly caused by the amount of energy the birds waste flying around and calling out in confusion. The exhaustion can then leave them vulnerable to other urban threats.

Audubon’s Lights Out program is a national effort to reduce this problem. Here are ways to contribute to the Lights Out solution:

- Turn off exterior decorative lighting
- Extinguish pot and flood-lights
- Substitute strobe lighting wherever possible
- Reduce atrium lighting wherever possible
- Turn off interior lighting especially on higher stories
- Substitute task and area lighting for workers staying late or pull window coverings
- Down-shield exterior lighting to eliminate horizontal glare and all light directed upward
- Install automatic motion sensors and controls wherever possible
- When converting to new lighting assess quality and quantity of light needed, avoiding over-lighting with newer, brighter technology

Vancouver Audubon Society Support & Donation Form

Membership dues support education, speaker programs, newsletter, and conservation projects.

**Renewal date:
September 1st**

_____ I wish to become a supporter of Vancouver Audubon for \$20/year or \$_____

Please include this form and make check payable to and send to: Vancouver Audubon, P.O. Box 1966, Vancouver, WA 98668-1966 **-OR- join/renew/donate online at vancouveraudubon.org**

VAS will not share your information with any other organization. VAS is a non-profit organization under US IRS Code Section 501(c)(3).

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____ (req'd for newsletter)

For additional information on membership to National Audubon (Chapter # Y13), go to <http://www.audubon.org/>

February 2021

21/28	22	23 Board Mtg	24	25	26	27
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

March 2021

	1	2 Program	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 Earth Hour
28	29	30 Board Mtg	31			



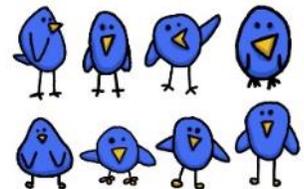
FEB 23 (TUE): VAS Board Meeting via Zoom, 6:30pm

MAR 2 (TUE): VAS Program: Steigerwald NWR Habitat Project, social 6:30pm, program 7pm via Zoom

MAR 27 (SAT): [Earth Hour](#), 8:30pm

MAR 30 (TUE): VAS Board Meeting, 6:30pm, Zoom Mtg.

APR 6 (TUE): VAS Program, Bird Nesting Structures



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Open for curb-side pick-up! Visit

backyardbirdshop.com



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