

the curlew

October 2003

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

In the Field

with Ann Taylor

Our next morning bird walk at Bateman Island will be on Saturday, November 1.

We meet at 8 a.m. at Wye Park next to the causeway to Bateman Island. All are welcome; beginning birders are particularly invited to join us. For additional information call 582-6462.

After our nice publicity in The Tri-City Herald, an incredible forty birders gathered on October 4 for our first walk at Bateman Island since the fire. Was that three years ago? With the help of four volunteers we broke into groups for a great day of birding. At the mud flats by the river many shorebirds were seen, to name a few - lesser yellowlegs, western sandpiper, pectoral sandpiper, least sandpiper, spotted sandpiper, and semi-palmated plover. A big thanks to those who brought scopes!

All told 51 species were seen and everyone had a great Saturday in the terrific Indian Summer weather.

October Membership Meeting
Tuesday, October 28, 7:00 pm
Kennewick First Lutheran Church,
corner of Highway 395 & Yelm Street,
Kennewick.

Our guest speaker this month will be Bob Morse. His slide show and talk will be on "Birds of the Puget Sound Region".

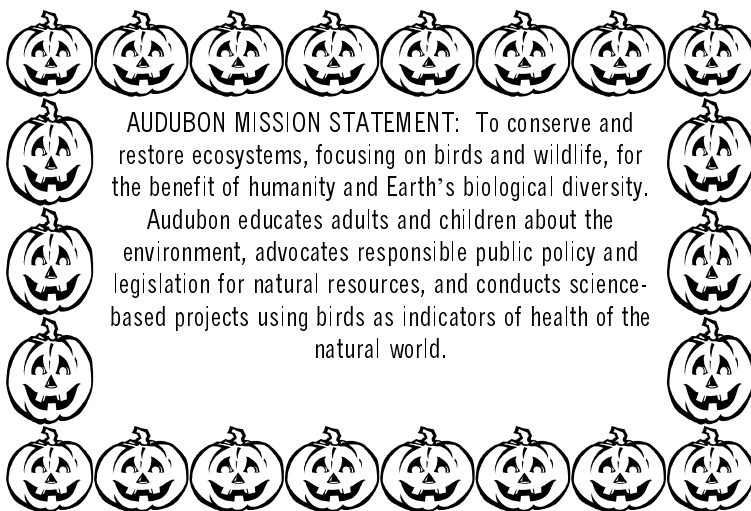
Mr. Morse started watching birds at the age of 12 and since has birded extensively throughout the United States. He has recorded over 828 bird species, 84% of the 984 bird species that inhabit the U.S. He has viewed over 413 in the State of Washington!

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Second Saturday EVENT at the McNary Environmental Education Center (MEECE) Saturday November 8

This Saturday we will feature an Archeologist from US Corps of Engineers who will present artifacts similar to those used in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Jeanne Newton will talk about the difficulties of Snake River travel and the Corps' dedication to complete their mission. Awards will be given for the Tee shirt design in the contest among area-wide third graders. The presentation is from 9 to noon. The event is open to the public at no charge, Families are welcome.

All this at McNary Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Center, 311 Lake Rd, Burbank, WA Turn east off US Hwy. 12 on Maple St., a mile past Hood Park. Free fun for all ages! Call 543-8322 for more information.



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.

Recording Rarities *with Phil Bartley*

As I start thinking about the LCBAS Xmas count coming on January 3, 2004, I get excited about the good people who will spend a day helping a very worthy cause recording the birds in our area. I also think of how to improve the count. One area where we can all improve is the recording of unusual count species. As the years go on, and it becomes clear how important the Xmas count and other citizen science related bird sightings are, the proper recording of unusual species seems to be more prominent. I wanted to share some of my rules and experiences in recording unusual species.

- 1) Take notes at the time you see the bird or immediately after.** This is the most important rule because it will make your sighting the most accurate. Sightings that are written up hours or even days later are immediately suspect. Drawings are great. Pictures, videos and voice recordings are even better. More about what to write below.
- 2) Get someone else on the bird and get them to provide their sighting.** The term in bird circles is SSO, which means single sight observer. Unless there is a preponderance of good evidence and details, SSO sightings are regularly not accepted. The more people that see the bird, the better. In general, it is also better if the individuals do NOT compare notes, as this reduces the accuracy of each sighting.
- 3) Focus your initial description on the bird markings, sizes, and shapes.** Start with the obvious (e.g. black bird with prominent white wing patches in flight, white tail tip, yellow legs, orange bill). When giving relative information, either give dimensions if they can be estimated, or compare with other common species. For example, as large

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October Meeting Silent Auction!

Come prepared to make your bid on the wonderfully illustrated "Sibley's Birds of Western North America" engagement calendar, 2004. This is a must have for the coming year, or could make a wonderful Christmas gift for a special someone! The Auction will be a fundraiser for the chapter and will close at the November meeting—just in time for that Christmas holiday—so beat the shopping rush and help your chapter at the same time!! Place your bids and take a chance. The Lucky winner will take the calendar home!!

HEY MEMBERS! After last months wonderful presentation by Lyn Tompkins of Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation, and the close encounters with live examples of great horned owl, red-tailed hawk, barn owl and American

kestrel—aren't you ready to become an essential link in the rehabilitation of injured wildlife?

Interested in Volunteering to Transport Raptors?

Volunteers are needed to be trained to transport injured raptors to the Blue Mountain Rehabilitation Center in Pendleton, Oregon. Interested individuals willing to help can call Marilyn Hayes at 943 0930 or email her at mzbirds@earthlink.net. Marilyn hopes to develop a phone bank of interested volunteers. Thanks from the birds in ad-

<p style="text-align:center">LCBAS P.O. Box 1900, Richland WA 99352</p> <p style="text-align:center">OFFICERS</p> <p>President, Tom Clarke - 588-3362 (tlclarke1@hotmail.com) Vice President, Charlotte Reep- 547-9087 (reepowls@earthlink.net) Secretary, Bonnie Dunham - 586-2429 Treasurer, Chris Simonen - 375-1703 (FASIMONEN@aol.com) President & First Lady Emeritus Howard Ennor & Lucile Ennor</p> <p style="text-align:center">COMMITTEE CHAIRS</p> <p>Audubon Adventures Bird Sightings, Bill LaFramboise - 627-3695 Book Sales, Margaret Greger - 943-3951 Conservation, Rick Leaumont - 545-6115 Curlew Folding/Mailing, Claire Schneck - 943-9249 Editor Heidi Newsome heidi_newsome@fws.gov 967-3633 Field Trips, Near, Ann Taylor - 582-5997 Field Trips, Far, Barbara Clarke - 588-3362 Nature Trail, Rod Coler 783-4664- Publicity, Murrell Dawson - 588-4025 Education, Dana Ward 545-0627 Hospitality, Forrest and Coralou Miller 783-7021 Membership, vacant Programs, vacant RARE BIRD ALERT - 627-BIRD</p>
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Bird Sightings -- August 16 to September 15, 2003

Bill LaFramboise (wlafra@owt.com)

To report your sightings, please send them to me at the above email address as soon as practical after the 15th of each month.

There were 2 Common Loons at Wanapum Dam on 08/23 (BL, NL). A Clark's Grebe was at Lind Coulee on 08/23 (BL, NL) and 1 was at Potholes State Park on 08/27 (CC, JC). The local high count of Great Egrets was 15 at the Yakima Delta on 09/03 and on 09/04 (BL, NL). Rare in the Lower Columbia Basin during the early part of fall migration, a Green Heron was at Paterson Slough on 08/28 (CMe). That was the first local sighting in the last 3 years.

The first Greater White-fronted Geese of the season were observed on 09/13 when 2 were at Lind Coulee and 16 were at Winchester Wasteway (DS). A Blue-winged Teal was at County Line Ponds on 08/23 (BL, NL) and 12 were at Para Ponds on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW). Fifteen Cinnamon Teal were also at Para Ponds on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW). There were 7 Common Mergansers near Nelson Island on 09/03 (BW). Two Ruddy Ducks were at the Yakima Delta on 09/03 and 4 were there on 09/10 (BW).

There was a Cooper's Hawk at Bateman Island on 08/25 (NL, RF) for the first sighting this fall. There were 2 early fall sightings of Northern Goshawks. One was at Ringold on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS). An immature flew over Canyon Terrace on 09/06 (BL). The previous early fall sighting of that species was on 09/09. Perhaps the last Swainson's Hawk of the season was at FEALE on 09/03 (HN). That species is rare after August. A Golden Eagle was at Windust Park on 09/05 (KK). A Merlin was at Potholes State Park on 08/27 (CC, JC). There have been several sightings of Peregrine Falcons. One was near Othello on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS), 1 was at Two Rivers Park on 09/06 (DR), 1 was at the Yakima Delta on 09/07 (BL, NL) and on 09/10 (BW), and 1 was at Iowa Beef on 09/11 (TA). The birds observed on 09/06 and on 09/07 appeared to be of the subspecies *anatum*.

Two Sandhill Cranes were seen flying over Royal City on 09/12 for the first observation of the season (BL). Rare during fall migration, a Sora was at the Yakima Delta on 08/29 and on 09/07 (BL, NL).

This has been one of the better years for shorebirds in the interior. Semipalmated Plovers have been well observed (mob). The high count was 10 at the Yakima Delta on 09/03 (NL, KCro, RF). The last reported Semipalmated Plover was

on 09/05 when 1 was at the Yakima Delta (BW). As numbers in the Lower Columbia Basin increase, Black-necked Stilts have been lingering later into the fall. One was at Iowa Beef on 09/11 (TA). The high count of American Avocets was 20 at Paterson Slough on 08/25 (BL, NL). Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs were observed throughout the reported period (mob). There was an unusually high count of 101 Lesser Yellowlegs at McCain Ponds near Othello on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS). There have been good numbers Solitary Sandpipers (mob). The high count was 6 at the Yakima Delta on 08/30 (PB). The high count of Spotted Sandpiper was 4 at Lind Coulee on 08/23 (BL, NL) and on 09/03 (EH). There were 3 sightings of Marbled Godwits. One was at Cold Springs NWR on 08/31 (PB) and on 09/03 (CC, JC), and 1 was at the Walla Walla Delta on 09/11 (TA). Marbled Godwits are rare in the interior during migration.

Rare but nearly annual during fall migration, a Sanderling was at the Yakima Delta on 09/05 (NL). Perhaps the last Semipalmated Sandpiper of the season was at Lind Coulee on 09/12 (BL). The high count of Western Sandpipers was 500 at Cold Spring NWR on 08/25 (CC, JC). The high count of Least Sandpipers was 75 at Cold Springs NWR on 08/25 (CC, JC) and at the Yakima Delta on 08/28 (BL, NL). Despite their late start, Baird's Sandpiper numbers have been above average. The high count was an amazing 64 birds at Lind Coulee on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW). The high count of Pectoral Sandpipers was 30 at Cold Spring NWR on 09/03 (CC, JC). There have been good numbers of Stilt Sandpipers. Two were at the Yakima Delta on 08/22 (NL, BW, RF) and 1 was there on 08/29 (BW). They were at Lind Coulee from 08/29 until the end of the reporting period. The high count was 5 at Lind Coulee on 09/12 (BL).

Rare in the interior, Short-billed Dowitchers were observed throughout the reporting period (mob). The high count was 4 at Lind Coulee on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS). The high count of Long-billed Dowitchers was 62 at Lind Coulee on 09/14 (BL). Wilson's Snipe were observed throughout the reporting period in modest numbers (mob). There were several September sightings of Wilson's Phalaropes when they are rare including 1 at Lind Coulee on 09/03 (EH), 2 at Iowa Beef on 09/05 (KK), 5 at Lind Coulee on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW), and 1 at Iowa Beef on

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09/11 (TA). The high count of Red-necked Phalaropes was 120 at Iowa Beef on 09/11 (TA).

Rare in the interior, a Parasitic Jaeger was at the Potholes on 08/17 (DS), 2 were at the Walla Walla Delta on 09/13 and 1 was there on 09/14 (M&MD). Two Franklin's Gulls were at Iowa Beef on 09/05 (KK) and 1 was at the Walla Walla Delta on 09/11 (TA). A Bonaparte's Gull was at the Walla Walla Delta on 08/23 (M&MD). Ten were at Iowa Beef on 09/11 (TA). A Sabine's Gull was at the Yakima Delta on 09/03 (LN, KB). Perhaps that same bird was seen there until the end of the reporting period (mob). There have been good numbers of Common Terns (mob). The high count was 30 at McNary Pool on 09/11 (TA). A Black Tern was at the Walla Walla Delta on 08/23 (M&MD) and 1 was at the Yakima Delta on 09/01 (BW).

A Common Nighthawk was at Cold Springs NWR on 09/03 and 4 were at Hat Rock State Park on 09/09 (CC, JC). They become rare after the end of August. Two Common Poorwills were along Snake River Road on 09/05 (KK). The status and distribution of that secretive species is not well documented in Franklin County.

A Black-chinned Hummingbird was in North Richland until at least 09/06 (BW). Up to 2 Rufous Hummingbirds were there until 09/08 (BW). A Rufous Hummingbird was along the lower Yakima River on 09/01 and on 09/09 (RF, LF). A Lewis' Woodpecker was along Harrigan Road in Franklin County on 09/01 (SD). A Red-naped Sapsucker was at Palouse Falls on 09/13 (DS).

Olive-sided Flycatcher sightings included 2 at Palouse Falls on 09/01 (SM, BF, DS) and 1 at Windust Park on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW). Perhaps the last Western Wood-Pewee of the season was at Groves Park on 09/09 (BW). Rare during migration, a Least Flycatcher was at the Wahluke Slope on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS) and 1 was at Hat Rock State Park on 09/09 (CC, JC). There were several local sightings of other empidonax flycatchers (mob). Locally rare, an Ash-throated Flycatcher was at Ringold on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS).

A Cassin's Vireo was at Bateman Island on 08/17 (PB), 1 was at Ringold and 2 were at the Wahluke Slope on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS), and 1 was at Hat Rock State Park on 09/09 (CC, JC). There were several reports of Warbling Vireos (mob). The high count was 19 at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/01 (SM, BF, DS). There were several reports of Red-eyed Vireos, which are locally rare. One was at Lyons Ferry Park on 08/29 (TA, HO) and on 09/01 (SM,

BF, DS). One was in Washtucna on 08/29 (TA, HO) and on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW). The only Tri-Cities report of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was 1 at Groves Park on 09/09 (BW). A Townsend's Solitaire was at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW) and 2 were in Washtucna on 09/13 (DS). Locally rare, 2 Swainson's Thrushes were at Palouse Falls on 09/01 (SM, BF, DS). A Hermit Thrush was at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW) for the earliest fall sighting by 2 days. Two Gray Catbirds were at Ringold on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS). A Sage Thrasher was at FEALE on 09/03 (HN) for the first sighting there since September 2000. Four American Pipits were at Lind Coulee on 09/14 (BL).

There have been good numbers of Orange-crowned, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's, and Wilson's Warblers (mob). Nashville Warbler sightings included 1 Bateman Island on 08/17 (PB), 1 at Cold Springs NWR on 08/25 (CC, JC), 1 at McNary Park on 08/31 (PB), and 1 at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/01 (SM, BF, DS). The high count of Townsend's Warblers was 10 at the Wahluke Slope on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS). An American Redstart was at Lyons Ferry Park on 08/29 (TA, HO) and 1 was at Kahlotus on 09/05 (KK). Local sightings of Common Yellowthroats were 1 at Ringold on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS) and 1 at Bateman Island on 09/07 (BL, NL). The high count of Western Tanagers was 20 at the Wahluke Slope on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS).

Two Chipping Sparrows were at Bateman Island on 08/30 (PB) and 5 were at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/05 (RSh, TNo, CW). A Fox Sparrow was at Palouse Falls and another was at Washtucna on 09/13 (DS). Lincoln's Sparrow sightings included 2 at Two Rivers Park on 08/30 (DR), 4 at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/01 (SM, BF, DS), 3 at Bateman Island and 3 at C'hamna Nature Preserve on 09/06 (PB). The first White-crowned Sparrows of the season occurred at 3 different locations all on 09/03 (NL, KCro, RF, DR, HN). A Golden-crowned Sparrow was at Hood Park on 09/13 (M&MD) and 1 was Palouse Falls on 09/13 (DS). The first Dark-eyed Junco of the season was at Two Rivers Park on 08/29 (DR). Perhaps the last Black-headed Grosbeak of the season was at C'hamna Nature Preserve on 08/24 (RF, LF). A Bullock's Oriole was at the Wahluke Slope on 08/31 (SM, BF, DS) and 1 was at Potholes State Park on 09/11 (TA). They are rare after mid-August.

Bird of the Month

Ruffs are rare in Washington, especially in the interior. Two birds were observed in the Lower Columbia Basin this year. This first was a juvenile

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found by Nancy LaFramboise and me on 08/23. The second was found by Tom Aversa at Iowa Beef on 09/11. These sightings appear to be the 10th and 11th for eastern Washington.

Late August through September is the time to be looking for rare warblers. This year a **Blackpoll Warbler** was found at Lyons Ferry Park on 09/05 by Ryan Shaw, Tracey Norris, and Charlie Wright. This is the 10th local sighting of that species since 1990.

Observers

TA Tom Aversa, **PB** Phil Bartley, **KB** Ken Burton, **CC** Craig Corder, **JC** Judy Corder, **KCro** Katie Crowley, **M&MD** Mike and MerryLynn Denny, **SD** Scott Downes, **LF** Larry Fischer, **RF** Ruth Fischer, **BF** Bob Flores, **EH** Eugene Hunn, **KK** Ken Knittle, **BL** Bill LaFramboise, **NL** Nancy LaFramboise, **CMe** Chad Merkley, **SM** Steve Mlodinow, **HN** Heidi Newsome, **TNo** Tracey Norris, **HO** Hal Opperman, **DR** Dennis Rockwell, **DS** Doug Schonewald, **RSh** Ryan Shaw, **BW** Bob Woodley, **CW** Charlie Wright

Conservation Notes: *with Rick Leaumont*

The development of the Hanford Reach National Monument Comprehensive Conservation Plan, CCP, continues. The third and final planning workshop was held in June. The workshop report offers four preliminary management alternatives for the USF&WS to consider. The alternatives are:

- a. Current Management
- b. Conservation with a Restoration Emphasis
- c. Conservation with Concentration of Facilities
- d. Conservation with a Public Use Emphasis

The alternatives are fairly self-explanatory except for “concentration of facilities”. This alternative would have an emphasis on public use in concentrated areas primarily close to existing roads. The theory being concentrating use focuses use in a small area that would not contain critical habitat and while preserving large areas for wildlife habitat and native plants. My initial reaction is that alternative b, Conservation with a Restoration Emphasis will provide the maximum protection and enhancement for fish, wildlife and native plants. The devil can be in the details so we will have to wait and see how the alternative develops. These alternatives are very preliminary and subject to major changes as the draft planning document is developed.

The Hanford Reach National Monument Advisory Committee met in September. The Secretary of Interior decided last winter to expand the Committee to give a greater voice to local government. The new members have not been named as yet, and the original Committee is moving ahead. The Committee has formed five subcommittees to develop recommendations for the full Committee to consider in developing advice for the draft plan. The subcommittees will also act as a sounding board to the USF&WS Planning Team on particular issues as they arise. The committees are:

- a. Public Use & Access
- b. Natural Resources – Terrestrial
- c. Natural Resources – Aquatic
- d. Cultural & Valid Existing Rights

I will be serving on the Natural resources – Terrestrial and Mike Lilga will be serving on Public Use and Access. The planning schedule calls for issuance of the draft Plan and draft EIS by mid 2004 and at this point the process appears to be on schedule.

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He started birding along the Washington coast in 1970, became the compiler of the Grays Harbor Christmas Bird Count in 1988. He is the founder of the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival and a member of the Olympic National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.

Mr. Morse has authored six birding guides as well as numerous articles. His sixth book on birding, **BIRDS OF THE PUGET SOUND REGION**, features full page photographs of the birds that are residents or annual visitors in the greater Puget Sound region. Each photograph is paired with extensive information.

A short general meeting will start at 7:00 followed by the program. The public is invited to attend this free lecture, so bring a friend! . For more information call 588-4025.

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as an American Robin. Another helpful way to describe dimensions is comparing one body part to another, for example – the bill was clearly longer than the width of the head. It is usually evident when someone writes and provides notes taken during the sighting and a write up written later. Clues include how “polished” the notes are.

4) As time permits, fill in the blanks. This means describe everything you can about the bird. Often it is the small detail that becomes the most important factor, particularly if you have little experience with the bird. Some species sightings, including shorebirds, are rejected because of the lack of small differentiating details. One time I took pictures of a Long-toed Stint foot print (with a sharpie pen to provide scale) as proof of a small detail. The sighting was accepted. It is a judgment call as to how many details are really necessary – remember that you need to “prove” the sighting to an understandably skeptical reviewer.

5) Don’t assume that just because it is easy to describe, few or no details are needed. In the most recent Xmas count results, Bill Pranty in Florida provided a list of sightings not accepted. This included some relatively obvious species, even in winter, such as Eastern Kingbird, Purple Martin, and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Wood Sandpiper is actually a fairly straight-forward identification, and was a fairly common bird in one area I worked out on the Aleutians. One year my sighting was rejected, likely because I assumed and provided too few details. On another year I took pictures.

6) Don’t forget behavior and calls. This provides very powerful supporting information to the sighting. This also helps to demonstrate how well you really saw and experienced the bird.

7) How is the bird different from similar birds and from the book. Usually this is done later when you have the time to look at references. What features in your original write up helped to demonstrate that the bird was not the common species in the area? I believe that my sighting of a Siberian Rubythroat from St. Lawrence Island was accepted in part because I not only described the bird (and its behavior), but also indicated the subtle differences of the bird from the references used based on the notes I took immediately after seeing the bird.

8) Experience, equipment, and weather are the least important details. I have lumped all of this last to demonstrate their relative importance. This information is generally necessary, but when there is one paragraph on the bird, and four paragraphs on the person’s experience, equipment, etc, most reviewers will be skeptical of the sighting. This is because the documentation seems to say – trust me based on who I am, what good equipment I have, or how nice the weather was.

9) Enjoy the birding experience first. Birding is fun; don’t make it hard or frustrating. If you want to prove your rare sighting to others, be prepared to adequately document them. If you want to just enjoy the bird – do so. Remember that your bird list is your own. Species that I have not written up have included Iceland Gull in Washington, McKay’s Bunting out on the Aleutians, and Fan-tailed Warbler in Arizona. Most were SSOs or limited views that I could not accurately describe all necessary details to the satisfaction of a rare bird committee. So be it – I still enjoyed the birds.

When I have followed my own rules above, I have had far more accepted sightings than rejected sightings. When I didn’t follow these rules, more were rejected. I hope this article will help all of us ensure our Xmas count and other rare bird documentations becomes stronger.

ALSO MAKE YOUR SIGHTINGS COUNT FOR CONSERVATION —Another opportunity to serve as a Citizen scientist is to report your sightings of State Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive species to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for their inclusion in the Priority Species and Habitats Data Base. This data base is used to give information to developers, cities, counties, and others on where sensitive wildlife is located in the state. Regional Biologist Mike Livingston came to our September Meeting to present how you can help. Species of concern lists and report forms are available from Mike, or on the WDFW website. Call Mike Livingston for more information 545-2201.

The Curlew
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
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