The mission of Kittitas Audubon is to develop an appreciation of nature through education and conservation, with a focus on birds.

October 15th • General Meeting via ZOOM!

The Checkerboard Partnership—Managing and Preserving Forests by Kittitas County

This October 15 presentation will talk about the present state of the Checkerboard Partnership’s effort and ideas for the future, with speakers:

Brian Straniti, Community Coordinator for the Central Cascades division of the Nature Conservancy, and Melissa Speeg, the Outreach Coordinator for the Kittitas Conservation Trust.

The Checkerboard Partnership is a growing group of private citizens, non-profits, and city leaders working to bring 27,000 acres of private land into public ownership for a Community Forest. Taking its name from the square-mile parcels that cut the Central Cascades and much of the American west into an enormous grid during the days of western railroad expansion, the Checkerboard Partnership aims to stitch these blocks back together to streamline management and conservation efforts.

Partners started the project in June 6, 2019, when an exploratory committee agreed that protecting the forest is key to Kittitas County’s future.

A bit of history—In 2014, The Nature Conservancy secured management of 48,000 acres of checkerboard lands from Plum Creek Timber, pausing the potential for development. As part of the management agreement, they must develop a plan for permanent ownership of the land by the end of 2021, including strategies from land acquisitions to the establishment of a core community forest. The 27,000 acres of land under consideration for the Checkerboard Partnership’s permanent inclusion are along the I-90 corridor in the Cabin Creek, Taneum, and Cle Elum Ridge areas — the backyard for many Kittitas County communities. The proposed acreage is adjacent to state and federal lands, including the Teanaway Community Forest, the Wenatchee National Forest, and the LT Murray Wildlife Area. Many popular trails connect the checkerboard parcels to these public lands. They are home to hundreds of fish and wildlife species, sheltered by mixed conifer forest, and hold long-term potential to be managed as sustainable working forests.

You are invited to the KAS General Meeting via ZOOM!

Date: Oct 15, 2020
Time: 07:00 PM PT
Join Zoom Meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84508206035?pwd=cWIlcFkydTNteUZ2N1ZO0UyanZnUT09
Meeting ID: 845 0820 6035
Passcode: 500100
Or Telephone: +1 253 215 8782

Where are the lands? There are 27,000 acres located in three distinct locations.

- Cle Elum Ridge
  - Community backyard
  - Fire break
  - High connectivity

- Taneum
  - Mixed forest
  - High biodiversity

- Cabin Creek
  - High timber growth
  - Limited recreation

Learn more at www.checkerboardpartnership.com

Join us via ZOOM!
**Board Notes**

(by Gloria Baldi • September Minutes)

Following is a brief summary of the minutes from the September 3rd KAS Board meeting, held virtually for safety.

- Be sure to enjoy the Bird of the Month feature in the Daily Record.
- The Kittitas Audubon Facebook page can be checked for announcements and calendar of events.
- The proposal to construct septage treatment lagoons near the DHS Boys’ Home near Kittitas was discussed in relation to how birds could be affected. Unfortunately, the Board was not aware of this issue until the day prior to comment termination.
- All officers were elected to serve through the coming fiscal year.
- Do you miss the monthly KAS program meetings? Discussion occurred on several virtual business options for presenting programs regarding cost, security, attendance ceilings, and method limitations. The decision to obtain a ZOOM license was approved, to be used now and after the pandemic.
- Location and requirements for the Jeb Baldi/Hal Lindstrom memorial were discussed.
- Remember, if you have volunteered any time in the past year to Kittitas Audubon, it is important to send the number of hours (no matter how few) to _Jan Demorest_. Hour total is used for the annual report to National Audubon.
- The Board voted to support Lower Columbia Basin Audubon in a letter to the USFWS regarding rehabilitation of the Hanford Reach National Monument after fires destroyed a vast amount of habitat in the last several years.
- National Audubon is asking members to sign a petition to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This can be done quickly online.
- The annual Audubon Conference of WA (ACOW), when reports and programs from all WA Audubon chapters are presented, is October 2nd and 3rd (see below).
- You are welcome to join our next ZOOM Board meeting on October 1st at 4:30. Email _Jan Demorest_ for instructions at _bobcat@kvalley.com_

**NEEDED: PUBLICITY CHAIR and HISTORIAN**

Email Judy Hallisey: _hydrojude@gmail.com_ if you are willing.

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Save the Date for ACOW 2020

A lot has been cancelled this year, but not ACOW! The Audubon Council of Washington is coming to your screens _over Zoom this October 2nd and 3rd_. As in previous years, we will have the Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee (WSACC) meeting on Friday afternoon and ACOW on Saturday morning. Registration and details coming soon!
Bird of the Month in The Daily Record

As you may have noticed, Kittitas Audubon is submitting a photo and description for a ‘Bird of the Month’ segment in the local paper.

If you have photos you’d like considered, please sent them to this address: cwclimatenews@gmail.com

Please send photos as .jpeg and as large a file size as you have. Also, don’t embed them in the body of the email, attach them please.

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Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail

By Laura Busby • Interpretive Specialist • Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

https://parks.state.wa.us/521/Palouse-to-Cascades

This 4,956-acre, 212-mile railroad trail runs from west of North Bend all the way to the Idaho border. Kittitas County boasts highly diverse habitats and many access points along the trail. From Snoqualmie Pass to Vantage, the trail passes through four distinct ecosystems. With diverse environments comes a large variety of wildlife, including birds! High elevation species include Clark’s Nutcrackers, Cassin’s Finches and Red-naped Sapsuckers to the dry sageland Prairie Falcons, Sage Thrashers and Brewer’s Sparrows.

The trail also traces interesting Washington (Milwaukee Road) rail line history. Check out the 2-mile Snoqualmie Tunnel and visit the South Cle Elum Depot for more information. Watch for renovations that are starting soon on the Renslow Trestle (over I-90) and the Beverly Bridge (over the Columbia River) to make them passable for recreational enthusiasts.

Your challenge is to visit as many Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail destinations as possible this fall and update the related Ebird hotspots. Let’s see if we can get Ebird up to date and representative of avifauna of our county!

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Posterior Evidence for Penguins

Satellite images of the Antarctic have revealed the presence of a few small Emperor Penguin colonies that formerly were unknown. Continuing one strand of the ‘Fantastic Avian Voyage’ item in the September Hooter, the evidence involves poop. Specifically, new European Space Agency satellites have higher resolution that enables detection of the “telltale reddish-brown stains of penguin guano.”

See “Penguin poop spotted from space ups the tally of emperor penguins,” by Carolyn Gramling, in the 29 Aug 2020 Science News. at https://tinyurl.com/y3w846k7. (Online, it is dated 4 Aug.)
Dead Birds in the Southwest...Sept 2020

Submitted by Jan Demorest

Hundreds of thousands, if not more, dead or dying migrant birds, particularly passerines (perching songbirds) have been found in New Mexico and adjacent states in the Southwest. The cause of these fatalities is complicated, probably driven by multiple stressing events over the past few months.

The Southwest is still experiencing a severe drought which has been ongoing since 2000. Drought impacts plants, which birds depend on for seeds and insects. When the drought conditions are impacted by smoke from wildfires and extreme weather events, the birds are extremely stressed: they can’t find enough food, their respiratory systems are compromised. If it gets too hot, they suffer from dehydration and heat stroke; then if it gets too cold, their feathers may get wet (from snow, as happened in the SW in the last week or so, with temps dropping from the 90s to the 40s overnight, with heavy wet snow), which takes away their insulation. They suffer from hypothermia, and with no way to get warm and dry, death is inevitable.

The affected birds have included warblers, sparrows, swallows, blackbirds, flycatchers, and the Western Wood Pewee. There is evidence that some of these birds had gathered together in groups, trying to find shelter, and snuggling up to try to keep warm. Thus, groups of dead birds were found, which is unusual behavior. Reports showed that the birds native to the SW, like Roadrunners, quail, and doves, were not among the dead, probably able to survive in familiar habitat.

Other research has shown that the birds were able to go through their pre-migration moult, but seemed to have been in a rush to head out, not putting on the body fat necessary to complete their long migrations, and perhaps not finding sufficient food along the way. Then – whammo! They are hit by 70-100 mph winds, rain, and snow and unseasonably cold temperatures when they reach Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado! The agencies and conservation groups are still awaiting reports from Fish & Wildlife on the necropsies (post-mortem exams) to determine cause of death.

According to Martha Desmond, a professor at NMSU’s Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology: “Over 3 billion birds have died since 1970. Insect populations are crashing, and this is just an unprecedented mortality,” she said. “Climate change is affecting the abundance of insects, it’s affecting the volatility of the fires, and the scary thing is this may be an indication of the future.”

Here are a number of links to the articles from which I gleaned this information. Please click on the links to see more photos and read about the demise of these birds:

Links to website studies on the effect of smoke inhalation in avian species:
https://www.merckvetmanual.com/toxicology/smoke-inhalation/overview-of-smoke-inhalation

From the American Birding Association, a report on unusual bird die-offs: ...258 Violet-green Swallows that Nick and I collected in Velarde this week.

Radio interview about SW bird mortality with transcript from WBUR, public radio Boston: https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2020/09/15/birds-dying-new-mexico

iNaturalist bird mortality SW: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/southwest-avian-mortality-project

Comments on bird food habits during and after the recent storm in Colorado: https://groups.google.com/g/cobirds/c/eUDfQYWZcwg
“Dzeer” came from over the marsh. It was high in pitch and buzzy in nature. Twice, the call filled the air, and then there was a pause before it appeared more toward my left. I scanned the air above the cattails along Mary Anne Creek. My binoculars were held just below my eyes in the ready mode. There it was, maybe ten feet above the vegetation, making a loop out from a dead snag, an Eastern Kingbird.

This flycatcher breeds across eastern North America and west into Oregon and Washington and then north through much of Canada. Incredibly, they fly to South America for the winter and spend those months in the western part of the Amazon Basin, some going down as far as northern Argentina. I’d come to Washington’s Okanogan Highlands in hopes of finding a few, and by mid-June, they should be in the middle of their nesting.

She looked elegant sitting back on that snag, bigger than many passerines, but still, she weighs only 40 grams, the equivalent of three tablespoons of butter. Her black and white body glimmered in the sunlight, and I tried to comprehend her journey of the last several months. I didn’t actually know the sex of this individual, but her elegance gave that impression. If she’d wintered in Northern Argentina, she’d have traveled over 6,000 miles to reach here, all on her own power. Perhaps, this small bird had flown north to the Yucatan Peninsula, then across the Gulf in one flight, to Texas or Louisiana, and then moved up to here. To think, she probably fueled that trip on flying insects and fruit!

She suddenly shot up, flying rapidly toward a crow that was cruising across the valley. She began to chase that black bird, diving on its back repeatedly. Kingbirds are highly aggressive and will attack crows, hawks, and ravens that dare enter their territories. Their generic name, *Tyrannus*, means “tyrant.” They will forcefully defend their nests and will try to dominate other birds.

However, in winter, these kingbirds travel in flocks, feeding on fruit, and apparently, they migrate in flocks, too. So different from the tenacious, feisty things here in the summer. Right now, I suspect that anything that moved might be attacked. But in winter, apparently, they seem more like a roving band of sorority and fraternity friends; smoking cigars, drinking margaritas or gin and tonics, and looking for fruity hors d’oeuvres. It would be fun to see that communal behavior.

I’d first seen this species when I was in high school. In the late 1960s, several buddies and I had gone on a weekend to northwestern Pennsylvania. Its elegant black head and back with that white underbelly really stood out, but the white tip to its tail left a mark in my mind. It was as if the bird was dressed in a tuxedo, and his tail had an extra accent. I hadn’t expected to find one on my first trip to the Okanogan a few years ago. It was a fun surprise that brought back fond memories of spring and summer birding trips when I lived in the east.

On this trip, I’d seen Eastern Kingbirds around Forde and Connors Lakes in the Sinlahekin Valley and now here in the Okanogan Highlands. Each time their classiness would grab my attention, and I’d stand watching them. They form monogamous pairs, and both members must work together to raise the young. If they both survive the winter, they will likely meet and become a couple again. Ornithologists, though, have discovered that many nests have at least one young fathered by a different male. Pairs only raise one brood per year. The fledglings are fed for up to five weeks after they leave the nest. Catching insects on the wing is demanding and requires a great deal of skill. These parents put that time into their young. Cold, wet weather will decrease flying insects and make it difficult for parents to provide for hungry young. It made me think of my daughter, who now lives in Australia. Had I done enough?

Both members of this pair sat on branches in the same bush. My brain seemed to understand the science of this species’ natural history, but my heart, my soul, saw so much mystery. Here was a small bird that flies between continents, changes personalities, and survives despite the distances traveled, weather, predators, and who knows what else. How remarkable, almost incomprehensible. These little tyrants took off along Mary Anne Creek, making a loop out over the water and then headed down across the marsh, disappearing out of my sight. To me, their flight seemed like a ballet as they twisted and turned in precise movements to pursue their flying morsels. They left me, though, with a treasure, a sense of primal awe.
From Norm Peck: About 10 days ago (Sep 14-17) Calliope Hummingbirds were observed spending as much time hunting insects and spiders as at the feeders. By the 21st I wasn’t seeing any coming into the feeders. I think that means they’ve headed south. Anna’s Hummers continue to come into the feeders, in fact in larger numbers, and with more strife over whose feeder it is.

A Gray Catbird passed through on Sep. 18, and today (Sep 24) a magpie was hanging around my feeder area. I’ve never seen a magpie here in town before, suspect it’s a fire displacement. The usual Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, House Finches continue to be feeder regulars, and White Crowned Sparrows have returned, including several immatures with gold rather than white crown stripes, and slightly more subdued light ‘eyebrows’.

Gender in Bird Songs and Diversity in Science

When you hear a bird, which gender is doing the singing? If you encounter an article about female birdsongs, of what gender is the lead author? For a discussion relating to these questions—as well as some audio files of birds singing—see the article by Kevin Omland, Evangeline Rose, and Karan Odom in The Conversation at https://tinyurl.com/y5pffc2u. “Women have disrupted research on bird song, and their findings show how diversity can improve all fields of science”.

Note: I had not heard of The Conversation until encountering this article. With newsrooms in the US and several other countries, it is “an independent, nonprofit publisher of commentary and analysis, authored by academics and edited by journalists for the general public.” This article, like others they publish, is not itself peer-reviewed, but contains many links to peer-reviewed research.
Ocean Salt, and Net-zero in 30 Years?

InsideClimate News is “an independent, not-for-profit, non-partisan news organization” concentrating on energy, clean and otherwise (they omit the space in their name). Here I wish to mention two recent items from ICN. Thanks to Judy for sharing these with me.

**Water Cycle Intensification**

Droughts, wildfires and hurricanes aren’t new, but we’re seeing more of each, and more intense ones. A new study points to ocean salinity as a measuring stick for how it’s happening. Bob Berwyn’s 14 Sep 2020 ICN article is “Changing Patterns of Ocean Salt Levels Give Scientists Clues to Extreme Weather on Land.” The idea is simple to state: More evaporation and less rain in an area leads to saltier water; more rain in another area leads to less salty water there.

The key? “Global warming is intensifying Earth’s water cycle, speeding up the rate at which water evaporates in one area and falls as rain or snow somewhere else.”

See [https://tinyurl.com/y5bh6vp9](https://tinyurl.com/y5bh6vp9). The ICN article includes a link to the original peer-reviewed research in the 9 Sep 2020 issue of the *Journal of Climate*, published by the American Meteorological Society.

**Net-zero in 30 years?**

Can the world achieve net-zero carbon emissions in 30 years? With the US government currently going in the opposite direction, this may seem folly to consider. However, even some major companies such as Shell and BP think it is possible—and necessary. See Dan Gearino’s 17 Sep 2020 ICN article “Get to Net-Zero by Mid-Century? Even Some Global Oil and Gas Giants Think it Can Be Done”.

See [https://tinyurl.com/yxgdmgs9](https://tinyurl.com/yxgdmgs9). The ICN article includes a link to the entire 89-page Sep 2020 report “Making Mission Possible: Delivering a Net-Zero Economy,” by the Energy Transitions Commission, a think tank in which Shell and BP participate.

**Megafires**

Locally, we are getting but a glimpse of what is likely to occur more and more frequently, not just around here but worldwide. Our 10-day period of unhealthy-to-hazardous air quality is only one aspect of things that result from more, more intense, and more widespread wildfires.

See the 17 Sep 2020 Ed Struzik article “The Age of Megafires: The World Hits a Climate Tipping Point”, in the online magazine *Yale Environment 360*, at [https://tinyurl.com/yywwb3l4](https://tinyurl.com/yywwb3l4). The article includes a link to a research article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* that quantifies the influence of human-caused climate change on forest fire intensity and area, over just the last several decades.

The article includes background—and some striking photos—on the fascinating phenomenon known as pyrocumulonimbus clouds, or pyroCbs for short: fire-triggered thunderstorms. Lightning from pyroCbs can trigger new fires miles away.
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Your generous donation to a specific project is symbolic. Kittitas Audubon is a chapter of \ Nation Audubon Society serving the communities of Kittitas County, Washington. Go to \kittitasaudubon.org for more information. KAS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

Please indicate membership preferences below:

☐ YES I want to “Go Green” by receiving the Hooter newsletter online only

☐ YES I wish to receive occasional emails related to Audubon activities

May we print your name in the Hooter to acknowledge your membership/donation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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Mark Your Calendars!

**Board Meeting:**
4:30 pm • October 1st:
*Due to reasons of public health and safety, meeting will be conducted via Zoom. See Board Notes on page 2 for info.*

**First Saturday BirdWalk:**
October 3rd • 8:00am • Irene Rinehart Park
*Guided by Steve and Jan*

**General Meeting:**
7:00 pm • October 15th: No tricks just a treat!
*Due to reasons of public health and safety, meeting will be conducted via Zoom. See front page for login details!*