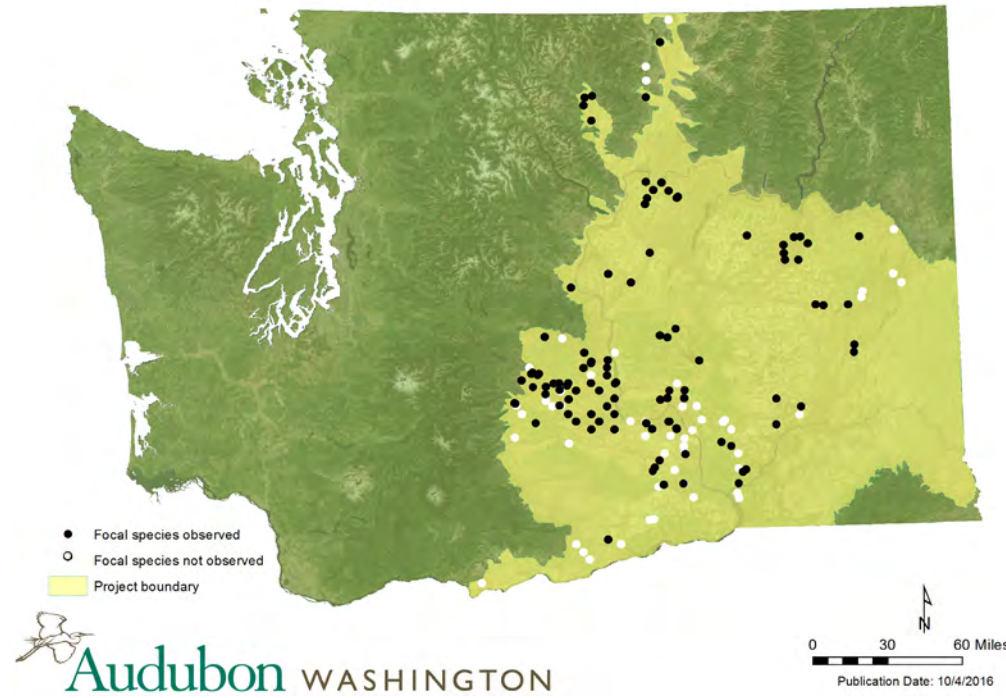


TOP 10 SPECIES OBSERVED DURING SAGEBRUSH SONGBIRD SURVEY*

1. Western Meadowlark
2. Horned Lark
3. Vesper Sparrow
4. Brewer's Sparrow[†]
5. Common Raven
6. California Quail
7. Sagebrush Sparrow[†]
8. Red-winged Blackbird
9. Mourning Dove
10. Sage Thrasher[†]

* Stationary point count (2014–2016)
[†] Focal study species



Location of Sagebrush Songbird survey sites with one or more focal species observed (Brewer's Sparrow, Sagebrush Sparrow, or Sage Thrasher)

By the Numbers: 2016 Community Science Stats

| Number of Sites Surveyed | Number of Surveys Completed | Number of Volunteers | Hours of Survey Time | Total Hours of Volunteer Time |
|--|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 58 | 173 | 117 | 1,073 | 2,343 |
| Number of Species Observed (2014–2016) | | Number of Survey Sites with Focal Study Species Observed (2014–2016) | | |
| 200 Species | | 97 out of 146 Sites | | |



Photo: Heather Findlay

Sagebrush Songbird Survey Annual Report

FALL 2016

A community science partnership of National Audubon Society, Audubon Washington, Audubon chapters, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Photo: Sagebrush Sparrow by Mick Thompson

Message from the Program Director

A few years ago, you could hear an audible gasp around the table when we said Audubon would implement a one million-acre Sagebrush Songbird Survey—and now, we have completed our third field season and want to share our progress! We see incredible effort and tremendous growth for our Audubon community as we pursue our multi-year landscape level survey of the Columbia Plateau to document distribution of shrub steppe passerine species.

I am proud of our vision of a community science program and in our collaborative implementation. Our Sagebrush Songbird Survey has garnered national attention for our partnership with ESRI—the world's leading mapping technology—and earned praise from state and federal agencies for our ambitious vision, our organization, and our conscientious field work. ESRI has recognized our project as an exceptional example of volunteer engagement in the ArcGIS online platform and promotes the project as a model to develop best practices for community science projects.

The Sagebrush Songbird Survey provides chapter members the opportunity to both lead and collaborate. It has brought regional and national attention to on-the-ground efforts of individual members and the collective efforts of multiple chapters working together on a set of common goals that will benefit the birds and landscapes of the sagebrush that we all care about so much.

Going forward, as we complete the data collection necessary around species occurrence, the efforts put into the survey will support more accurate models of sagebrush songbird species distributions so that we can make better land use management decisions at the local, state and regional levels. In the meantime, data are posted on eBird and help inform the state species database, the underlying science for species management in Washington State.

Christi Norman

“This meaningful work connects us to the birds and landscape we love in wonderful and unexpected ways.”

Robin Priddy, Sagebrush Songbird Survey Chair,
 Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

What to Expect in 2017

As we look toward the coming field season and future years, there is much to be done with many more sites to survey before we cross the finish line. To capture the geographic extent of sagebrush habitat in the Plateau, we'll eventually need to venture onto private lands, and this truly will be new territory for us! Additionally, here are a few other essential components for 2017:

- Ramp up our new volunteer recruitment, while sustaining the energy and enthusiasm of seasoned volunteers.
- Continue to refine our methods, especially when it comes to site selection, to minimize the frustrations that come with this sometimes thorny task.
- Annual training, making sure we're all staying consistent with the survey protocol, and staying in communication when problems arise are all key components of producing a strong study that we can put to the best possible use, protecting birds and habitats.
- Lead a workshop at the 2017 National Audubon Convention in Park City, Utah to expose other sagebrush states to the concept and process.

The Science Behind the Survey

When first envisioned, the sagebrush songbird project focused on filling an information gap. We knew from reading the literature and talking to folks on the ground that there were big gaps in our understanding of how birds were responding to the relentless loss, fragmentation and degradation of sagebrush habitat in the Columbia Plateau. We also learned that the current models used to predict their distribution within the Plateau were based on limited information.

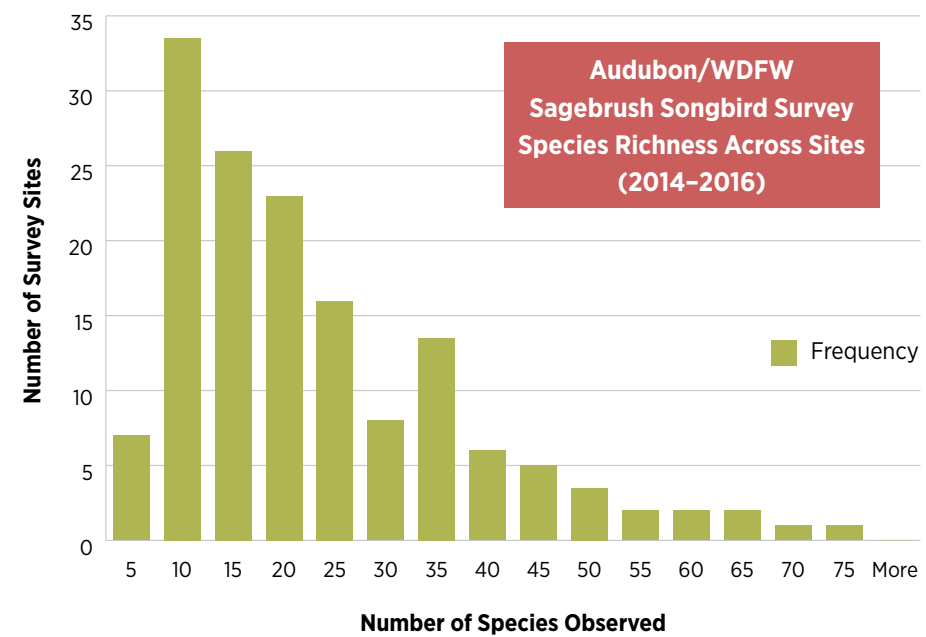
From this, the Sagebrush Songbird Survey was born, a landscape-level effort to document the presence of sagebrush obligate and other shrub steppe species across a range of habitat values. Ultimately, having more accurate models will mean better informed land management and planning across Western states. This information will also allow us to distinguish among areas of varying quality and bird presence so that we can better understand and communicate the importance of high quality sites. In the meantime, our data is being fed into multiple public databases and this will have ripple effects that extend far into the future.



Sagebrush Songbird Survey project boundaries within the Columbia Plateau ecoregion, Washington

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

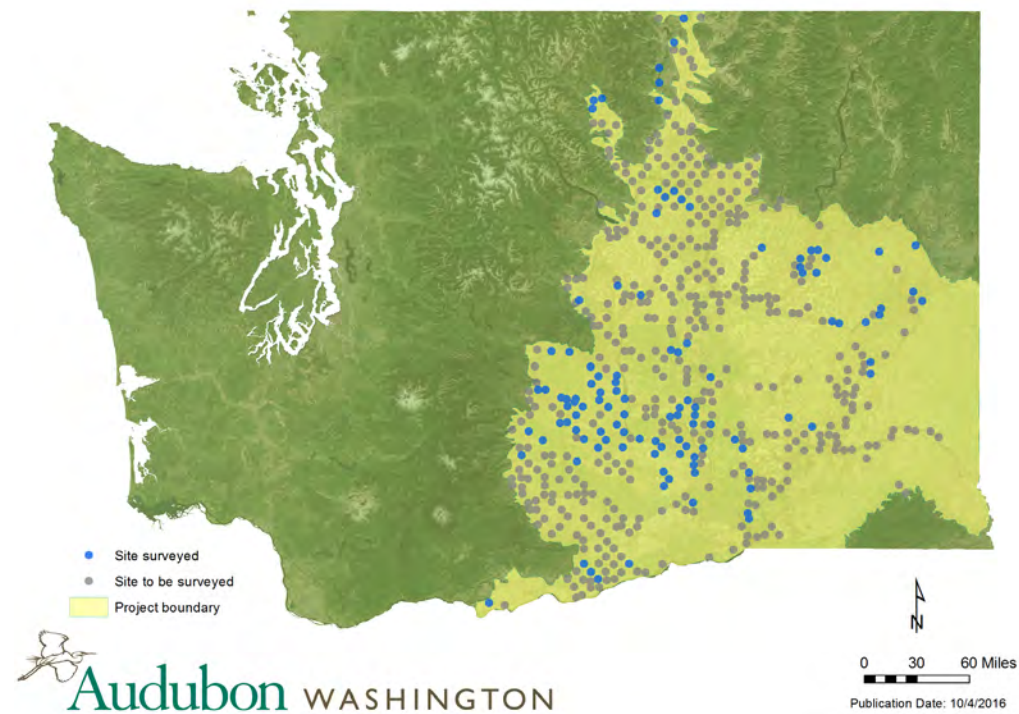
Steve Moore, Kittitas Audubon, exemplifies the spirit of exploration and cooperation among chapters. He is intrepid and ready to take on anything, whether on the computer or in the field. Steve and his wife, Jan, hosted the first ArcGIS volunteer training in their kitchen and has assisted in training survey volunteers from all the chapters ever since. He scouts the toughest survey sites, scaling sage-covered hills and mapping routes that enable other volunteers to perform the spring surveys.



Thank You to Chapter Leaders and Volunteers

When the project was first conceived, we couldn't begin to imagine all the ways that it would take us beyond a science effort to connect us with chapter volunteers and our public landowner partners, with the birds, and with the arid landscape of the sagebrush steppe. As we enter our fourth year of the project, we are humbled and awed by the dedication of our volunteers

to these birds and to the aims of this survey. Individuals' willingness to survey sites of questionable value, collaborative work among neighboring chapters, the early mornings in the field and late nights poring over ArcGIS online—all of these are amazing examples of the commitment chapters in Eastern Washington have to the birds and to the sagebrush sea.



Location of public land survey sites for the Sagebrush Songbird Survey project with completed survey sites indicated.

WILDLAND HOT SHOTS

In early May, three Lower Columbia Basin Audubon members helped prevent a lighting strike fire in the Hanford Reach National Monument by being in the right place at the right moment. Read more:

"Jan, Chris and I went out to the Wahluke Slope this morning to do a couple of surveys. There was rain and it was way too windy, but we decided to check out each site anyway. On the way back, we saw a spectacular lightning bolt flash right in front of us. Pretty cool – until we realized the Refuge was ON FIRE! So we called it in and watched until the fire guys from various places came out. I just now found out, that thanks to us calling it in so fast, they were able to put it out and only 3 to 5 acres of beautiful sagebrush burned."

— Kathy Criddle, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon President



Photo: Sage Thrasher by Denny Granstrand