

**Audubon Washington  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife**

**Audubon Mission:**

Audubon Washington inspires diverse audiences to conserve natural ecosystems and build healthy communities for people, birds and other wildlife.

Community is key- and as defined Aldo Leopold in the *Sand County Almanac* encompasses five elements: soils, water, plants, animals and people. Health and integrity are based on sustaining all parts. Audubon Washington adopts this ecology-based approach and understands that the health of bird populations reflects the health of the entire community. Audubon Washington and chapters work in concert with Washington's communities to maintain the integrity of the whole including a place for birds and other wildlife.

Sagebrush and shrub steppe are a dominant communities in eastern Washington. Audubon's goals are

- to stabilize or increase sagebrush songbird populations;
- advance our understanding of sagebrush songbird responses to habitat management practices;
- advocate for ecosystem-based management on publically-owned land;
- identify priority conservation areas under future climate conditions;
- educate and engage new audiences around value of sagebrush & shrub steppe ecosystem.

**Sagebrush Songbird Pilot Survey Vision**

Community science plays a critical role in conservation.

There are new geo-spatial mapping efforts and species models being produced for eco-regional and multi-state scales. These maps/models produce theoretical projections of bird distribution and ranges and life cycles based on a variety of key features-habitat, temperature, landscape attributes, and, generally very limited bird data. For this community science project, we selected Sagebrush Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrasher as priority songbird species.

- It is our role to "verify accuracy" for bird distribution in these models by providing new avian data for eastern Washington.
- We are specifically interested in the Western Governors Association Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) model in predicting obligate sage brush songbird distribution because it covers 16 western US states. CHAT is conceived as a way to make wildlife data usable from different states for use in planning large scale energy, electrical distribution lines, and multi-state conservation initiatives.
- Other examples that our data can verify include the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group Climate Gradient model and the Intermountain West Joint Venture Bird Habitat and Population models.
- We are partnering with the Washington Department of Wildlife (WDFW) for study design, oversight, and quality assurance. A goal is to have our data incorporated into the WDFW Washington state Priority Habitat Data Base (PHS). PHS data is often used for Growth Management Act Critical Area Ordinances throughout Washington State.
- We will promote use of our data by other state and federal agencies.
- Monitoring results will help focus Audubon's conservation efforts in eastern Washington.

**Songbird Survey Structure:**

- We envision a multi-year program, with a minimum of 5-10 years. We plan to survey the Columbia Plateau to establish bird distribution. We will be surveying on public lands. Each site needs several years of surveys to verify bird occupancy. We started in the Tri-cities area in the first year because the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon volunteered to be the pilot project. We will expand to the other seven Audubon chapters in eastern Washington as capacity is built from 2015 -2019.
- Washington Department of Wildlife is designing our survey in order to supplement shrub steppe avian data from the Breeding Bird Survey in eastern Washington, Yakima, Spokane and Colville Tribes, USFWS, BLM and the Department of Defense’s Yakima Training Center, and eBird hotspots.

**Community Science** plays an important role in community health.

Why a team?

- We use a team approach for our survey efforts for continuity of survey coverage in a multi-year program, survey performance, safety, and coverage during sickness and vacations.
- Share responsibilities so that time spent in the field is most efficient at collecting bird data.
- Ensure continuous survey support as different members come and go.
- Build broader birder support, increase site knowledge, and increase the capacity of birder’s skills in community science survey techniques for wildlife and habitat, data collection and reporting.

**Resource team**

**Audubon**

**Washington**

Christi Norman

Program Director  
cnorman@audubon.org

Sagebrush Songbird Survey Management

Trina Bayard

Director of Bird Conservation

Sagebrush Songbird Survey Science Oversight

**Washington**

**Department of Fish  
and Wildlife**

Matt Vander Haegen

Senior Scientist  
matt.vanderhaegen@dfw.wa.  
gov

Survey sampling and protocol design, data  
management and data quality assurance

**Audubon Chapters**

**Central Basin**

Steering Committee Chair

Jim Herrin

**Kittitas**

Steering Committee Chair

Steve Moore

**Lower Columbia  
Basin**

Steering Committee Chair

Kevin Black

**North Central WA**

Steering Committee Chair

Mark Oswood

**Palouse**

Steering Committee Chair

Marie Dymkoski

**Spokane**

Steering Committee Chair

Lindell Haggin

**Yakima Valley**

Steering Committee Chair

Teresa Lorenz

**Legal Framework:**

5902 Lake Washington Blvd S. / Seattle, WA 98118 / T (206) 652-2444 / F (206) 723- 0836 / wa.audubon.org

- We will be surveying on government (public) lands. WDFW, DNR and BLM have given permission to survey.
- Show respect for private property at all times.

### **Methodology: Avian Point Count Overview**

- A point count is a tally of all birds detected by sight or sound by a single observer located at a fixed position during a specified period of time (i.e., 10 min.). Counts are usually conducted in the morning, typically during the breeding season when birds are most vocal and territorial. Counts in our sagebrush steppe are best conducted between a half hour after sunrise and preferably by 9am. Counts must be conducted under suitable weather conditions typically winds < 10 mph and no rain. It is important to NOT pish or play any birdsongs from iPhone, iPad, or other devices.
- Our point count sites are off-road. We will record species seen by walking into the point count site. We will conduct a stationary point count at the flagged site. Then we will record species by the walking out of the site. Sites range from 0.2-0.8 mile off the road.
- We will use WDFW protocols and data forms.

### **Training and Survey Schedules**

#### **Training**

**March 7, 2015** 9:30am-3:30pm Washington State University Tri-Cities Campus, Room 145 West, 2710 Crimson Way, Richland 99354

**March 21, 2015** 9:30am-3:30pm Wenatchee Valley College, Wenatchi Hall Rm 2217, 1300 Fifth Street, Wenatchee 98801,

**April 4, 2015** 9:30am-3:30pm, Spokane Falls Community College, Science Bldg. Room 146 3410 W Fort Gorge Wright Dr. Spokane 99224

#### **Survey**

- Choose one day per month to survey.
- The first round of field work will be April 16-19,
- the second May 7-10 and
- the third June 4-7.
- We have selected optimal windows and that are at least one week apart. The dates are Thursdays (with a back-up day of Friday) for those free during the week, and Saturday (with a back-up day of Sunday) for those who have weekday commitments. Choose one day per window to survey.
- If you cannot survey the site(s) on a scheduled day because of weather, (strong winds or rain), please reschedule preferably within one week and email us the date. If you cannot reschedule the survey, please email Christi Norman, [cnorman@audubon.org](mailto:cnorman@audubon.org) and your local chapter Chair.

#### **Get Involved!**

Join skilled amateur birders and professional biologists to participate in the sagebrush songbird survey.

#### **Our requirements for participation are:**

1. Access to suitable transportation to complete a survey.
2. Good (not perfect) hearing and eyesight.
3. The ability and/or training to identify breeding birds in the area by sight and sound. Knowledge of bird songs is important, because most birds counted on these surveys are singing males.
4. Ability to walk 0.5-1 mile cross country in shrub steppe.
5. Volunteer completion of a visual and oral Bird ID, eBird data entry, GPS usage and field protocol training to become familiar with techniques and forms.

**Record Keeping:**

- Follow WDFW protocol. Data will be recorded at the survey site on paper data forms. Our data will be housed in eBird. eBird sites are designated by: WDFW/Audubon site—(site name)
- One volunteer from each team will enter sightings into eBird preferably the date of the survey. Our data will be housed in eBird. eBird sites are designated by: WDFW/Audubon site—(site name)
- You will need to have a personal account. We should be able to sign people up at the workshop but even better would be for each volunteer to have an eBird account and be able to practice entering during the Bird ID training class.
- **All data should be entered into eBird by June 30 and all paper data forms mailed to:  
Christi Norman, Audubon Washington, at 5902 Lake Washington Blvd. S., Seattle WA 98118.**

**Elements for a successful and safe survey morning:**

- Audubon will scout and map the survey sites. Much time can be lost finding sites due to closed roads, washed out bridges, and wrong turns. Therefore Audubon will save volunteers those frustrations by scouting the locations and providing maps with driving directions. This is especially important as we will be surveying different sites each time.
- Park at site so that roads are accessible by other drivers/farm equipment.

**Equipment check list:**

- Car with full tank of gas
- Discovery Pass for state lands: State Parks, WDFW and WA DNR sites, or Federal Lands pass for BLM.
- GPS Garmin Etrex 20 Unit (or your own) and **2 extra AA batteries**
- Site map(s) & driving directions
- Binoculars and/or scope
- Clipboard, Pencils (dark, soft lead) / pen (dark ink)
- Forms (Audubon Survey Form and Audubon Protocol Sheet)
- Smartphone/cell phone
- Camera (if no smart phone)
- Flashlight
- Water
- Tick-proof clothing

**What Audubon will provide:**

- GPS units: Garmin Etrex20 units to share among teams.
- Survey forms for each site.
- Map to each site.
- Bird ID CD

**Resources:**

All documents are in [Google Docs Shrub Steppe Folder 2015](https://drive.google.com/?usp=chrome_app#folders/0Bzd3rPFp02FqaHNEVEpic1hQSGM). This folder is accessible to participants only – NOT the general public Includes protocols, forms, volunteers, survey schedules, tutorials, and more!

- Public: [Audubon Washington](http://wa.audubon.org/songbird-survey-eastern-washington-underway). <http://wa.audubon.org/songbird-survey-eastern-washington-underway>

**Administrative:**

- Complete ,sign & return Audubon Assumption of Risk form to Christi Norman before surveying sites.
- INCOME TAX DEDUCTION/RECEIPTS: U.S. citizens who itemize deductions on their Income Tax Returns may make a deduction for mileage necessary for the community science volunteering. The cost of motels, campgrounds, etc. that you used when surveying sites are also deductible. Please check your 1040 instructions each year.