



# Kákya Táymut

KUK-yuh TIE-moot, Umatilla Indian Translation: *Bird News*

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## *Echo Meadows: Rest Area for Migrating Sandhill Cranes*

***“When approached by an avian predator, the adult cranes will fly at the predator, kicking with their feet. A mammal predator such as a coyote, fox, or bobcat will be chased or attacked by the crane with wings spread.”***

**S**andhill Cranes are currently near the peak of their spring migration coming through Umatilla County. The best place to view the cranes is at Echo Meadows, where they can be seen most days during March and early April. Andrews and Emert Roads are spur roads off of the Echo Meadows Road and are excellent viewing areas for the cranes. The cranes favor the harvested corn fields and find enough food to hold them over until the next stop on their route to their breeding areas in Alaska and northern Canada. Apparently these cranes stop in these same fields every year, many of them making the same journey with the same layovers for many years. It is difficult to determine the number of cranes that use Echo Meadows as a stopover on their migration route. There are definitely hundreds, and probably thousands, over a period of 6 to 8 weeks.

These Lesser Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis canadensis*) have migrated in this fashion for thousands of years. Before moving farther north, some of the cranes will likely be viewed as the attendees of the Crane Festival at Othello, WA. Eventually, the cranes will reach their breeding grounds in Alaska and northern British Columbia. The Sandhills coming through this route probably over-winter in California. A huge

number of cranes winter on Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico and migrate through Nebraska, nesting in northern Canada. It is estimated that over 450,000 cranes stop over along the Platte River in Nebraska's Sandhills, the most important stop over for Lesser Sandhills. The common name of these cranes, Sandhill, comes from their preference of habitat, which includes sandhills along the Platte River and other locations.

There are several subspecies of Sandhill Cranes but the ones seen in Umatilla County are mostly the Lesser Sandhill Crane. The resident Sandhill Cranes in Cuba, Florida, and Mississippi are all different subspecies, all are endangered species, and, therefore, protected. The Florida subspecies (only about 5,000 remaining) are often seen in residential yards and seem little afraid of humans. These cranes will eat shelled corn and bird seed from the ground and feeders.



*Lesser Sandhill Cranes 'dancing'. Photo by Dave Herr.*



Male Lesser Sandhill Cranes usually weigh over 7 pounds and have a 73-inch wingspan. Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) are larger, the males weighing close to 11 pounds, with a 77-inch wingspan. Greater Sandhill Cranes also migrate but do not go as far north for their breeding grounds, generally nesting no farther north than central Canada. The cranes that nest at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and around Ukiah are Greater Sandhills.

The Greater Sandhill Crane was threatened with extinction by 1940, when only about 1,000 birds were left. They suffered from persecution, habitat loss, and being hunted for eating. There has been a great improvement in their numbers, with approximately 100,000 Greater Sandhills currently surviving. The major subspecies of Lesser Sandhills is now estimated at over 400,000 birds, making it the most numerous crane in the world.

All subspecies of Sandhills are skilled flyers and can go great distances on their long wings. The long neck is kept straight in flight, and the dark legs trail behind. Utilizing thermals (columns of rising warm air), the cranes conserve energy while staying aloft for many hours, requiring only occasionally wing flapping as they ride the thermals.

Cranes mate for life, and some of the migrating groups may represent extended family members. They nest on the ground in marshy habitats near water. The female lays two eggs, but it is rare if more than one youngster survives. The young Sandhill Cranes are called colts. The parents are very attentive to their colt and give it many lessons in flying, singing, feeding and dancing. Over several weeks, the colts are taught to fly, and the famous crane mating dance is an important component in their education. The colt will remain with the parents for the migration south in the fall and, after spending the winter with the flock, will accompany the parents on the spring migration as well. Cranes do not breed until they are two to seven years old.

The cranes forage in fields and shallow water, sometime probing with their bills. They are omnivorous, eating insects, aquatic plants and animals, rodents, roots, seeds and even berries. During migration, they often forage in large flocks in cultivated fields.

Sandhills have an interesting, resonant call, described as a rolling bugle. This is often given in flight. The mating dance of the cranes also includes a rich duet,

where the male does slower notes and the female gives twice as many notes with a somewhat higher-pitched tone.

The cranes, especially the colts, have many predators, including large birds and various mammals. When approached by an avian predator, the adult cranes will fly at the predator, kicking with their feet. A mammal predator such as a coyote, fox,

or bobcat will be chased or attacked by the crane with wings spread. They also stab with their long bills, and the attack may include hissing and kicking at the predator.

The Sandhill Crane has one of the oldest fossil histories of most birds. The oldest unequivocal Sandhill Crane fossil is about 2.5 million years old, one and one-half times older than the earliest remains of most living species of birds. There was considerable difference in size among the early fossils, as there is today among the living cranes.

Umatilla County's claim to the cranes is short-lived and mostly during migration. Spring is definitely the best time to observe them, although many do pass through on the fall migration. During that time, they are more apt to stop briefly at McKay Creek or Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuges and timing to see them is more a matter of luck. A few pairs of Greater Sandhills breed in the meadows in the Ukiah area, but they can be difficult to find. Persistence in searching will usually pay off, although it may take a few trips there to actually see the cranes.

*Some of the material for this article was obtained from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandhill-Crane>*

*Submitted by June Whitten*



*Lesser Sandhill Cranes at Echo Meadows. Photo by A. Skirvin.*



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Bird Club Meeting & Potluck

6:30 p.m., April 8, 2010

**POTLUCK DINNER**

followed by

**BIRDS IN LITERATURE AND  
ART**

Presented by Shannon Van Kirk and  
Alison Timmons

Pendleton First Christian Church  
North Main St., Pendleton

### Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., May 13, 2010

**BURROWING OWLS AT  
UMATILLA CHEMICAL  
DEPOT**

Presented by Don Gillis and  
Mike Gregg

Pendleton First Christian Church  
North Main St., Pendleton

### Bird Club Field Trip

Saturday, May 1, 2010

Pendleton Bird Club & Blue  
Mountain Audubon Chapter

*Joint Field Trip to*

**Spring Creek for  
Great Gray Owls  
&**

**Ladd Marsh Wildlife  
Area (La Grande)**

Meet at 7 a.m. at Arrowhead  
Truck Plaza, Exit 216, I-84.

For more information, contact  
Aaron Skirvin [umatbirder@yahoo.com](mailto:umatbirder@yahoo.com)  
or 541-215-0761

### Bird Club Picnic

Saturday, June 19, 2010

**BATTLE MOUNTAIN  
& ALBEE**

Meet at Pendleton Safeway parking lot  
at 6:30 a.m. for field trip to Albee

Picnic to follow at noon at  
Battle Mountain State Park

For additional information contact  
Lorna Waltz at 541-276-6353  
or Aaron Skirvin 541-215-0761



## An Invitation

**To:** Pendleton Bird Club  
**From:** Cathy Nowak, Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
ODFW Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area, La Grande,  
Oregon

**Event:** Fifth Annual Ladd Marsh Birdathon

**When:** May 14 – 16, 2010

**What:** The Birdathon is a non-competitive celebration of birds and birding commemorating International Migratory Bird Day. With presentations Friday and Saturday evenings, a live raptor presentation Saturday afternoon, children's activities, field trips and staffed birding stations there is something for everyone at the Birdathon. Local birders will staff 6 stations from 6:00 am until noon Saturday to help novice birders locate and identify birds. Not-so-novice birders may also enjoy the spotting scopes at the stations. Field trips Saturday and Sunday will provide opportunities to bird elsewhere in Union County as well. For those more inclined to explore on their own, portions of the wildlife area normally closed to entry will be open to the public on this weekend only. Children's activities on Saturday will include building a bird house, coloring a canvas tote, bird walks and the chance to earn a Junior Birder patch. Friends of Ladd Marsh will offer lunch as a fund raiser. Check the web page as details will be added as they come together:  
<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/viewing/events/index.asp>

### Some highlights from past Birdathons:

1. Great-tailed Grackle viewed by all during lunch 2009
2. Five American Bitterns in view from station in 2008
3. A Sandhill Crane on the nest visible from a station in 2009
4. 64 species seen from one station in 4 hours in 2007
5. Sora and Virginia Rail seen at a station every year

## Have you seen the Long-eared Barney Owl??

As far as we know only attendees of the March Pendleton Bird Club meeting got a glimpse of the Long-eared Barney Owl! And they had to look fast! Club members were given just a few seconds to make the identification as Jack Simons flashed the owl's photo for all to see. Needless to say this totally unique bird was in a category of its own, the "Humongous Bonus Bird," created by Jack for 50 bonus points to any and all who could identify the photo-manipulated bird!

Jack produced and orchestrated his Second Annual Humongous ID Challenge with 53 photos of common Umatilla County resident and migrant birds. Most of the photos were taken by bird club members. Photo contributors to the identification quiz included Dave Herr, Joy Jaeger, Duane Whitten, Aaron Skirvin, Connie Betts, Karen Baxter, Lee Farren, Bob Tapley, Rose Scott, and Eric Quaempts. If you missed the meeting, the photos are available on our Pendleton Bird Club website ([www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org)) in the Photo Gallery section.



In addition to Jack's educational and humorous ID challenge program, the March meeting included announcements of upcoming birding opportunities (see the *Calendar of Events*). Jennifer Karson-Engum announced that "Anna," Pendleton's overwintering Anna's Hummingbird, has moved on. Aaron Skirvin invited discussion about the spring and migrant arrivals to our area. The meeting concluded with refreshments organized by Lorna Waltz.



## Getting to know Jack.....

Jack Simons was born in Vallejo, California in 1950. In 1976 he graduated from California State University at Los Angeles where he earned his teaching certificate to be an Industrial Education teacher. In 1986 he graduated from Oregon State University with a Masters in Education. After teaching for 3 years in San Jose, California (1976 – 79) he and his wife Sharon and young son Alan moved to Umatilla where he taught for 8 years before leaving for Florida to work alongside his father in the family business. Jack



still maintains contact with students and teaching by substitute teaching at Pilot Rock School District approximately 20 times per year. After 13 years in the Florida humidity and congestion, he and his wife returned to Oregon in 2000.

Jack is currently the technical representative for JMS Flower Farms, Inc. a small company that manufactures a mineral oil product used to control powdery mildew disease and pest insects on a wide range of crop plants in the Northwest. His hobbies include woodworking, birding, photography, gardening and fishing.

Jack lives on the Umatilla Indian Reservation and considers himself to be extremely fortunate to own property only 5 minutes walk from the Umatilla River where eagles and salmon grace the landscape. His passion for wildlife is exceeded only by his desire to share his world with others, especially fellow birders in the Pendleton Bird Club.

## PBC Financial Report

The Pendleton Bird Club traditionally has one fundraiser per year, a highly successful and enjoyable member-supported December Auction and Raffle. Dues are not charged to members, so the proceeds of the December fundraiser are used to cover the club's expenses and to support bird related projects.

This 2009-2010 year the club donated \$100.00 to the Malheur Field Station in memory of Russ Betts; \$100.00 to Blue Mountain Wildlife; and \$120.00 annual donation to the First Christian Church to help pay for use of the building for our meetings. New Adobe Acrobat PDF software was purchased to upgrade the monthly newsletter. In addition the annual web-hosting fee was paid, leaving the club with a current balance of \$1499.99.

## PBC Hummingbird Garden

Last spring a few adventuresome Pendleton Bird Club members teamed up with Dee St. Romaine of the Pendleton Garden Club to design and plant a hummingbird garden at the Bishop Funeral Chapel on Byers Avenue here in Pendleton. Perennial transplants attractive to hummingbirds were ordered and planted in a beautiful location with sun and shade beneath a large walnut tree. By the end of May our first penstemons were in bloom along with petunias, lilies, alyssum and many more species.



Over the next several months our plants grew in this ideal location and produced a bounty of blossoms and nectar. Alas! Apparently the hummingbirds never read the "vacancy" sign and did not show. However, the garden was still a success with LOTS of flowers to delight passersby, bees and butterflies.

We recorded the monthly change in the garden's 'mood' with photographs that are now available at the Club's website ([www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org)). From the Homepage, click on the "Club Projects" link, then scroll down to the "Our Hummingbird Garden" link to see how our garden grew from rocks and weeds to a rainbow of festive colors and charming smells last summer.

Stay tuned for updates from year number two...

*Contributed by Jack Simons*

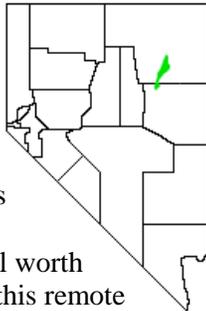


## Birding East of the Pacific Northwest: Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Elko County, Nevada

### Why go to Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge?

The Ruby Mountains are the only place in the United States where the Himalayan Snowcock is found. According to the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America this large Asian bird was successfully introduced in 1963. They are not easy to find, as they live at high elevations in the rocky cirques.

They fly downhill in the morning and walk back up, clucking and cackling and feeding as they go. You'd probably be lucky to find one!



If hiking into the high mountains is not for you, a birding drive through Ruby Lake NWR is well worth the time and effort of getting to this remote gem of a refuge. It is located in a high valley on the east side of the Ruby Mountains which are south-east of Elko, Nevada.

Ruby Lake NWR lies along the migration corridors serving both the Pacific and Central flyways. The refuge consists of a pristine marsh, meadows, grasslands, and shrub-steppe uplands providing essential habitat for nesting and migrating waterfowl, water birds, songbirds, and native wildlife. The refuge is identified as one of 500 Globally Important Bird Areas by the American Bird Conservancy. Good access gravel roads and camping sites are available.

Over 220 species of birds regularly visit the refuge. The South Marsh supports the largest population of nesting Canvasback ducks west of the Mississippi River (outside Alaska). Other breeding species include Sandhill Cranes, Trumpeter Swans, Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, American Bittern, Great and Snowy Egrets, Black-Crowned Night-Herons, Virginia Rail, Sora, and more! In late May and early June the marshes are brilliant magenta when the Shooting Stars are in bloom.

When in Northeastern Nevada be sure to check out this refuge!



Information for this article came from StateParks.com, US Fish and Wildlife Service website, and National Geographic's *Guide to Birdwatching Sites, Western US* by Mel White.

Compiled by Barbara Clark who loved this refuge and did not see a Himalayan Snowcock!

### Email to the Editors

In response to our February 2010 lead article on Anna's Hummingbirds, we received the following email from Paris Merriam whose website was used in preparation of the article.

From: Paris Merriam <[parismerriam@yahoo.com](mailto:parismerriam@yahoo.com)>  
Date: Wed, Mar 10, 2010 at 11:09 AM  
Subject: Anna's Hummingbird

Thank you for linking your newsletter that you have on your web site to my web site on Anna's hummingbirds. Here's another interesting article I wrote for the American Orchid Society that you might wish to read and/or link to as well:  
<http://www.aos.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=OrchidsMagazine&CONTENTID=6042&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>

Regards,  
Paris Merriam  
Irvine, California

### February - March Bird Sightings

Migratory birds are slowly starting to move into the area. The first **Sandhill Cranes** were reported on February 21, and the first **Osprey** March 9. Early swallows have been reported and soon they will again be common. As new birds migrate into the area other may be leaving. The **Anna's Hummingbird** that spent the winter at Jennifer Karson-Engum's home in SE Pendleton was last seen on February 24.

While doing farm work on February 7, Jakota Johnson found a **SNOWY OWL** near Johnley Road, about a mile NE of Cayuse. Jakota was able to get within 20 to 30 yards of the owl before it flew. A **SNOWY OWL** is a great addition to our 2010 county list.

Based on a report from Lyle and Nancy Brown of probable Western Scrub-Jays in Hermiston, on February 14, Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and June Whitten (June) checked the area and heard a **Western Scrub-Jay** calling. On February 18, after several tries, Lyle and Nancy were able to verify the report by visually sighting two **Western Scrub-Jays** in the area where June and Aaron reported hearing them. February 27 Karen Baxter found and was able to get photographs of the jays. Lyle and Nancy believe there are at least **3 Western Scrub-Jays** in the neighborhood around NW 6<sup>th</sup> and W. Standard streets in Hermiston.



*Western Scrub Jay. Photo by Mike Danzenbaker.*

Visiting their Cabbage Hill cabin on February 20, Joy Jaeger found a **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Song Sparrow**, **Steller's Jay**, **Northern Flicker** and a **Dusky Grouse**. The same day, Dolly Robison reported finding the **Great Egret** in its now-regular spot along Stage Gulch Creek in Stanfield and reports the **Eurasian Collared-Doves** absent during the winter have returned to her NE Hermiston neighborhood. The following day, Lyle and Nancy Brown reported finding the first **Sandhill Cranes** of the season along the Echo Meadow Road. Nancy reported there were several flocks circling the area and one flock on the ground. They also found 2 **Bald Eagles** and a **Golden Eagle** in Echo Meadows, some **Cackling Geese** among **Canada Geese** along Stanfield Meadows Road, and an alarming **10,000 European Starlings** along Highway 207 about one mile north of I-84.

February 22, Rich Scheele added **Greater White-fronted Goose** to the county year list when he spotted 12 birds at the Wanaket Wildlife Mitigation Area, which is located next to Highway 730 just upstream from McNary Dam. Rich and Aaron found the first reported **Turkey Vulture** of the season on February 26 when they saw one flying over the intersection of Highways 730 and 207.

Driving on SE Court Street in Pendleton on February 25, Tanya Harrison spotted a **Cooper's Hawk** flying over the street. February 26, Tucker Whitten reported **Gray Partridges** were very plentiful on the hills above Birch Creek, just outside Pilot

Rock. Tucker's sighting is the first report of this species this year.

Checking Mission Ponds on February 27, Jack Simons found 15 **Common Goldeneyes** and 20

**Green-winged Teal**. Jack also noted **American Robins** have really become common around his home along the Umatilla River between Pendleton and Mission. On February 28, Jack and Sharon Simons were cleaning out the Wood Duck nesting boxes they have in their pasture. As they worked, they discovered a **Western Screech-Owl** looking out of one of the boxes. Jack noted this is the first time

they have seen a **Western Screech-Owl** using one of the boxes in two years. Jack further notes that the owl is in the same box **American Kestrels** nested in the last two years. Jack wonders if there will be a fight or if the **American Kestrels** will use one of the other available boxes.

February 27, Aaron and June birded around Ukiah and vicinity. They found 3 **Pileated Woodpeckers** and a **Varied Thrush** at Battle Mountain State Park, an adult **Bald Eagle** at Cape Horn, 2 **Northern Shrikes**, a pair of **Golden Eagles**, 4 **Western Bluebirds** near the Ukiah Cemetery, 6 **Killdeer** in Ukiah, and 2 **American Dippers** in Camas Creek along Highway 395. The following day Aaron and June spotted 2, or possibly 3, **Western Scrub-Jays** in Hermiston, 3 male **Barrow's Goldeneyes** in the Columbia River, 2 **Mew Gulls** at McNary Wildlife Nature Area, 17 **Sandhill Cranes** just south of I-84 in Echo Meadows, 2 **Say's Phoebes** at Cunningham Sheep Ranch at Nolin (Nolin is located along the Umatilla River 5 – 6 miles SE of Echo) and a **Ferruginous Hawk** along Coombs Canyon Road.

Joy Jaeger saw 2 **Western Bluebirds** at their Cabbage Hill cabin on March 1, and Joy hopes they will take advantage of one of the several nest boxes she has placed around the cabin.

McKay Creek National Wildlife Refuge opened on March 1. Aaron checked the area that afternoon and noted the reservoir is "depressingly low", with less



than 19,000 acre feet of water out of a total capacity of 65,500 acre feet. At the refuge, he found a **Mew Gull** (new to McKay Reservoir bird list), **Ring-billed** and **California Gulls**, 40 **Common Mergansers**,

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Club Member's Photo Gallery,  
Calendar of Events, **Online  
Newsletter** and more.**

**[www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org)**

**Ring-necked Ducks, Mallards, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon**, a couple of **Northern Shovelers, Canada Geese** and 9 **Great Blue Herons** at about 18 nests.

March 3, I (Dave Herr) had 2 **Lesser Goldfinches** visit the thistle feeders in my yard in NE Pendleton. I am now finding them periodically. A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** has also been making frequent passes through my yard.

March 3, Jenny Barnett reported that while checking pond levels at the Wanaket Wildlife Mitigation Area, which she manages, she had a "4-goose day". Her sightings included over 1000 mixed **Canada** and **Cackling Geese**, several dozen **Greater White-fronted Geese** and one lone **Snow Goose**.

**White-crowned Sparrows** are on the move. Barbara Clark, Jack Simons and Connie Betts all reported single **White-crowned Sparrows** at their feeders in the Pendleton area in early March, the first they had seen for months. Aaron notes the big spring push of migrating **White-crowns** through our area will peak in late April and trail off in early May.

Mayanna Kopp reports although the numbers are down, she has still been feeding over **200 California Quail** at her yard in Pilot Rock near Wagner Gulch Road. Mayanna reported that, along with the quail, she has been feeding **Mourning Doves**, several pairs of **Eurasian Collared-Doves, American Goldfinches** and **House Finches**.



March 5, while driving along the first few miles of Gurdane Road, I was able to find both **Chukars** and **Gray Partridge**, two species that had been eluding me this year. Checking water-monitoring stations along the Umatilla River on March 5, Dolly Robison found an **American Dipper** near Corporation (located about 30 miles east of Pendleton) and an immature **Double-crested Cormorant** near Cayuse.

Neal Hinds added **Canvasback** to the county year list when he spotted one male at Memorial Marsh, Cold Springs NWR, on March 6. Birding at Memorial Marsh on March 7, Katrina Dielman, Angela Baylink, Bruce Mayfield, Perry Ukachukwa, and Aaron relocated the male **Canvasback** and reported seeing and hearing numerous territorial **Marsh Wrens**. The group also reported that, while they were watching about 125 **Sandhill Cranes** along Emert Road in Echo Meadows, a noisy **Greater Yellowlegs** flew overhead.

Running the Hermiston Winter Raptor Survey March 9, Tanya Harrison and Jenny Barnett counted a total of 64 raptors including 2 nesting **Red-tailed Hawks** and a nesting **Great Horned Owl**. They also found one **Osprey** along Kosmos Road near Memorial Marsh. Checking his records, Aaron found March 9 is the earliest an **Osprey** has been reported locally. You may have noticed that the **Osprey** nest on the power pole near the east end "Welcome to Pendleton" sign is missing. At the March Pendleton Bird Club meeting, Aaron noted the nest fell off the pole late last summer, luckily after the young birds had fledged. It will be interesting to see if the **Ospreys** rebuild this nest or choose to nest elsewhere this year.



*Photoshop watercolor rendition of a Wilson's Snipe. Original photo by Rose Scott.*

Connie Betts reported March 10 and 11, she found a **Varied Thrush** along McKay Creek near the Pendleton Community Park. On March 13, Connie reported finding 6 **Long-billed Curlews** in an irrigated pasture at the intersection of Emert and Rosenberg Roads in Echo Meadows. This is the first report of **Long-billed Curlews** in the county this year. Earlier the same day, Aaron and June found more than **300 Lesser Sandhill Cranes** around the Echo Meadows area. Although the first **Sandhill Cranes** of the season were reported February 21, this is the largest concentration reported so far this year.



*Varied Thrush. Photo by Connie Betts.*

Craig Kvern had two male **Evening Grosbeaks** visit his bird feeders in Adams on March 14. In recent years, **Evening Grosbeaks** have become more difficult to find in Umatilla County.

For several weeks, Dolly Robison has been seeing a **Say's Phoebe** at the Forest Service Warehouse next to Washington School in SE Pendleton. She also reported the number of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** she has been finding in and around Hermiston is increasing. Her recent highest count is 14 doves.

Taking advantage of the warm weather and the high probability that Sandhill Cranes might be about, Jack and Sharon Simons birded in the Echo Meadows area on March 16. They were successful in finding 200+ **Sandhill Cranes**, most of which were in the corn stubble near Emert Road's intersection with Rosenberg Road. They also spotted some **Northern Pintails** among the **Green-winged Teal** in the ponds along Emert Road. On their drive around Echo Meadows, they tallied a total of 6 **Long-billed Curlews**. Mann's Pond (off Stanfield Meadows Road) was awash in geese; they

estimated about 900 total dark geese. In sorting through the geese, the Simons discovered about two-thirds were **Greater White-fronted Geese** (or Specklebellies as some people call them).

While in Hermiston March 18, Lorna Waltz was able to locate one of the **Scrub-Jays**, which have taken up residence in Hermiston. Later Lorna drove to the Echo Meadows area to check for **Sandhill Cranes**. Although Lorna was not able to find any cranes on the ground, she did see an estimated 75 to 100 cranes flying overhead in three groups. Driving back to Pendleton, she enjoyed watching several

male **Ring-necked Pheasants** in bright breeding plumage and also found an **American Kestrel**, **American Robins**, and **California Quail**.

March 18, while driving along Mud Springs Canyon Road west of Pilot Rock, I found two birds sitting on a fence that I could not readily identify. I was able to take a couple pictures, and after checking my bird book; identified them as **LAPLAND LONG-SPURS**. While discussing my finding with Aaron, he confirmed my identification and noted this is only the second record for this species in Umatilla County. Driving home along Rieth Road later in the morning I found a number of **Violet-green Swallows** flying along the cliffs located along this road. I also found a couple of **Violet-green Swallows** flying above downtown



*Lapland Longspur (notice the length of the spurs on the feet!). Photo by Dave Herr.*

Pendleton. Earlier Aaron predicted breeding swallows would return to our area near the first day of spring and he was correct.



Now that spring has arrived, new birds will be moving into our area with increasing frequency, which really makes birding this time of year fun. So get out and see what you can find and please send reports of all the birds you see to me, Dave Herr at [dsherr1@mac.com](mailto:dsherr1@mac.com) or call 541-276-6413  
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