

Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 8, No. 6

Pendleton, Oregon

June 2010

Phillip Lawrence Emert *1943-2010*



The Pendleton Bird Club will miss Phil at their monthly meetings. He passed away a few days after being diagnosed with cancer.

Phil was an avid conservationist and an enthusiastic student of Umatilla County birds.

He attended club meetings for about four years and enjoyed hearing and reading the reports of birds in our area. He always was interested in what the speakers and others had to say, asked questions, and shared the information with his wife of 44 years, Beverly. One special presentation by Terry and Kay Steele of Ritter, OR, on Birds and Beasts of the Chiricahua Mountains (November 9, 2006) sparked a dream that one day he and Bev would travel there so she could paint and he could explore this fascinating place. Bev still dreams of making that journey.

Phil was born in Pendleton, graduated from Ione High School where he played trombone in the Pep Band, and received a bachelor's degree from Willamette University. After his career as a vocational rehabilitation counselor in Salem and Pendleton ended, Phil became a Master Gardener, devoting his time and effort to the three community gardens (one on the Umatilla River, one at the tower, and one six-plot

garden for 6 individual families) and helping many start their own personal gardens. Drip irrigation was his favorite method of watering. He worked on the family ranch with his brother in Echo. Phil was a

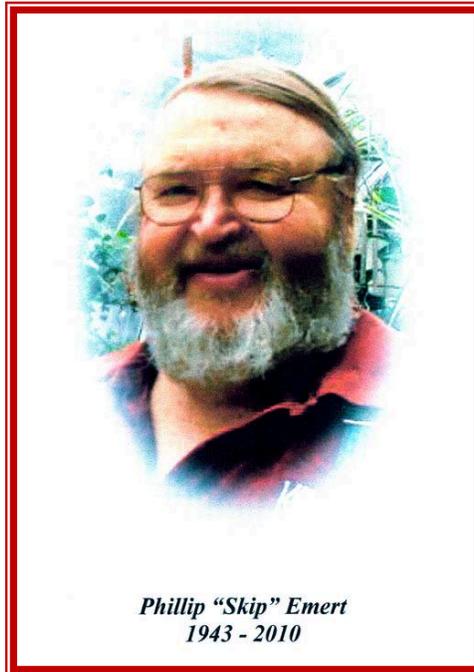
generous man. He delivered produce to individuals and families everywhere, including Washington and the Portland area. At the Pendleton Senior Center he helped cut up squash, shuck corn, and brought in asparagus and bags of potatoes and onions. He often spent time talking with people, sharing in their joys and sorrows. At home, he took pride in propagating Clivia, which fill many of the windows in their home.

He loved to listen to his sons' (Dan and Andy) fiddling and grandboys (Connor, Mason, Alexander, Samuel) on the violin. ***"Phil loved and supported music, especially fiddling, his entire life, along with his gardening.***

Heaven's grounds will be a more beautiful place with that Master Gardener in the house!"

Information supplied by the Emert family, the East Oregonian, Jeannie Jensen, and Pat Tempinski.

Submitted by Connie Betts



*Phillip "Skip" Emert
1943 - 2010*



Calendar of Events

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., Thursday,
October 14, 2010

GROUSE OF THE WORLD

Presented by Mike Gregg &
Jenny Barnett

Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., Thursday,
November 11, 2010

A BIRDING ADVENTURE – SOUTHERN AFRICA

Presented by Terry Steele

Location to be determined

Visit the Bird Club's website at
www.pendletonbirders.org



Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., Thursday,
December 9, 2010

AMAZING HUMMINGBIRDS OF THE UNITED STATES

A Video Presentation Produced by
Charles W. Melton

Followed by

THE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton

Bluebird Trail Update

Submitted by Jack Simons

Bruce Mayfield was “on call” to monitor the Club’s Bluebird trail on Sunday, June 6, 2010 and we’re pleased to report that the cold, rainy weather over the past month has **not** taken a serious toll on this year’s crop of nesting bluebirds. In fact, Bruce’s tally sheet showed our birds are



Western Bluebird at one of our nestboxes on the Albee Bluebird Trail. Photo by Dave Herr.

slightly ahead of last year’s totals. Nesting success is high with 31 boxes occupied (30 Western BB; 1

Mountain BB) compared to 30 Western BB and 0 Mountain BB last year on June 14, 2009.

Bruce counted 113 eggs, 17 chicks and 0 fledged chicks for an aggregate total of 130 on June 6. In contrast, on June 14, 2010 we counted 31 eggs, 88 chicks and 8 chicks fledged (which reflected the excellent *early* nesting conditions last year) for an aggregate total of 127. However, it should be noted that this year Bruce could not count eggs or chicks in 4 boxes which had nests occupied by sitting females (which refused to leave the nest). Not wanting to disturb the incubating females, Bruce simply noted the location and closed the box door. If we assume each of these 4 boxes had an average of 4 eggs, then the adjusted egg count would be 129 eggs, 17 chicks and 0 fledged chicks for an aggregate total of 146 compared to 127 last year on June 14th.

Despite the poor weather/nesting conditions this spring, the latest counts suggest we are right on track or slightly ahead of last year's bumper crop of bluebirds for this time period. Having said that, recall the old adage to "never count your chickens before they...."

We'll continue to keep you posted.

2010 CLUB PICNIC

Submitted by Barbara Clark

Ten Pendleton Bird Club members: Aaron Skirvin, Betty Klepper, Connie Betts, June and Duane Whitten, Neal Hinds, Virginia Storey, Dan Baum, Barbara Clark, and new member Margie Gaboury were up early Saturday morning, June 19th meeting at 6:00 am in the Safeway parking lot for the pre-picnic birding field trip. Mourning and Eurasian Doves watched them from the telephone wires as they drove to Pilot Rock where they met up with Marilyn and Gene Cripe.



Heading south the 5-vehicle caravan passed Cliff and Barn Swallows flying over the highway to the turnoff at Yellowjacket Road. Traveling upward into the Blue Mountains the birds turned out to display their colors against the gray of the sky



and green fields and trees. About half-way up Yellowjacket the group stopped and found some 20 species in a riparian area off the road: Lazuli Bunting, American Goldfinch, Black-headed Gros-



Aaron and Joy Jaeger discuss birding highlights on the Jaeger property in the Blue Mountains NE of Ukiah.

beak, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow Warbler, Great Horned Owl, Bullock's Oriole, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Kingbird, Western Wood-Pewee to name a few. With all the late Spring rains, wildflowers were in their glory about three weeks later than usual: both Blue and Yellow Lupine, Camas, Death Camas, Wild Iris, Indian Paintbrush, Wild Larkspur, Wild Rose, Heart-Leaf Arnica.....and more!

Up in the top of the Blues the road led us to a warming campfire on the forest property of club members Joy and Steve Jaeger. Joy and Steve have set out 30



Club members enjoying a warm campfire during the field trip.

Bluebird nestboxes at their place and showed us one with five delicate blue eggs and another with 3 baby Western Bluebirds being fed by an anxious parent flying erratically close by as we took turns peeking

into their cozy birdhouse. The Jaeger's have several feeding areas with seeds and salt blocks where we watched Pine Siskins having lunch. We enjoyed walking around seeing Williamson's Sapsuckers,



Birders gather for the Club's annual picnic feast held this year at Battle Mtn. State Park.

Mountain Chickadee, Steller's Jays, Chipping Sparrows, House Wrens, both Mountain and Western Bluebirds, Cassin's Finches, Pygmy Nuthatches and far below "the green plains" of Ukiah. After roasting marshmallows on the campfire we got back into caravan and headed off for the picnic. Along the way we stopped for a Turkey Vulture, Spotted Sandpiper, Red-tailed Hawks, Brewer's Blackbirds, and more bluebirds along the Albee Road flying to and from the Bluebird Boxes reported in the article by Jack Simons earlier in this newsletter.

We arrived at Battle Mountain State Park to join Ann Wyatt, Jeannie Jensen, and Dave Herr for our picnic. The beautiful and often unnoticed, American Robins along with a few Dark-eyed Juncos were busy foraging near our picnic tables. Our potluck picnic was the usual wonderful variety of good food that we Pendleton Bird Club members have come to anticipate when we dine together!



In all we saw 58 species of birds on our annual picnic day. We experienced cool weather, beautiful scenery, and enjoyed the delight of being in the company of good companions and the beauty of our Eastern Oregon.

A big *Thank You!* to the Jaegers for hosting us and to Aaron Skirvin for guiding the field trip!

Birding the Pacific Northwest: Harney County May 30 to June 5

Submitted by Dave Herr

I spent a week birding at Malheur Wildlife Refuge in early June and since many of you are familiar

with this area, I thought you might be interested in a quick summary of the trip. The season was at least two weeks later than normal.

Birding Oregon



The hawthorns at Refuge Headquarters had not started to bloom and the elm trees had just started to leaf out. During my stay the temperature never got higher than the low 60s.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Photo by Dave Herr.

Lots and lots of water this year. The entire time I was there a series of high intensity rain cells moved over the area. The north end of the refuge had more water than I've seen in years. The south section of the Center Patrol road was closed because of high water and much of the grove at Benson Pond

was under water. There is still a substantial snow-pack on Steens Mountain, and it is quite possible there will again be water at the Narrows by late fall.

Although the weather was less than optimal, birding was good. Two of the highlights for the week included: a male and female **HOODED ORIOLE** seen carrying nesting material at Fields and several **ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS** seen during the week. Some of the other unusual sightings included: **AMERICAN REDSTART**, **OVENBIRD**, **TENNESSEE WARBLER**, **CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER**, **NORTHERN PARULA WARBLER**, **HOODED WARBLER**, **INDIGO BUNTING**, and several **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS**. Additionally, Duncan Evered, co-director at the Malheur Field Station, reported a **LESSER NIGHTHAWK** at Krumbo Reservoir.

Caspian Tern - (Hydroprogne caspia)

Submitted by June Whitten

The Caspian Tern, at about 21 inches long, is not only the largest tern to occur in Umatilla County but the largest tern in the world, occurring on every continent except Antarctica. While it is an endangered species in some African and European countries, it has greatly increased in population along the west coast of the United States, especially at the Columbia River Estuary. Since 1986, the estimated increase of Caspian Terns nesting in the Columbia River Estuary is about 600 percent. This increase is due partly to loss of habitat elsewhere and the artificial islands produced from dredged materials from the Columbia River.



Bird of the Month

The Caspian Tern's main food source is fish. The tern will fly over water, such as the Columbia River, with its head and bill pointed downward. When a fish is spotted near the surface, the tern dives into the water and is quite successful in catching small fish. Since salmon smolts are among their favorite and most plentiful food source, there was some effort to eliminate or decrease the terns in the Columbia River Estuary. The US Corps of Engineers tried some unsuccessful methods to reduce the number of terns, and have now decided on a long-

term management plan which includes providing nesting sites away from the estuary.

Caspian Terns breed when 3 years old. The nest is often a simple scrape in sand or gravel where 1 to 3 pinkish-buff eggs with some brown spotting are laid. Both parents incubate the eggs for 3 weeks. The young may leave the nest a few days after hatching,



Caspian Tern (adult). Photo copyright Mike Danzenbaker.

but are dependent on the parents to feed them for several months. Even though the young terns can fly when about a month old, it takes several months to hone their diving and fishing skills. They remain dependent on their parents for up to 7 months, the longest dependency of any tern. The juveniles soon look similar to the parents, but they have some mottling in their whitish backs and wings, and their bills are not the same brilliant red.

The adults are distinctive with their whitish-gray mantle, shiny black cap, and bright red-orange bill often with a small black tip. The wing tips and legs are black. Since Caspian Terns are so large, they are seldom confused with other terns. The other terns that occur in Umatilla County, the Common and Forster's Terns, are both about 13 inches long. They are not easily mistaken for the larger Caspian Tern. In non-breeding plumage, the Caspian Tern's shiny, black cap fades to a mottled gray and black and the blackish bill tip may disappear.

Caspian Terns use both fresh- and salt-water wetlands, usually estuaries, coastal bays, beaches, rivers, and lakes, preferring somewhat protected waters. Nesting is colonial with large numbers nesting on the same island. Previously, the terns often nested with large gulls, but as their numbers have increased in the



Columbia River Estuary, they have nested in larger numbers with only other Caspian Terns.

Because these terns are beautiful birds and graceful fliers, one might expect an equally lovely voice. Such is not the case. The Caspian Tern gives a very harsh, heron-like squawk, a call it likes to make quite often while flying in search of fish or communicating with other terns.

Since Caspian Terns are migratory, spending the winters in Southern California, Mexico, and Central America, the only time to see them in Umatilla County is during the breeding season. The Columbia River, around Warehouse Beach, or downstream from McNary Dam are likely places to see the terns. They are occasionally at McKay Creek and Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuges as well.

Some information for this article was obtained from: <http://www.seattleaudubon.org/bird/birdweb/bird>

Editor's Recommendations

By Barbara Clark

1. One of our San Diego birding friends sent this YouTube site on the filming of Public TV's Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air special that so many of us enjoyed. I found it really interesting. If you haven't seen it, I think you would enjoy it, too. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjnc1kHMDDo>
2. Read current bird migration news featuring 'flying softballs (bar-tailed godwits)' in an article recommended by Andrew Clark entitled "*Migrating Thousands of Miles With Nary a Stop*" by Carl Zimmer. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/25/science/25migrate.html>
<http://nytimes.com/interactive/2010/05/24/science/migrate.html>
3. "Fresh Fruit, Aisle 3B" by Dave Leatherman in Vol. 22, no. 3 June 2010 issue of Winging It, the official newsletter of the American Birding Association takes **bird listing** to another level by



listing what birds eat and from where. If you enjoy identifying bugs and insects, plant parts and seeds this endeavor could add to your birding experience. Dave Leatherman, a forest entomologist, has written a most interesting article.

4. From Bob Tapley's email to Ann Wyatt, dated June 21, 2010:

"This is actually a pretty amazing story about a baby hummingbird that was found on a sidewalk. He couldn't fly, so I took him under my wing. At night, he would come home to our house for safety. During the day, he was in the backyard of the house near where I found him.

About 4 days after I found him, I was holding him in my cupped hands when his mama came by to feed him. She had seen me around, I guess, because she just flew over, perched on my hand and then fed him. This happened a number of times, so I called a friend who is good with a video camera, and he came over to film some of the amazing goings on that I told him about."

I hope this is enough info to give you some context for the video we posted to YouTube. Here's the link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7xBLvMIBZU>

May-June Bird Sightings

Compiled by Dave Herr

For the last several mornings I have woken up to the calling of both **Mourning Doves** and **Eurasian Collared-Doves**. Until a couple of years ago, when the first **Eurasian Collared-Doves** began colonizing the area, this was a combination of calls never heard in Pendleton. Some folks have expressed concern that the **Eurasian Collared-Doves** might take over habitat historically populated by **Mourning Doves**. This remains to be seen, but both species are now common at my feeders, and I've never seen any negative interaction between the two species. I guess only time will tell if they can continue to coexist.



Over the past several years, Eric Hoverson has built and installed several dozen nesting boxes in the trees around his pond near Milton-Freewater. Eric reported that each year, most of the boxes are used for nesting by several species of birds and occasionally by Northern Flying Squirrels. On May 15, he noted 4 broods of **Wood Ducks**, the first Wood Duck ducklings of the season on his pond.

On May 19, when Jack Simons was leaving his home along the Umatilla River between Pendleton and Mission, he looked up and saw **3 SNOWY EGRETS** flying over his home and headed in the direction of Mission Ponds.

I'm sure that if I (Dave Herr) had looked up and seen 3 white egrets flying over, I would have assumed they were Great Egrets. Luckily, Jack had a lot of experience with **SNOWY EGRETS** when he lived in Florida and was able to identify them immediately. Later in the morning Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and Connie Betts were able to relocate the Snowys at Mission Ponds. Aaron notes that the only other record for **SNOWY EGRET** in Umatilla County was at Cold Springs NWR August 16 - 17, 2009.

After returning home from sighting the egret, Connie Betts noticed a small bird moving around the side of her home. She snuck around and was able to get a picture of a **MacGillivray's Warbler** that probably hit a window and was stunned. Connie believes the bird recovered.

On May 19, Aaron reported finding **2 Bald Eagles** at Indian Lake. He estimated one was a 3rd year bird and the other a 4th year bird. He also found a **Golden Eagle** soaring over East Birch Creek Road near milepost 10, and reported, that again this year, a pair of



Mountain Bluebirds was nesting near the entrance to Indian Lake Campground. On May 20, Eric Hoverson spotted a **Great Blue Heron** fishing for frogs in his pond near Milton-Freewater. Also that day, Eric saw two young **Western Screech-Owls** peering out of one of his Wood Duck nest boxes.



Connie Betts spotted a MacGillivray's Warbler that likely hit a window and lay stunned at her home.

May 21, Diana LaSarge reported she had both **Mourning Doves** and **Eurasian Collared-Doves** using her bird feeders. Also on May 21, Aaron found one breeding-plumaged **Red-necked Grebe** at McKay Reservoir. The following day, Aaron, June, Duane Whitten, Janet Groat,

Virginia Storey, and Lona Odom found a singing **Wilson's Warbler** and a pair of **Canvasbacks** at the Reservoir. Birding at McKay Reservoir on May 23, Aaron and his grandson (Gabriel) watched an **Osprey** catch a fish, **3 American White Pelicans** fishing near the shoreline, at least **12 male Wood Ducks** feeding in the shallows in the inlet and **2 Black-necked Stilts** foraging in the flooded flats along the inlet. However, their best bird of the evening was a **WHITE-FACED IBIS** flying above the Reservoir: a species not found in the county every year.



White-faced Ibis. Photo by Rose Scott.

Dan Baum has had a number of interesting sightings this spring. He reported an **Eastern Kingbird** May 19 near the Butter Creek Highway (OR Hwy 207) and Hwy 74 junction. Near the junction of Winn Road and Hwy 11 (a couple miles north of Weston) on May 23, he

spotted a male and female **Bullock's Oriole**, 2 female **American Goldfinches**, a male **Western Tanager**, a male **Yellow Warbler**, 2 **Spotted Towhees**, an **American Robin** and a **Killdeer**.

These were all spotted within a hundred yards of Hwy 11.

Western Tanagers have been moving through our area for the past several weeks. On May 26, Jack Simons found at least 5 males near his home. May 30, Jane Holmes saw a pair of **Western Tanagers** along the Umatilla River behind her home on NW Bailey Street in Pendleton.

The evening of May 26, Aaron and June Whitten (June) decided to check the Gurdane Road area for **Common Poorwills**. They had good luck, finding at least 4 different birds. On that trip they also found 5 **American Avocets** in the ephemeral pond along Hwy 395 at Whitaker Flat; 2 **Short-eared Owls**, one along Hwy 395 and the other near the Gurdane road; 1 male **Gray Partridge** and a **Ferruginous Hawk**.

More baby birds appeared at Eric Hoverson's yard and pond near Milton-Freewater on May 27: 3 baby **Western Screech-Owls** left the nest and perched in a locust tree; and new broods of **Mallards** and **Green-winged Teal** took their first swim on the pond. May 30, Jack Simons spotted the year's first **Common Nighthawk** flying over his home as it flew toward Mission Ponds. The following day Jack was able to add **Western Wood-Pewee** to the county year list.

Conducting bird surveys at Wanaket Wildlife Area on June 1, Tanya Harrison found a **Common Nighthawk** and a late-migrating **White-crowned Sparrow** along with the other more expected species. June 1, Barbara Clark had an unexpected surprise when she found a **California Quail** nest with 13 eggs under a small ramp propped against the garage at her home near



California Quail nest with 13 eggs at the home of Barbara Clark.

McKay Dam. Barbara hopes she can get to see the brood once the eggs hatch. (Note: as we go to press the quail is sitting on her nest and does not run off when Barbara lifts the ramp to see if hatching is taking place.)

On June 11, while scouting for their Umatilla County "Big Day" planned for June 13, Aaron and June checked out the north and northeast portion of the county. Aaron reported finding lots of birds including 4 county year birds: **Gray Catbird**, **Willow Flycatcher**, **Western Flycatcher** and **Red-eyed Vireo**, all seen between Cayuse and Thorn Hollow. Other highlights included **Forster's** and **Caspian Terns** on the rocks off Warehouse Beach Recreation Area swimming area; two alternate plumaged

Eared Grebes in the cove at the west end of Warehouse Beach; and one **Clark's Grebe** in the Columbia River about 2 miles upstream from Sand Station Recreation Area.

June 11, Ruth Whitaker found a **Burrowing Owl** nest along Homly Road (north side of the Umatilla River) about 2 miles east of Cayuse. June 12, Aaron was



Young Burrowing Owls along Hwy 37 north of Pendleton, Sep 2009. Photo by Dave Herr.

able to observe at least one of the adult owls. After returning from a birding trip in Arizona, on June 11, Connie Betts did some birding in the Pendleton Community Park. She found a male **Western Tanager**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, **European Starlings**, **House Sparrows**, **American Goldfinches**, **House Finches**, and **Mourning Doves**, and she heard calling **Eurasian Collared-Doves**.

On May 15 this year, I found 2 **Burrowing Owls** at the burrow along Hwy 37, 2 miles north of Pendleton, where they nested last year. Since this observation, several people have been monitoring the owls. On June 13, Duane Whitten checked the site and observed 7 **juvenile owls** as well as the 2



parents. Duane reported he spent over an hour watching and enjoying the antics of the young birds.

On June 13, Aaron and June spent a long day (from 0315 to 2300 hrs) birding throughout Umatilla County, hoping to equal or surpass their record of 148 species seen in Umatilla County on June 8, 2009. They ended the day with a total of 142 species, and highlights included a singing **Varied Thrush** and seven adult **Common Goldeneyes** (including one drake) at Langdon Lake; an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** near Target Meadows Campground; a **Lesser Goldfinch** near Thorn Hollow; 3 **American Dippers** along NF John Day River and Camas Creek; a **NORTHERN GOSHAWK** along Texas Bar Road just below the Tower Burn; a pair of **Townsend's Solitaires** at Ukiah-Dale State Park; and a **Flammulated Owl** near Divide Well Campground.

Virginia Storey reported seeing two male **Western Tanagers** several times along the River Parkway in Pendleton during the week of June 13. June 17, Dolly Robison called to report she was watching a large flock of **American White Pelicans** soaring over the Forest Service Warehouse adjacent to the Washing-

ton Elementary School in Pendleton. Dolly reported the birds were slowly headed upriver.

As Aaron noted in a recent email, all of the expected spring migrants have now returned to the county, so it is a great time to get out and observe male birds in their full breeding plumage. It is also a good time to observe interactions between parent birds and their juvenile offspring. For the next two months only, would you please send your bird sightings to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com (541-276-6413) and also to Aaron Skirvin at umatbirder@yahoo.com (541-215-0761).

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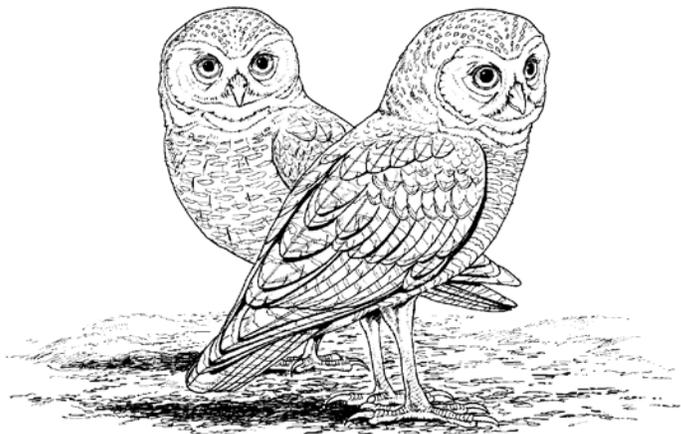
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