



Kákya Táymut

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

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REFLECTIONS OF PANAMA – CANOPY LODGE

February 2 to 14, 2008

Editors Note: June Whitten has graciously agreed to write a three-part series on her recent birding trip to Panama. This article is Part III. Part I was published in March and Part II was published in April.

The change is like day and night. In two hours we are whisked away to what seems like heaven! The same person owns both the Canopy Tower and the Canopy Lodge, but it is plain to see his heart is in the Canopy Lodge. And, no wonder! The elevation is about 1,000 ft. higher and the climate is idyllic. The lodge itself, situated on a clear stream, is built of native rock, wood and cement surrounded by dense forest. The large veranda serves as dining room, library, meeting room, and bird-watching gallery. Here the feeders are filled several times daily with fruit, mostly bananas. Regulars at the feeders are Rufous Motmot, many Clay-colored Thrushes (Robin), Thick-billed Euphonia, several cagey squirrels, who take a whole banana and escape with it, and a Tennessee Warbler. (I never thought I'd see a Tennessee Warbler eating banana!). [Ed. Note: "Let alone seeing one in Panama!"]

Tony Nunnery is our new leader, and he, too, is a big change. Tony is a people-person, very tuned in to his group and their needs. He and his wife live on an acreage in Ecuador, several miles

toward Mindo from Quito. Here they raise most of their own food, keep thirty hummingbird feeders cleaned and filled, doing ten each day, and are strict vegetarians. They have no electricity and use gas for cooking and heating water. He is, of course, an expert birder and does not like using tapes or pishing. The company requires him to use tapes, so he does so but very much less than our first leader, who used them incessantly. However, I have to say if bumping up the life list is a goal, Kevin is the one to be with. If you want to enjoy everything around that nature has to offer, Tony is the man!



Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo. Photo by Joel Rosenthal.

Our daily excursions are more evenly paced and most enjoyable. We see some wonderful birds as well, that were not seen in the other areas. A Pygmy Motmot is just as it sounds, a tiny Motmot, green and rufous, too small even for racquets on his tail. One day we traveled up to Altos de Maria (the high Maria), which was high hills. Here, we found Snowcap, a gorgeous hummingbird that is a

maroon-brown with, of course, a white cap; Emerald Tanager, bright green and only one was seen; and Black-and-yellow Tanager, very bright yellow with black wings and tail.

Another day, we heard of another army ant swarm and walked up a trail to that area. What a worthwhile walk! Among other birds at the swarm, was a



Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo. This is normally a very shy bird and difficult to more than hear. This day, it was so busy eating, it let us cross the fence (Tony and Danilo, the native guide, said it was okay) and get close enough for grand looks! While walking out through the heavy leaves and dense foliage, Tony reminded us to watch for snakes!

Ordinarily, the snake comment would not have deterred us. However, on the first night at this lodge a couple from our group and their visiting daughter and friend, who live and work in Costa Rica, had been on a short walk up the creek beside the lodge. They returned to report a rather large, dark snake that went into a hole near the log they were sitting on. All agreed it appeared to be a Fer de Lance, one of the four most poisonous snakes in the world! Tony managed to see it and it was, indeed, a Fer de Lance. Naturally, the lodge owner did not want that kind of snake on the grounds. Tony was very much on the side of the snake, and probably saved its life. An herpetologist was called, and when he came to catch the snake, he didn't find it but did destroy the hole and nest. Figure that one out! On our last day, the same person did manage to catch the snake and take it home where he will remove and sell the venom. Until very recently a bite from a Fer de Lance was fatal, but they now have anti-venom that MAY save a life.

On our last morning, we walked up a river to a lovely waterfall and were rewarded with a beautiful Sun Bittern. It gave us a memorable show, flying across the waterfall, then down, and back up. This bittern is about 18" long, with a rather long neck and tail. When it flies the "sun comes up" as the underwings are reminiscent of the sun.

It is hard to leave this wonderful spot. The rooms are spacious and ever so nice, the food is superb, and we'd like the entire experience to last longer. The small, locally-grown bananas are very tasty, somewhat more tart than the bananas we get in the states. The birds enjoy them very much, and so do we. We also enjoyed baked plantain (banana) several times. Tony takes us to the local market for an hour before we leave for Panama City. The main item of interest is the Molas, a type of reverse appliqué made by the Kuna Indians of San Blas, Panama. Then, it is back to our same motel on the canal and our farewell dinner.



Again, it is lucky for us that Tony speaks excellent Spanish and watches the news in Spanish! He learned of a current protest from the construction workers, striking for a raise in the minimum wage. Many roads had been blocked during the day, there were skirmishes between police and workers, and one worker was killed. Tomorrow, (a travel day for us) the workers promise to come back with a vengeance. Tony arranges for us to leave very early (5:30 a.m.) for the airport before any roads are blocked.

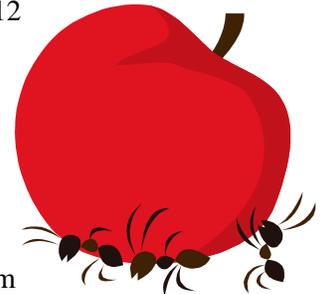
The plan worked fine, except a tanker truck wrecked very close in front of our bus. Now, all traffic is stopped, and it is a busy, four-lane highway! Our driver also has some ingenuity! He convinced twenty-odd men to help him actually lift one section of the truck and all the debris from the cement median out of the outside lane. In spite of gasoline running out of the truck and across the highway, we and the other stalled vehicles drive through, holding our breath for fear of an explosion, and eventually make it safely to the airport. The flights are on time, but we arrive in Portland about mid-night Panama time, so it is a full 24-hour day for us.

Now, it is home again. A wonderful, action-packed trip, but it is always so good to be home!

Contributed by June Whitten

Bird Club Picnic at Harris County Park – Saturday, June 28, 2008

The club's annual picnic will be held at Harris County Park along the South Fork Walla Walla River. The park is located about 12 miles southeast of Milton-Freewater. We will start the picnic at noon, light the barbecues at 12:30, and eat around 1 p.m. Please bring your choice of meat to barbecue, buns if required, and all table service. Also bring a salad, dessert, or item of choice to share. Condiments and iced tea will be furnished.



Our summer picnic provides an opportunity to get acquainted with new friends or new birders, so please invite guests. It will also be an opportunity to experience a new birding area. Harris County Park is in a beautiful setting in the spectacular valley of the South Fork Walla Walla River. Bird species diversity

is very high because of the wide variety of habitats: stream, riparian brush, mixed conifer, and dry hillsides with rocky outcrops. Plan on arriving early to do some birding; you won't be disappointed!

Arrange your own transportation or car pool. If anyone needs a ride, call Lorna Waltz, 276-6353.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Club Picnic

Saturday, June 28, 2008

Harris County Park

We will start the picnic at noon. Come early for some good birding in the beautiful setting of the park and along the South Fork Walla Walla River.

For more information, see article in this newsletter or call Lorna Waltz, 276-6353

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., October 9, 2008

Program TBD

**Pendleton First Christian Church on
N. Main Street in Pendleton**

April – May Bird Sightings

Spring migration is well underway and new birds are being added to the county year list almost daily. Perhaps the biggest surprise for me (Dave Herr) is the number of **Lazuli Buntings** being reported visiting feeders. I started to notice buntings eating seed under my feeders the first of May, and around that time others started to report seeing them. Last week I counted over 35 of these beautiful birds at my home, but Bob Tapley topped that number when he reported over **40 Lazuli Bunting** at his feeders! As I write this (May 13), I've now received several reports from

folks counting over **50 Lazuli Buntings** around their feeders.

On April 22, Jenny Barnett conducted a waterfowl survey at Wanaket Wildlife Mitigation Area, located just east of McNary Dam. In addition to the more common waterfowl species, she noted 2 drake **Blue-winged Teal**. During the survey Jenny also heard calling **Virginia Rails**, spotted a **Western Kingbird** and noted several **Savannah Sparrows**. Jenny also reported hearing 19 **Long-billed Curlews** at Wanaket in early April and believes there may be 6 or 7 breeding pairs nesting at the wildlife area.

On April 23, Connie Betts found 9 **Common Loons** as well as an **Osprey** and 5 **American White Pelicans** at McKay Reservoir. On April 26, Aaron Skirvin and June Whitten noted several **American White Pelicans** and 3 or 4 **Common Loons** on the Reservoir. Later that day Aaron drove south,



Lazuli Bunting (male). Photo by Aaron Skirvin.

checking several areas. Along Wegner Gulch Road, a couple miles SE of Pilot Rock, he found **White-crowned Sparrows**, **Orange-crowned Warblers**, **Lincoln's Sparrows** and one **Gray Flycatcher**. In Ukiah he watched a **Great Horned Owl** fly out of a spruce tree and land on a power pole. While it was being mobbed by swallows, Aaron was able to take several pictures. On the Ukiah sewer ponds, he noted an immature **Canvasback** and 5 breeding plumage **Eared Grebes**.

Neal Hinds birded at Cold Springs NWR and the surrounding area on April 26. He had a great day



finding over 40 species at the refuge. During his travels, Neal was able to add several new birds to the county year list including **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Wilson's Phalarope**, **Yellow Warbler** and **Barn Swallow**.

The following day, June and Aaron found a **Peregrine Falcon** along Coombs Canyon Road. Later, checking McKay Reservoir they found 4 **American White Pelicans**, 3 **Common Loons**, a **Caspian Tern**, one **Lewis's Woodpecker**, a **Canada Goose** marked with a neck collar, and several **Western Grebes**. Aaron noted **Western Grebes** will be present at McKay until September, but he



Wilson's Phalarope (female). Photo by Rose Scott.

does not think they breed there. April 26, Aaron found 6 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at the McKay Reservoir, adding another new species to the county year list.

Hummingbirds have arrived in great numbers. June Whitten reports she has had a steady stream of hummingbirds, both **Rufous** and **Calliope** visiting her feeders at Grecian Heights neighborhood in SW Pendleton since mid-April. She said she has more hummingbirds this year that she has ever seen before. In early May, Jenny Barnett reported hummingbirds started to use her feeder in SW Pendleton almost as soon as she put it up. Mayanna Porter reported that her hummingbird feeders in Pilot Rock are being heavily used and on April 30, reported the year's first **Black-chinned** along with numerous **Calliope** and **Rufous Hummingbirds**. Malissa Minthorn-Winks has 12 large hummingbird feeders at her home along upper McKay Creek. Malissa and her mother have been feeding hummingbirds there for 30 years. This year, Malissa reports the hummingbirds were drinking all of the sugar water from



all of the feeders everyday!! There must have been over 250 hummingbirds (**Rufous**, **Calliope**, and **Black-chinned**) coming to her feeders. Malissa always has lots of hummingbirds each May, but this year was the capper. The hummers apparently are keged up at the lower elevations, like the **Lazuli Buntings** in Pendleton, until the weather warms in the Blue Mountains. Joy Jaeger also reports a large number of hummingbirds coming to the feeders at her cabin near Poverty Flats. She has photographed both **Rufous** and **Calliope** hummers there.

On April 30, Craig Kvern found a **Great Gray Owl** at Indian Lake. The same day Aaron found a **Solitary Sandpiper** feeding along one of the Wildhorse Golf Course ponds. Neal Hinds birded in the Hermiston, Stanfield and McNary areas on May 3 and found a total of over 60 species. Some of more interesting birds included a **Solitary Sandpiper**, **Great Egret**, **MacGillivray's Warbler**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Dunlin** and 2 **SNOW GEESE**. The same day Aaron and Tanya Harrison checked the area along the Umatilla River up to Iskuulpa Creek. They found **Chippings Sparrows**, **Lesser Goldfinches**, **Rufous Hummingbirds**, a **MacGillivray's Warbler**, a **Western Tanager** and **Lazuli Buntings**. Later in the day, Aaron found 3 **Common Loons**, 5 breeding plumage **Horned Grebes** and one breeding plumaged **Eared Grebe** at McKay Reservoir. Driving along Mud Springs Canyon Road, Aaron found a **Long-eared Owl** nest and was able to photograph a large owlet. This is the second **Long-eared Owl** nest Aaron has found along Mud Springs Canyon Road this spring.

On May 8, Phil and Linda Ruud reported two pairs of **Lazuli Buntings** at their feeders in SW Pendleton, the first time in 30 years they had seen Lazulis in their yard. By May 12, the number of Lazulis had increased to 20. The Ruuds also reported seeing **Cassin's Finches** at their feeders.

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

Bird checklists, ID Challenge, Club Member's Photo Gallery, Newsletter Archive and more.
www.pendletonbirders.org

After reading the success Neal had birding around Cold Springs NWR, Aaron and June decided to visit the area May 4. Their route included Mud Springs Canyon Road where they found the year's first **Grasshopper Sparrows**. They also found a **Short-eared Owl** and relocated the nesting **Long-eared Owls** Aaron had found previously. June notes they saw numerous hawks on the trip to Cold Springs including: **Swainson's, Ferruginous, Red-tailed, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, American Kestrel** and **Northern Harrier**. At Cold Springs, they were able to relocate the **Snow Geese** reported by Neal as well as many other species. Since they had good success at Cold Springs, Aaron and June decided to see how many species they could locate during the remainder of the day. They ended their informal "big day" with 110 species. This count included 5 species of **swallows** and 4 species of **grebes**, including a **Western Grebe**, at McKay Reservoir.



American Bittern. Photo by Rose Scott.

Birding at Cold Springs Reservoir the afternoon of May 9, Aaron reported seeing **Blue-winged** and **Cinnamon Teal**, 2 **Tundra Swans**, **American Wigeons**, **Northern Pintails** and heard a calling **Virginia Rail**. Birding the same area the following day, Neal Hinds found 51 species including the 2 **Tundra Swans**, **Blue-winged Teal**, a **Wilson's Phalarope**, a **Semipalmated Plover**, 6 **Least Sandpipers**, a **Bullock's Oriole**, **Western Tanager**, **Yellow Warbler** and a **House Wren**.

After the May 10 Bird Club Field Trip to Spring Creek, Barbara and Andrew Clark decided to continue birding. At the Ukiah sewer ponds, they found many wetland species including **Gadwall**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Cinnamon Teal**,

Bufflehead, **Green-winged Teal**, **Wood Duck**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Eared Grebe**, **American Avocet** and **Wilson's Phalarope**. At McKay Reservoir, Barbara reported they had great looks at a **Lewis's Woodpecker**. This is probably the same bird Aaron reported checking out possible nesting cavities.

Nancy Brown reported that the **Dunlins** present at Stanfield Meadows are now starting to show their black bellies as they molt into alternate plumage. There was lots of bird activity at Nancy Brown's yard in Hermiston on May 10. She reported seeing, along with the more common species, an **Orange-crowned Warbler**, **Wilson's Warbler**, **Chipping Sparrow**, **California Quail**, **Downy Woodpecker** and a few lingering **White-crowned Sparrows**.

Mayanna Porter observed a **Great Blue Heron** near her home in Pilot Rock May 11. She also reported seeing several **Wild Turkeys** near her home about a month ago, but she has not seen them recently.

On May 11, Aaron birded throughout the south end of the county. Some of his better finds included **Bullock's Oriole**, **Black-headed Grosbeak**, 2 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** and 2 breeding plumage **Black-bellied Plovers** at McKay Reservoir. Other highlights of his trip included a **Lark Sparrow**, a **Hammond's Flycatcher**, a calling **Sora** near Ukiah, lots of **Chipping Sparrows**, a **Long-billed Curlew** across the road from the Ukiah sewer ponds, and 10 **Evening Grosbeaks** at the Ukiah-Dale State Park.

On May 12, Connie Zahl saw 15 to 18 **Lazuli Buntings** off and on during the day in her backyard in SW Pendleton. The same day, Marilyn and Allan Jio reported about **50 Lazuli Buntings** in their SW Pendleton yard. Also, on May 12, June and Duane Whitten found 4 **Lewis's Woodpeckers**, some **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, a male **Bullock's Oriole**, and a pair of **Wood Ducks** at McKay Reservoir. Birding at McKay Reservoir on the evening of May 12, Aaron Skirvin found one **Clark's Grebe** among the more common **Western Grebes**. Connie Betts drained the water from the birdbath on May 12 because a local **American Crow** had developed the unfortunate habit of depositing "eggs, baby bird parts, mutilated mice and, in general, making a terrible mess" in the water in the birdbath. Removing the water apparently solved the problem, at least temporarily.



June and Duane Whitten were elated to see a “B.B. Oriole (that’s a BEAUTIFUL **Bullock’s Oriole**)” in their SW Pendleton yard on May 13. They hoped that the male oriole would “find a suitable nesting spot and stay all summer.” It didn’t take long for the “B.B. Oriole” to make himself right at home. By the 15th, June reported that “Our B.B. Oriole thinks he is a B.R. Hummer (that’s a Beautiful Rufous Hummingbird). He can get syrup out of one spigot on our feeders. He can also swear in Oriolese — when Duane took the feeder down to refill it, he (the oriole, that is) complained loudly with his *ke ke ke ke ke* call. We have put up an oriole feeder, too, so hopefully we won’t get chewed out again.” The oriole saga continued on May 19 when June reported “*Our* oriole is a happy guy! The ‘light of his life’ showed up today. He was sooo busy showing her around the yard and house hunting in all the neighbor’s trees. He even tried to coax her into eating hummingbird food out of the feeder. She tried it once, but evidently wasn’t too successful. After that she was content to sit on the deck railing and watch him slurp hummingbird food. (We are relieved she showed up, too. He isn’t nearly as noisy and vocal as he has been since he’s been here!)”

Lazuli Buntings were still visiting feeders on May 14, when Phil Emert reported seeing a flock in his backyard in SW Pendleton. The same day, Steve and Joy Jaeger saw a male **Western Tanager** in their SW Pendleton yard. On May 15, Don and Norma Staebler spotted two **Western Screech-Owl** owlets poking their heads out of the nest box in their SW Pendleton yard. In previous years, W. Screech-Owls have nested in the Staebler’s nest boxes, but this year they were unaware of the nesting owls, even though they had watched for them, until they saw the young owls in the box.

On May 17, Neal and Sandi Hinds found an **AMERICAN BITTERN** along Bensel Road just north of Hermiston. This species is very uncommon and not reported every year in Umatilla County. At dusk on the 17th, Aaron Skirvin and June Whitten joined Lynn Tompkins and Mee-la



Calliope Hummingbird. Photo by Joy Jaeger.

(Lynn’s student intern) from Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center to release a rehabbed Common Poorwill along Gurdane Road. Just prior to releasing the bird, they heard a **Common Poorwill** calling from a nearby hillside.

With the deep mountain snows finally melting and making roads passable in the Blue Mountains, on May 18, Joy and Steve Jaeger were able to drive to their property near Albee. They were greeted with warm temperatures and many wildflowers in bloom and reported finding several birds including **Williamson’s Sapsucker, Steller’s Jay, American Robin, Common Raven, Yellow-rumped Warbler**, bluebirds (and their nests, but no eggs yet), **Turkey Vulture, Pileated Woodpecker** and **Dusky Grouse**.

On June 18, Aaron and June birded from McKay Reservoir to the Tower Burn (SE of Ukiah), finding 113 species for the day. Highlights included a female **PURPLE MARTIN** (only the second record of this species in Umatilla County), a pair of **Red-naped Sapsuckers** at Battle Mountain, 2 male **Bobolinks** at Ukiah, and several **Green-tailed Towhees** in the Tower Burn.

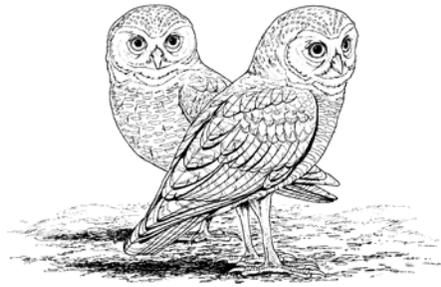
Connie and Russ Betts continue to census the species found at the Pendleton Community Park as well as the surrounding area. Although Connie has seen **Swainson’s Hawks** in the vicinity, she has seen no evidence they will nest in the Park this year. On May 1, Connie reported finding a **Solitary Sandpiper, Killdeer, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Violet-green Swallow, Western Tanager, Brewer’s Blackbird**, and **White-crowned Sparrows**. The following day she relocated the **Solitary Sandpiper** and also found an **Orange-crowned Warbler** along with **Yellow-rumped Warblers**. Connie reported that **Lazuli Buntings** started to show up in her neighborhood in early May. She saw the first **Barn Swallow** in the Park May 6. Although there was a cool wind blowing May 8, Connie reported that birding was good in the park. As well as the more common species, Connie found **48 Violet-green**

Swallows, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Townsend's and a Wilson's Warbler as well as a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**. On May 10, Connie reported 8 **Cedar Waxwings** bathing in McKay Creek with an **American Goldfinch** and a **Chipping Sparrow** mixed in with **Lazuli Buntings** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**.

Spring migration is still underway as evidenced by the large number of Lazuli Buntings being reported from throughout the local area. There are still many newly arrived birds to find and report. Aaron Skirvin

will be compiling the bird sightings for the next report period, so please send your sighting to Aaron at umatbirder@yahoo.com or call 276 -1948.

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Pendleton Bird Club
Pendleton, OR

