
Pendleton Bird Club

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Birding the Blue Mountains in July

Eighteen birders attended Pendleton Bird Club's field trip to the Blue Mountains, Saturday, July 12th. We met and carpoled at 5:30 a.m. in Pendleton and then drove to the Tollgate store. Mike and MerryLynn Denny and Judy Johnson of Walla Walla joined us, as we had all hoped they would.

Our first stop was Woodward Campground which borders Langdon Lake. A Spotted Sandpiper with at least three babies was viewed at the shore's edge, and a few Hammond's Flycatchers were observed in the evergreens that surround the lake. A group of us walked around the campground and into the woods to get a close up view of a Hairy Woodpecker doing what woodpeckers do, drumming! The Hairy looks identical to the Downy in the guidebooks, but in the field they are very distinct from one another. As experienced birders say, "there's nothing like time spent in the field." A pair of Western Tanagers delighted us with brilliant colors in contrast to the light green of forest moss.

Also at Woodward, we observed a mob scene at the top of an Engelmann spruce tree. Those of us without wings and stuck at ground level, could not determine what all the commotion was about. Whatever it was, it attracted many vocal species to that one tree top; Warblers, including a Townsend's, Pine Siskins, Hammond's Flycatcher, and Ruby Crowned Kinglet were among the birds identified together.

Our next stop was at another U.S. Forest Service Campground, Target Meadows. Here we were able to listen to the differences in the songs of the Swainson's and Hermit Thrush as they were singing simultaneously. Mike Denny struck up a

conversation with some Common Ravens and it became evident just how much time he spends in the Blues listening to the sounds of nature around him! Red Crossbills were viewed at this location too.

The day grew warmer and we continued north to Burnt Cabin Creek, which overlooks the South Fork of the Walla Walla River. MerryLynn discovered a pair of Red-naped Sapsuckers who were busy feeding their young in the nest. We observed one parent clinging to the bark of a tree pulverizing and caching an insect (possibly a cicada) to feed its young in the future. Red-naped Sapsuckers are known to drill wells into the bark to release sap from trees, which in turn attracts insects the birds can feed on.

We then drove to the end of McDougal Road at the top of Lick Creek Trail, a beautiful spot that overlooks the North Fork of the Umatilla Wilderness Area. Mike immediately recognized in a draw what looked like ideal habitat for Green-tailed Towhee, and sure enough, MerryLynn heard the Towhee singing in the brush just moments later.

Besides the 48 species observed, Lazuli Buntings, Western Bluebirds, Red-breasted Nuthatches among the many, this field trip included other colorful delights: Wild Columbine, Butter & Eggs, Fireweed wildflowers and the first of the season's huckleberries. Jack Simons knows butterflies and he identified Swallowtail, Larkin's Admiral, and Tortoise Shell. He informed me that a beautiful blue butterfly that I saw on a Buckwheat plant was, of course, an Azure. The scent of fresh mountain air, stunning canyon views, and the company of birders and new friends made for a very successful trip.

Calendar of Events

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, August 14th, 2003 7:30 p.m.

The second Thursday of the month.

First Christian Church
Pendleton, Oregon
(Across from the Pendleton Arts Center)

Aaron Skirvin & Dave Herr present:

Identification of Local Shorebirds

Malheur in the Fall

The Pendleton Bird Club is still planning a fall trip to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, tentatively September 11 to 14. It can be difficult to know if you are free to travel two months in advance. Is that Round-up company coming or not? But, we do need to know as soon as possible, preferably by August 1, if you intend to go. At that time, we will make reservations with a deposit if we stay at the Field Station. We have seven people definitely going and a few maybes at this time. This promises to be a great trip as usual with a trip into the Steens Mountains. Please let June Whitten know as soon as possible if you plan to attend. (276-6492)

Bluebird Trail Project

The Bluebird Trail project is underway. An enrichment class at Washington Elementary School in Pendleton is in the process of making 10 bluebird nest boxes for the Poverty Flat area. The nest boxes will be put up this fall.

Jack Simons has generously agreed to cut out the pieces for 10 more boxes, which will be placed in the Battle Mountain, Albee, and Ukiah area. Kelly Lumber in Pendleton is giving us a discount on the cedar lumber needed for this project. Dave Herr will contribute an additional 10 new nest boxes to the project.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Since we have no funds for this project, donations to purchase lumber and supplies would be most appreciated.

The discount provided by Kelly Lumber will reduce the cost of the boxes to about \$4.00 each. Since the next bird club meeting isn't until August 14, it would be nice to receive some donations before then to acquire the lumber so Jack can start cutting the pieces. Please send donations to: June Whitten, 1837 SW Athens Way, Pendleton, OR 97801.

Also, we need people to help put up the boxes and to monitor them next spring and summer. If you would like to volunteer, please contact June Whitten at 276-6492.

Motherly Sparrow

A pair of Western Kingbirds nested in the yard of Jerri Flynn and Janet Jones in May and June. The unusual aspect of this nest was a female House Sparrow who regularly fed the babies. The Kingbirds also tended the nest and fed the babies.

This brought up several questions:

Did the House Sparrow, pretending to be a Cowbird, lay an egg in the nest?

If so, it was never evident. The nest contained four Kingbirds which all successfully fledged July 5 and 6.

What did the House Sparrow feed the babies? No way to tell, but she fed them regularly every day.

Did the House Sparrow have an unsuccessful nest? Only the House Sparrow knows the answer to these puzzling questions (and she did not tell any answers).

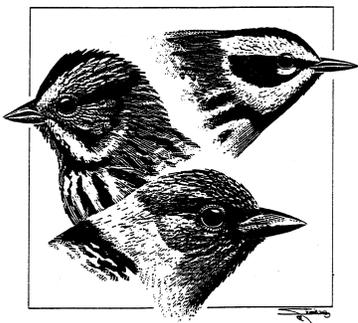
Contributed by June Whitten

Bird Sightings – Compiled by Dave Herr

Spring is an exciting time to be birding and spring '03 was not an exception. Lots of folks were out birding and many exciting sightings were reported.

On June 22, birding along Mud Springs road, Aaron, June and Duane Whitten found a **SAGE THRASHER**. There have been few sightings of this species in Umatilla County. The same day, Paul Daniello found a **Common Nighthawk** sitting on the concrete wall along the Pendleton Parkway. On June 24, Paul was

able to observe a **Downy Woodpecker** for several minutes at close range near the Pendleton 10 St. Bridge. Jack Simons reported seeing a **Forster's Tern** flying down the Umatilla River near his home at Mission on June 26. June 27, Aaron and the Whittens birding along the Stanfield Meadows road found both **Black-necked Stilts** and **American Avocets** with young. On June 28, the Whittens reported a pair of **Lark Sparrows** carrying food at Poverty Flats. On the same day Bob and Dannell Tapley, birding along the Summit Road, had an exciting find. Along with many common species they spotted **3 GREAT GRAY OWLS**. Bob was able to take some excellent pictures of the owls and I am sure if you ask him he would share them with you. The next day they also found **Black-necked Stilts** and **American Avocets** along the Stanfield Meadows road.



Driving down the old Cabbage Hill road on July 1, the Tapleys reported seeing a **Swainson's Hawk** hunting. July 2, June Whitten reported a male **Rufous Hummingbird** at her feeder. On July 5, Craig Corder reported finding a number of shorebird species including **Western** and **Least Sandpipers**, **Lesser Yellowlegs** and **15 Spotted Sandpipers** at Cold Springs Reservoir. On July 6, Craig noted 10 **Common Nighthawks** in the Hermiston area. According to Craig, these birds will stay until late August. Birding between Pendleton and Ukiah on the same day, Aaron reported finding many species feeding young including **Gray Partridge** and **Lark Sparrows**. On July 7, Aaron found a **Virginia Rail**, **Ruddy Ducks** and a female **Redhead** with young at the Wild Horse golf course ponds. On July 8, Aaron reported seeing 81 **White Pelicans** at McKay Reservoir. This

number had swelled to **110** birds by July 11. (There was an interesting article in the July 18, issue of the *East Oregonian* about research being done on the feeding habits of *White Pelicans* below McNary Dam.) Also on July 11, Aaron and June Whitten birded along East Birch Creek and found a number of singing birds including **Winter Wrens** and 8 **Western (type) Flycatchers**. The Pendleton Bird Club birded in the area around Tollgate, Oregon on July 12. A summary of that trip is reported elsewhere, but one of the highlights of the trip was finding a singing **GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** below the Lick Creek Trailhead. On July 13, Jack and Sharon Simons found an adult **Eastern Kingbird** with 3 young near their home along the Umatilla River. On July 16, Craig Corder reported finding a number of different shorebird species at the Cold Springs Reservoir including 2 **SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS** and a **SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER**. Normally **Long-billed Dowitchers** are found in Eastern Oregon and a **Short-billed** is a great find. On July 17, the Whittens' found a **Solitary Sandpiper** at a pond along the Summit Road.

Verna Johnson reports a **Barn Owl** is roosting in the trees by her Riverside home. The Owl is leaving lots of pellets and if anyone is interested in collecting them, contact Verna. Verna also reported a number of **Black-headed Grosbeaks** at her bird feeder. I've also noticed several **Black-headed Grosbeaks** at my feeders in July. Matt Hunter, one of the editors of the new [Birds of Oregon](#), believes these birds have bred and are now dispersing. Anyone else finding Grosbeaks in town this year?

Please report your bird sightings to Dave Herr at 276-6413 or by e-mail, dsherr@oregontrail.net

Winged Migration – The Movie

Our youngest son and his wife were passing through Portland with a 2-hour lay over, so we went down to see them. We found out in time that the "Winged Migration" movie was playing at the Cinema 21 so went down the evening before and saw it.

The show itself would have made the trip to Portland worthwhile. The show started with birds of Europe. These included the Greylag Goose, Eurasian Crane, White Stork, Barnacle Goose, and Whooper Swan. The birds from North America included the Bald Eagle, Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Clarks Grebe (in Oregon), Sandhill Crane, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Greater Sage Grouse (in Idaho), Snowy Owl, Common Murre, Gannet, and Artic Tern. They also show many of the sea birds along the cliffs of Alaska.

The distance these birds migrated ranged from a few hundred miles to over 12,000 miles, which was the Arctic Tern's migration from the Arctic to Antarctic. Most of the birds migration ranged from 1000 to 1500 miles. The movie showed some of the pitfalls birds may encounter in their

routes. This could be anything from industrial development, bad weather and hunting.

One might think that some of the scenes might have been trick photography or computer generated, but the declaration at the beginning of the show stated that all shots were the real thing. The photography was superb. By the credits listed at the end, it appears to have been produced by a French company. If *Winged Migration* comes out on a DVD I would like to buy it.

Happy Birding,
Robert Tapley

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