



# Pendleton Bird Club

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NEWSLETTER Volume 1, No. 9 Pendleton, Oregon November 2003

## Field Trip to McNary Wildlife Area

On November 8, twelve members of the Pendleton Bird Club (PBC) joined Aaron Skirvin on a field trip to the McNary Wildlife area. The weather was great, and the group found over fifty different species. I (Dave Herr) had spread some birdseed out the previous evening so there were lots of sparrows to look at when we arrived and the group was able to identify five different sparrow species including: **White-crowned Sparrow, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow and Fox Sparrow.** The ponds in the wildlife area are a great place for ducks and ten different species were noted. The favorites were the numerous male **Wood Ducks** we were able to observe at close range. By the end of the day, we were all proficient at recognizing the male Wood Duck's whistle and the female's squealing flight call, *oo-eeek*.

After walking through the Wildlife area, Aaron led the group to the edge of the Columbia River where we scanned the open water. There were lots of gulls and the group found five different gull species including: **Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Herring Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull and Bonaparte's Gull.** There were also lots of loons and a total of eight **Common Loons** were observed. While the group was scanning the river Mike Denny and Aaron both spotted a strange duck flying upstream. It landed and was identified as a **LONG-TAILED DUCK.** This saltwater duck is seldom found away from the ocean and was a great find in Umatilla County.

The field trip was a great success and everyone agreed that at the club should have at least one more trip to the area this winter.

*Contributed by Dave Herr*

## Calendar of Events

### Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, December 11, 2003 7:30 p.m.

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

**Lynn & Bob Tompkins** will discuss the work  
& many successes of  
**Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation &  
Education Center**

This should be a special meeting as Bob & Lynn  
will *bring raptors with them!*

## Festival of Trees – Bird Tree

Planning for the Christmas tree to be donated by the Pendleton Bird Club & S.U.R.E. to the Festival of Trees, sponsored by St. Anthony's Hospital, is well underway. The tree will be an outdoor tree to provide food and shelter for birds at Christmastime, featuring mostly edible ornaments. Gifts under the tree will include feeders, bird seed, a waterer, bird houses, and hand-made notes and coffee cups that feature birds (for the birdwatchers).

Betty Klepper and June Whitten would like to thank all of you who have volunteered to assist with this project in so many ways. We have received donations from PGG, Wal-Mart, Safeway, and Albertsons.

There is still much to be done! The final work of preparing the decorations and putting the tree together will be completed on **December 5, from 2:00 until 5:00 p.m., at the Pendleton Convention Center.** The final touches may be made on Saturday, December 6.

Our needs at this time include making some items that require saws and tools. Nothing very complicated, so let us know if you can assist. We need more cones, preferably Ponderosa. So if you are out in the woods and can pick up a few, it will be a big help. If you would like to join us in some work sessions or have suggestions and ideas, please call Betty Klepper (276-8416) or June Whitten (276-6492).

### Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, January 3, 2004

Kevin Blakely, count compiler

276-2344 (W); 276-5249 (H);

[blakely4@ucinet.com](mailto:blakely4@ucinet.com)

### “Eastern” Blue Jays Visit Umatilla Co.

Around noon on Tuesday, November 4, my wife, Tina, and I heard a strange, shrill cry above our house. The dogs barked. Looking into our cherry tree above a feeder I saw, with great surprise, a Blue Jay among the Steller’s Jays that frequent our feeders this time of year.

After confirming the identification I called Pricilla Dauble to give her the news. She said such sightings, though not unheard of, were unusual. She suggested I call Aaron Skirvin and Dave Herr. I did so and promised that I’d call them if the bird reappeared. It didn’t seem to be around on Wednesday, but a bit after eight Thursday morning the bird came to the feeder again. I called Aaron Skirvin and he said he’d be right over. I then called Tina and, while talking to her, another Blue Jay joined the first. Aaron arrived forthwith with the Whittens close behind him and the birds were cooperative.

Aaron observed that one was larger and that they were simpatico with each other: one playfully took a peanut from the other’s bill. He speculated that they were either siblings or a pair.

The Blue Jays have since been busy at the feeder, especially in the mornings. They are caching large quantities of raw peanuts and black sunflower seeds somewhere in the brush that edges our pasture, as are about a dozen of their well-fed cousins with whom they co-exist with mutual respect and an apparent awareness of the differences they share.



I have witnessed only one confrontation between them: The larger Blue Jay initiated contact with a Steller’s Jay by brusquely approaching it and going beak-to-beak. Simultaneously, still beak-to-beak, the birds abruptly flew vertically about six feet then returned to the feeder and resumed feeding having presumably settled something.

Although perhaps not as cheeky and boldly confident in their rambunctious athleticism, the Blue Jays certainly hold their own with their western cousins. They are feeder savvy and are likely to appear soon after peanuts are offered. The larger bird vigorously swings its bill from side to side gouging through the bird food and sending it flying as it seeks the choicest morsels.

The larger bird’s call is high-pitched, long, and extended. *Birds of North America* likens it to a “squeaky pump handle;” that seems about right. The smaller jay has a similarly high-pitched, but shorter and more frequently repeated call. Dave Herr said that the standard mnemonic is *thief, thief* which is about right as well.

One of my favorite lines of poetry is from “Sunday Morning” by Wallace Stevens: “Who could say that the Blue Jay would suddenly

swoop to earth?" I have often recalled this line which celebrates the vigorous and beautiful spontaneity of the universe while watching Steller's Jays and Magpies suddenly swooping to earth. It is an added delight to consider it while watching our eastern visitors.

Marilyn Cripe visited on Sunday, the 9<sup>th</sup>, in the morning and the birds put on quite a show for her. Tina and I are happy to share our good luck with any who want to try viewing the birds. Mornings are best. We're at 51764 Grey Lane between Cayuse and Thornhollow. Please call, (541) 276-7129, and we'll let you know if the birds are still around. Raw peanuts cheerfully accepted.

*Contributed by Tina Jackson & Grey Elliot*

### **The Wild Swans at Coole**

The trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky;  
Upon the brimming water among the stones  
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me  
Since first I made my count;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount  
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.

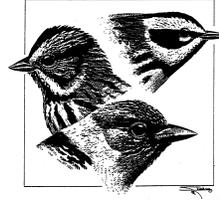
I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold  
Companionable streams or climb the air;  
Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,  
Mysterious, beautiful;  
Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool

Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away?

--William Butler Yeats



### **October-November Bird Sightings**

Wow, birding in Umatilla County has really been exciting this fall. Since much of the "action" has occurred at the McNary Wildlife area and Columbia River below McNary Dam, this area will be reported in a separate section.

#### **McNary Dam and Wildlife Area:**

On November 2, scouting for the Pendleton Bird Club (PBC) field trip, Aaron Skirvin noted more than **2000 gulls** below McNary Dam. He also reported a late **SPOTTED SANDPIPER**. Mike and MerryLynn Denny stayed at the McNary area after the PBC field trip on November 8, and in addition to the birds already reported in another article, found a **Bohemian Waxwing, Mew Gull** and an **Orange-crowned Warbler**. Birding the McNary area on November 9, the Dennys found a **GLAUCOUS GULL, BLACK SCOTER**, and a **RUSTY BLACKBIRD**. All three are really great birds, and the **Black Scoter** and **Rusty Blackbird** are likely first County records. On November 10, Craig and Judy Corder found a **Pacific Loon** below the Dam. On November 11, the Corders, Whittens and Aaron birded the McNary Area. Along with a wide variety of gulls including one **Mew Gull**, they found a **RED-NECKED GREBE, PEREGRINE FALCON, 3 Dunlin, 2 Greater Scaup** and **3 WESTERN BLUEBIRDS** (unexpected at this location in late fall). On November 13, the Dennys reported 3 **Mew Gulls**, a **Merlin** and a **SWAMP SPARROW**. As Mike noted, "this is truly an outstanding birding area".

#### **Other Sightings:**

Jack Simons reported that on October 24, there were still **3 Great Egrets** at the Mission Ponds. Taking a long walk on October 25, Bob Tapley

reported finding mixed flocks of **House** and **White-crowned Sparrows**, **House Finches**, **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **Black-capped Chickadees** along Lee Street Grade in Pendleton. He also reported finding a late **SAY'S PHOEBE** in the same area. Early on the same day I (Dave Herr) did some owling east of Cayuse along the Umatilla River and heard 3 **Great Horned Owls**, 2 **Western Screech Owls**, a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** and a **Northern Pygmy-owl**. Checking Cold Springs on October 28, Craig Corder reported that the **American White Pelican** flock had dwindled from 500 birds reported earlier in the fall to only 25 birds. On October 31, Aaron found a **Brown Creeper** in his backyard.

On November 1, Aaron reported 1 **Great Egret**, 2 **Tundra Swans**, 25 **Hooded Mergansers**, and 1 **Marsh Wren** at Mission Ponds. He also found 2 **Killdeer**, 1 **Pied-billed Grebe**, 2 **Ruddy Ducks** and 1 **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the Wildhorse Golf Course Ponds. On November 2, June Whitten reported several **Barn Owls** living in a barn along Best Road. On November 3, Craig Corder reported a **Snow Goose**, 3 **Greater White-fronted Geese** and numerous **Tundra Swans** at Cold Springs Reservoir. On November 4, Grey Elliot reported a **BLUE JAY** joined with a flock of Steller's Jays at a feeding station near Thorn Hollow. On November 6, Grey found 2 **BLUE JAYS** at his feeder, (**BLUE JAYS**, are the eastern

counterpart to our **Steller's Jays** and are seldom found in Oregon). This is a great find and we appreciate Grey reporting these birds. On November 10, Paul Sullivan, leading a group from Portland Audubon reported finding 25 **Tundra Swans**, 2 **Greater White-fronted Geese**, 20 **Least Sandpipers** and 25 **Dunlin** at the Cold Springs Reservoir. On November 14, June Whitten and Aaron made another great find. Driving along Nolin Road they found 4 **SNOW BUNTINGS**. This species is very difficult to find in the County. The same day they reported a late **SAY'S PHEOBE** at Nolin, 2 flocks of **Gray Partridges** at Ukiah and a **Prairie Falcon** at the Ukiah Sewage Ponds. On November 16, the Corders found 3 **Rock Wrens** along the Umatilla River between Echo and Pendleton. On the same day, birding Umatilla County, Aaron and I found 68 species including 6 **Northern Shrikes** and 1 **Loggerhead Shrike**. At Cold Springs Reservoir there were 20 **Tundra Swans**, 250 **Dunlin** and an estimated 20,000 **Mallards**.

With all these great birds being found in the County, it will be interesting to see what turns up in the Umatilla County Christmas Count. *Thanks for all your reports and please continue to send your bird sightings to Dave Herr at 276-6413 or by e-mail, [dsherr@oregontrail.net](mailto:dsherr@oregontrail.net)*

*Newsletter Editor: Jane Holmes*  
[holmesj@eoni.com](mailto:holmesj@eoni.com) or Daytime: 541-276-3469.



## *Pendleton Bird Club*

Jane Holmes, Newsletter Editor  
424 N.W. Bailey Ave.  
Pendleton, OR 97801