

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 2, No. 9 Pendleton, Oregon September 2004

NEWSLETTER GETS A NAME; CLUB NEEDS A LOGO

Our bet is that the first thing you noticed about the newsletter is the new title at the top of this page. It's been a long time coming, but after a year and a half, our newsletter finally has a name, which replaces the original "*Pendleton Bird Club*" in the header of the newsletter.

Your next response may well have been, "Where did this name come from, what does it mean, and how do I pronounce it?" The club's organizers searched for a name that describes the purpose of the newsletter, which is to inform our members about birds and club activities, and that recognizes the American Indian heritage of the local area. The name also had to be pronounceable to those of us who are not familiar with the Umatilla language. We believe the name "Kákya Táymut" fills the bill; it describes the newsletter's purpose, it is unique for a newsletter, and it acknowledges the rich cultural history of Umatilla County. It is a Umatilla Indian phrase which means "bird news" or "all about birds." "Kákya" means "bird or small creature," and "Táymut" "to inform or tell news."

"Kákya Táymut" is pronounced "KUK-yuh TIE-moot", with the accent on the first syllable of each word. The "a" represents the "uh" sound in English, "ay" is pronounced with the long "i" sound, and "u" represents the "oo" sound, as in "food." We gratefully appreciate Mildred Quaempts and Noel Rude of the Language Program on the Umatilla Indian Reservation for sharing their expertise and their enthusiastic support of our interest in selecting a name in the Umatilla language.

Now that we have a name for our newsletter, the next step is for club members to select a bird species to represent the Pendleton Bird Club. The species selected will be prominently displayed on the club's logo.

At the club's picnic at Battle Mountain State Park on July 24, the attendees nominated nine bird species for the club's logo bird: American Kestrel, Lazuli Bunting, Cliff Swallow, Ferruginous Hawk, Grasshopper Sparrow, Osprey, Vaux's Swift, Mountain Bluebird, and Common Goldeneye. Any one of these species, as well as many other birds, would make a great logo for the Pendleton Bird Club.

The club's organizers pared the list to the following four species (in alphabetical order): Ferruginous Hawk, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, and Mountain Bluebird. One of these species will be selected as our logo bird. We will make the selection at the October 14 bird club meeting, which will be held at the First Christian Church in Pendleton. Each member who attends the meeting may cast a vote for the species he/she prefers for the logo. We hope to see you at the meeting on October 14, so you can help us choose the species to represent the Pendleton Bird Club.

Visit the Pendleton Bird Club Web Site @
www.pendletonbirders.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Blue Mountain Wildlife 7th Annual Open House

1 – 4 p.m., Saturday, October 2, 2004
Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation
And Education Center
Located about 4 miles south of Pendleton
Contact Lynn Tompkins at 541-278-0215

The Big Sit! Bird Count

Sunday, October 10, 2004

Enjoy an hour or more of relaxed bird watching
and counting near McNary Dam at Umatilla.

Contact June Whitten at 541-276-9019

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, October 14, 2004 7:30 p.m.

First Christian Church
Pendleton, Oregon
(On Main Street, across from the
Pendleton Arts Center)

Help choose the bird species to represent
the Pendleton Bird Club.

June Whitten and Aaron Skirvin will lead a
discussion on bird field guides

The Big Sit! Bird Count - October 10

Are you ready for a fun day? Big Sit! time is here again! We will have two circles near McNary Dam this year. One, The Jaegers, will be near the face of the dam with a good view of gulls, loons, and hopefully some unusual ducks or jaegers. The other group, The Scoters, will be down stream, approximately where it was last year, also with a good view of the Columbia and nearby brush and trees.

You may show up there anytime between 12:01 a.m and 12:00 midnight on October 10. Bring a chair, a thermos, food or whatever, and enjoy. You may go back and forth between the circles as often as you

wish and stay as long or as little time as you wish. We may be able to keep radio contact between the circles in case some unusual birds show up.

Contact June Whitten at 276-9019 for more information on how to participate.

Barn Owl Recieves Second Chance

Around 10:30 p.m. on September 18, during our Umatilla County Fall Migration Count, Dolly Robison was traveling along Lorenzen and Rieth Roads looking for owls and Common Poorwills. As she came onto Rieth Road she noticed a movement along the roadway and backed up to find a Barn Owl. But, this owl was badly injured and tried to climb the embankment, dragging one wing. Dolly put her coat around the bird and got it in the car. It spent the night in a cat carrier with only water to sustain it. Dolly had called Lynn Thompkins, Director of the Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center, who agreed to take in the owl the next morning.

Next morning, Dolly was fearful of looking into the cage as she thought the owl might be dead. Relieved to see the owl still alive, Dolly delivered it to Lynn, who thought the wing was possibly broken in two places. The prognosis did not look too good for the owl.

However, they took the owl into surgery that very morning and the wing was reparable with one spiral break. On awakening from the procedure, the owl devoured a mouse and is, so far, on the road to a complete recovery. Dolly plans to accompany her "Miracle Owl," to its release area in a few weeks.

Help Support Blue Mountain Wildlife at the Open House on October 2

Blue Mountain Wildlife, a volunteer, non-profit organization, will hold its annual fall Open House on October 2, 2004. Raffle tickets are available for three weekend packages. Wildhorse Resort has generously donated two golfing packages. Each package includes 18 holes of golf for two, a night's lodging at the hotel, free admission to Tamastlikt Cultural Institute and lots of coupons for use throughout the resort.

Les Schwab and Hood River Comfort Suites are the generous sponsors of a Mount Hood Railroad

Mystery Dinner Train Weekend. Included are two tickets on the Mystery Dinner Train and a night's lodging for two at the Hood River Comfort Suites.

Tickets are \$1 each and are available at several businesses in Pendleton. Call 541-278-0215 for more information. All proceeds from the raffle will support Blue Mountain Wildlife's rehabilitation and education programs.

My First Trip to Malheur NWR

Editor's Note: This wonderful account of the bird club's 4-day fall Malheur field trip was prepared by John Norman. Due to its length, the entire article could not be printed in this newsletter. To read the article in its entirety, please check out the September newsletter on the club's web site: www.pendletonbirders.org.

I love September. Many people yearn for the onset of spring after a long, hard winter, and I like springtime too. But I often feel summer is somewhat tense. School's out... got to keep busy... endless chores... what should we do next?... hot enough for you?... Even vacations have to be planned and full of activities. Whew. It's tiring just remembering.

All of which is why I get a big kick out of autumn. A little slower, cooler, and more peaceful. There's a little space in which to move, and reflect, and hopefully be thankful. I guess that is why I so looked forward to making my first visit to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Everyone needs a refuge, right? Pack your bags, bring a little food and you're all set. Just remember to bring the binoculars, then you can just turn your brain off and relax. It's time to enjoy a nice very long weekend, all day Friday through Monday (Labor Day), in a beautiful setting with good folks and an important bonus: little or no mosquitoes! Yes, this was going to be perfect.

What was I thinking? I'm about the least knowledgeable member of Pendleton's bird club. Seriously, even my ten-year-old son is appalled at my identification skills. (Hey, see those ducks? Huh, Dad, the grebe, loon or cormorant?) And really, a half-day birding trip usually taxes my patience. Why? I'm in good enough shape to run enough to coach youth soccer, and heck I enjoy walking, I could walk twenty miles without complaint, I'm sure of it. But I hate standing around. I just can't do it for

long without getting pain in the legs. Gee, I'm only forty-something, I better quit talking like this.

So, come Friday morning, seventeen people meet up at Aaron's house, bright and early. Nice, cool morning, but I'm not sure anymore if this is such a great idea. Doughnut? Thank you, Dannel. Boy, that sure was thoughtful. Coffee? No thanks, better not. Normally I would, but this will be a long drive and caffeine-free seems more appropriate. We get under way in six cars; every car has a radio so we can stay in contact. You can go south on Highway 395 for almost the whole way. The birds are putting on a show already. Hawks mostly, and most of them are Red-tails, I think. We're past Pilot Rock, and even though I'm driving, I can see the nests (aeries?) atop the cliffs on the right. They were so hard to see, months earlier, when I'm first shown them. Now, of course, I'm looking for them, and they stand out plainly. Interesting.

Soon, a trucker pulling a big logging trailer pulls up behind us, then blasts his way around our caravan. I check the speedometer, but nope we weren't dawdling. We're approaching the Battle Mountain park area where we had a good turnout of birders for the recent potluck picnic. I can remember trying to spot the Common Nighthawk that everyone else could see. I had the binoculars out, and was looking at the right tree, the right branch, I could follow their directions and find the 'landmarks', but where was the bird? To the left of that bump there, or to the right? It is the bump? Are you kidding? So it is! And it blended in so well I couldn't imagine how anyone could notice it. (Aaron: I could hear it, so I just looked for it.) Dave Herr played recordings of owls later, and I thought it would be nice to hear them. I'd almost never seen an owl outside of a cage... Oh well, maybe someday. But wouldn't it be something to be able to learn about half of what those two guys had managed somehow to forget?

Ha. Traffic slows for road construction and I see the same logging truck ahead. He really hadn't advanced at all. Traffic stops completely while we wait our turn for a single lane-width portion of road. Behind the truck is a pickup hauling caged birds. Looks like pigeons. Carrier pigeons? Homing pigeons? Racing pigeons? (unlikely to be Passenger Pigeons.) Fern Oliver gets out to ask the driver, as there is plenty of time for conversation, and radios that they're homing pigeons in training. Back on the road, and I

realize I'm feeling happy. This trip already has an easy-going, carefree pace, and I'm enjoying it.

Soon, we're stopping at the Ukiah-Dale State Park, and all the coffee drinkers rush out to promote recycling. If I had known we'd be stopping already, I might have had a cup or two. Quickly back on the road and what's this, stopping again? We've made it to Clyde Holiday State Park. A quick tour of nest boxes in the park reveals a number of them so packed with nesting material that they're bulging and pushing open the cleanout/access doors. Most of the birders wander off chasing birds along the creek, but I prefer to sit and listen to it. I marvel at the size of the planks used to construct the picnic tables, and eat lunch.

Back on the road, the radio squawks, and a White-headed Woodpecker has been observed. Stop, swing around and go back. The bird is spotted flitting around, but doesn't linger. We do. Paint is on the roadway. It appears to be a body outline and a recent accident scene (motorcycle?). Chilling. Maybe this isn't the safest place to loiter.

We stop for gasoline and groceries in Burns, and know we're now very close to our destination. Stop again, this time a pond/wetland on the edge of town. Lots of bird activity here: many Northern Shovelers, American Coots, a few Canvasbacks, and gulls. Before long, we turn off and quickly reach the field station. We distribute ourselves between the three dorms, Pelican East and West, and Owl. The lodging is not palatial, but adequate. It could certainly use a little paint and new linoleum, but it wasn't bad. Bathrooms were clean, with plenty of hot water after a short wait. The mousetraps, well, I didn't like them. But, truthfully, there were no mice. During our entire stay there were no sprung traps, no mice detected by visual or audible means, and lastly no mice dropped any 'calling cards'.

The dinner menu included the wonderful 'Chicken a la Dannell', salads and pie. And coffee!... finally, I get caught up on what I've been missing. After an intergenerational cribbage battle, we all say goodnight and plan to get an early start tomorrow, leaving around dawn (or 6:30 AM, close enough). Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time, but the Great Horned Owl outside my window had other ideas. I've never ever experienced that level of owl racket. It was loud and persistent. So loud, in fact,

that I wondered if someone was crouched outside and pulling a prank. Surely, no one would attempt that except me? Others who stayed awake and alert after I fell asleep reported hearing coyotes "singing" as well.

Day two, Saturday. I intended to get up early in order to claim my share of hot water, and eat a semi-leisurely breakfast after showering. I had brought and set an alarm clock, but found myself awakening without it, five minutes early. That doesn't happen at home.

Nobody wants to be late today and we get off to a fine start on this refreshingly cool morning. Our first destination is the park headquarters. It's only a few miles down the road from our roost at the field station. It takes us about half an hour, though, as we stop and observe cranes, sparrows, hawks, lots of Sage Thrashers, and Western Meadowlarks.

We park at the refuge headquarters in front of the observation pond, which is surrounded by a large marsh. I had expected to see more of Malheur Lake. It looks big on the map, apparently it is stream fed and the water level is highly variable. I suppose there is a large section beyond our limited range of viewing. We see Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, heck, everything's great. Fish jump in the pond, and otters appear at the shore, swim across and disappear. Didn't expect to see otters here, and a short 'discussion' with my son ensues. (Those are muskrats. No they're not. Of course they are. I'm telling Mom!)

Not far from the parking lot is a group of buildings: gift shop, museum, restrooms, staff buildings, fire tower. The shop is not open yet but we watch from the deck, and warm ourselves (a little) as the sun climbs higher. A Red-breasted Nuthatch does its hopping dance down a tree trunk to take a closer look at us. (Nuthatches are common in Minnesota, where we lived before moving to Pendleton, but I only knew the White-breasted variety. Those of us lucky enough to join the Bluebird Trail field trip this spring saw three kinds of Nuthatches in just one area: Red-breasted, White-breasted and Pygmy.) The nuthatch's curiosity quickly turns to boredom, and the little bird puts its head under a wing and takes a nap in front of us, only an arm's length away. (That darn noisy owl must have kept everyone awake.)

Not all doze, however. A Calliope Hummingbird swoops in and stays briefly at a feeder. It's still quite chilly, and I never would have guessed that hummingbirds stay so late here. Presumably, they would have to eat constantly just to stay warm, and I was already under the assumption that they eat a lot anyway. He never stayed long, but reappeared several times. I suppose it could have been a dozen or more of them, but I doubt it. The only time we saw two together, there was a fight as the first one aggressively repelled a newcomer.

Walking around the grounds, we stay mostly on the lawn, but beyond the fence is lots of motion. A covey of California Quail. No way to tell if there are fifty or five hundred. They run like mad and I'm glad I'm not trying to get a count. We go back to the area with the big trees and look up. Someone has spotted a Great Horned Owl and it's really big. It's on a branch about twenty-five feet up. I watch it watching us, and smile knowing it's our turn to keep him awake. Not far away, another owl is found. Lucky day. The animals seem to know this is a refuge, hmm.

August – September Bird Sightings

Birding during this report period started off slowly, but as you will find as you read through this report, it ended with several really great birds being found in Umatilla County.

In late August, a juvenile **Caspian Tern** with colored leg bands was seen at least twice at McKay Reservoir. Mike Denny reports that this bird was banded at an island near the Walla Walla River Delta as part of a tern dispersal study. A picture of this bird can be seen on the Pendleton Bird Club Web site www.pendletonbirders.org. Click on "Club Members Photo Gallery Pages", then "Birds of McKay Reservoir". On August 23, Neal Hinds reported finding **3 GREAT EGRETS** and **1 Semipalmated Plover** at Cold Springs Reservoir. The same day, Craig and Judy Corder found over **100 Forster's Terns** at McNary Wildlife Park. On August 26, Aaron Skirvin reported seeing an adult **Cooper's Hawk** with a bird in its talons, flying through his yard. This seems early to be seeing accipiters in the valley. The same day, birding at McNary Park, Craig and Judy found a total of 44 species including a **Red-eyed Vireo** and **10 Orange-crowned Warblers** in one tree. Birding at Cold

Springs Reservoir on August 27, Craig and Judy found 31 species including a family of **4 Olive-sided Flycatchers**. Also on August 27, Aaron and June Whitten had a great trip driving the route from Gurdane to Vinson in the southwestern part of Umatilla County. Their best birds were **3 SAGE THRASHERS** and **2 BREWER'S SPARROWS** along with many **Vesper Sparrows**. Of special interest, they counted **104 American Kestrels** in the 23-mile stretch from Vinson-Gurdane-Highway 395. On August 31, Jack Simons reported seeing **7 Common Nighthawks** flying over Mission Ponds.

Craig and Judy birded McNary Wildlife Park on September 1, finding a total of 28 species. Their best bird was a **Gray Catbird**, a rare find in that area. On September 4, Jack Simons reported a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and 3 circling **Turkey Vultures** near his home between Pendleton and Mission. On September 6, Jack saw **9 Turkey Vultures** circling over Mission Ponds. On September 8, Craig and Judy had a great find at McNary Wildlife Park. While in the area they found a **NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH**. This is a very rare bird in Umatilla County and a great addition to our year bird list for the county. In addition to the **Waterthrush**, they found 44 other species. On September 10, Jack Simons found **8** perched **Turkey Vultures** near his home as well as a **PEREGRINE FALCON** carrying a dead bird in its talons. On the same day, Mike and MerryLynn Denny spent the afternoon on Bald Mountain (near Tollgate) counting hawks. In a two and a half hour period they saw **2 Swainson's Hawks**, **15 Red-tailed Hawks**, **3 American Kestrels**, **2 Golden Eagles**, **4 Sharp-shinned Hawks**, **1 Northern Goshawk**, **2 Northern Harriers** and **63 Turkey Vultures** (the highest number they have ever seen in Umatilla County). Birding McNary Wildlife Park on September 10, Craig and Judy found their first **Common Tern** and **Golden-crowned Sparrow** of the season. They also flushed an **AMERICAN BITTERN**, a difficult bird to find in Umatilla County. On September 11, the Pendleton Bird Club traveled to the McNary Dam area. Although we were unable to find the **Waterthrush** Craig and Judy had found earlier in the week, club members did find a juvenile **SABINE'S GULL** below McNary Dam. This is another rare Umatilla County bird and another great addition to our county year list.

Also below McNary Dam, along with the expected gulls, bird club members found many newly arrived **Common Terns** along with **Forster's Terns** and 3 **Bonaparte's Gulls**. Later in the day Craig and Judy lead club member around the wildlife area. The best birds were 2 **Red Crossbills** (rare in the valley), and 2 **Lewis's Woodpeckers**.

On September 13, Craig and Judy reported there were about **40 Common Terns** below McNary Dam. On September 15, Neal Hinds found 2 **SANDERLINGS** at Cold Springs Reservoir. This is another great addition to the county year list, since this species is not found every year in Umatilla County. On September 17, birding in the Coombs/Alkali Canyon area, Aaron reported lot of migrant bird activity. Included in the 28 species he

found were **2 SAGE THRASHERS**, 1 **Prairie Falcon** and a **Golden-crowned Sparrow**.

Mike Denny reminds us that September to early November is a great time to see and hear owls. Jean Wood reports hearing **Western Screech-Owls** during the evening hours at McKay Community Park in Pendleton and Jack Simons has been hearing **Great-horned Owls** calling along the Umatilla River near his home in the Mission area. Please report any owls you see or hear as well as your other bird sighting to me (Dave Herr) at 276-6413 or dsherr@oregontrail.net.

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