



Kákya áymut

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

Volume 3, No. 2 Pendleton, Oregon February 2005

Mission Ponds Featured at February Bird Club Meeting

Jack Simons provided a most entertaining program to the bird club on February 10. No one nodded off despite the delicious, potluck food consumed prior to his presentation of “THE BIRDS OF MISSION PONDS.” Since Jack is 1) a birder and 2) lives within 200 yards of the Ponds, he is doubly qualified to discuss what’s going on-over-and-around the Ponds. This oasis, a reclaimed gravel and rock quarry, is nestled in the arid lands adjacent to the Umatilla River between Pendleton and Mission. Mission Ponds provide a smorgasbord of riparian delights for migrating and year-round critters. As Jack often says, “*You never know what you’ll see at Mission Ponds.*”

Jack’s pictorial presentation was illustrated with photos he attributed to Robert Shantz of Duncan, Arizona; Mike Danzenbaker; and Don Baccus of Portland, Oregon who supplies the “pic of the week” bird photo on the bird club’s website.

The Mission Ponds checklist currently has 113 bird species with the complete list found on the club’s website — www.pendletonbirders.org. Raptors, wading birds, waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds, otter, beaver, fox, deer, coyote and other species visit this all-season site. Hundreds — sometimes *thousands* — of Mallards can be found in fall and winter. As many as four Bald Eagles, two adults and 2 juveniles, have been seen perched in the river bottom near the ponds. The small cottonwood thicket in the northeast corner of the property is also the best place for finding song birds and owls. Jack has seen the Great Horned Owl in the thicket on numerous occasions and is certain that the Barn Owl and Western Screech-Owl visit this spot too.

Other raptors frequent the Ponds, too. The Northern Harrier, with its distinctive white rump, is more often seen in fall and winter. The Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk and, the most common hawk species found at the ponds, the Red-tailed Hawk, can be seen by keen-eyed observers throughout the year. Keep a

watch out in winter for the Northern Goshawk; no one has reported one at the Ponds, yet, but at least two have been seen locally this year. Last year, Jack finally saw a Swainson’s Hawk flying over the ponds and, later, one adult and two juveniles were spotted in the river bottom north of the west pond. A goal this year is to find their nest. Jack reports finding at least 13 Turkey Vultures in a group last fall. They were attracted to the area by the carcasses of several white-tailed deer that had succumbed to a viral disease called Blue Tongue. Other raptors include the American Kestrel and Prairie Falcon. Though not observed yet, Peregrine Falcon almost certainly prey on the many species of birds that frequent the ponds. In the spring and summer, Osprey use both ponds to fish and to teach their offspring how to fish.

Wading birds include some of the larger species: the Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron. In the fall of 2003, Jack saw a “flock” of 27 Great Blue Herons feeding in the west Pond. Last year, Jack saw only two Black-Crowned Night-Herons, an unusually low number. He has heard Virginia Rails calling but has yet to see one. Last fall, in the northwest corner in the cottonwood grove, Jack counted eight Great Egrets in one tree. The next morning they were gone, having likely migrated south. However, one or two Great Egrets did manage to stay through the winter this year. This may be the first time Great Egrets have been observed to over-winter in Umatilla County.

A diverse mix of waterfowl use the ponds year-round. So far, at total of 22 species have been recorded at the ponds. Among the larger waterfowl are the Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, and Canada Goose. The Canada Geese are found year-round; they nest at the ponds, have ‘goose wars’ (territorial disputes) in the adjacent pastures and raise their goslings in the spring. Approximately four to five pairs nested at the ponds in 2004 and some 22 goslings were counted.

In the less weighty group of waterfowl, Green-winged Teal is a regular in fall/winter, with 61 seen at the Ponds in the last few days. At least one pair of Blue-winged Teal nested last year. Cinnamon Teal are seen in the spring, but apparently haven't nested at the ponds. The American Wigeon is very common in fall/winter, and its rusty-headed cousin, Eurasian Wigeon, has been seen as well. The Northern Shoveler is putting on its breeding plumage now. American Wigeon and Mallard are the most common waterfowl at the Ponds.

Diving duck species which frequent the ponds during the spring migration include Canvasback (with its sloped bill) and its counterpart — the bright red-headed male Redhead. Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser are also common visitors. In another couple of months, Jack expects to see Common Merganser broods on the Umatilla River near the Ponds. The adults are actually year-round residents. On one occasion Jack spooked a Common Merganser family with two adults and 25 babies in the Umatilla River. The parents made their escape upriver leaving their 25 babies frantically trying to follow. The youngsters flapped their tiny wings and ran on top of the water as fast as they could but the river's current counteracted their efforts holding them in the same spot despite their gallant effort to follow mom and dad. Realizing their mistake, the two adults swung back and led the way *downriver* to safety.

On the day of the Mission Ponds talk, Jack reported seeing what may have been Long-billed Dowitchers and Killdeer on the Pond. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs will be seen in the spring and in the fall. Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper (with its white-ringed eye), Least Sandpiper, and the Western Sandpiper (with its black bill and legs) join them. The Red-necked and Wilson's Phalarope are seen spring and fall. Wilson's Snipe make spring and fall appearances, too, and the only Willet sighting reported in Umatilla County was at Mission Ponds.

Of the several gull species found in Umatilla County, only the Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gull have been reported at the Ponds. The fall Bonaparte's Gull sports a black spot behind the eye, white wedge on the primaries, and black wing tips. Terns that visit the ponds include Forster's and Black, which is usually charcoal gray with a black head. In the spring of 2004 seventeen Black Terns were counted in one flock at the Ponds.

The yellow-eyed male Brewer's Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird, and Yellow-headed Blackbird will soon be setting up territories and singing at the Ponds. Migrating Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers and other songbirds, such as Lazuli Bunting and White-crowned Sparrow will join them as they migrate

through the area in the spring. Bullock's Oriole and Black-headed Grosbeak are common in the river bottom and cottonwood thicket in the northeast corner in the spring and summer.

You can find Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, and Northern Flickers. Jack has seen Pileated Woodpeckers nearby but not at the Ponds, though he suspects they occasionally visit the Ponds.

All six of the local swallow species frequent the Pond in spring and summer: Barn Swallows, with their long swallow tails, the brown-backed Northern Rough-winged Swallow and Bank Swallow; Cliff swallow with its peach colored rump and dark throat visit the Ponds but also can be seen by the thousands nesting in the cliffs along the Umatilla River downstream from Rieth. A few Tree Swallows are seen at the Ponds, too, and may be confused with the more common Violet-green Swallow. The male Tree Swallow has a metallic blue back; the top half of its head is dark bluish and the bottom half is white. There is a white circle above the eye of the Violet-green, which also has a white rump. Come out to the Ponds in May, June and July and you'll see them all and more.

Contributed by Marilyn Jio

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, March 10, 2005 **7:30 p.m.**

Dave Herr talks about woodpecker identification.

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

Field Trip

Saturday, March 12, 2005

McNary Wildlife Area

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot or
9:00 a.m. at the parking lot at the main entrance to the Wildlife Area.

Trip Leader: Aaron Skirvin 276-1948

Field Trip

Saturday, March 26, 2005
Battle Mountain State Park
(possible joint field trip with Blue Mt. Audubon of
Walla Walla)

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton
Safeway Parking Lot
Trip Leader: Dave Herr 276-6413

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting & Potluck

Thursday, April 14, 2005 **6:30 p.m.**

Presentation by Karen Kronner

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

Field Trip

Saturday, April 23, 2005

Tollgate Woodpecker Search

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton
Safeway Parking Lot
Trip Leader: Dave Herr 276-6413

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

April 29 – May 2, 2005

Must make your reservation soon! See article below.

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, May 12, 2005 7:30 p.m.

Aaron Skirvin talks about IDing spring migrants

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

Umatilla County Spring Migration Count

Saturday, May 14, 2005

For further information, contact
Aaron Skirvin 276-1948

Field Trip

Saturday, May 21, 2005

Battle Mountain, Ukiah, Albee

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton
Safeway Parking Lot

FEATHERED FUN DAY

The habitat on Bateman Island at Kennewick, Washington, is recovering from a serious fire a few years ago. The island makes an interesting location to bird as it forms bays on one side, has the main channel of the Columbia River on the other side, and also has seedy weeds, brush and trees.

The bays and the river provided us views of Glaucous-winged Gull, Pied-billed and Horned Grebe, Common Goldeneye, and many more common gulls and waterfowl. The brush and trees housed White-crowned Sparrows, Juncos, Black-capped Chickadees, Northern Flickers, both kinglet species, and a Cooper's Hawk cruised about looking for lunch. One group spotted Great Horned Owls and another saw a Bald Eagle. Both Bewick's and Marsh Wrens were about in the brush and reeds. Not a bad birding day for February 5th!

The afternoon program included a movie called "Watching Warblers," which was shown on a large screen in the auditorium at Battelle Northwest in Richland. The photography was superb and usually included both male and female warblers (39 species), their habitat, nest, and young. The sound recordings were also exceptional. The film showed that some warblers forage and nest near or on the ground, some at mid-level in the trees and shrubs, and those which give us "warbler neck" in the top of the highest trees. This is one of nature's ways to provide "food for all". So, a warbler's location in its habitat is a beginning clue to identification, as are habits, size, shape, bill, and tail. The best identification clue of all, however, is their beautiful song,

Thirteen members of the Pendleton Bird Club joined the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society for this Feathered Fun Day. Attending were Russ and Connie Betts, Nancy and Lyle Brown, Janet Ebaugh, Betty Klepper, Fern Oliver, Dolly Robison, Craig and Judy Corder, Aaron Skirvin, and June and Duane Whitten.

Some of our members purchased the DVD, "Watching Eastern Warblers." Income from sales will enable the authors (Michael Male and Judy Fieth) to complete another DVD on Western Warblers, which will be of great interest to Pendleton Bird Club members and most local birders. We may be able to persuade one of the DVD purchasers to show their "Watching Eastern Warblers" at a bird club meeting!

Contributed By June Whitten

RESERVATIONS AND DEPOSIT FOR SPRING MALHEUR FIELD TRIP

The spring Malheur trip is tentatively set for April 29, 30, May 1 and 2. I have visited with Duncan Evered at the Malheur Field Station by phone a couple of times, and believe we can work it out for that weekend. He does not make a final reservation until he has a deposit.

So, anyone who can make this trip will be most welcome. However, we do need to get our deposits in as soon as possible. Since Duane and I will be out of town until March 8, Lorna Waltz has graciously consented to mail in the deposits. Please send \$20 per person, preferably a check made out to Malheur Field Station, to:

**Lorna Waltz
1 N.W. 8th St. #3
Pendleton, OR 97801**

Please get your deposit to Lorna by March 1, and she will mail them to the Malheur Field Station on March 3. You will hear from me with trip details after we return from Trinidad-Tobago.

June Whitten

REGIONAL BIRDING EVENTS - 2005

The Pacific Northwest hosts a number of great birding events, annually. June Whitten compiled the following list of spring (and one fall) 2005 bird festivals in the region. For more information about the events follow the internet links or give the organizers a call.

- Othello, WA: **Sandhill Crane Festival**, March 18–20 (866-726-3445)
www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org
- Crescent City, CA: **Aleutian Goose Festival**, April 1–3 (800-343-8300)
www.aleutiangoosefestival.org
- Burns, OR: **John Scharff Migratory Bird Festival**, April 1–3 (541-573-2636)
www.migratorybirdfestival.com
- Hoquiam, WA: **Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival**, May 6–8 (360-495-3289)
www.shorebirdfestival.com
- Bend, OR: **Wings Over Central Oregon**, May 14–21 (541-383-5465)
www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/wildlife/
- Charleston, OR: **Shorebird Festival**, September 9–11 (541-867-4550)
www.oregoncoast.fws.gov/

BIRD CLUB CHANGES: MEETINGS & NEWSLETTER

The Pendleton Bird Club turns two years old next month, and this is our 24th monthly edition of the newsletter. Our membership has grown greatly over the past 2 years; we have an outstanding web site; we create a great monthly newsletter; last year the newsletter got its name, *Káyka Táymut*; we've established two successful bluebird trails; we selected the Grasshopper Sparrow to represent the club on our logo, and soon we will have the club's logo completed. Our meetings and field trips have been well attended. We're a thriving club.

Originally, we decided to hold six meetings per year, one every other month. Last year, we changed the schedule to hold only four meetings per year — October, December, February, and April — and to schedule two field trips per month.

We now have some experience with the new meeting schedule, and we've decided that four meetings per year are too few. There simply have not been enough meetings to get into discussions on bird identification, preparation of bird checklists, planning field trips, sharing birding experiences among the members, working on a publication on the Birds of Umatilla County, discussing and planning club projects, etc. To keep the club moving forward, we decided to increase the number of monthly meetings to eight per year, October – May, inclusive. Summer months will be reserved for field trips and the popular club picnic in July. Oh yes, we will continue to have monthly field trips throughout

the year. Meetings will start at 7:30 p.m., (potluck meetings will start at 6:30 p.m.) the second Thursday of each month between October and May. All meetings will be held in the First Christian Church in Pendleton, unless notified otherwise.

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE
Bird checklists, ID Challenge, Club Member's
Photo Gallery, Newsletter Archive and more.
www.pendletonbirders.org

Distribution of the Newsletter

The April 2005 issue of the *Kakya Taymut* will be the last one that we mail via the postal service (snail mail). There are three reasons for this change: 1) the annual cost (about \$200 for paper, stamps, and incidentals) of mailing the 30 copies of the newsletter each month (Blue Mt. Wildlife has generously donated time and a copy machine to make the copies, otherwise the cost would be much higher) is the greatest single cost the club has; 2) the time, effort, and inconvenience of copying and preparing to mail the newsletters; and 3) we have in place more efficient and effective methods of distributing the newsletter – email and on the web site. Instead of copying and mailing the newsletter, we would prefer to spend that time in producing an even better newsletter on the web site. For those who have been receiving the newsletter via the post office, there are the following options: 1) you can send us your email address, if you have one, and we'll send the newsletter to you via email. 2) If you don't have a computer, you can have a friend/bird club member print a copy of the newsletter for you. 3) If you have access to a computer, e.g. a public library or a friend, you can view it there or print a copy. The time has come to make the change from sending out paper copies of the newsletter to distributing it exclusively by email and the internet.

January – February Bird Sightings

Usually county birding in January and February is pretty slow, but not this year! Three really great species were found during this report period. First, on January 16 Markie McRae found a **RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER** in her Milton-Freewater yard. **Red-naped Sapsuckers** are common in the Blue Mountains during the spring and summer, but this is the first county report of a **RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER**. The bird only stayed two days and attempts by other birders to

locate the bird were not successful. Birding in Pilot Rock on February 6, Aaron Skirvin, June and Duane Whitten and Russ and Connie Betts found another great bird. They discovered a **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** feeding on seed a homeowner had spread on her driveway. This species has only been seen a few times in Oregon and there is only one other verified record. The bird has been seen periodically and on February 13, Aaron and the Whittens found **2 EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** in the same location. And just as the report period was ending Craig and Judy Corder reported finding a **HARLEQUIN DUCK** about ½ mile below McNary dam on February 18. This is only the third report of this species in Umatilla County.

Birding on January 21, June and Duane Whitten found 3 **Bald Eagles** near the top of the Old Cabbage Hill Road. On January 23, Jack Simons had an interesting experience. At his home near Mission Ponds he watched a **Black-billed Magpie** chase down a **Dark-eyed Junco**, kill it and then eat it. On January 27, Aaron found 2 **Virginia Rails**, a **Double-crested Cormorant** and a **GREAT EGRET** at Mission Ponds. Connie and Russ Betts are continuing their efforts to census the birds in the McKay subdivision and Community Park. They report that a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and **Northern Harrier** continue to hunt in the area. Along with the more common birds, they have reported a **Greater Yellowlegs**, a **Townsend's Solitaire** and a **Mountain Chickadee**. On January 29 Craig and Judy Corder searched for the Sapsucker reported in Milton-Freewater. They were unable to locate the Sapsucker, but did find 25 **Bohemian Waxwings** mixed with a flock of 15 **Cedar Waxwings**. Birding south of Pendleton on January 30, June, Duane and Aaron found a **Northern Pigmy-Owl** at Battle Mountain and 7 **Wild Turkeys** at Albee. They also found a **Brown-headed Cowbird** in Ukiah. Later on the same day, Aaron found the year's first **Say's Phoebe** along Korvola Road.

On February 1, Nancy Brown reported finding over 60 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at McNary Wildlife Area. She also noted two male **Hooded Mergansers** and an **American White Pelican**. Neal Hinds reports that a **GREAT EGRET** was seen in Stanfield on January 29, and on February 1 he found **Redheads**, both **Goldeneye** species, a **HARRIS'S SPARROW** and 5 **Bald Eagles** at the McNary Wildlife Park. On February 2, Jean Wood observed a flock of **Bohemian Waxwings** feeding near the bridge at the McKay Community Park. Birding at McNary Wildlife Park on February 3, Nancy Brown

reported finding 10 species of ducks as well as 65 **Black-crowned Night-Herons**. On February 6, Aaron, the Whittens and the Betts reported seeing two **Short-eared Owls** at the upper end of McKay Reservoir. The following day Aaron found a **Least Sandpiper** at Mission Ponds. On February 9 the Betts were able to re-locate the Pilot Rock **Eurasian Collared-Dove** and the **Short-eared Owl** seen previously at McKay Reservoir. On February 13, Jack Simons spotted a **Pileated Woodpecker** in the pasture behind his home. Now Jack wants to find one at Mission Ponds so he can add that species to his "Pond" list. On February 12, Aaron and the Whittens ran their monthly Pendleton Raptor count. In addition to finding 137 raptors on the 100 mile run (down from 201 raptors last month) they also found 3 **Say's Phoebes** and the year's first **American Tree Sparrow**. Driving along the Holdman Road Bob and Dannel Tapley found a nesting **Great Horned Owl**. Later in the day they found an immature **Bald Eagle** near Hat Rock, a female **Northern Shoveler** at Stanfield Meadows and a flock of **Brewer's Blackbirds** at Echo Meadows. Walking along the River Parkway near the ball diamonds on February 14, Bob and Dannel Tapley observed Great Blue Herons in the trees where they nested last year. It will be interesting to see how many birds nest in the area this year. On



Pendleton Bird Club
70371 Prairie Road
Pendleton, OR 97801

February 19, Aaron checked the area around McNary Dam to see if he could locate the **HARLEQUIN DUCK** found by the Corder's the previous day. Aaron was unable to find the **HARLEQUIN DUCK**, but did find a **LONG-TAILED DUCK** at the grain elevators above McNary Dam. This is another great addition to our County year list.

Blue Jays continue to be reported in the County. Jerry Baker reports that up to **6 Blue Jays** have been seen with **Steller's Jays** in Athena. He also reports **Blue Jays** continue to be seen along the Umatilla River near Thorn Hollow. Neal Hinds reports that a **Blue Jay** has been seen in the Hermiston area and another in Stanfield. **GREAT EGRETS** have also been sighted throughout the report period and on February 14 Jack Simons saw two **GREAT EGRETS** flying near Mission Ponds. It is likely the birds stayed in the area all winter. Please continue to send your reports to dsherr@oregontrail.net or give me a call at 276-6413.

Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant
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