



Newsletter of the Pendleton Bird Club

# Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 4, No. 11 Pendleton, Oregon November 2006

## **PENDLETON BIRD CLUB "TAKES A TRIP" TO THE CHIRICAHUA MOUNTAINS OF ARIZONA**



**WHEN TERRY STEELE FINISHED** his presentation on November 9, the attendees had to return to reality. We weren't in the Chiricahua Mountains of southeastern Arizona with Terry; we were sitting on chairs in the Rogers Fellowship Room at the Pendleton Presbyterian Church. But for that hour of beautiful photos, outstanding narration and humorous story-telling, we really felt as if we were at Cave Creek in the Chiricahua Mountains experiencing all of those wonderful birds and animals in a fantastic setting!

Terry's superb photos did not come easily. He reported that the temperature inside his nylon blind was occasionally 120 degrees F. Hikers and birders frequently, but inadvertently, ruined his photo opportunities. It takes a great deal of time and patience to obtain photos of this quality.

Sometimes, it also takes great courage. The white-nosed coatis (co-WAH-teez), a relative of raccoons, frequented the watering pond at night. When they brought all of the female relatives and their young offspring in to drink, they were ever-so-cute. However, a huge, extremely menacing black bear was photographed at the same watering hole. As the bear looked directly into the camera, Terry took its picture. Most of us would not have stayed to look the bear in the eye — much less taken his picture several times!

Terry said he loves birds and SNAKES. His excellent photos of snakes showed he does indeed enjoy snakes as well as birds. Some very unusual and, we have to agree, beautiful snakes were

shown. Terry showed us many birds that most Oregon birders would love to add to their life lists, including an Elegant Trogon eating its favorite food, a walking stick insect. Montezuma Quail, which can be quite elusive, were photographed with their white feathers standing up like quills against brown background feathers. These quail display a "puffed up" form when they are alarmed. Terry photographed some Chiricahua birds that we are familiar with in eastern Oregon, including MacGillivray's, Wilson's, and Townsend's Warblers and the lovely Lazuli Bunting.

Terry Steele's personal life story is an inspiration in itself. Terry struggled in school, from early grade school until he dropped out of high school. He suffered from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), an unknown medical condition at the time, and he believed he was unable to learn. As a result, Terry was "shrugged off" as a hyperactive kid and a troublemaker. A great deal of research has been done on ADD since Terry was in school but there are no easy solutions to this challenging learning disability.

It was later in Terry's life, after he was given a bird book and an old pair of binoculars, that he discovered he could learn. Although ADD is not easy to live with, alcoholism added to Terry's difficulties. But he made a complete turn-around in his life. Terry not only discovered he could learn, but he excels in all he does. He's an inspirational speaker, writes with emotion, and is certainly an outstanding naturalist. He attributes much of his success in life to his wife, Kay, who is a biologist (and holds his snakes for him). What a Great Lady!



The Bird Club was very privileged to have Terry and Kay with us on November 9. They make their home on the North Fork of the John Day River, near Ritter. Since they live fairly close to Pendleton, we hope to have them share their experiences again for a repeat performance.

*Contributed by June Whitten*

## **Heads-Up For December Raffle/Auction**

**DECEMBER'S BIRD CLUB MEETING** will feature a raffle and auction to raise money for club activities like funding the website. Be thinking about what you want to contribute! Home-made items like bird houses, feeders, food-cakes, and trinkets were popular last year. How about store-bought sacks of bird feed? Calendars? Books? T-shirts? Put your thinking cap on and get started on any items that you would like to bring! For more information, please contact Dannell Tapley ([dnail@my180.net](mailto:dnail@my180.net), phone: 969-7087) or Betty Klepper ([klepperb@uci.net](mailto:klepperb@uci.net), phone: 276-8416).

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **Bird Club Meeting and Fund Raiser**

**7:00 p.m., December 14, 2006**

**Dave Herr presents**

**“Tufa Tower and Golf Course Birds”**

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

### **Umatilla County**

### **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

**Saturday, December 30, 2006**

All are welcome and encouraged to join the count!  
Mark your calendar and reserve December 30 for counting birds.

Compiler: Aaron Skirvin 276-1948  
[askirvin@wtechlink.net](mailto:askirvin@wtechlink.net)

### **Bird Club Meeting & Potluck**

**6:30 p.m., January 11, 2007**

**Aaron Skirvin presents**

**“Winter Sparrows of Umatilla County”**

**Pendleton First Christian Church**

**S. Main Street in Pendleton**

### **Field Trip**

**McNary National Wildlife Refuge  
at Burbank, Washington**

**Saturday January 27, 2006**

**Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Pendleton Safeway  
Parking Lot**

**Trip Leader: Tanya Harrison**

### **Bird Club Meeting**

**7:00 p.m., February 8, 2007**

**Program to be determined**

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

### **VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE**

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

**[www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org)**

## **STAMP PRIZE WINNER**

**ON OCTOBER 8, WILDLIFE ARTIST** Richard Clifton of Milford, Delaware, won the 2006 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest in Memphis, Tennessee with a depiction of a pair of swimming Ring-necked Ducks.

Clifton's painting — chosen from among 297 entries — will grace the 2007 – 2008 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly called the Duck Stamp. The sale of stamps raises



approximately \$25 million each year to fund wetland and grassland habitat acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ninety-eight percent of the proceeds from the \$15-stamp go toward supporting the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund which secures properties for the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Second place in the contest went to Joseph Hautman, who painted a pair of flying Wood Ducks. Hautman won in 1992-93 with his depiction of a Spectacled Eider and in 2002-3 with a Black Scoter,

You can view their artwork at <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/federal/results/fedresults06.htm>.

*The Birding Community E-Bulletin* — November, 2006

## Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count Saturday, Dec. 30, 2006

**HERE ARE THE DETAILS FOR THE** 20th official Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count, which is scheduled for **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2006**. This local count is part of the national 107<sup>th</sup> annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. If you are interested in the history and count data accumulated for the hundreds of counts across the country, please visit Audubon's website ([www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)) then click on the link to Christmas Bird Count.

Last year, 24 bird counters saw 70 species of birds, and tallied a total of 11,186 individual birds in our circle. Our count circle is 15 miles in diameter, with the center located about 7 miles southeast of Pendleton. We welcome **everyone** (from beginning birder to expert) to help count birds on December 30. There are no major changes in Audubon's rules from last year as to how we conduct our count. The participant fee remains at \$5 per birder for those participants older than 18 years of age and each participant will receive a CBC issue of *American Birds*.

Our count circle is divided into six areas, and each area has a Coordinator (see below). Each Coordinator is responsible for organizing and

managing the bird counters in his/her area. To get involved, each interested participant must contact directly one of the Area Coordinators to join that group for count day. The coordinator will set a place and time for his/her team members to meet on count morning. If you want to help count birds on December 30, please contact one of the coordinators listed below.

- ◆ **Area 1** (Pendleton, Wildhorse Creek and Riverside)  
*Jack Simons* — home: 276-8566
- ◆ **Area 2** (Umatilla River and Cayuse)  
*Jenny Barnett* — home: 276-0639;  
cell: 310- 0374
- ◆ **Area 3** (McKay Reservoir and Birch Creek)  
*June and Duane Whitten* — home: 276-9019
- ◆ **Area 4** (Patawa Creek, Coyote Creek and upper Tutuilla Creek)  
*Dolly Robison* — home: 567-3642;  
work: 278-6471
- ◆ **Area 5** (Mission, Emigrant Hill and Poverty Flats)  
*Aaron Skirvin* — home: 276-1948
- ◆ **Area 6** (Spring Hollow Creek and upper McKay Creek)  
*Dave Herr* — home: 276-6413; work: 278-3869

Bird enthusiasts can also choose to do feeder counts if you have an active feeder in the count circle. If you want to do a feeder count, contact Aaron Skirvin (see contact information below). All Christmas Bird Count participants will get together for a count-down at the end of the day and compile the count results. Abby's Pizza on Southgate in Pendleton has reserved the back room for us from 4:00 – 8:00 pm that evening. Please contact Aaron Skirvin (276-1948, home or [askirvin@wtechlink.net](mailto:askirvin@wtechlink.net)) if you have any questions about the areas or feeder counts or how to participate.

## LET'S GO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTING ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2006!!!

*Contributed by Aaron Skirvin*

## Promoting Wildlife and Future Plans

**Editor's Note:** *This is the second of three articles by Joy Jaeger. Here she describes how she and her husband Steve took steps to enhance the diversity of wildlife and improve the quality of habitat at their*



*Blue Mountain property . Joy's final article will be published in the December Newsletter.*

**2003 WAS THE YEAR WE PUT UP OUR** first bird nest box. Success from that first nest box must have been beginner's luck because the birdhouse was the type and size favored by bluebirds. And, it was also put in a good location because Western Bluebirds raised a family in it that year. It was interesting to watch the parents go to and from the birdhouse feeding their hungry (and noisy) babies. The birdhouse was located only about 30 feet from our trailer.

I decided after our success with one nesting box that I wanted to put up more. My husband Steve made 4 more boxes, then we obtained another 15 from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. There were still places I thought might make good nesting sites so we picked up 10 more and put *them* up too! Being a beginner, I got lucky in some of my site selections and in 2004 we had more bluebird nests (both Mountain and Western) as well as Tree Swallows and House Wrens. The following year (2005) we even had a pair of Mountain Chickadees raise a brood. By monitoring nesting success, we discovered that some of the boxes were not being used so we moved them to alternate sites.

By trial and error we gradually figured out that bluebirds liked ridge tops and open areas best. Some of the boxes have been used every year. Several of them are receiving new hole covers because Northern Flickers like to enlarge the holes. We added 5 more boxes in 2005 and have moved a few more from unfavorable sites. We only added one more box in 2006 and by now have pretty well saturated the favorable bluebird sites. There are also natural nesting cavities available in nearby tree snags.

In 2003, we began to put out pans of water and grain on logs near our trailer so we could observe the birds and animals through our front window without them seeing us very well. After a couple of years though, deer discovered our feeding area and were drinking the water and eating all of the bird seed before the birds had a chance to eat much of it. We ended up

putting a 6 foot tall fence around the feeding area which disappointed the deer but thrilled the birds. We have also sprinkled grain out along our main road. This spreads out the birds to some extent and makes feeding more natural than from pans.

Stellar's Jays have become one of our regular visitors at the feeding site. They make an amazing range of sounds and imitations. In 2004 we replaced the pans with a 15-gallon water container thus enticing even more birds to come. We found that Mourning Doves as well as Dusky Grouse would come in for seeds and water. Chipmunks, ground squirrels and red squirrels were attracted to our feeding area, too. Many songbirds (including a Williamson's Sapsucker) have been observed taking baths and drinking from the big water container. Nuthatches and woodpeckers, including Northern Flickers, come in for water, too.



Excluding cattle from our property has increased many native trees, shrubs, and grasses. This has helped to improve the quality of habitat for wildlife (see photo). Along the stream banks, riparian plants have regrown to stabilize the soil and provide cover for many wildlife

species. Cavity-nesting birds and wildlife have plenty of nesting sites since we added nesting boxes to augment the natural cavities in the snags. Next on our to-do list is to add a pond because water is so important on top of the ridge in the dry, hot summer. There are creeks, but they are over ¼ mile away. Finally, I would like to plant trees and shrubs around the pond for cover and shade for the wildlife we want to attract to our property.

## **BIRD OF THE MONTH — SHARP-SHINNED HAWK**

*(Accipiter striatus)*



**HERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL** questions recently about a small hawk trying — often successfully — to catch small birds at feeders. That is what Sharp-shinned Hawks do best (catch small birds) and remember, they do need to eat to survive. Their diet is almost exclusively small songbirds, sparrows, chickadees, nuthatches, and finches.



The Sharp-shinned, often called a "Sharpie," shows pronounced sexual size dimorphism. In this species, as with most hawks, males are significantly smaller than the females. Males are usually only 9 inches in length, while the females are 12 inches. Distinguishing between Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawk can be a challenge. The Sharpie is usually smaller, but a large female Sharpie and a small male Cooper's can be nearly the same size. To differentiate between the two, look for the rounder head, usually squarer tail, and the appearance of almost no neck exhibited by the Sharpie.

Adult Sharpies have horizontally barred (reddish-brown) bellies, short, rounded wings, and red eyes. Immature birds have obvious brown, vertical streaking on the belly, brown backs, and yellow eyes.



Even though we are not fond of seeing one of the birds at a feeder sacrificed for a hawk's lunch, you have to admire the speed and agility of the Sharp-shinned Hawk. It can turn almost as deftly as its smaller prey and with its speed, often catches the darting bird in the air. Stealth and patience are hallmarks of the Sharpie. They are frequently seen camouflaged on a concealed perch in a tree or on a post.

If you truly cannot stand the thought of bringing birds to your feeder with the risk of being caught by a Sharpie, there are some steps you may take to reduce these chances. First of all, the best defense small birds can have is a near-by brush pile or a planting of evergreen shrubs in a clump, a thick evergreen pine or spruce, or any dense brush for a quick retreat.

The Sharpie depends on quickness and surprise to catch a small bird. It may not hang around long after the surprise element is eliminated. Feeder birds become much more wary after a few attacks, forcing

the Sharpie to move on to more productive hunting grounds.

Perhaps the best way to deal with these hawk attacks is to remain philosophical. After all, this is nature's way of survival for all, and we have far more Juncos than we have Sharp-shinned Hawks.

In fact, it is a wonder we have any Sharp-shinned Hawks at all. Dave Helzer writes in the Audubon Society of Portland, *The Warbler*: "One hundred years ago, Sharp-shinned Hawks were heavily persecuted and vilified by humans, and thousands were shot every year. In the mid-1900's, along with many other species, they suffered from the application of the pesticide DDT. Today they are fairly common, and populations appear stable. Because their preferred nesting habitat is continuous dense forest, logging practices will continue to affect their breeding density and distribution."

So, the next time you witness a Sharp-shinned Hawk attacking one of your feeder birds, think of it as the Sharpie's attempt to maintain a stable population — one song bird at a time.

*Contributed by June Whitten*

## MEGA-BIRD-CARNIVORE ANNOUNCED

IN LATE OCTOBER, PALEONTOLOGISTS AT the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County released an amazing find. Apparently, a curious teenager in Argentina has discovered a fossil skull belonging to the largest bird ever found -- a swift, flightless predator that was 10 feet tall and weighed perhaps 400 pounds. Apparently the bird pursued its prey across the plains of Patagonia 15 million years ago. As reported in the 26 October edition of the journal, "Nature," the skull, tapering to an impressive and powerful beak, belongs to a previously unknown offshoot of extinct birds known as phorusrhacids, or "terror birds." These birds most likely preyed on rodents that once grazed on South American savannas and were the size of sheep.



Luis Chiappe, paleontologist and director of the museum's Dinosaur Institute, said that this remarkable creature is now the largest bird known to science, with a skull larger than that of a horse. Until now, scientists thought that these unusual flightless birds became more portly and less agile as they evolved into bigger and bigger carnivores. To the contrary, the slender leg and foot bones found with the immense skull more closely resemble those of a typical running bird.

*The Birding Community E-Bulletin*, November, 2006

## October — November, 2006 Bird Sightings



**WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE MOST** exciting bird sightings this period have been **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRDS** seen in Pendleton. On October 23, Connie Zahl reported a hummingbird with a red throat that was visiting her feeder in SW Pendleton. June Whitten went to Connie's home and identified the bird as a probable immature male **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD**. Later in the day Aaron Skirvin observed the bird and confirmed that it was indeed an immature **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD**.

On November 7, Mary Combs reported a "green" hummingbird at her feeder. The bird was again observed on November 13, and from the description Aaron tentatively identified it as another **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD**. The following day Aaron was able to observe the bird and identified it as either a female or immature male **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD**. Since Connie Zahl and the Combs don't live that far apart, both sightings could be of the same bird. Craig and Judy Corder made the only other reported sighting of **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD** in Umatilla County in June, 1992.

Birding in the Tollgate area on October 22, Aaron, June and Duane Whitten found the first county-year **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** near Dusty Spring. Later in the day they observed 2 more Rosy-finches along the Linton Mountain Road.

October 25, Jack Simons reported seeing his first **Bald Eagle** of the fall season along the Umatilla

River near his home. Jack noted it was an immature bird.

On November 1, birding near Bald Mountain, Aaron and June Whitten found a flock of more than **400 Gray-crowned Rosy-finches**. In the Tollgate area they also found a **Golden Eagle, Northern Flickers, a Pileated Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadees and Golden-crowned Kinglets**. Earlier in the day they found **4 Northern Shrikes** along the Linton Mountain Road.

November 10, June and Aaron reported finding **5-6 Pacific Loons, 2 RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS** and a flock of over **600 gulls** including **2 Mew Gulls** below McNary Dam. They also reported seeing an unusual **Common Goldeneye** without a spot on its face in the Columbia River at the Hat Rock State Park boat launch site. Keep a lookout for this unusual Goldeneye if you are birding in the area.

On their first Pendleton Raptor Count of the season June and Aaron reported finding just 62 total hawks, which is significantly lower than counts from the previous two years. The Denny's and Shoemakes survey a raptor route in Umatilla County near the Washington-Oregon state line. On November 16, results from their survey were much different. They spotted 10 species of raptors, including **222 Red-tailed Hawks, 76 American Kestrels** (a new high for this count) and **15 Northern Harriers**.



American Kestrel

On November 12, Aaron noted a flicker-sized bird land on a power line near his home. A spruce tree growing in his yard obscured his view but when he moved to another position he discovered it was a **EURASIAN COLARED-DOVE**. Looks like this species may be moving north from Pilot Rock.

Connie Betts reports that there are now lots of **American Robins** at the Pendleton Community Park and on November 13, she counted **26 Mallards** along McKay Creek. Connie is hopeful and keeps looking, but so far no Blue Jays or Greater Yellowlegs have shown up. On November 14, Connie found a pair of **Varied Thrushes** in her back yard.

On November 14, Jack Simons reported seeing a mature **Bald Eagle** cruising down the Umatilla River behind his home and later that day saw a juvenile

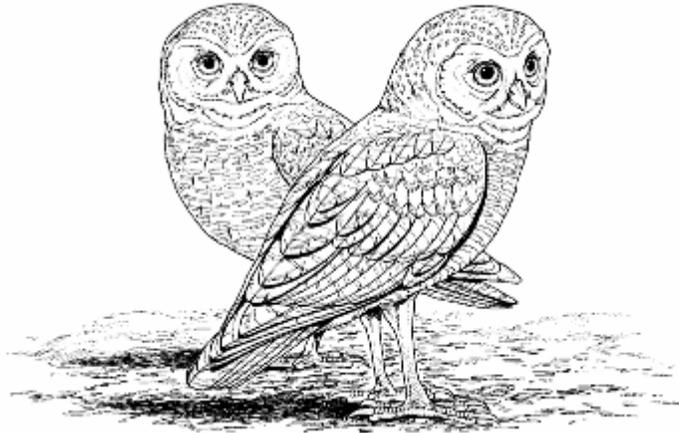


**Great Horned Owl.** Jack thinks this is the same juvenile bird he saw during the summer.

Winter is getting closer. The Christmas Bird Count season opens in less than a month, with the Pendleton Count scheduled on December 30. Keep looking for winter birds, and continue to send your sightings to

me, Dave Herr at 276-6413 or [dsherr@oregontrail.net](mailto:dsherr@oregontrail.net).

**Newsletter Editor:** Position Vacant  
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