



Kákya Táymut

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

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2006 Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count



WENTY-THREE BIRDERS, including four feeder counters, participated in the annual Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count on December 30, 2006. Umatilla County's count was part of the nationwide 107th annual Christmas Bird Count sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The goal of our count was to find, identify, and count as many birds as possible in a 24-hour period within a count circle 15 miles in diameter. The center of Umatilla County's count circle is located near the base of Cabbage Hill about six miles southeast of Pendleton.

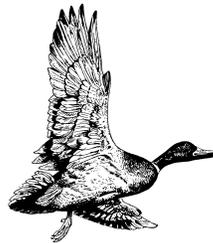
A typical Umatilla County CBC will tally 70 to 72 bird species. The highest species total for the Umatilla County CBC was 81 species on January 3, 1992. Last year, we found 70 species and counted 11,186 individual birds in the count circle. This year, we found 72 species and 9,137 individual birds. A decline in the number of ducks and geese in the count circle was the single largest factor in the ~2,050 bird difference between the 2005 and 2006 counts.

Rules for the Christmas Bird Count allow the addition of species found during "count week" — three days immediately prior to and three days after count day. This year, two additional species, Chukar and Great Gray Owl, were seen within the count circle during count week but not on count day.

Participants in this year's count were: Jerry Baker, Jenny Barnett, Connie Betts, Russ Betts, Sam Clark, Sophia Clark, Dave Herr, Becky Hiers, Jane Holmes, Craig Kvern, Diana LaSarge, Bob Lewis, Bruce Mayfield, Dolly Robison, Jack Simons, Sharon Simons, Aaron Skirvin, Lorna Waltz, Ruth Whittaker, Duane Whitten, June Whitten, Dale

Wilkins, and Jean Wood.

Results of the count are as follows: Canada Goose 145, Wood Duck 4, Green-winged Teal 18, Mallard 316, Gadwall 6, American Wigeon 20, Ring-necked Duck 1, Common Goldeneye 102, Common Merganser 48, Great Blue Heron 16, Bald Eagle 24 (23 adults and 1 immature), Northern Harrier 25, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 3, Red-tailed Hawk 67, Rough-legged Hawk 8, *Buteo* sp. 3, Golden Eagle 4 (3 adults and 1 immature), American Kestrel 50, Merlin 1, Prairie Falcon 6, Wild Turkey 101, Ring-necked Pheasant 128, California Quail 118, American Coot 122, Virginia Rail 2, Wilson's Snipe 2, Ring-billed Gull 14, Rock Pigeon 301, Mourning Dove 280, Western Screech-Owl 3, Northern Saw-whet Owl 1, Northern Pygmy-Owl 1, Great Horned Owl 3, Belted Kingfisher 4, Downy Woodpecker 7, Hairy Woodpecker 3, Northern Flicker 47, Pileated Woodpecker 5, Horned Lark 300, Steller's Jay 3, Black-billed Magpie 586, American Crow 35, Common Raven 77, Black-capped Chickadee 43, Mountain Chickadee 21, Red-breasted Nuthatch 12, Pygmy Nuthatch 4, Bewick's Wren 13, Winter Wren 6, Golden-crowned Kinglet 23, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2, Hermit Thrush 1, Townsend's Solitaire 2, American Robin 114, Varied Thrush 3, American Pipit 1, Northern Shrike 2, European Starling 2430, Spotted Towhee 8, American Tree Sparrow 1, Song Sparrow 247, White-crowned Sparrow 497, Golden-crowned Sparrow 1, Harris's Sparrow 1, Dark-eyed Junco 1381, Red-winged Blackbird 259, Western Meadowlark 16, Brewer's Blackbird 27, House Finch 420, Red Crossbill 3, American Goldfinch 186, House Sparrow 401.



Contributed by Aaron Skirvin



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Lynn Tompkins, presents

Wildlife Rehabilitation

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

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., March 8, 2007

Jack Simons presents

Winter Raptors

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

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., April 12, 2007

Program to be determined

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

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., May 10, 2007

Jenny Barnett presents

Birds of Iskuulpa Creek

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

Bird of the Month — Gray Partridge

(Perdix perdix)

GRAY PARTRIDGE, like several other upland gamebirds such as Chukar and Ring-necked Pheasant, is an introduced species to the United States. They are widespread in Europe and Asia, but are reported to be declining due to loss of habitat and food sources. They have been diminished by 85 per cent in Great Britain over the last 25 years, mostly due to industrialization.

The first introduction of Gray Partridge in North America was in Iowa in 1905. The introduced birds, usually 20 pairs at a time, did well and soon more were brought to Iowa, as well as other states. The birds came to the United States from Hungary, thus their early name was "Hungarian Partridge" which was often shortened to "Huns."

Gray Partridges thrive in areas of native grasslands and cultivated crops, especially winter wheat, and are often found from 2,000 to 4,000 feet elevation. Unlike pheasants, lack of winter habitat does not seem to be a serious issue with Gray Partridge. In the fall, Gray Partridges form coveys of up to 30 birds, but often fifteen or less, depending on the survival rate of the spring chicks. In cold weather, the covey nestles together at night; tails inward, heads outward. Their ability to snow-roost by keeping warm together, at times under the snow, seems to allow the Gray Partridge to survive cold, snowy winters.

If the birds are alarmed, the entire covey will fly with a flurry of noise on short, rounded wings. They attain speeds of 30 – 40 miles per hour for short distances. Flocking is advantageous to the partridges, with at least one bird alert to danger while the others feed. When one flies, they all quickly take wing with no stragglers remaining to check out the predator.

Gray Partridges are gray-brown overall with russet



barring on the flanks and a cinnamon face. The males have a chestnut belly patch and females may have a smaller patch or, at times, none at all. The bill is small and gray. Typically adults average only twelve to fourteen inches in length.

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

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

The nest, on the ground, is concealed in grass or shrubs, often in a fence row. The shallow depression for a nest is lined with grass, leaves, or straw. The eggs may be covered with leaves or grass for up to 3 weeks during the laying season. Ten to twenty olive-buff eggs are laid. Gray Partridges have one brood per year, but if the first attempt fails, they are persistent re-nesters. The young can leave the nest almost immediately after hatching and can make short flights by the time they are two weeks old.

Gray Partridges are mainly seed eaters, but the young must have insects for protein to survive. The parents take the newly-hatched chicks to edges of fields where they can forage on insects. Both parents care for the chicks, the female leading them and the male acting as the rear guard. Both adults may perform distraction displays if an intruder is close to the chicks. They may act wounded or drag a wing to lure the danger away from the chicks.

Gray Partridges are wary gamebirds and even though they are widespread in Umatilla County, they can be difficult to find. They are most often seen from late summer through winter in grasslands and wheat lands in the southern half of the county. Numbers may have decreased over the past couple of decades, based on the apparent reduction in observations. Some of the best areas to view Gray Partridges include the Gurdane-Vinson Road and the fields around Ukiah. They can also be found occasionally along Mud Springs Canyon Road, East Birch Creek Road, and most of the roads and highways in between these places.

Contributed by June Whitten

2007 County Year List

ONCE AGAIN, THE Pendleton Bird Club is tracking Umatilla County bird



Kakya Taymut, Pendleton Bird Club Newsletter

sightings. This year's effort marks our fifth consecutive year of reporting bird species in the county. Tally results from previous years include 2003 (244); 2004 (259); 2005 (244); and 2006 (243). Thus far in 2007 Club members have spotted 91 species.

How many total confirmed species have been recorded in Umatilla County since records have been kept? Would you believe 301? Although most county residents would find it hard to believe over 300 different kinds of birds have been sighted in the county, Umatilla County hosts wonderfully diverse habitat that is attractive to both migratory as well as non-migratory species.

This year's list is posted on the Club's website at www.pendletonbirders.org. To view the list (as well as previous lists), click on the "2007 Umatilla County Bird List" link at the top of the page then scroll down to see which species have been highlighted (checked off).

To add your sightings to the list, report them to Dave Herr at dsherr@oregontrail.net. There are many species yet to be found for the year (150+), so we hope you can spend some time searching throughout the year for birds in the varied habitats of the county. A couple of species that could be in the area now that won't be later in the year are Bohemian Waxwing and Common Redpoll; both have been seen recently just to the north and to the east of Umatilla County. Pine Grosbeak would be another great addition to the list this winter.

If you see a rare/unusual species or one that isn't on the list, please provide details to substantiate your sighting and identification.

Keep on birding and reporting your sightings!

Contributed by Jack Simons and Aaron Skirvin

Florida Ivory?

FURTHER CLAIMS OF Ivory-billed Woodpecker, *Campephilus principalis*, are disclosed today [Sept. 26, 2006] in the Canadian online journal, *Avian Conservation and Ecology* — this time from Florida, USA.

Researchers from Auburn University and the University of Windsor report 14 sightings of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in forest along the Choctawhatchee River in the panhandle of Florida between May 2005 and May 2006. All but three of the observations were naked eye only without optical aids, and no photographs of the woodpeckers were

obtained. On two occasions, two birds were seen together.

In addition, on 41 occasions the researchers heard sounds that matched descriptions of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, and using automated listening stations and audio recordings from hand-held video cameras isolated 99 “double-knock” sounds and 210 “kent” calls. These, the researchers say, match historical descriptions of Ivory-billed Woodpecker acoustic signals. Examples of each are available as supplementary supporting material and can be downloaded at: <http://www.ace-eco.org/>

This evidence, the researchers state: “suggests that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers may be present in the forests along the Choctawhatchee River.”

“It would be wonderful to confirm that a viable population of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers exists.”

Greg Butcher, National Audubon Society

Last year [2005], Ivory-billed Woodpeckers were reported in Arkansas. Prior to those reports, the last fully documented USA sighting was in Louisiana in 1944, and many believed the species extinct both in the USA and in Cuba, the only other country where it occurred.

“It would be wonderful to confirm that a viable population of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers exists, and we hope the search by the Auburn research team will lead to just that,” said Greg Butcher, Director of Bird Conservation for National Audubon Society, the BirdLife Partner in the USA.

He added: “This announcement is a reminder of why it is so essential that we protect bottomland forests, wetlands and coastal habitats across the south-east, and these new sightings should reinvigorate efforts to find the bird in other portions of its historic range.”

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January Bird Club Meeting

Potluck: The January 11, 2007, Bird Club potluck was the usual success with a great array of food and much camaraderie among the 28 attending birders. The dessert table alone made everyone forget about their New Year's Resolutions!

Program: Aaron Skirvin presented a power-point program on the 14 species of winter sparrows of Umatilla County. If you have ever been puzzled over sparrow identification (and who

hasn't?), this program was just what was needed to straighten out sparrow identification.

Aaron's first identification tip was to check the sparrow for a plain or streaked breast. This immediately cuts down your search time, and with additional information on head and face patterns, tail length, and other color and size factors, you should be able to identify the sparrow.

The excellent photographs Aaron displayed were most helpful in seeing likenesses and differences in the sparrows. He showed familiar faces like White-crowned, Savannah, Fox, and Song Sparrows, often side-by-side with their rarer (in Umatilla County) counterparts: Golden-crowned, White-throated, Harris, and Lincoln's Sparrows.

Four more sparrows, which are in Umatilla County, but can be difficult to find are Sage, Swamp, and American Tree Sparrows and Snow Bunting. Birds we don't think of as sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos and Spotted Towhees, were brought to our attention as being in the sparrow family. Aaron asked the group to identify a bird known as a sparrow, but is not of the sparrow family. Several birders responded with the correct answer: the House Sparrow, which is classified in the family of Old World Sparrows. To end the program, Aaron showed several juvenile sparrows, little streaky birds that can be another identification challenge, especially in the late summer and fall.

Thanks, Aaron, for an excellent and informative presentation.

Contributed by June Whitten

December — January (2007) Bird Sightings

OF COURSE THE BIG BIRDING event for this report period was the Christmas Bird Count held December 30. A full report of the birds seen and other interesting statistics are included in a separate newsletter article. Well, the weather has turned really cold and although we have not had a lot of snow, the activity at my bird feeders has really picked up. It will be interesting to hear what others are finding at their feeders.

Connie and Russ Betts are continuing their inventory of birds seen in and near the Pendleton Community Park. December 29, Connie received a report of a **Bald Eagle** stirring up the **Mallards** found along



McKay Creek near the park. On January 9, Connie reported 2 male **American Wigeons** along with **54 Mallards** and one **Great Blue Heron** along the creek. The same day, Jean Wood found 5 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at McKay Neighborhood Park right before dusk. Jean thinks the birds may have been hunting mice, since they were not near water. On January 15, Connie reported a large number of **American Robins** in her yard eating juniper berries.

On December 22, I (Dave Herr) found 2 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at Pilot Rock. On December 26, Aaron Skirvin and June and Duane Whitten birded around Albee and Ukiah. Aaron reported no snow and few birds. They did see one adult **Bald Eagle**, a **Prairie Falcon**, 3 **Northern Shrikes**, 2 **Rough-legged** and one **Red-tailed Hawk** and one **American Kestrel**. December 28, Ron and Carole Louderback, birders from Kennewick, reported finding a **Prairie Falcon**, **Short-eared Owl**, a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** and a **Townsend's Solitaire** along the old Cabbage Hill highway.

Aaron and the Whittens started off the New Year with an "all county" birding trip. They started at dawn at Umatilla Marina and ended the day at the North Fork John Day River south of Ukiah. Their total count for the day was 72 species. Birding at the McNary Wildlife area the same day I was able to add two more species (**Hermit Thrush** and **Golden-crowned Sparrow**) to the county year list. The following day Aaron added 3 more new species (**Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Golden Eagle** and **Merlin**). Birding at the feedlots along Rencken Road in the northern part of Umatilla County, Mike and MerryLynn had a couple of great sightings. They were able to locate a pair of **Tricolored Blackbirds** and a female **RUSTY BLACKBIRD**. A **RUSTY BLACKBIRD** is a great bird to find in this county. The following day, driving along highway 395 north of the Gurdane road turn-off, Wayne and Patty Bowers reported finding a flock of hundreds of **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches**. For the past few years, this species has only been reported in the fall near Tollgate.

Jack Simons reports that a flock of several hundred **Canada Geese** is using a pasture near his home along the Umatilla River, although "Goose Simons" failed to report which subspecies. [Editor's

Note: "They all look alike to me!"] On January 9, while driving through downtown Hermiston, Jack saw a **Peregrine Falcon** land on top of a power pole. This could be the same bird Craig Corder reported perching near the Umatilla Electric offices several years ago.

After hearing about Mike and MerryLynn finding the **RUSTY BLACKBIRD**, the Whittens decided to check out the feedlots near Echo Meadows for unusual blackbirds. Although they found a huge flock of blackbirds, they were unable to find anything unexpected. However, they did find a **Great Egret** along Rosenberg road.

On January 10, Rose Scott found three **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** in a large flock of **Red-winged Blackbirds** near Echo Meadows. Rose also reported finding a **Red-winged Blackbird** with white on its wings and in its tail and over 40 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at the McNary Wildlife Area.

On January 13, Aaron found an unusual bird at his feeders. After viewing it for several minutes, he concluded it was a **VESPER SPARROW**. Although **Vesper Sparrows** are quite common during the spring and summer, they are almost never found here during the winter. Aaron has an interesting yard, because a few days later the **Eurasian Collared-Dove** again showed up at his feeder.

On January 13, Aaron and the Whittens drove to Milton Freewater again to look for the **Rusty Blackbird** the Dennys found previously. They could not locate any blackbirds, but did find the first **Ferruginous Hawk** seen in the county this year. On January 14, Aaron added **Horned Lark**, **American Pipit** and **Northern Shoveler** to the county list.

January 17, Lorna Waltz reported seeing a single **Varied Thrush** in her Pendleton yard. With the recent cold weather and snow, large numbers of **Varied Thrush** are being found in Western Oregon. It will be interesting to see if more show up in Pendleton.

On the same day, Colette Jakobosky reported finding **Say's Phoebe** near her home along McKay Creek. **Say's Phoebe** is an early migrant, but it is impossible to say if this bird returned early or stayed in the area all winter. Earlier in the month Colette found and



Rough-legged Hawk



photographed a **Northern Pygmy-Owl** and **Golden-crowned Kinglet** near her home.

Remember, again this year the Club is keeping track of all the species found in Umatilla County. The current list is posted at the Pendleton Bird Club website at www.pendletonbirders.org and is updated weekly. Please send all your bird sightings to me

(including new county year birds), Dave Herr, at 276-6413 or dsherr@oregontrail.net .

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