



Newsletter of the Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

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PENDLETON BIRD CLUB VISITS ISKUULPA CREEK



JENNY BARNETT PRESENTED “The Birds of Iskuulpa Creek” for the November 8th meeting. Jenny, wildlife biologist for the

CTUIR, explained the on-going research of the birds and the habitat on Iskuulpa Creek.

Livestock grazing is now banned in this area to allow some of the small willows, alders, and cottonwood trees to develop into mature trees.

Currently, small trees are fairly abundant and provide good habitat for some birds and animals, but larger trees are also needed. The area is also interspersed with conifers .

Bird surveys have been done in May and June since 2006. This is the breeding season for many birds in the area and the time when they are most vocal and most apt to be seen. The surveys are set up in specific locations and intervals along Iskuulpa Creek. The surveyor then goes to the marked location each time and listens and watches for 5 minutes for birds to record.

“Veery, veery, veery:” Dave Herr let the audience listen to each bird’s song or call; then Jenny’s projectionist (her mother) showed a picture of the bird to see if the correct bird was recognized from its song; then came a picture of the bird

with identification. The photos went from the bird seen or heard the least frequently (Veery) to the bird recorded the most times on the surveys.

There was quite an array of bird species present including Willow, Hammond’s, and Western Flycatchers; Western Wood Pewee; Steller’s Jay; Magpie; American Crow; and smaller forest birds such as Black-capped Chickadee; Red-

breasted Nuthatch; Cassin’s and Warbling Vireo; MacGillivray’s, Townsend’s, and Orange-crowned Warblers. The American Robin and Lazuli Bunting were high on the list but top honors went to the Yellow Warbler.

Jenny’s research also included the preferred habitat and nesting area for each bird, including which layer, ground level, mid-level, or top of the canopy, the bird utilized.

Thanks to Jenny and Dave for a most interesting program. Jenny also explained that the road up Iskuulpa Creek is open to the public and since the creek is quite near the road, anyone can enjoy the birds of Iskuulpa Creek. There is a trail at the end of the road which is also open to the public for about a mile up the creek.



Adult Veery. Photo by Mike Danzenbaker.

Submitted by June Whitten



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Club Meeting and Annual Fund Raiser

7:00 p.m., December 13, 2007

“The Birds and the Bears”

Presented by June & Duane Whitten,
Betty Klepper, and Fern Oliver

The Club’s fund-raiser will
immediately follow the presentation

Pendleton First Christian Church on
N. Main Street in Pendleton

Christmas Bird Count

December 29, 2007

For more information, see
announcement in this newsletter or

contact Aaron Skirvin

umatbirder@yahoo.com 276-1948

Bird Club Meeting and Potluck

6:30 p.m., January 10, 2008

Potluck starts at 6:30 p.m.

Program to be Determined

Pendleton First Christian Church on
N. Main Street in Pendleton

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., February 14, 2008

Jack Simons presents

“The Artwork of John James
Audubon”

Pendleton First Christian Church on
N. Main Street in Pendleton

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., March 13, 2008

Book Reviews by Russ Betts,
Haval Norman,
Nancy Brown, and Jane Holmes

Pendleton First Christian Church on
N. Main Street in Pendleton

Bird Club Meeting and Potluck

6:30 p.m., April 10, 2008

Potluck starts at 6:30 p.m.

Program by Dave Herr

Pendleton First Christian Church on
N. 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



The Big Sit!



HIS MOST SEDENTARY DAY of birding was held on October 14, with the Pendleton Bird Club sponsoring 4 circles for The Big Sit. This means the birders sit within a circle 17 feet in diameter and count the species seen or heard from the circle.

Jack Simons had his own private circle on the Umatilla River and Mission Ponds. Two circles were near McNary Dam, one at Spillway Park and the other downstream about a quarter of a mile where a nature pond is also in view. Birder's Digest, sponsor of The Big Sit, encouraged birders to select a location within a national wildlife refuge where possible. Thus, our fourth circle was located at Cold Springs NWR.

Aaron Skirvin, Neal Hinds, and Jenny Barnett recorded 52 species at Cold Springs NWR. This is a great species count for a 17 foot circle! Dave Herr joined them for part of the morning as did June and Duane Whitten. The Whittens did the Columbia River areas, where birding was rather slow and only 27 species were recorded. Jack Simons recorded 18 species in his circle, including Belted Kingfisher, Black-capped Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and, of course, a Great Blue Heron.

Wallowa County Birding Trip

THE PENDLETON BIRD CLUB'S JOINT birding trip with the Salem Audubon group will travel to Wallowa County (Enterprise and Joseph area) on January 19 to 22. Each group was limited to eight participants, and Pendleton Bird Club has eight people signed up.

We will stay in a motel in Enterprise and look for winter birds, such as Bohemian Waxwing, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. We are hoping for decent weather for driving, but snow in the Wallowa Valley will probably improve our chances of finding the target species.

The weather was a pleasant 65 degrees or so, warming up as the day went on. No wind or clouds to speak of made for very comfortable viewing. Some of the more unusual species were many Black-bellied

Plovers and a couple of American Golden Plovers, Greater White-fronted, Snow, and Cackling Geese, and a Peregrine Falcon at Cold Springs NWR. The Columbia River area produced Horned and Western Grebes, Marsh Wren, and Black-crowned Night-Heron among others.

The results of the circles have been sent to Birder's Digest to be combined with hundreds of circles from the United States and other countries. A winning "Golden Bird" is drawn, then the winning circle is drawn from all the circles who reported the "Golden Bird." A \$500 prize is awarded to the winner to be used for habitat enhancement.

Submitted by June Whitten

Bird of the Month — AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)

THE AMERICAN BITTERN IS RARE in Umatilla County, or at best is seldom seen or heard. The American Bittern is a very elusive bird and may be present in greater numbers than are apparent. They live rather exclusively in marshy wetlands with enough tall reeds and grasses to remain out of sight. Bitterns are well camouflaged with various shades of brown and a lighter breast heavily streaked with brown. Even though Bitterns are large birds, about 28 inches long, they are very good at remaining hidden within the dense stands of cattails, rushes, and grasses of the wetlands. They also often "freeze" in one spot, neck extended upward, until they blend into marsh vegetation.

The American Bittern breeds throughout North America with the exception of northern Canada and southern United States. Bitterns are migratory and are common in Florida, southern United States, and Mexico in winter. They are year-round birds in both coastal regions.

The female prepares a flimsy platform nest of grasses and reeds near the water level in a marsh. Here, she lays 4 or 5 buff or olive eggs and incubates them for about a month. The babies hatch with some down and mobility, but the mother takes care of them for 6 or 7 more weeks. They may leave the nest when about 2 weeks old, but remain with the mother.



The American Bittern eats small fish, frogs, insects, crayfish, and water snakes. Their feeding pattern is one of quiet stalking within the reeds of a wetland, another reason they are not frequently seen. They may be found in fresh-water or salt-water marshes.

The only obvious identification of the Bittern is its deep, gulping call, a repeated "bloonk." Its unusual call has earned it the nickname "thunder pumper." And, once you hear this impressive, "gulping" call emanating from a marsh, you'll immediately realize the source is the American Bittern. They are most active from dusk to midnight, so the call is about the most a Umatilla birder can hope for. Since Umatilla County is not known for wetlands, American Bitterns will remain a rarity on the county list. Bitterns have been heard and seen in the McNary Wildlife Nature Area and the Power City Wildlife Area, both near Hermiston.

Contributed by June Whitten

Corps of Engineers Announcement of a Bird-Watching Hike at McNary Dam on November 24

Editor Note: The following announcement of a bird-watching hike appeared in the *East Oregonian* newspaper late last week. If you've been curious about birding and wildlife in the vicinity of McNary Dam, this hike offers a good opportunity to become familiar with the McNary Wildlife Nature Area, located just below McNary Dam. McNary Dam is on the Columbia River about 2 miles east of the town of Umatilla.

"Bird watchers invited to McNary Dam

Bird watchers can learn about and see some birds that have made their homes near McNary Lock and Dam during a 10 a.m. nature hike Nov. 24 at the Pacific Salmon Visitor Information Center on the downstream side of the dam.

Participants of all ages are invited to join Park Ranger Doug Helman for the hike. People should bring binoculars and camera, dress warmly and wear shoes for walking on uneven surfaces. For more information, call 541-922-2268.

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 Lorna Waltz at clwaltz@eoni.com or 276-6353; Jeanie Jensen at ljensen@oregontrail.net; or Betty Klepper at klepperb@ucinet.com.

Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count Saturday, Dec. 29, 2007

HERE ARE THE DETAILS FOR THE 21st official Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count, which is scheduled for **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2007**. This local count is part of the national 107th 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) then click on the link to Christmas Bird Count.

Last year, 23 bird counters saw 72 species of birds, and tallied a total of 9,137 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 29. 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 four 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 on the next page:



- ◆ **Area 1** (Pendleton, Wildhorse Creek, Patawa 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, Upper McKay Creek, and Birch Creek)
June and Duane Whitten — home: 276-9019
- ◆ **Area 4** (Mission, Emigrant Hill and Poverty Flats)
Aaron Skirvin — home: 276-1948; cell: 215-0761

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 banquet room for us from 4:00 – 7:30 pm that evening. Please contact Aaron Skirvin (276-1948, home or umatbirder@yahoo.com) if you have any questions about the areas or feeder counts or how to participate.

LET'S GO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTING ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2007!!!

Contributed by Aaron Skirvin

October – November Bird Sightings

I WAS SURPRISED WHEN I LOOKED out my window this morning and found the ground was white. **Mountain Chickadees** have been reported from many lower elevation areas in the state this fall. Could this be a harbinger of an early and harsh winter? If so, perhaps some northern species not normally found in our area will be located.

Kathy Ramsey had an unusual sighting on October 21. Driving on Dorion Avenue, she saw a cat in the road standing over something. Because it did not move, she was fearful a car might hit it and stopped to check. She found the cat was “attending” an injured **Sharp-shinned Hawk**. The hawk was flattened out on the road, wings spread facing the cat. Kathy tried to pick

it up, but the hawk managed to fly up into low branches of an adjacent tree. Kathy said she hopes the bird was okay and until she interfered, could not get off the ground with the cat waiting to pounce.

On October 23, I (Dave Herr) checked the river below McNary Dam and found a **Pacific Loon** and at least 6 **Bonaparte's Gulls**. There also appeared to be 2 **Red-breasted Mergansers** mixed in a large flock of **Common Mergansers**.

The following day Aaron Skirvin and June Whitten checked the Tollgate area, trying to add some new mountain birds to the county year list. They did not find any new year birds, but did locate the first **Northern Shrike** reported this fall and a late **Osprey** at Langdon Lake.

One October 21, Aaron and June birded along the Columbia River. At Hat Rock State Park they found a **Common Loon** and at least 24 **Bonaparte's Gulls** near the boat ramp. At McNary Golf Course they found a **Merlin** and below McNary Dam found 3 **Pacific Loons**, and many gulls including several **Glaucous-winged**, one **Western**, one **Mew** and 35 **Bonaparte's**.

Checking Bluebird Boxes in the Ukiah area on October 28, Aaron, June and Duane Whitten located a single adult **Snow Goose** grazing with a flock of about 75 **Canada Geese** on the south side of Mossie Road. Aaron noted that there seem to be more **Snow Geese** in the county this year than in previous years.

While hunting pheasants on October 28, Craig Kvern flushed 3 **Short-eared Owls** at the base of the foothills south of Cayuse Road about 4 miles from Mission.

The following day, along Cayuse Road near Nichtyoway Road, Aaron found 4 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 1 **Rough-legged Hawk**, an **American Kestrel** and one **Prairie Falcon**.

On October 30, one of Connie Betts' neighbors reported seeing a “blue jay” at their feeder. Connie checked the area hoping to find an eastern Blue Jay, but determined the bird was a **Steller's Jay**.



John Gatchet, a Portland birder, reported finding 2 **Mew Gulls**, 1 **Pacific Loon** and a **HARRIS'S SPARROW** Below McNary Dam on November 6th.

Paul Sullivan, leading a Portland Audubon Birding Weekend trip to the Mid-Columbia River, found a **RUSTY BLACKBIRD** November 10 in a large blackbird flock along the Stanfield Meadows Road. In the Echo Meadows area the group found 7 **Tundra Swans**, 2 **Great Egrets** and a **Prairie Falcon**. At the McNary Dam spillway they found 3 **Pacific Loons** and a female **Red-breasted Merganser** among the 25 **Common Mergansers**.

Birding the Columbia River area on November 10, June and Aaron found a **Peregrine Falcon**, **Western Gull**, 2 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and over 20 **Pied-billed Grebes** at Warehouse Beach Park.

On November 12, June Whitten reported that she was able to relocate the **RUSTY BLACKBIRD** reported earlier; and thought there might actually be 2 **RUSTY BLACKBIRDS** in the large blackbird flock. June also reported her son Greg found at least 10 **Short-eared Owls** on a ranch about 14 miles from Pendleton on Stage-gulch Road November 6.

On November 14, Becky Hiers reported seeing a mature **Bald Eagle** near the heron rookery across the Umatilla River from the little league ballpark. Hopefully more Bald Eagles will be sighted along the Umatilla River as we move into the winter months.

Although not in Umatilla County, each year the Blue Mountain Audubon Society has an annual field trip known as "Tom's Turkey Trott" lead by Tom Scribner. Tom (a "tom turkey expert"

according to Mike Denny) leads the group in search of **Wild Turkeys**. On November 18, birding in Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, the group found **365 Wild Turkeys!** The largest number ever seen by the group in one day.

Connie Betts continues to census the birds at the Pendleton Community Park. This morning (November 19) on her way to the park she spotted **200 Cedar Waxwings** in the top of a tree in Betty Klepper's yard. She notes there are now 9 **Mallards** in McKay Creek and many **American Robins** in the park. Connie reports that waves of **Canada Geese** are now flying over as they travel between feeding areas and water.

As you probably know, there is an informal competition each year between the Blue Mountain Audubon Society and the Pendleton Bird Club, to see which club can find the most species of birds in their respective counties in one year. For the past several years the Pendleton Bird Club has been the winner. However this year things are looking bad for the PBC. Currently Blue Mountain Audubon has **252** species on their County year list while the Pendleton Bird Club has **247**. There is still time to add to our total and a lot of new winter birds could show up. So you need to get out and start looking. And please, send all of your sightings to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com or 276-6413.

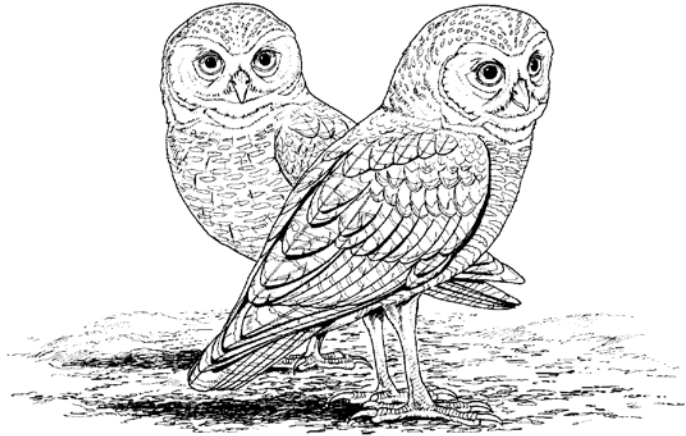
Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant

Editor for November :

Jack Simons 276-8566

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