



Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 5, No. 2 Pendleton, Oregon February 2007

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Topic of the Club's February Meeting

At the February 8 Pendleton Bird Club meeting, Lynn Tompkins spoke to us about the activities of the Blue Mountain Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center. The Center, which is located just a few miles south of Pendleton, receives, treats and rehabilitates injured wildlife, mainly birds, from a wide area of northeast Oregon and southeast Washington.

Many of us were surprised by the number of birds they receive at the Center each year. In 2006, over 300 injured or orphaned birds were admitted to the Center. Some are too sick or injured when they arrive at the facility that they do not recover, some are so badly injured they cannot be leased back into the wild, and about 50% are treatable and eventually released.

Most of the birds they treat are raptors: hawks, falcons, eagles, and owls. It seems that many of the birds are injured due to collisions with vehicles, buildings, fences, and other objects, often causing serious head injuries and/or broken wings. It's the Center's job, with the help of local veterinarians, to try to determine the cause of the illnesses or injuries and rehabilitate the birds if possible.

Lynn, who is the Director of the Center, showed slides of some of the birds the Center has rehabilitated over the years, ranging from an American White Pelican to American Kestrels. A few of the non-releasable birds are used as "educational" birds. These educational birds are part of the Center's active public education program that reaches out to school classrooms, civic organizations, clubs, and others.

The highlight of the evening was the display of a few of the educational birds: an American Kestrel, Northern Saw-whet Owl, and

Flammulated Owl. Of course, Lynn told the story of how each one arrived at the Center.

We thank Lynn and Bob Tompkins and the dedicated staff and volunteers at the Center for the valuable service they provide to the local community and the injured wildlife they rescue and rehabilitate.

Contributed by Aaron Skirvin

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Field Trip

Birding at McNary NWR

Saturday, March 3, 2007

Trip Leader: Tanya Harrison

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at
Pendleton Safeway parking lot (NE corner).

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

6:30 p.m., April 12, 2007

Potluck and

**Birds of Pendleton Community Park
presented by Russ and Connie Betts**

and Book Reviews

**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**

Field Trip

Cabbage Hill Birding

Saturday, May 19, 2007

Trip Leader: Aaron Skirvin

askirvin@wtechlink.net

Meet at 6:00 a.m. at Mission Market

Field Trip to McNary Wildlife Area – Retry!

Our January 27 field trip to McNary National Wildlife Refuge was called off at the last minute because of icy roads in the area. However, Tanya Harrison, the trip leader, has readily agreed to lead the group to McNary NWR near Burbank, WA on Saturday, March 3. Please see the announcement in the Calendar of Events in this newsletter.

Even though we were disappointed because of canceling the trip to McNary NWR on January 27, and as we stood in Safeway's parking lot mulling over our options, the group decided to make a short birding trip to Mission Ponds. Because of the cold weather, the west Mission pond was frozen over, but the east pond had

some open water and a number of waterfowl. But, the most exciting bird of the morning was a Virginia Rail that, in responding to the playback of a tape recorded call, practically walked over our shoes. We weren't aware the rail had crept so closely until it suddenly bolted and ran like a large mouse through the grass towards the pond. The lesson here: Next time you're out birding in rail habitat, beware of those creeping rails because they may nip at your ankles!

Pendleton River Parkway Clean-up, May 19

Saturday, May 19 is the date for the Umatilla River clean-up in Pendleton. The Bird Club will have an area to clean, so put the date on your calendar and come to Stillman Park at 9 a.m. Stillman Park is located at SE 4th and Byers. A great lunch is your reward for working on the clean-up. If possible, please be prepared to sign-up at the Bird Club meeting on March 8 as a volunteer for the clean-up.

Beginning at 6:00 a.m. on May 19, the Bird Club will sponsor a short birding trip to the Old Cabbage Hill (Emigrant Road). Remember, everyone is welcome to attend the field trips, regardless of your birding skills. Newcomers are most welcome, and May is a great time to hear and see the songbirds of this area. We will return to Pendleton in time to work on the clean-up. Questions about the clean-up or birding trip, please contact June Whitten at 276-9019.

West Nile Virus Update

Editor's Note: The following news release from last fall about West Nile Virus in Umatilla County may be old news to some, but it's worth repeating since mosquito season is approaching. The websites listed at the end of the release provide additional useful information on understanding and dealing with West Nile Virus.

Umatilla County Health Department NEWS RELEASE

October 13, 2006

For Immediate Release

Contact: Genni Lehnert, Administrator
Umatilla County Public Health Division
(541)278-5432

Ron Montgomery, Manager
West Umatilla Vector Control District
(541)567-5201

Volume 5, Number 2 February 2007 Page 2



Dr. Emilio DeBess
State Public Health Veterinarian
Oregon Department of Human Services
(971)673-1111

West Nile Virus Detected in Umatilla County

Pendleton, Ore. -- A bird has tested positive for West Nile Virus in Umatilla County. The bird was tested by the Washington State Lab and reported to Umatilla County by the Walla Walla Health Department. The bird was found dead by a land owner south of Pendleton at McKay Reservoir.

“This is the first case of West Nile Virus found in a bird in Umatilla County” stated Genni Lehnert, Administrator of the Umatilla County Public Health Division. Last year a horse near Milton-Freewater tested positive for West Nile but to date no human cases have been reported in Umatilla County. “West Nile has already been detected in 19 of Oregon’s Counties so we have been expecting to find it here as well. We have a good surveillance system in place and it worked exactly as it was supposed to,” stated Ron Montgomery, Manager of the West Umatilla Vector Control District.

West Nile is primarily a bird disease, and crows are especially susceptible. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on an infected bird and can pass the virus to humans, horses or other hosts when they bite. Genni Lehnert, Administrator of the Umatilla County Public Health Division stated “Most people who become infected do not become ill. Some may develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally swollen lymph glands or a rash. In rare cases West Nile may cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. Individuals with severe or unusual headaches should seek medical care as soon as possible. People over 50 are at an increased risk.”

“The risk of West Nile is low but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” said Lehnert. She offered the following suggestions to reduce the risk of exposure to West Nile:

- Get rid of old tires and other containers where water can accumulate and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito infested areas.
- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, making sure to follow the directions on the container.
- Be sure screen doors and windows are in good repair.

“The peak period for mosquito activity has ended and no mosquito pools tested positive for West Nile this season” says Ron Montgomery, West Umatilla Vector Control District Manager. “As nighttime temperatures dip into the low 40’s, mosquitoes will begin seeking shelter or begin to die off altogether” Montgomery said. Landowners are still reminded to remove any standing water on their property that may serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Local Officials and health care providers in Umatilla County have been notified of the virus detection. The State of Oregon has set up a West Nile Virus Information line. For more information please call 1-866-703-INFO.

For more information on the West Nile, visit the following web sites:

West Umatilla Vector Control District
<http://www.wuvcd.org>
Umatilla County Public Health Division
<http://www.co.umatilla.or.us/westnile.htm>
Oregon Department of Human Services
<http://gov.oregon.gov/>
US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>

Bird of the Month – American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*)

If you were designing a bird, who would have thought of a songbird that feeds mostly under water? American Dippers live near cold, rushing mountain streams. They seem to have no trouble with their footing on the slippery rocks. They can walk under water, and using their wings, can even "fly" upstream under water. Dippers do not hesitate to jump or dive into frigid, turbulent water to forage. Their feathers, like Penguins' feathers, are very short and dense so the cold water does not reach their skin.

While under water, they may turn small rocks to find their favorite food: aquatic insects, usually larvae attached to the river bottom. They also eat small aquatic creatures, fish eggs, and very small fish, and may take food from the surface while swimming.



Both males and females, 7 1/2 inches long, are solid, dark gray with slightly browner heads. The beaks and eyes are also dark, and the legs and feet are lighter gray. The juveniles are very similar, but may have white-tipped feathers. This coloration is excellent camouflage as they blend in very well with the rocks and boulders in a stream.

American Dippers, formerly called Water Ouzels, are named from their constant dipping motion. Unlike other birds that dip or bob, Dippers move their entire body up and down. They do have a white eye-lid, which they can flash. The dipping and flashing of the eye-lid may be a means of communication along the noisy stream. They do have a nice song, which is fairly loud to be heard over the sound of the rushing water. The song consists of rather high, trilled phrases in a steady rhythm.

American Dippers nest, usually very near water, on ledges or banks, even behind waterfalls. Some development has actually helped Dippers, as they readily nest under bridges. Both male and female build the mossy dome, up to a foot in diameter. The spray from the river usually keeps the moss alive during the nesting season. The opening is on the side toward the water, which leads to an inside cup of grass, leaves, and bark strips.

The female incubates 4 or 5 eggs for 13 to 17 days, while the male brings her food. For the first week after hatching, the young are brooded exclusively by the female, with the male bringing food for the family. When the young leave the nest in 24 to 26 days, they can swim and dive immediately. The parents continue to feed them until they are adept at foraging on their own.

American Dippers are year-round residents and do not migrate. They will, however, move farther downstream if their foraging area freezes over. They may even move to a different stream in search of open water with a food supply.

Since Dippers are often at high elevations on rushing streams, it has been difficult to judge their population increases and decreases. Many human activities, such as deforestation, pollution, and silt increase the stream temperature and reduce the food supply for Dippers. Dams and irrigation systems which alter water levels can greatly affect the habitat for Dippers. The American Dipper, like salmon, is good indicators of stream health.

Umatilla County is a very good area for finding Dippers. However, due to their fine camouflage coloration, it takes a little time and practice to locate them. Some good places to look for Dippers include the Forks of the Umatilla River and all along the upper portions of the Umatilla River, Harris Park along the South Fork Walla Walla River, Cable Creek, Camas Creek, and the North Fork of the John Day River.

Contributed by June Whitten

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

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

www.pendletonbirders.org

January – February Bird Sightings

Although spring is still a couple of month away, there have been a number of unexpected birds found this report period, including several that are sometimes not seen at all during a normal year. At the present time we have a great start on our 2007 County year list, which now stands at 130 species.

The Pendleton Community Park report – Connie and Russ Betts continue their survey of the Community Park and surrounding area (located along McKay Creek in southwest Pendleton). Perhaps their best bird for the report period was Connie's sighting of a **Greater Yellowlegs** on February 10. This was the first report for this species in the County this year. On February 4, there were two pair of **Godwalls** on McKay Creek, and on February 10, Connie found over **50 Mallards** along the creek. Along with large flocks of **American Robins**, Connie reports that **Belted Kingfishers** and **Great Blue Herons** are now being seen regularly. A pair of **Red-tailed Hawks** is also frequenting the park, and Connie wonders if they may be thinking about taking over one of the old Swainson's Hawk nests?

Although most of the local lakes and ponds were frozen on January 20, the pond at Hat Rock State Park was open and along with several hundred **American Wigeons**, I (Dave Herr) was able to locate a male **Eurasian Wigeon** and a male **Canvasback**. The same day Nancy Brown found a **Pine Siskin** at her feeder, and June Whitten and Aaron Skirvin birding at McNary Dam were able to add **Redhead**,

Volume 5, Number 2 February 2007 Page 4



Thayer's Gull and **Western Gull** to the County year list. Also on the 20th, Colette Jakabosky, who lives on Upper McKay Creek a few miles east of Pilot Rock, added two more species to the year list including **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and **Say's Phoebe**.

Birding in the Ukiah area January 21, Aaron and June added 9 more species to the year list including: **Pileated Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, American Dipper, Townsend's Solitaire** and **Red Crossbill**.

On January 22, Jack Simons' dogs flushed two **Barn Owls** along the Umatilla River behind his home. The following day Aaron was able to find 4 **Cackling Geese** as well as many American **Wigeons** and **Canada Geese** at Mission Ponds.

January 25, I was surprised to find 2 **Lesser Goldfinches** at my home feeders. The same day Dale Wilkins reported two **Red-necked Grebes** along the Umatilla River 5 miles below Rieth.

Jean Wood heard a **Western Screech-Owl** calling near her southwest Pendleton home on January 27.

Driving in the Ukiah area on January 28, Bob Tapley reported finding a **Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk** and a **Rough-legged Hawk**. He also reported 4 **Great Blue Herons** roosting in a tree near Jack and Sharon Simons' home near Mission. I also noted that a number of **Great Blue Herons** were roosting at the heronry across from the Melton Little League Park in Pendleton in late January.

Mike and MerryLynn Denny joined Ginger and Rodger Shoemake on their Northern Umatilla County Raptor Survey January 29. Highlights of the survey included a total of **221 Red-tailed Hawks** (with 3 **Harlins Red-tails**) and **5 Great Horned Owls**, a new record for this survey.

On January 31, Russ and Connie Betts reported two **Great Egrets** in Stanfield. This species is becoming a regular wintering bird in that area.

On February 2, I found an unexpected bird while driving along Mud Springs Canyon

Road, west of Pilot Rock. I was able to photograph a very dark, first year **SNOWY OWL** that flew across the road in front of me and landed on a fence post. Not a species I had expected to find, although I did find a small flock of **American Tree Sparrows** in the same area. This was the species I had been looking for.

February 3, Jack Simons ("Goose") reported a **Bald Eagle** and more than 100 **Canada Geese** in the Mission Pond area. The next day "Goose" found 3 **Bald Eagles** in the same area. On February 4, Aaron and the Whittens located 2 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in Stanfield. This is the first time this species has been reported from this area. They also found one **Great Egret**, a **Great Blue Heron** and two **Black-crowned Night-Herons**, all fishing in Stage Gulch Creek in downtown Stanfield.

Birding with his daughter on February 10 along Iskuulpa Creek, Aaron reported finding the year's first **Ruffed Grouse** as well as **Black-capped Chickadees, Winter Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow** and **Dark-eyed Juncos**. Aaron found a **Lincoln's Sparrow** along Emert Road the following day, adding another new bird to our year list.

Birding in the southern portion of the county on February 13, Aaron reported find 3 **Bald Eagles** along Birch Creek near White Eagle Grange. Continuing to the Gurdane area he noted several **American Kestrels**, a **Great Horned Owl** and a hunting **Cooper's Hawk**. At Gurdane itself, he found a lone male **Mountain Bluebird**, adding another new species to the year list.

Living up to his name, "Goose" Simons reported the first Umatilla County **Snow Goose** of the year at Mission Ponds on February 12. This immature Snow Goose was still present on February 19.

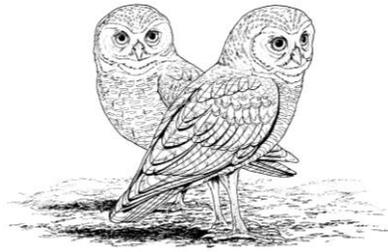
As I noted above we have a great start on our County list for this year. Who knows, maybe this year we can beat our 2004 year total of 259 species. Please continue to send all your bird sightings to me, Dave Herr at dsherr@oregontrail.net or call at 276-6413.

Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant
Editor for January: Aaron Skirvin
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Rough-legged Hawk





Original art work by John Green
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