



Newsletter of Pendleton Bird Club



Kákya Táymut

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



Volume 9, No. 12 Pendleton, Oregon December 2011

Bird Club's Annual Fund Raiser: Another Success

“I HAVE SIXTY DOLLARS HERE, sixty dollars, who will give me sixty five, sixty five dollars? Anyone give me sixty-five? Going,...., Going....., Gone for sixty dollars to the lady in the gray vest.” These words rang out over and over from auctioneer Sandi Hinds on the evening of December 8, when the Pendleton Bird Club held its annual fund raiser. Between the raffle tickets and the great auction, the Bird Club raised \$1,330.50, which enables us to donate to Blue Mountain Wildlife, Malheur Field Station, the churches where we are so kindly allowed to hold our meetings, to maintain the Club's website, provide honoraria to guest speakers, and have money left over for various projects.



The Bird Club owes a huge thank you to Auctioneer Sandi Hinds; Betty Klepper for organizing the fund raiser; Jeanne Jensen, a great cashier and keeper of the proceeds; and Lorna Waltz for her enthusiastic and efficient help as well. Lorna, along with Dale and Judy Wilkins, prepared the Rogers Fellowship Room in the Pendleton First Presbyterian Church for the event, and a big thank you to them for having the room ready for the evening.

Thirty-five people attended the auction and raffle, and most people went home with some new and interesting items such as bird books, bird food, craft

items, photos, and paintings. Thanks to all who donated items and to those who purchased them; we greatly appreciate your support of the Club. If anyone has ideas for new projects for the Pendleton Bird Club, please pass your ideas on to Aaron Skirvin.

Contributed by June Whitten

Potluck (Good Eats) at the January 12th Bird Club Meeting

BIRDERS ARE GOOD COOKS, too!!, and the Bird Club potlucks have proven this fact. Skeptical? Come see (and taste) for yourself — guaranteed good food on the evening of January 12, 2012. Please attend and bring a friend. The potluck, followed by Jack Simon's fun Humongous Bird ID Challenge, will help keep the winter doldrums at bay.

The Pendleton Bird Club meeting on January 12, will begin with a potluck at 6:30 p.m. at the Pendleton First Presbyterian Church, 201 SW Dorion Ave. Please bring a dish of your choice, your own plates and silverware, cups or glasses, and serving spoons or forks. We plan to leave the room at the church at least as tidy as it is on our arrival without anyone having to do dishes or much clean-up. Coffee will be provided.

In addition to the delicious food, our potlucks offer a great time to socialize with fellow club members and guests. We hope you are able to join us on January 12, 2012. Anyone needing additional information about the potluck may contact June Whitten at jwhitten@oregontrial.net or call 541-276-9019.

Calendar of Events

Christmas Bird Count

Friday, December 30, 2011

See article in this newsletter for details
or contact Aaron Skirvin 541-215-0761,
umatbirder@yahoo.com

Umatilla County Winter Birding Big Day

Midnight to midnight, Sunday, January 1, 2012

Count as many bird species as you can in one day
in Umatilla County, then report your species list
to Aaron Skirvin at umatbirder@yahoo.com

Bird Club Meeting and Potluck Dinner

6:30 p.m., Thursday, January 12, 2012



**FOURTH ANNUAL HUMOUNGOUS
ID CHALLENGE** (All new, more
challenging, exciting format!)

By Jack Simons

Pendleton First Presbyterian Church
201 SW Dorion Ave., Pendleton

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., Thursday, February 9, 2012

ON SAFARI IN KENYA & TANZANIA

By Dave Herr

Location to be announced

Wanaket Burrowing Owl Project

9:00 a.m., Saturday, February 25, 2012

Work Party to Maintain Artificial Burrows for Burrowing Owls

Volunteers needed to help clean and reset 8
artificial burrows at Wanaket Wildlife Area.

Contact Tanya Harrison at 541-429-7254
or TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org

Visit the Bird Club's website at
www.pendletonbirders.org



Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count, Friday, December 30, 2011

HERE ARE THE DETAILS FOR THE 25th official Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count, which is scheduled for **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2011**. This local count is part of the national 112th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. If you are interested in the history of the Christmas Bird Count and count data accumulated for the hundreds of counts across the country, please visit Audubon's website (<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>).

During our count last year on January 2, 2011, 20 bird counters, including 4 feeder watchers, saw 69 species of birds, and tallied a total of 8,580 individual birds in our circle. The Umatilla County 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, 2011. 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 can 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 and help count birds, each interested participant must contact 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, Patawa Creek and Riverside)
Jack Simons — home: 541-276-8566
- ◆ **Area 2** (Umatilla River and Cayuse)
Bruce Mayfield — cell: 541-969-8444
- ◆ **Area 3** (McKay Reservoir, Upper McKay Creek, and Birch Creek)
June and Duane Whitten — home: 541-276-9019
- ◆ **Area 4** (Mission, Emigrant Hill and Poverty Flats)
Aaron Skirvin — cell: 541-215-0761

Birders can also choose to do feeder counts if they have an active feeder within 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 4:30 – 7:30 pm that evening. Please contact Aaron Skirvin (541-215-0761 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 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2011!!!



Collared-Doves Pouring From the Sky

Contributed by Jim Ward

I'VE LONG BEEN A BIRDWATCHER. I was the president of the Grande Ronde Bird Club in La Grande for many years and my property lies on the south border of Ladd Marsh (my east fence borders Exit 268 on I-84). I see a lot of critters out here – especially migrating birds as I'm directly south of the big Ladd Marsh ponds. Recently, huge skeins of tundra swans (300+) have been flying overhead at tree level the last several days – truly awesome.



Eurasian Collared-Doves. Photo by Jack Simons, Enterprise, OR

Up until our last storm in mid November, 2011, I had quite a unique relationship with a flock of about 100 Eurasian Collared-Doves – ever since about mid-October. I have a pigeon loft on the bank of Ladd Creek which runs through my land. I've planted several Colorado spruce along the bank near this loft. The trees are about 25 feet tall now.

One evening I noticed my pigeons all looking skyward. They have incredible vision. Looking up, I could see some tiny specks high in the clouds. Soon I could see them circling lower and lower until I could tell they were Eurasian Collared-Doves. To my surprise they all landed near the creek, took a quick drink, and began flying into the spruce trees and spent the night. For several weeks afterward, this huge flock of doves came here to roost. Since they approached from so high I figured they must be feeding way out in the Grande Ronde Valley somewhere.

They're all gone now. I very much enjoyed this event. I'm still wondering if the cooing of my pigeons may have attracted the birds to this roost. Some of the doves would perch fairly low to the ground – not more than 20 feet from my loft.

The Lonesome Swan: "A fun bird to see when walking along the parkway..."

Contributed by Jack Simons

ONE OF THE MOST MAJESTIC and beautiful of all the waterfowl is a swan. Two species have been reported here in Umatilla County, the uncommon, but annual, Tundra Swan and the rarely seen Trumpeter Swan. So, when either species is seen it becomes somewhat noteworthy, but when one is seen "out of place" it is even more noteworthy. Between October 16th and November 26th of this year, three Pendleton Bird Club members reported seeing a solitary adult swan along or near the Umatilla River near Pendleton. Since all of the sightings were of a lone adult swan and they occurred within a three mile distance of each other, it can be reasonably assumed that this was the same bird.

The first sighting was on Oct. 16th, when I spotted a solitary swan (unknown species) at Mission Ponds mixed with a small flock of four Canada Geese. The



geese were nervous (hunting season had opened the day before) and took off, with the swan following a moment later. The swan easily kept up with the geese and appeared to be healthy. Having seen swans at the Ponds a few times before, I assumed the bird would continue migrating south.

However, on Nov 21st, club member Virginia Storey notified our club's Bird Sightings Editor, Dave Herr, that she had seen "a swan in the Umatilla River this morning where Wildhorse [Creek] comes in."



Birding and Wildlife Tales From the Clarks in India

Wildhorse Creek flows into the Umatilla River at the eastern end of Pendleton. The next day (Nov. 22nd) Dave wrote Virginia back saying about a week earlier he had looked out his window to see a swan “flying low up Wildhorse Creek” but he could not identify the species.

Then, on Nov 24th, Dave reported back to Virginia that he had been jogging “along the [River] parkway [in Pendleton] and at the [railroad] pavilion happened to look out and saw, at the mouth of Wildhorse Creek, what I am sure was the same swan that you



*Tundra Swan. Photo by Dave Herr, Pendleton.
Note yellow lores on the inset photo.*

had reported. I did not have my binoculars with me, so was unable to determine species. The following day I again saw the swan in the same location. This morning I drove to the same spot, the swan was still there and I was able to get a few photographs. Along with some other identifying characteristics, the yellow lores confirm this is a TUNDRA SWAN” (see photo). Dave noted this was “the third time he had seen the swan in this location and it would be interesting to know why it was hanging out in that area. Certainly a fun bird to see when walking along the parkway.”

On November 26th, Dave had been jogging and later emailed to say, “The Tundra Swan was at the mouth of Wildhorse Creek, when I passed the first time and was 100 yards downriver when I returned.”

And, that was the last reported sighting of our lone-some swan. By all appearances, the swan was healthy, but it is very strange that this bird was traveling alone because swans are gregarious by nature. It is also strange that the bird, which is normally quite wary of people, spent so much time in the river within 200 feet of the people walking on the River Parkway. We will probably never know why our “mystery swan” was in our backyard for more than a month but it was certainly a real treat for those who managed to see it.

Update: Barbara Clark, PBC Newsletter Editor, is in India working on the India Global Exchange Project. Her husband, Andrew, is with her, and they hope to visit New Zealand and Australia before returning home to Pendleton at the end of March 2012. Andrew recently updated their whereabouts via email after they hitched a ride on the back of an elephant to see tigers and all sorts of avian fowl. The following are excerpts from emails sent by Andrew late last month. All photos by Andrew Clark. Editors



21 Nov 2011

We're at Bjrani [India] today, a small guesthouse/hotel in the Jim Corbett National Park. Corbett is a premier tiger reserve and a very good bird watching site.

This morning we did something I had never dreamed of doing, or rather, something that just never occurred to me: we went bird watching in the forest/jungle on elephant-back.

At 7AM we left camp on our elephant for a birding trip into the forest. What a wonderful experience!



Barbara Clark (with the mahout) on her elephant.

The elephant walks very quietly and can go anywhere in the jungle, so there is no limit on where you can travel. It is so utterly quiet and peaceful, swaying back and forth with the gait of the elephant and hearing the fall of the dewdrops in the forest and all the while listening for birds and watching for tiger footprints in the sand or mud.



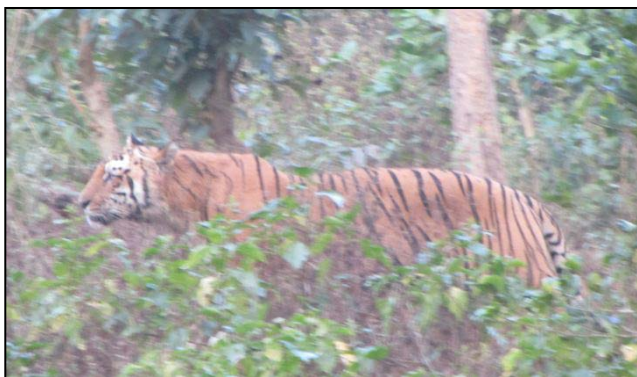
30 Nov 2011

Barbara is hard at work compiling our list of bird species seen, which is now about 225. We've been to the Kaleodeo (grasslands and woods) and Kanha Sanctuaries (forest and jungle) to the southwest of Delhi, and to Corbett Sanctuary (jungle/forest/grassland), Pangot (high altitude, steep forested hills and rivers), and Sattal (river and lakes in the Himalayan foothills) in the far north. The ecosystems are entirely different, as are the birds.

Certain birds make an indelible first impression, as do a lot of humans! A Spotted Forktail is a dramatic, almost flamenco-dancer sort of bird who, once seen, is impossible to be confused with any other species. A flock of Scarlet Minivets will always be remembered for both their chatter and their super streamlined brilliant red and black males and yellow and black females. A Himalayan Griffon Vulture is reminiscent of a heavy broad-winged bomber slicing the sky, and a Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler (it has no tail) is a rare treasure who prowls the underbrush more like a rat than a bird.

21 Nov 2011

Yesterday we were out on our elephant looking for a tiger and indeed we found a queen tiger in a very dense thicket, so dense that we could see only pieces of the tiger but never the whole animal. The mahout [elephant driver] knew approximately where the tiger was but when we got close (there were two elephants together at this point and the first elephant was perhaps 30 feet from the tiger) the elephants simul-



Bjrani male tiger.

taneously smelled the tiger and the tiger snarled, which is quite impressive at close quarters. The elephants staged a minor revolt, snorting and jumping and stamping and ours put up her trunk and trumpeted.

30 Nov 2011

I have a particular love for cranes and storks, and we've done very well in that category even including a pair of Sarus Cranes, the tallest of all flying birds at a height of 5.9 feet. Woolly-necked Storks and Black-necked Storks and Black Storks (neck and body both black) and Asian Open-billed Storks and Painted Storks - a wonderful variety for the 'storking' specialist!



Common Hoopoe

For anyone particularly interested in Woodpeckers there are 24 species listed in our bird book; for the Owl enthusiast, 32; for the Babbler nut, 55; and, Warblers come in at 68 species!! Needless to say, the most common species observed is *Indianicanus indeterminatus*, which is found throughout the Indian subcontinent.

21 Nov 2011

Birding has been very nice and we have greatly enjoyed it. So far we have about 200 new species after having been steadily birding for 10 days, but of course you start off in a new place with an empty pallet and the first few days you go gangbusters, e.g. our first day was 76. The rate of newbies drops off as you spend more and more time at it, however. Nonetheless we have gotten several spectacular sightings of relatively rare species and it is a real pleasure to have the experts confirm identification as "rare" or "very unusual" or "only occasionally seen".

30 Nov 2011

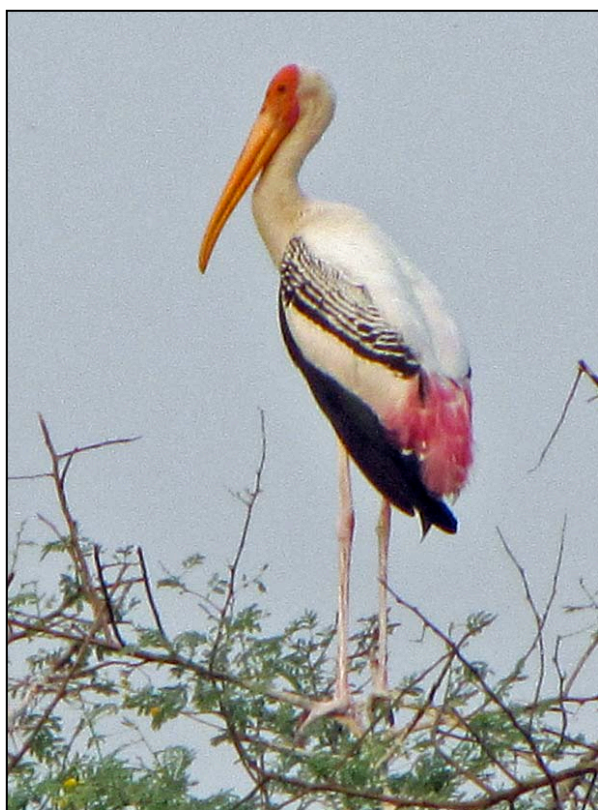
In addition to the great variety of birds there are the bugs and spiders and mammals and jungle flora and parasitic vines and wonderful ficus trees - on and on. One very special mammal is the Barasingha deer of which there are only about 350 in the world and found only in the Kanha Sanctuary — which unfortu-



nately is also a major tiger reservation. And another very special mammal for Andrew (a veterinarian) was wild gaur, the largest of all wild bovids (cattle) who weighs in at 2,200 lbs. Only elephant, rhino, and hippo are heavier than an adult bull gaur. This is a huge animal with great heavy horns and surely nobody you want to meet on a narrow forest path, night or day!

21 Nov 2011

So back to tigers. The next morning we were out early for another birding/tigering drive in our Maruti Gypsy, which is the India-manufactured heir to the Suzuki Samurai/Geo Tracker. Slightly beyond where we had turned on to that particular track was a lovely full adult male tiger sauntering along the road, going



Painted stork.

home after the night's hunt. We followed at a discreet distance, and when he turned off the road we went by to watch as he walked through the underbrush parallel to the road so we had a very nice time watching him for a kilometer or so.

And here is where the real adventure begins.

Shortly after that point was a Gypsy that had run out of fuel, so all the people transferred into a third Gypsy — about 12 or 14 people in that little open

vehicle. We had turned around and gone by them when our driver again saw the tiger lying in the lantana brush only about 20 feet from the road. We gestured to the Gypsy with all the people that the tiger was ***right there!***

As all of those people stood there in their little open Gypsy, totally exposed (no top, no roof, no window – no nothing) when suddenly that huge tiger burst out of the brush with an enormous roar, charged the vehicle to about 4-5 feet, looked at the people straight in the eye and again gave a great roar (a very, very impressive sound from a 500 pound, 10ft. long cat), then turned, leapt into the brush, and disappeared.



Collared Scops Owl

27 Nov 2011

The following 5 days were spent in the steep, rugged northern India foothills of the Himalayas at relatively high altitude doing birding, and we picked up a couple of zinger species there. The air in the high country was pure and sweet and a pleasure to breathe (like Eastern Oregon) and the views of the high Himalayas to the north were astonishing — what an immense and beautiful range of mountains.

We're back in Delhi now at our cozy rest house/hotel, but with the smoggy air, and are contemplating the next birding safari which will probably be to the far south of India next week. Then the wedding celebrations of Benjamin and Gayatri and more fun in an entirely different context - this is great!

Good times indeed!

Andrew and Barbara Clark



Hummingbirds in Winter?

*Contributed by Robert and Sherry Sallee,
June Whitten, and Aaron Skirvin*

WINTER DOESN'T OFFICIALLY begin until December 21, but with nighttime temperatures hovering around 20 degrees, it does feel pretty much like winter. Most hummingbirds that breed in Umatilla County, the Black-chinned, Rufous, and Calliope, do head south usually by mid-September or earlier. But, then, there's Anna's Hummingbird, who is coming to hummingbird feeders in Eastern Oregon on a fairly regular basis in the fall. Rather than arriving in spring and spending the summer, Anna's are passing through our area in the fall or spending the winter here.

We have only 8 records of Anna's Hummingbirds in Umatilla County. The first Anna's was observed by Craig and Judy Corder at the mouth of Camas Creek (south of Ukiah) on June 22, 1992. It is not known whether this bird was nesting in the area. All of the other 7 records (all since 2006) are from the fall and winter, and 6 of those are from Pendleton.

Remarkably, one immature female Anna's showed up at Jennifer Karson Engum's yard in SE Pendleton on December 5, 2009, stayed most of the winter, and was last seen on February 24, 2010. It is not known where she came from or where she went when she left.

Some Anna's Hummingbirds must have wanderlust. Prior to the 1970's, the breeding range of Anna's Hummingbirds on the west coast was restricted to California. During the 1970's, they began expanding their year-round range northward into western Oregon, then western Washington, and finally into southwestern British Columbia. More recently, they have extended their range eastward into the Bend, OR area, where a few

spend the winter. In the past several years, more and more are being seen in the fall in eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and Idaho. It's probably only a matter of a few years before the first breeding Anna's Hummingbirds are reported from eastern Oregon and Washington.

As this newsletter goes to press, Sherry and Robert Sallee have a female Anna's Hummingbird attending their feeders along the Walla Walla River near Milton-Freewater. The Sallees reported that *"This year, we left our feeders up into the fall for late stayers, mostly Black-chinned,we had a total of 7 coming all summer. With only about two weeks separation, we watched as we were visited in mid-September by 2 Anna's, a large dark one and the other bright green. One is still with us...a beautiful full-grown female. She is much more skittish than our summer hummingbirds. We have 3 feeders going in our yard: two in the trees and one on our house. We bring in the feeders at night to keep the sugar water warm. Our Anna's stays in one of our trees and dashes to the feeders, and we have gotten some good pictures."*



Duane and June Whitten who live in SW Pendleton had two visits from Anna's Hummingbirds in November this year. The first was very brief on November 15. Interestingly, exactly one year prior, on November 16, 2010, the Whittens had one Anna's come in one day, and it also quickly vanished. This year, the second, and probably a different bird, came on November 25 and 26, 2011. Both days, the bird came in twice around noon and took long drinks from the feeder and quickly disappeared. It is highly likely they do not see it every time it feeds, but Duane has a good view of the feeder on the deck from his lounge chair, and he is often the one who first spots the hummingbirds.



*Female Anna's Hummingbird, Milton-Freewater.
Photo by Sherry Sallee, Dec 11, 2011.*

Where these fall-visiting Anna's Hummingbirds nested or were raised poses a very good question. Why do they come through here in cold weather months is another good question?



There have been several reports of Anna's Hummingbirds in La Grande, Enterprise, and Walla Walla this fall. Anna's Hummingbirds are fairly common west of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountains and into southwestern Arizona, where they are year-round residents. They are the earliest hummingbirds to breed in North America, starting in some areas as early as December and on through June. They probably are breeding in the Bend area in central Oregon, so perhaps there will be some breeding in Umatilla County soon.

It now seems a good idea to keep hummingbird feeders up all fall and into the winter. It is a bit of a hassle in very cold weather to bring the feeders in at night and exchange a thawed one for a frozen one during the day. But, the sight of a winter hummingbird in Umatilla County is definitely worth the effort.

November – December Bird Sightings

By Dave Herr

IT SEEMS WINTER IS RAPIDLY approaching. Cold weather and for the last week, dark, cloudy weather with lots of frost tells us winter is near. Still, interesting birds are being reported.

Sherry and Robert Sallee, who live on Walla Walla River Road just south of Milton-Freewater, reported in early November that two hummingbirds were still coming to their feeders. A picture taken November 11, identified at least one of the birds as a female

Anna's Hummingbird. June and Duane

Whitten have also had a hummingbird visit their feeder on November 25 and 26 at their home in SW Pendleton. June finally got a good look at the bird and was able to identify it as a female **Anna's Hummingbird.**

November 17, Phil Ruud was able to photograph a **BLUE JAY** in his backyard on SW 30th Street in Pendleton. This is the only Blue Jay that's been reported this fall in Umatilla County. A

number of years ago several **BLUE JAYS** wintered in this part of Pendleton, and it will be interesting to see if any others are found in the city this winter.

November 21, Virginia Storey reported seeing a **Tundra Swan** swimming in the Umatilla River



Blue Jay. Photo by Lee Farren

near the mouth of Wildhorse Creek across from the Railway Pavilion on the River Parkway. See the short article by Jack Simons for more details on this unusual Pendleton city visitor.

November 24, Connie Betts had an **American Robin** and a **Slate-colored Junco** (a race of Dark-eyed Junco) visit her yard near the Community Park in Pendleton. The following day I (Dave Herr) did some birding below McNary Dam. At the main parking lot I was able to attract 4 sparrow species (**Fox, Song, White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned**) by scattering some seed. A few **Western** and **Horned Grebes** and **Common Goldeneye** were all I could find in the River. The male **Eurasian Wigeon**, reported earlier, was quite noticeable at the Spawning Pond along with a nice variety of other waterfowl species. Two falcons, one chasing the other which was carrying a prey item, crossed the highway near the Wanaket check station. Because of the traffic, I was unable to stop and make a positive identification, but they were either **Prairie** or **Peregrine Falcons.**



Bird Sightings



November 26, Neal Hinds found a **Belted Kingfisher** and the **Eurasian Wigeon** at McNary Nature Wildlife Area. At Hat Rock State Park he was able to get a nice of picture of 10 **Ring-billed Gulls** lined up on the spillway railing, a photo of a **Green-winged Teal** and a picture of his first sighting of the season of a mature **Bald Eagle**. Dolly Robison was surprised to see a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** in the sagebrush near the junction of Highway 395 and Pumpkin Center Road in Hermiston.



Ring-billed Gulls. Photo by Neal Hinds.

On December 26, Aaron Skirvin (Aaron), June Whitten (June) and Diana LaSarge birded from Pendleton to the North Fork John Day River. Their raptor count on the return trip included: 41 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 12 **Rough-legged Hawks**, 11 **Northern Harriers**, 12 **American Kestrels**, a **Merlin**, 3 **Golden Eagles** and 2 **Bald Eagles**. Some other species they found on their trip included a **Dipper** along the North Fork John Day River, **Belted Kingfishers**, **Clark's Nutcrackers**, **Red Crossbills**, 2 **Evening Grosbeaks**, 2 **Northern Shrikes** and 2 **Pacific (Winter) Wrens**, lots of **Common Ravens**, **Mountain Chickadees** and a covey of **Gray Partridges** in Jack Canyon, just west of Pilot Rock.



Fox Sparrow. Photo by Neal Hinds.

One great thing about the winter months is the return of the **Bald Eagles** to our area. November 28, Jack Simons saw 4 mature **Bald Eagles** flying down the Umatilla River behind his home

between Pendleton and Mission. Seeing mature **Bald Eagles** is always a treat.

Robert and Jeannie Kopp from Kennewick, WA did some birding over the Thanksgiving weekend in the Battle Mountain area. They were able to photograph 3 **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** near Battle Mountain State Park and a dark morph **Red-tailed Hawk** just below Nye Junction.

November 28, Tanya Harrison completed the Hermiston raptor survey. Her totals included 32 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 26 **American Kestrels**, 6 **Northern Harriers**, 1 **Bald Eagle**, 4 **Rough-legged Hawks**, one **Ferruginous Hawk**, 2 **Merlins**, and one **Prairie Falcon**. Tanya notes this is the first time running this survey that she found a **Ferruginous Hawk** and more than one **Merlin**.

Birding at the McNary Wildlife Nature area December 3, Neal Hinds was able to take several photographs of a **Fox Sparrow**. The same day, Aaron and June birded along Mud Springs, Spare Canyon and Alkali Canyon roads and then on to the McNary Area. June reports raptors were numerous with many **Northern Harriers**, **Red-tails** and **Rough-legged Hawks** as well as a **Great Horned Owl**, **American Kestrels**, a **Merlin** and a **Prairie Falcon**. There was a **Bald Eagle** at Hat Rock and one at McNary as well as a **Cooper's Hawk**. They found large flocks of **Horned Larks**, and June reported **Gray Partridges** continue to be plentiful. Birds



were sparse on the Columbia River with some **Common Goldeneyes**, both **Greater** and **Lesser Scaups** and a few grebes (**Western, Horned** and **Pied-billed**). The **Eurasian Wigeon** was still at McNary Ponds along with the usual ducks and a few **Black-crowned Night-Herons**. They found 2 **Western Scrub Jays**, one near McNary golf course and the other across from the oak trees by the Fish Viewing Room.

December 4, Ginger and Roger Shoemake along with Mike and MerryLynn Denny completed the December 100-mile-long Northern Umatilla County Raptor Survey, which is located near Milton-Freewater. Their count included **191 Red-tailed Hawks** (MerryLynn notes that half of these were black with 9 Harlan's, more than normal), **76 American Kestrels**, **10 Northern Harriers**, one dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk**, **2 Sharp-shinned Hawks**, **2 Prairie Falcons** and **2 Great-horned Owls**.

On December 4, Logan Whitten was at Warehouse Beach Recreation Area and reported there were lots of ducks and geese on the Columbia River. Of most interest was a large flock of **Snow Geese** he watched circle and finally land on the river. Logan estimated there might have been up to **5,000** geese in the flock, which would be the largest flock of **Snow Geese** reported in the county. A few days later, Laci Bristow, biologist with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, reported seeing between **4000** and **5000 Snow Geese** at Cold Springs NWR.

December 5, Jack Simons saw **5 Bald Eagles** about ¼-mile downriver from his house between

Pendleton and Mission. Three of the eagles were sitting on a cottonwood limb only 15 feet from the ground and only 60 feet in front of Jack (no camera of course!) Two of the five were adults and the others various ages of sub-adult. December 12, Jack reported that he continued to see **Bald Eagles** flying up and down the Umatilla River. He also notes that the 3 immature eagles he saw December 5 continue to hang out together.



Snowy Owl, near Burns, OR. Photo by Kelly Hazen who will be our guest speaker at the May PBC meeting.

December 8, Connie Betts had **4 Cassin's Finches**, an **American Kestrel** and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at her feeders in SW Pendleton. The first week of December, Dan Baum noted a **Tundra Swan** at Mann's Pond. The same week, I had **Lesser Goldfinches** visiting my feeders in NE Pendleton.

December 10, Neal Hinds found **3 Hooded Mergansers** at McNary Wildlife Nature Area and also found a very small (male?) **Red-tailed Hawk**. The same day Dolly Robison was surprised to see **3**

American White Pelicans flying in the fog near Hermiston. On December 12, Aaron saw a **Great Egret** in Stage Gulch Creek in Stanfield.

Common Ravens are a common bird in the county, but normally found in the rural areas and the Blue Mountain. Thus Dolly was surprised to see one on December 15 at the junction of SE 10th and Byers in Pendleton picking at something in the gutter. Also on December 15, Aaron and Diana LaSarge saw **2 Killdeer** and **2 Lesser Goldfinches** along Pendleton's River Parkway near SE 16th Street. On December 16, Sherry and Robert Sallee reported they continue to see a



female **Anna's Hummingbird** daily at their feeders just south of Milton-Freewater.

Based on some recent sightings, this could be a very good year for northern birds to show up locally. Tyler Hicks and Sidra Blake found a **SNOWY OWL** on the southern boundary of the McCormack Unit of the Umatilla NWR between Irrigon and Boardman. Earlier they found a grey phase **GYRFALCON** just east of their owl sighting. Aaron notes the sightings are located in Morrow County but only about 5 miles from Umatilla County. Other sightings around us include **Common Redpolls**, **Snow Buntings**, **Pine Grosbeaks** and **Bohemian Waxwings**. So keep your eyes open and report all your sightings of common and uncommon birds to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413.

November - December Bird Sightings

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