



Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 9, No. 2 Pendleton, Oregon February 2011



Sidra Blake on Long-billed Curlews: Our Fabulous February Bird Club Program

THE INTIMATE DETAILS OF THE LIFE of the Long-billed Curlew were presented to 40 attendees at the February Pendleton Bird Club meeting. Presenter Sidra Blake, a conservation biologist, ornithologist, and a research biologist, is a graduate student at Washington State University. Sidra is part of the Land Management and Research Demonstration Program with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She is currently studying Long-billed Curlews in the Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuge Complex out of Burbank, Washington.

Sidra uses several methods to search for Long-billed Curlew nests that include spotting them with scopes and binoculars, rope “dragging”, and spot lighting. Once nests are located they are monitored and when the chicks hatch they are radio tagged with tiny (1.4 gram) transmitters that have a battery life of 60 days. The newly hatched chicks themselves weight 50 grams. Sidra reports that her study shows low fledging success due to predators including Common Ravens, Black-billed Magpies, bobcats, coyotes,

raccoons, possums, skunks, and snakes. Those that survive leave the nest and travel further from the nest day by day, generally moving toward nearby cultivated land or more dense, taller grassland habitat for protection from the predators.

Sidra noted that Long-billed Curlews are currently breeding in the Columbia Basin and in eastern Oregon. In Oregon their numbers are increasing and in Washington they are decreasing. Threats to the curlew populations, especially in



Long-billed Curlew. Photo by Ingrid Taylor.

Washington, include habitat loss, contaminants, pesticides, invasive ground-cover species such as cheat grass, predation, disturbances during breeding, and crop management techniques especially during the nesting stage.

Nesting takes place from mid-March through June. Once the curlews begin arriving around March 15th, courtship begins with the males' territorial aerial displays. Sidra had several video clips showing the several rituals common to curlew courtship: a scraping ritual, grass tossing, and pre-copulatory "shaking" with a distinctive male "shaking call", all carried out near the nesting area.

Once the nest is established, the monogamous curlews lay an average of 4 eggs that both male and female help to incubate for 28 to 31 days. Only one nest is established each season. The curlews aggressively defend their nest, especially during the late stages of incubation. The adults also aggressively defend their precocial young, who leave the nest after about 24 hours. Differing from other species of ground nesting birds, the female curlew abandons the chicks soon after they hatch, leaving the male as primary protector.

Sidra's slideshow, complete with photos, video clips, and relevant graphics, prepared the Pendleton Bird Club members for the arrival of these long-billed



Jack Simons and guest speaker Sidra Blake chat after her presentation on Long-billed Curlews.

shrub-steppe residents who will soon be returning to the Echo Meadows area in Umatilla County. For an even more up-close and personal experience with the Long-billed Curlews read the following invitation from Sidra.

By Barbara Clark

*Long-billed Curlew (Numenius americanus):
North America's largest shorebird. 19-*

25", wingspan 23", long legged, long neck, with extremely long decurved bill 8.75".

Upperparts mottled brown. Has plain crown; underparts buffy and subtly streaked; underwings are bright cinnamon; has pale gray legs. Immature has shorter bill and is paler. Similar species: Whimbrel has distinct head stripes, lacks cinnamon underwings, and has shorter down-curved bill. Marbled Godwit has long, straight or slightly up-curved bill and dark legs.

Would you like to spend a half day finding curlews with Sidra??

Sidra invites anyone interested to join her ANY DAY from **mid-April through June!** Contact her: Sidra_blake@fws.gov to set up your opportunity to spend time in the field with curlews.

Thank You To

**Lorna Waltz
Diana LaSarge
Bruce Mayfield
Becky Hiers....**

**for the tasty
February Bird Club Meeting
Refreshments!**



Calendar of Events

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 10, 2011

3rd ANNUAL HUMONGOUS ID CHALLENGE

Presented by Jack Simons

Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton

Bird Club Field Trip

GREAT GRAY OWLS AT SPRING CREEK

Saturday, May 7, 2011

Meet at 7 a.m. at
Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
(NE Corner)

For more information contact
Dave Herr: 541-276-6413 or
dsherr1@mac.com

Bird Club Field Trip

SANDHILL CRANES AT ECHO MEADOWS

Saturday, March 26, 2011

Meet at 8 a.m. at
Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
(NE Corner)

For more information contact Aaron Skirvin:
541-215-0761 or umatbirder@yahoo.com

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., Thursday, May 12, 2011

Program by Noah Strycker **Program Title TBA**

Pendleton Presbyterian Church
201 SW Dorion St., Pendleton

Bird Club Meeting & Potluck Dinner

6:30 p.m., Thursday, April
14, 2011

Potluck starts at 6:30 followed by
Presentation by Mike Denny

Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton

Bird Club Field Trip

EARLY MORNING AT MISSION PONDS

Saturday, May 21, 2011

Meet at 6:30 a.m. at
Mission Ponds
For more information contact Jack Simons:
styletoil@eoni.com



Bird Club Field Trip

**AN EVENING OF
HUMMINGBIRDS
AT MCKAY CREEK**

Thursday, June 2, 2011

**Meet at 6 p.m. at
Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
(NE Corner)**

For more information contact Aaron Skirvin: 541-215-0761 or umatbirder@yahoo.com

Bird Club Picnic

Saturday, July 23, 2011

**Meet at 7 a.m. at
Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot (NE
Corner)
for birding at Tollgate and Summit
Road.**

**Or meet at Emigrant Springs State
Park**

at 1:00 p.m. for the picnic.

For more information contact Aaron Skirvin: 541-215-0761 or umatbirder@yahoo.com

Bird Club Field Trip

**UKIAH AND TOWER BURN
BIRDING**

Saturday, June 11, 2011

**Meet at 6 a.m. at
Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
(NE Corner)**

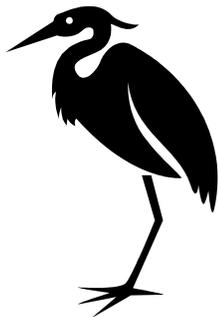
For more information contact Aaron Skirvin: 541-215-0761 or umatbirder@yahoo.com

Little League Heronry Goes Active

GREAT BLUE HERONS HAVE ONCE again claimed their nesting sites at the rookery near the River Parkway in Pendleton. The nesting trees are directly across the Umatilla River from the Little League Park, and this site has been traditionally called the Little League Heronry. The heronry is readily visible from the Parkway at the Little League ballfields.

Virginia Storey reported seeing several adult herons on some of the nests on February 9. On February 17, Duane and June Whitten counted 13 nests with 16 adult Great Blue Herons standing on the nests. There may be some repairs needed for the nests, but they appear to be in pretty good shape and ready for the egg-laying process.

Updates will be given on the nesting progress. Any input or observations of the heronry from Bird Club members is very welcome and encouraged. Please send your questions and observations to June Whitten at jwhitten@oregontrail.net.



Pendleton Bird Club Visits Wallowa County

By June Whitten

EVIDENCE THAT THE BIRDERS WHO went to Wallowa County on a Pendleton Bird Club overnight-field trip had a great time were

comments like these: “Why didn’t we stay longer?” “When can we go back?” “When is the Bird Club having another long-weekend field trip?” It did seem everyone enjoyed the weekend very much with a good mix of birding, enjoying the gorgeous scenery, and enough social get-togethers just for fun!



On Saturday evening during dinner in Joseph, everyone related their “bird of the day.” Several birds made the list including a cooperative Prairie Falcon; a stooping or displaying Golden Eagle; a wonderful flock of Bohemian Waxwings enjoying juniper berries in Lostine; a very wary covey of Gray

Partridge, which finally left their hiding place long enough to fly across the road and again take cover in the tall grass on the hillside; a large group, maybe 40, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, which arrived at their roosting site right on time at 3:32 p.m. The rosy-finches put on a great show, landing on the power lines, the metal granaries, and finally going to the old wooden granary where they clung to the wooden sides like a swift might do before getting into the eaves and other nooks and crannies of the building for the night.



Rusty Blackbird, female. Photo by Jack Simons.

George and Leeann Ruby led the group on an interesting side trip to a Century Farm, The 6 Ranch, originally the McAllister farm, out of Enterprise. Where the Wallowa River goes through the ranch, the stream has been rehabilitated to include the original meandering of the stream. Here in a shed, an old

American Dipper’s nest was found. This is the first time any of us had seen a Dipper nest in a building! Speaking of Dippers, they were plentiful at Wallowa Lake on Sunday morning where the Wallowa River flows into the lake.

Possibly the “trip bird” was a female Rusty Blackbird found near the Cross Saber Ranch on the road to the Ferguson Ridge Ski Area out of Joseph. This very cooperative bird posed for pictures, stayed in her bush while everyone got out and admired her, and seemed to know she was the center of attention.

Other wildlife included numerous White-tailed Deer, which are fairly recent inhabitants of Wallowa County, and 3 Red Foxes.

Participants on the Wallowa County trip: Connie Betts, Leeann and George Ruby, Aaron Skirvin, Betty Klepper, Irene and Steve Willard, Jack Simons, Lorna Waltz, Becky Hiers, Tanya Harrison, Ann Wyatt, and June and

Duane Whitten. Also joining us for most of the weekend was Terre and Mark Mercier from Tri-cities.



BIRD OF THE MONTH— COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

By June Whitten

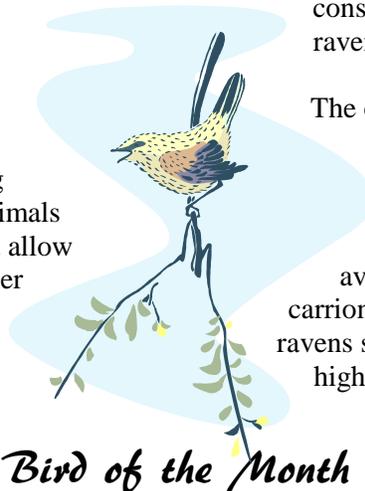
THE COMMON RAVEN IS possibly the most intelligent of all birds. It has the largest brain of any bird species and has displayed remarkable ability in problem solving, using imitation and insight in cognitive processes. Common Ravens have been observed manipulating wolves and coyotes to the site of dead animals where the canines open the carcasses and allow the ravens to feed. They watch where other ravens cache their food and remember the caches to later return and eat the food. On the other hand, some ravens pretend to cache food just to lead others away from the real cache.

Common Ravens also have a wide repertoire of vocalizations, up to 15 to 30, some of which are to call other ravens, give alarm calls, chase calls, and flight calls. The familiar deep prrk-prrk-prrk call is often heard, but the more complex vocabulary includes a high, knocking toc, toc, toc, and grating kraa, a low guttural rattle and some calls of an almost musical nature.

The Common Raven has the largest range of any member of the genus, ranging throughout the Arctic and temperate zones in North American and Eurasia to the deserts of North Africa, and to islands in the Pacific Ocean. There are several sub-species, but at this time all are considered Common Ravens, known in some areas as Northern Raven. They do not migrate but may move for food sources, especially in their far northern ranges.

An adult raven may be 22 to 30 inches in length and weigh 1.5 to over 4 pounds. Common Ravens from

the colder regions average slightly larger and have larger bills. They are over-all black, but appear iridescent in sunlight. The tail is wedge-shaped and feathers around the throat and bill are somewhat shaggy distinguishing the Common Raven from its cousin, the American Crow. Usually, the raven is considerably larger than a crow, but a small raven may not be much larger than some crows.



Bird of the Month

The overall population of Common Ravens appears to be holding quite steady. This is in part due to the opportunistic diet of the ravens, which may vary widely according to location, season, and availability of food. They often feed on carrion, much of it provided by road kill. Some ravens seem to “patrol” certain stretches of highways for carrion, a primary food source. They like various foods such as those found in dump sites, and their diet may include plants such as cereal grains, berries, and fruit.

Juveniles begin to court at a young age, but may not bond for two or three years. Aerial acrobatics, demonstrations of intelligence, and ability to provide food are key behaviors of courting. Once paired, they tend to nest together for life and usually in the same location. Breeding pairs must have a territory of their own before they begin the nest-building and reproduction cycle. This territory is aggressively defended. The nest is a deep bowl made of large sticks and twigs, bound with a layer of roots, mud, and bark and lined with softer material, often deer fur. Females lay 3 to 7 bluish-green, brown-blotched eggs, and the 18 to 21 days of incubation is done solely by the female, with the male in attendance and bringing food. The young fledged at 35 to 42 days and are fed by both parents. The juveniles stay with their parents for about 6 months

after fledging. In most of their range, egg laying begins in late February, but in colder climates it is often April. The adults are very successful in



Common Raven. Photo by Joy Jaepger.



protecting their young from predators, due to their large size, numbers, and cunning. They have been observed dropping stones on potential predators that venture close to their nests.

Common Ravens usually travel with their mates and may form a small flock with juveniles. They seem to exclude other ravens from the group and are often quarrelsome. They do demonstrate great devotion to



their families, and their differences with other flocks appear to vanish toward evening when large numbers of ravens usually congregate for the night in a common roost tree.

Common Ravens are known to collect and cache shiny objects such as pebbles, bits of metal, or golf balls. It seems the ravens, especially the juveniles, are extremely curious about all new things and are attracted to bright, shiny objects. Biologists have recently discovered that many birds are prone to play and ravens are the most playful of the bird species. They have been observed sliding down snowbanks and playing a sort of tag, catch me if you can, with wolves, coyotes, and dogs. Common Ravens have been observed making their own toys of sorts by breaking off twigs and playing with them. Common Ravens also do aerial displays, flying in loops and swooping high and low, apparently just for fun.

Throughout human history, the Common Raven has been a popular symbol in mythology and folklore. Probably due to their all-black plumage and possibly because they eat carrion, they have often been considered bad luck and an ill omen. Many native tribes of North America revered it as a god. In Tlingit

and Haida cultures, Raven was both a Trickster and Creator god. The Common Raven has been frequently featured in writings by well-known authors like William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, J.R.R. Tolkien, and perhaps more famously by Edgar Allan Poe in his poem, "The Raven."

"Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn, it shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore." Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

The Baltimore Ravens of the National Football League have a raven as their official mascot. No surprise, the raven's name is Poe, and they have had it since the Cleveland Browns relocated in 1995. In the wild, ravens may live 10 to 15 years, but in captivity they may live as long as 40 years.

Common Ravens are common in Umatilla County and are regularly seen in almost any area of the county. Generally, they prefer wooded areas with large expanses of open land nearby. Most nest in these wooded areas, but a pair has nested under the overpass at Rew Elevator consistently for the past several years.

By June Whitten

Some of the information for this article is from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Raven

Birding Service Opportunity

River Parkway Clean-Up
May 21st – 9:00 AM
Meet at Stillman Park for instructions.
Contact: Betty Klepper at 541-276 8416



“MIND OF THE RAVEN,”

by Bernd Heinrich --

A book review by June Whitten

BERND HEINRICH IS A NOTED author and scientist. In his book, “The Mind of the Raven,” Heinrich explains his many investigations and adventures with ravens. All of his studies are done in the most humane manner, except perhaps for the author who spends hours in snow-covered blinds, high in wavering tree tops, and in his own Maine yard where he maintains an extensive aviary for breeding, feeding, and observing ravens.

Heinrich brings very desirable food for both wild ravens and those who come and go in his aviary. He is always on the lookout for road kill for them, and he patronizes a local slaughterhouse for carcasses and raven favorites like intestines, fat, lungs, hearts, and liver. He mentions a young son in the book, but never mentions if his wife appreciates ravens or the delicacies he provides them.

The cover of the book includes the statement: “Investigations and adventures with wolf birds.” Heinrich travels to many countries to study ravens, but some of his most extensive studies were in the Arctic regions. It was there he found ravens referred to as wolf birds as they often travel with wolves and share their food when a kill is made. The natives in the area maintain that the ravens help the wolves by finding game for them, and that the wolves open the carcass so that the ravens may feed. Also, many local peoples maintain that ravens show them where game is located and that

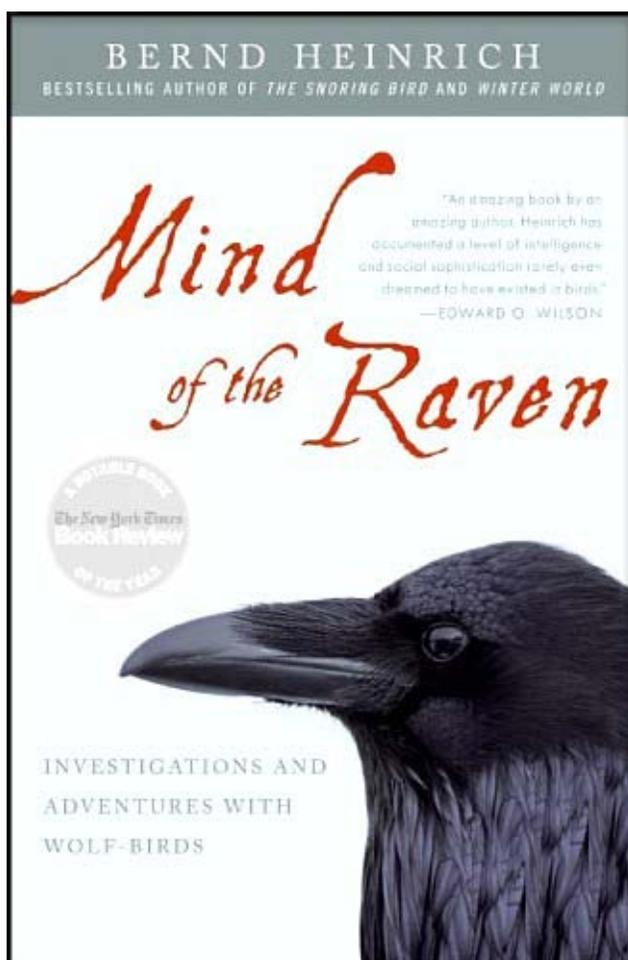
they, too, share with the ravens. Scientist that he is, Heinrich states these theories can be neither proven nor disproven.

Heinrich names most of the ravens and recognizes them by some small feature and by behavior. Both males and females have alpha or dominant ravens within their group. One pair of “Heinrich’s” ravens, raised in the aviary, but free to come and go, nested in the aviary. When the aviary chicks were only a week or so old, Heinrich acquired 4 orphan ravens about 5 weeks old. While the adults were out flying about, he replaced the tiny babies with the 4 orphans. When the adults returned, they spent much time walking around the edge of the nest and eyeing the large babies suspiciously. The large babies were putting up quite a fuss to be fed. Heinrich was about to remove them and feed them himself when the adult ravens began to feed them. He then replaced the two small babies and the adults raised all of them.

Many of Heinrich’s experiments showed great intelligence in the ravens. One such test included securing desirable food to the

end of strong twine tied to a tree limb. Most of the ravens learned right away to pull up the string with one foot, hold it with the other foot, and to continue this until the food was in reach. They also learned after just one attempt that it does not work to fly away with the food on the string as it jars them to a sudden stop.

“Mind of the Raven” is a good read for birders and anyone interested in animal behavior. Reading only a



chapter or two at a time does not take away from the overall content of the book. Heinrich has authored several other books including: “Winter World,” “Why We Run: A Natural History,” “The Geese of Beaver Bog,” and “The Trees in the Forest.”

A fun read sent in by one of our members in honor of the many Red-tailed Hawks we’ve seen this winter season.....

Old, but Unready to Be Rung Out
By [PETER APPLEBOME](#), NY Times
E-mail: peappl@nytimes.com

Fame can be a capricious thing, for any kind of beast. So no disrespect to [Pale Male](#), the über-hawk of Fifth Avenue, but he’s not the only raptor of renown in these parts.

As Pale Male’s celebrity grows in books, song and [the recent documentary](#) “The Legend of Pale Male,” a rural cousin has demonstrated equally remarkable, if less publicized, avian persistence.

She doesn’t have a catchy name (or any name), a fashionable perch or [Twitter](#) twitter (“Pale Male’s Central Park is infested with humans but he’s tolerant”), but the red-tailed hawk first seen just before Thanksgiving sitting on a dead rabbit on the white line in the middle of Route 17M near Monroe, N.Y., has quite a story to tell.

When finally contained, after a somewhat erratic journey, she was clearly old and infirm. But it was not until people were able to study the aluminum band that had been placed on her left leg when she

was 6 or 7 months old that they realized just how old she was: about 27 years and 9 months. Most red-tails that survive their first year — more than 60 percent do not — live about half that long.

Among red-tails whose ages could be documented, she was the oldest ever found alive in the wild in North America. She first came into contact with humans when Joe Morgan and [Pete Rose](#) were playing for the Phillies in the World Series and [Ronald Reagan](#) was president.

“Part of it’s luck, part of it’s genes, part of it’s being really proficient in what it does,” said Leonard J. Soucy Jr., founder of the [Raptor Trust](#) in Millington, N.J., where the bird is being kept at least through the winter. “It’s not that different from what makes you live a long time and stay healthy.”

Red-tailed hawks are large, adaptable birds of prey that breed from Canada to Panama. This one was almost certainly born north of New York City, and she was captured and banded on Oct. 15, 1983 — coincidentally, by personnel at Dr. Soucy’s center.

She has almost certainly traveled far since then, but



Palemale off 965 Fifth Avenue, Jan 23, 2011. Photo by Lincoln Karim.

her current acclaim began on Nov. 15 when a motorist, worried that the bird would be hit by a car, stopped to pick her up after seeing her feeding on a rabbit carcass in the road. When the bird didn’t fight him and wouldn’t let the rabbit go, he figured there

was something wrong with her and put her in the back of his van, where she perched on a mop handle.

There were a few stops and missteps. She escaped when a worker at [Sterling Forest State Park](#) in New York tried to transport her in a banker’s box, but she was picked up the next day on the same highway and



Update from Malheur Field Station

Help us spread the word about Malheur Field Station: become a friend of our new Facebook page! Simply log onto Facebook.com and enter "Malheur Field Station." You should land on our Facebook page which now contains all 2011 workshop titles and dates, Station news, and photos. Shortly, we'll have Flipcam videos posted to share bird sightings, weather, Malheur Lake levels, etc.

taken to the Bear Mountain Zoo, and then to [Suzie Gilbert](#), a wild-bird rehabilitator in Garrison, N.Y.

Ms. Gilbert fed her for a few days, realized the hawk had a respiratory problem of some kind that needed extra care and took her to Dr. Soucy's raptor center, where the red-tail has been given food, medicine and treatment for a hairline fracture of a wing. The bird will be fed and observed at least through the winter. If she is fully healed and able to fly, she will probably be released back into the wild.

Things have improved for red-tails since regulators began to curb the use of DDT and other harmful pesticides. And in some ways, the cleared landscape of highways and subdivisions has made it easier for them to find safe perches to hunt for mice, rats, squirrels and ferrets.

In other ways, our comfort zone is their nightmare, in which a bird like this one over the years has managed to escape plate-glass windows, electrified utility lines, speeding cars, hunters' rifles, windmill blades and other perils. City hawks, like Pale Male, face particular dangers from rats feeding on rat poison, which can kill both predator and prey, though there is plenty of rat poison in the country as well.

As we are, a hawk is bred for survival and without concern for its victims in a world in which predator eventually becomes prey. So you romanticize it at your peril. Still, old age can be its own reward, burden or miracle. As we get older, this time of year feels as much about survival as about celebration, a time when, if we're lucky, we find a secure perch for a few quiet weeks, to look back on obstacles

overcome, mazes run, bullets dodged, refuges found. A holiday season shout-out to this tough old bird and to assorted tough birds, old and young, down here on the ground.

January – February Bird Sightings

By Dave Herr

FEBRUARY IS NOT THE MOST exciting month for birding and brevity of this column seems to substantiate this. However, the nice thing about February is that spring is just around the corner, and there are already signs of things to come. Several folks have reported **Great Blue Herons** are starting to "hang out" at the local heronries. Barbara Clark reports the **California Quail** around her home are starting to pair up and Jack Simons "pet" **Canada Geese** are starting to pair. Jack also reports the **Red-winged Blackbirds** are "singing up a storm at Mission Ponds. January 29, Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and June stopped at the junction of Highway 395 and Gurdane Road and spotted an early swallow, but were unable to identify which species. The first report of migrating **Sandhill Cranes** in the Echo Meadows area February 12, is another harbinger of things to come.



During the past report period a number of people have reported seeing **Varied Thrushes** in the area. January 20, June Whitten (June) reported seeing one under her feeders in Grecian Heights in Pendleton. Neal Hinds reported seeing one in a neighbor's yard near his Hermiston home on January 18. And, Connie Betts had one in her yard in SW Pendleton on February 16.

Dan Baum makes periodic trips to Lexington in Morrow County and has spotted several **Spotted Towhees** and **Western Scrub-Jays** in residential yards on several of his trips.

Checking the Pendleton Community Park on January 19, Connie Betts found 2 **Common Mergansers** in McKay Creek.



Birding in the McNary Dam area January 22, Neal Hinds was able to photograph **Redheads**, an immature **Tundra Swan**, 2 **Bald Eagles** a **Northern Flicker**, **Gadwall** and an **Orange-crowned**

Warbler. **Orange-crowned Warblers** are rare in our area during the winter months. Photographing in the same area January 29, Neal was able to get photographs of **Canada Geese**, a **Snow Goose**, a female **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Tundra Swans**, a **Common Goldeneye** and 3 **Buffleheads**.

Dan Baum had a “double eagle” day on January 23. About a mile after turning off Despain Gulch Road onto Edwards Road (a few miles NE of Stanfield), Dan spotted a large raptor which he was surprised to see was a mature **Bald Eagle**. Later, checking around the McNary Dam area, Dan spotted another **Bald Eagle** a couple hundred feet north of the Oregon Fish View Room.



Bald Eagle, adult. Photo by Neal Hinds.

rumped Warblers, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, 8 Greater Yellowlegs and their first **Killdeer** for the year.

February 11, June and Aaron birded around the local area, with a final tally of 48 species, pretty good for this time of year. In the Stanfield and Echo Meadows area they found the expected waterfowl species. They found **Savannah** and **White-crowned Sparrows** along Emert Road and a **Great Egret** and **Wilson’s Snipe** near Stanfield. Driving along Alkali Canyon Road about 4 miles south of Highway 74, they found a group of 5 **Gray Partridges** and a large group of hen **Ring-necked Pheasants**. June notes the **Wild Turkeys** are still hanging out along Highway 244 just east of Ukiah. **Northern Harriers** were plentiful and they found a few **Red-tailed** and **Rough-legged Hawks**. On the trip they also found 4 **Bald Eagles** and 2

Golden Eagles. June reports **Northern Shrikes** continue to be plentiful and **Red-winged** and **Brewer’s Blackbirds** are increasing in numbers.

Aaron, June and Jack Simons went birding on February 12. Along the Columbia River they found **Western, Horned, Pied-billed** and one **Eared Grebe**. Two female **Greater Scaups** were in the Columbia River at Warehouse Recreation Area and was a new county bird for the year. The ponds at McNary Wildlife Nature Area are now partially drained and it appears many of the **American Wigeon** (and one

Eurasian Wigeon) have moved from this area to Hat Rock State Park. **Great Horned Owls** normally start nesting in February, and the group confirmed this by sighting one on a nest along South Juniper Canyon

I (Dave Herr) had a surprise when I found a **Pileated Woodpecker** in my Mount Hebron yard in NE Pendleton on February 4. I have also periodically been seeing **Lesser Goldfinches** at my feeders during January and February.



Pileated Woodpecker. Photo by Dave Herr from his backyard.

Rose Scott lives near the Mission grain elevators. On February 5, she looked out her kitchen window and counted at least 30 **Eurasian Collared-Doves**. She notes the doves are attracted to the spilled grain around the elevators. Nancy and Lyle Brown checked the Echo Meadows area for **Sandhill Cranes** February 6. Although they did not find any cranes, Nancy reports they did find 20-30 **Tundra Swans**, “tons” of hawks, **Yellow-**



Road. There were 4 or 5 **Western Scrub-Jays** hanging out around the McNary fish viewing room. During their trip, they tallied a total of 53 species, which included a **Golden** and several **Bald Eagles**, **Northern Harriers**, both phases of **Red-tailed Hawk**, 2 **Rough-legged Hawks** and a possible **Ferruginous Hawk**.

February 12, Barbara and Andrew Clark drove to Echo Meadows where they found 8 **Sandhill Cranes**. They also found 4 **Great Blue Herons** at the Echo heronry and spotted more herons along the Umatilla River. The following day Barbara and Andrew drove the Gurdane Road from Highway 395. Barbara

reports they were delighted to find a flock of **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** flying in and out of the **Cliff Swallow** nests on the rocky wall just 3.9 miles south of Vinson on the east side of the road. I've seen rosy-finches roosting in Cliff Swallow nests during the winter along the Snake River in northern Walla Walla County, but this is the first report I've heard of this behavior in Umatilla County. During their trip they also spotted a nesting **Great Horned Owl** in Coombs Canyon and 8 **Short-eared Owls** along the Alkali Canyon and Mud Canyon Roads just before dusk. Other species of interest spotted included 2 **Golden** and one **Bald Eagle**, a **Northern Shrike**, 5 **Chukars**, numerous **Horned Larks**, and among many **American Kestrels**, 2 eating their prey on telephone wires.

February 14, Aaron checked the area where Barbara and Andrew found the **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches**. Aaron reported he was able to find finches



Gray-crowned Rosy-finch. Photo from <http://bobsbirding.blogspot.com/>

at the site described by the Clarks, but reported that when he stopped the car, the finches fluttered around the cliffs, for some reason acting jumpy. Checking another Cliff Swallow nest site about ½-mile up the road, he was unable to find any additional finches, but did spot an early **Say's Phoebe**.

February 12, Neal Hinds spent the day at Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge. He reports he had a fairly good day with 31 species sighted including hundreds of **Northern Pintails** and at least 27 **Tundra Swans**.

While driving up NW 10th Street in Pendleton on February 16, Millie Grilley was surprised to see a **Pileated Woodpecker** flying

in front of her car. Also on February 16, Connie Betts saw **21 Eurasian Collared-Doves** in her SW Pendleton yard.

Late winter and early spring are really fun times to be birding. We can expect early migrants starting to arrive in our area and birding will continue to get better. Please report all your sightings (early migrants as well as local birds) to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413.

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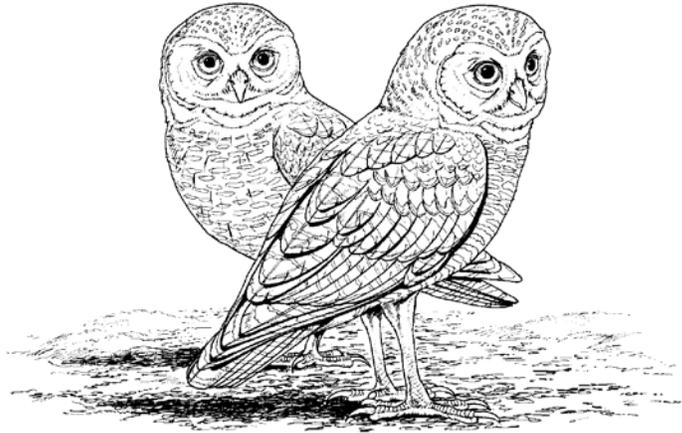
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