



Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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



Volume 9, No. 6 Pendleton, Oregon June 2011

EXTRA! EXTRA!! EXTRA!!!

New Publication: “Birder’s Guide to Umatilla County, Oregon”

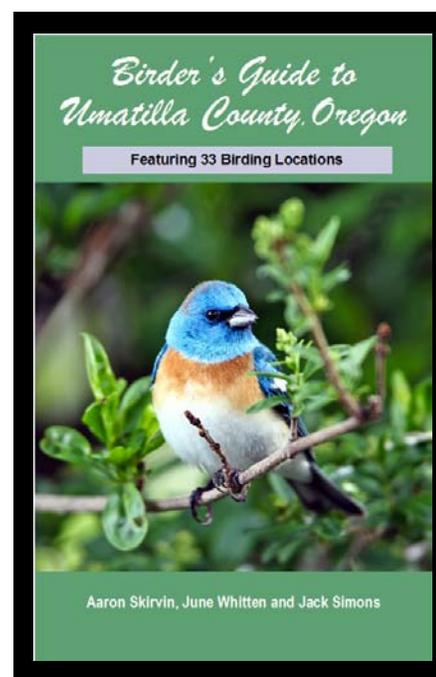
***Part I of a series on the newest book
in my birding library.***

Editorial note: I wrote this article in admiration and respect for the book that happens to have been written and produced by the other editors of this newsletter. They have produced a significant book for anyone wanting to explore Umatilla County’s birding potential. I was not and am not involved in this book project nor was it sponsored by the Pendleton Bird Club. Nonetheless, after reviewing the book, I believe it deserves to be recognized for all it has to offer and deserves to be front, center, and first in this June Newsletter. The authors are all modest and asked that it be placed on a later page. I take full responsibility for showcasing their work and hope that others find it as valuable and interesting as I do. —Barbara Clark

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, Aaron Skirvin and June Whitten have spent many weekends and evenings with binoculars combing the roughly two million acres that comprise Umatilla County. Aaron and June set out to know the bird species, their habitats, and seasonal migration patterns in and through the county. Back home on the computer, Jack Simons organized and archived county bird photographs sent in by Pendleton Bird Club members. Jack’s skills produced maps of birding routes and locations that Aaron and June

developed during their comprehensive search for the birds that live and breed in Umatilla County as well as those who pass through during Spring and Fall migrations.

These years of observation, information gathering, photography, and map making have resulted in the June 2011, just-off-the-press-220-page publication of “Birder’s Guide to Umatilla County, Oregon” authored by Pendleton Bird Club leaders Aaron, June, and Jack!



“Birder’s Guide to Umatilla County, Oregon: Featuring 33 Birding Locations” opens Umatilla County’s varied birding opportunities to the casual birder as well as the hard-core big lister! With maps, explicit driving directions, lists and notes of birds to be found, along with historical tidbits, a birding enthusiast can be well on the way to seeing and enjoying many of Umatilla County’s 308 bird species currently recorded by the Pendleton Bird Club.

Full color front and back cover bird photographs by Dave Herr grace this gem of a guidebook. The interior pages include more black and white photos by the three authors as well as bird club member’s Karen Baxter, Neal Hinds, Bob Tapley, Joy Jaeger, Rose Scott, and more by Dave Herr.

The book has a sturdy spiral binding for ease of use in the field. It sells for \$15.00 and is currently available from any of the authors. A car copy is probably a must for any devoted follower of Umatilla County birds.

HATS OFF TO AARON, JUNE & JACK....your book is a delight for the rest of us who so enjoy seeing and knowing the birds in this part of Oregon!

Calendar of Events

Bird Club Picnic

Saturday, July 23, 2011

Meet at 7 a.m. at

**Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
(NE Corner)**

**for birding Tollgate and Summit Rd
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

CLEAN-UP: PENDLETON’S RIVER PARKWAY

A big thank-you to Bird Club members who helped make Pendleton proud of the River Walkway by cleaning it on Saturday, May 21. A good turnout of workers made the job go much faster and we were easily done before 11 a.m. Thanks to Dan Baum, Aaron Skirvin, Marilyn and Gene Cripe, Joy and Steve Jaeger, Virginia Storey and Pat Tempinski. Duane Whitten drove the pickup to gather all we collected and ended up delivering about 1660 lbs. to the disposal.

Congratulations to Betty Klepper for very successfully managing the cleanups for the past ten years! She is now ready to turn the job over to the Umatilla Basin Watershed Council.

By June Whitten

Bird Club Meeting

**7:00 p.m., Thursday,
October 13, 2011**

**TRAVELS OF THE
BURROWING OWLS AT THE
UMATILLA CHEMICAL
DEPOT**

by Mike Gregg

**Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton**



Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

By June Whitten

OF THE THREE PHALAROPES THAT frequent the United States, the Wilson's is by far the most prevalent in Umatilla County. Red-necked Phalaropes are often seen here in fall migration while Red Phalaropes are extremely rare in Umatilla County. Wilson's Phalaropes arrive from their wintering grounds in late April and May. A few stop to breed here but the majority move farther north to nest in the prairies of other western states and western Canada. They are often seen again during the fall migration as they return to the high Andes in South America.

Wilson's Phalarope is a little over 9 inches in length, with a straight, fine black bill. The bill and legs are longer than the other phalaropes, making Wilson's the largest. The breeding female, which is larger and more brightly colored than the male, is mostly brown on the back, with white underparts, a reddish neck and reddish flank patches. The male is noticeably smaller and a duller version of the female, and the reddish color may be greatly reduced or absent.

Since the female is the larger and more colorful, she assumes the role usually done by the male. This is true of all three of the phalarope species. The females pursue the males, compete for nesting territories, and defend the nests and chosen mates. The nest is usually concealed in sparse vegetation and lined with various grasses. The male makes several

scrapes and the female chooses one for the nest sites to lay usually 4 buff-colored eggs marked with browns. After the female lays the eggs, it is left to the male to incubate the eggs and take care of the babies. The young are self-sufficient in a very short time, so the male's care of the offspring is fairly short.



Bird of the Month

The nest is near water, since the phalaropes feed on insects and small crustaceans on mud flats or in shallow water. In the water, where many phalaropes may feed together, they swim and spin in small circles, up to 60 revolutions per minute, evidently stirring up food from the bottom of the pond or marsh. Their toes are lobed which may help in this spinning motion in the water.

Phalaropes are sandpipers, even though they seem a bit different from most sandpipers, especially with their swimming and spinning feeding behavior. Most other sandpipers seldom swim. Wilson's Phalaropes are so named to commemorate the American ornithologist, Alexander Wilson.



Wilson's Phalarope. Photo by Rose Scott.

ed to nest there.

Wilson's Phalaropes are usually fairly tame and unconcerned about people observing them. In Umatilla County, these phalaropes usually frequent shallow ponds along Stanfield and Echo Meadows Roads, the Ukiah area, and Memorial Marsh at Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, this year they found the new Athena sewer ponds for at least a stop-over feeding area, but possibly, a pair or two stay-

Some of the information for this article came from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilson's_Phalarope



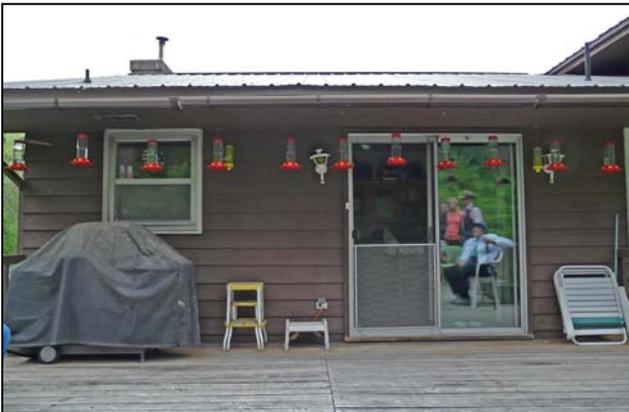
Hummingbirds Galore

By Barbara Clark

SHUT YOUR EYES AND IMAGINE the sound of two hundred and probably more hummingbirds flying near your ears. They're passing you to drink from one of a dozen feeders on a late spring evening! On June 2nd a group of Pendleton Bird Club members stood on the deck of Malissa Minthorn's Upper McKay Creek home while such an overwhelming number of hummingbirds focused on their evening meal. Calliope, Rufous, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, all three of the species commonly seen in Umatilla County, were busily feeding. Later in the month, a second field trip made its way to see the Minthorn's fabulous hummingbird display!

The golden light of the evening sun showed the jeweled gorgets of each species: Rufous displaying brilliant goldy-red-orange, Black-chinned's deep purple, and Calliope's streaks of rosy-red rays. The females were harder to differentiate as few sat still for any length of time.

With all three species converging on the feeders together, the aggressive, possessive behavior of the Rufous Hummingbirds was observable. Calliope, our smallest North American bird, measuring just 3¼ inches in length was also distinguishable from the



Have a hummingbird feeder! This is the view from the back deck at Malissa Minthorn's home where there were literally hundreds of hummingbirds. Photo by Joy Jaeger.

other two species that are both a larger 3¾ inches in length. Calliope is also known to perch and forage closer to the ground than the other hummingbird species.



With as many hummers flying between the bushes just beyond the deck and the hanging feeders under the eaves along the deck, one had to wonder if the fast flyers might just collide or possibly pierce one of the many binocular spectators standing in the midst of their flyway? None were, so we can conclude that they are agile and accurate fliers.

Malissa, our hostess, noted that the hummingbirds that visit her feeders migrate through in waves of more on some days and fewer at other times. Some



Calliope Hummingbird. Photo by Joy Jaeger.

of them stay over the summer, but the majority continue on their journey. Each of Malissa's dozen feeders holds one quart of sugar water and during the busy season she fills each feeder daily! The Pendleton Bird Club thanks Malissa for welcoming us and allowing us to experience the thrill of observing the phenomena of so many of nature's smallest, hovering, nectar-loving birds.

Unusual Spring Backyard Dinner Guests

By Barbara Clark

The day after Easter in April, it was not an Easter egg left in the grass, but a female Wild Turkey that showed up! In our six years living at this location in the short space between Highway 395 and McKay Creek Wildlife Refuge we have never seen a Wild Turkey! That first night she flew up fairly high into one of the neighbor's pine trees that border our place. During the next day and throughout the next month she foraged through our slow Spring-growing flowerbeds and found the cracked wheat we feed the California Quail. Some days we'd see her in the

neighbor's yards checking out the delectables that only a turkey might enjoy. On a couple occasions my husband Andrew rescued her from a neighborhood dog that had a hold on her tail feathers. Her favorite roosting place became the Maple tree in our back yard. As the days went by she was affectionately called "Lurkey". With our spotlight we checked to see if she'd safely made it to bed each night. And then, like she mysteriously appeared, she disappeared. Did she come via McKay Wildlife Refuge that borders our backyard or up from nearby Birch Creek? Where did she come from and where did she go???

While Lurkey visited us, we had another feathered visitor, a spectacular one that arrived on May 27 and stayed for 3 days to dine at our backyard mixed seed feeder. This one was an eye pleasing **Indigo Bunting** who appeared together with a Lazuli Bunting. Through the kitchen window we were able to take more than a dozen photos before notifying other Pendleton Bird Club members of this sighting. Aaron Skirvin researched the records and reported back to us that there is not an official record (accepted by the



Miss Turkey-Lurkey at the Clark's home.

Oregon Bird Records Committee) of an Indigo Bunting in Umatilla County. There are 31 other Indigo Bunting sightings in our state and hopefully this one will put Umatilla County on the Indigo Bunting map.

We checked our birding guidebooks and noted that the Indigo Buntings' range extends from the Rocky Mountains to the east, not west. According to Sibley, "Lazuli and Indigo Buntings are closely related, sharing similar habits, plumage, and



voice. Both are found in grassy or weedy, open areas near brush or trees and may form small flocks when not breeding." Sibley also notes, "Indigo and Lazuli Buntings hybridize frequently in a broad area of



*Indigo Bunting (left) and Lazuli Bunting (right).
Photo by Andrew and Barb Clark.*

range overlap, producing a variety of intermediate plumages. Male hybrids are fairly easy to recognize; female hybrids are very difficult to distinguish." June Whitten observed the bunting at our feeder and reported that it was "blue!, blue!, blue!". Nonetheless, we will await final confirmation that our visitor was an Indigo Bunting by decision of the Oregon Field Ornithologists' Rare Bird Committee. Regardless of the committee's decision, the bunting at our feeder made our day!

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

BOY, WHAT A STRANGE SPRING. Although most of our migrants have arrived, the unseasonable wet and cold weather has delayed nesting of many species. Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) commented on the slow spring, noting that Western Wood-Pewees were almost 2 weeks late in arriving, and the number of birds present in early spring was much lower than normal. Hopefully now that warmer weather has arrived birding will pick-up.



May 20 Katherine Skirvin had an interesting experience. A **Vaux's Swift** flew down the chimney of her SW Pendleton home and was fluttering against the glass doors of her fireplace. She opened the



Western Tanager. Photo by Rose Scott.

doors slightly so it could fly out into some netting she had placed there. Katherine took the swift outside and released it, apparently unharmed.

Neal Hinds continues to check birds at the Cold Spring National Wildlife Refuge. On May 21, he found a **Blue-winged Teal** and an **Eastern Kingbird**. May 24, Joy Jaeger noted there were many singing birds around her Poverty Flats summer cabin and lots of hummingbirds were using her feeders. May 23 Joy saw a **California Quail** crossing SW Hailey Avenue in Pendleton, a block east of Harris Jr. Academy. This is the first time she has seen quail in this location. A couple of days later Joy spotted a couple of **California Quail** crossing the road at the corner of SW 32nd and Jay.



Checking the Pendleton Community Park on May 21, Connie Betts found that birding had picked up. Along with the more common species she spotted 3 **Double-crested Cormorants** and a **Great Blue Heron** flying over the park. Connie also reported a female **American Goldfinch** is taking nesting material from a bunch of material she has hanging in her Pendleton yard. Driving about ¾ miles before the turn to Crow's Shadow Institute, which is located on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Connie had a treat when 4 **Long-billed Curlews** flew along side of her car. May 26, Jane Holmes had a beautiful male **Western Tanager** behind her home on Bailey Street in Pendleton. Her yard borders along the Umatilla River and Jane has been seeing **Black-crowned Night-Herons** flying up and down the river in the evening.

May 27, Barbara and Andrew Clark had a rare bird visit their feeder near McKay Dam. Along with some **Lazuli Buntings**, Barbara was able to photograph and identify an **INDIGO BUNTING**. This all blue bunting is the eastern counterpart to our **Lazuli Bunting** and is seldom encountered in Oregon. Barbara and Andrew's sighting of the Indigo Bunting is only the second record of this species in Umatilla County.

In late May, Dale and Barbara Brandt reported hearing a **Northern Bobwhite** calling in the Grecian Heights neighborhood in SW Pendleton. This



Indigo Bunting (left) and Lazuli Bunting (right). Photo by Andrew and Barb Clark.

introduced species was once fairly common in our area, but now there is no longer a viable population. It would be interesting to know the origin of the

Grecian Heights bird. During the same time period, George Ruby who lives near Mission had a **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** in his yard for two days. At first George thought it might be a shrike, but after careful study he determined it was indeed a mockingbird. This is another species rare in our area.

Checking McNary Wildlife Nature Area on May 30, Neal and Sandy Hinds found two **Eurasian Collared-Doves**, a first for them in this area. There were also 20 **American White Pelicans** on the Columbia River near the Nature Area. Walking the Pendleton River Walkway along the Umatilla River the same day, Virginia Storey found a flock of colorful calling **Evening Grosbeaks**.

Katrina Dielman has had lots of interesting birds in her Pendleton North Hill yard this spring. May 30 she spotted a pair of **Evening Grosbeaks** and a pair of **Western Tanagers**. May 31 she spotted a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and the following day a **Hammond's Flycatcher** and a **MacGillivray's Warbler**, two unusual birds for the North Hill. June 4, Joy Jaeger photographed two **Evening Grosbeaks** at her mountain cabin near Albee.

June Whitten (June) and Aaron went birding June 5. June reported the birding was finally starting to pick up and she reported the following: **Grasshopper Sparrows** were fairly plentiful along Reinhart Road off Coombs Canyon Road, SW of Pendleton. She was surprised to find a **Canyon Wren** up East Birch Creek Road out of Pilot Rock. Pearson Creek had several warbler species including **Orange-crowned, Townsend's, Wilson's, Yellow, Yellow-rumped** and **MacGillivray's**. Near Ukiah they found 2 or 3 calling

Soras and a female **Calliope Hummingbird** was building a nest at Ukiah-Dale Campground near Ukiah.



Northern Mockingbird. Photo by Bob Tapley.

June 6, Dolly Robison watched 2 **Western Scrub-Jays** she thought might be nesting near her Hermiston home. However, she has been unable to find a nest. June 9, Connie Betts checked the Athena sewage ponds. She found **Brewers, Red-winged** and **Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Killdeer**, a pair of **Wilson's Phalaropes**, a **Mallard** and 2 **Black-necked Stilts**.

Jack Simons had several sightings from his property adjacent to the Umatilla River between Pendleton and Mission. He reports lots of young **European Starlings** have fledged and June 6, he watched a **Black-billed Magpie** kill a young starling. June 9, Jack found his first **Western Wood-Pewee** of the year (he reports this is very late), and the same day noted the first appearance of the young **American Kestrels** that had fledged from a nest tree in his pasture. There were four fully-fledged youngsters looking for a handout from mom and dad. Jack said he has lost track of how many

years this pair has hatched eggs and raised their brood in his pasture. June 14, Joy Jaeger was able to photograph several **Red-Crossbills** at her mountain cabin near Albee as they sat on a salt block in the yard. **Red Crossbill** numbers vary considerably from year to year, and this year they are difficult to find.



Harlequin Duck, (female on the left) at Yellowstone NP. Photo copyright Paul Higgins.

Other recent sightings of interest included two **Mountain Quail** seen by Malissa Minthorn on June 1, on Upper McKay Creek, a

Northern Pygmy-Owl June 8, seen and photographed by Michelle Thompson near Gibbon. On June 10, a **Common Nighthawk** was spotted by June and Aaron along the Rieth Road, and they found a



Common Poorwill along Mud Springs Canyon Road.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 17-19, the Oregon Field Ornithologist (OFO) held their annual meeting in Pendleton. During the day, over 60 birders traveled throughout the county looking for birds. At the Saturday evening banquet, a list of all the birds seen by the group was compiled, totaling 136 species. Without question, the best bird seen was a female **HARLEQUIN DUCK** found resting on a rock in Camas Creek at milepost 53 south of Ukiah along US Highway 395. This species is fairly common on the Oregon coast in the winter. Harlequins nest along fast-moving inland streams but has been found only 3 times before in Umatilla County.

During the OFO weekend, eight species of owls were seen in Umatilla County: **Barn, Short-eared, Long-eared, Great Horned, Great Gray, Western Screech, Flammulated,** and **Burrowing.** Short-eared Owls are “thick” on Whittaker Flats (along US

Highway 395 south of Pilot Rock). Barn Owl numbers are high, too; many pairs raised lots of young owls because of the very high rodent population that has persisted in Umatilla County since late summer 2010.

Summer is here and there is lots of nesting activity, which makes for some really fun birding. So check out all our summer birds and send your sightings to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413

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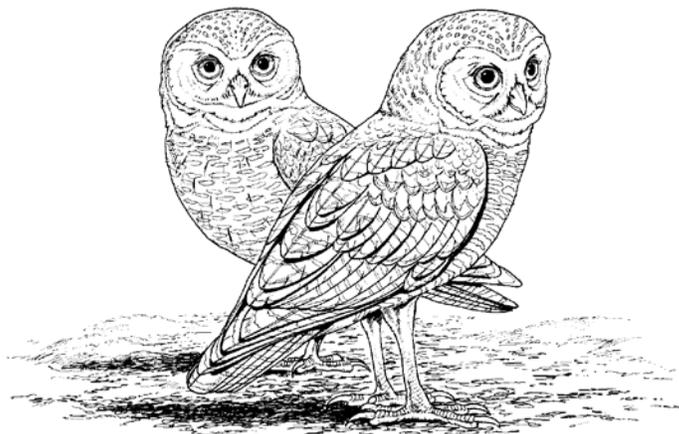
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