



Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

# Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 10, No. 2 Pendleton, Oregon February 2012



## *eBirders Enable Next Generation of Range Maps*

**Editors Note:** We thought the following article, taken from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website (<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=2401&ac=ac>), would be an excellent tie-in to the topic of “citizen science” and participation by club members in the recent Great Backyard Bird Count project. The article was written by Hugh Powell.

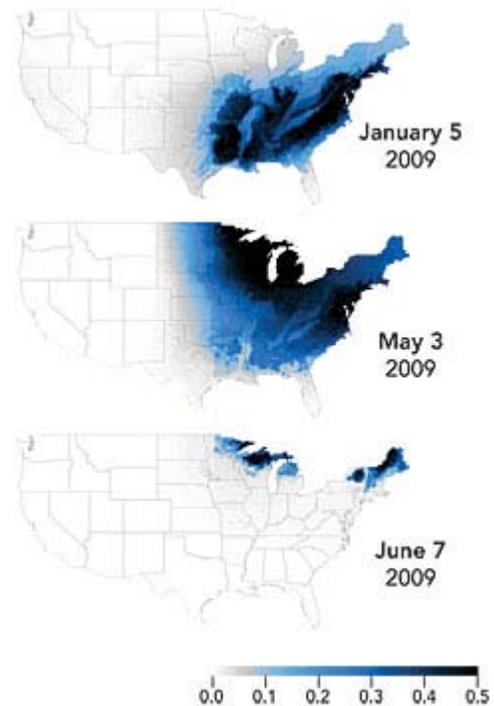
the immense, global database of observations they have built.

One way those data have begun bearing fruit is in the form of a new kind of range map—one that moves before your eyes. eBird’s new animated occurrence maps statistically model a species’ occurrence across North America for each week of the year—in essence

**W**E’VE SAID MANY TIMES that entering data into our eBird program is a great way to make your hobby count toward something bigger. Now a paper in the journal *Public Library of Science Biology* (PLoS) says so, too.

[The report describes eBird](#), a nine-year-old project by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, as an example for researchers interested in the power of human computation—tapping the human brain to do things that computers can’t yet do. For eBird that task is identifying birds, but other projects involve identifying galaxies, deducing the folded structures of proteins, and digitizing books one word at a time.

The paper’s authors—all members of the Cornell Lab’s Information Science program—discuss how eBird has succeeded in recruiting a volunteer workforce. They stress the importance of knowing their audience, offering tools (such as personal checklists and sightings maps) that give back to the user, and devising ways to ensure data quality without making data entry onerous. The reward for successfully balancing these concerns has been the emergence of a vibrant community of eBirders and



producing 52 separate range maps for each species. By flashing them on your computer screen in sequence, you can watch a species ebb and flow over the continent.

As an example, consider the White-throated Sparrow. Field guides tell you these handsome little sparrows winter in the East and move northward in summer. But we're basically left to guess about the routes and timing of migration. The figure at right shows three excerpts from an animated occurrence map. Shading corresponds to the likelihood of occurrence — another difference over typical range maps. The first map shows how the birds start the year mainly in low-elevation parts of the East. By May they are moving north, mainly through Minnesota and Michigan but also in Wisconsin and New England. By early June they're almost all gone from the United States. When will they return? [See the full 52-map animation here.](#)

Watching these new maps change as a year sweeps past can be as mesmerizing as it is informative ([see maps for 50 common species here](#)). Just remember to keep birding and to enter your own data into eBird, where your contributions can take shape right before your eyes. (*These are amazing animations; I urge you to take a look at them* – Jack).

## Calendar of Events

### **Work Party for Wanaket Burrowing Owl Project**

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

### **Work Party to Install Artificial Burrows for Burrowing Owls**

Volunteers needed to help install new artificial burrows at Wanaket Wildlife Area.

Contact Tanya Harrison at 541-429-7254  
or [TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org](mailto:TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org)

### **Bird Club Meeting**

7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 8, 2012

### **WILDLIFE REHABILITATION**

**\*Live Birds Will be on Display\***

**By Lynn Tompkins**

**Pendleton First Christian Church  
215 North Main Street  
Pendleton, OR**

### **Humans and Bird Collisions**

*Contributed By Jack Simons, Aaron Skirvin  
and Lynn Tompkins*

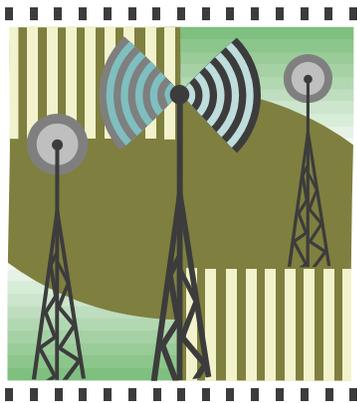
**M**OST, IF NOT ALL, of us have had the unfortunate circumstance to be at the wheel of a vehicle when a bird suddenly appeared and crashed into a window or bumper. We can recall numerous times when that dreaded “thud” appeared followed by a wave of feathers in the rear view mirror. The one collision I (Jack Simons) will likely never forget occurred one morning in central Florida when, with no other vehicles in sight on a crystal clear morning, a Northern Cardinal flew right into the front of our car and feathers erupted over the hood. I've always thought to myself, “If I had been going one second slower or faster, that bird would still be alive...”



With more drivers than ever, bird collisions with automobiles now occur more frequently. Humans have complicated the situation by building an array of both moving and stationary obstacles (wind turbines and radio towers, for example) that birds



now have to negotiate, often at night during migration. One event that sticks vividly in my (Aaron Skirvin) memory is seeing the corpses of several male Wilson's Warblers scattered across the KVAL TV station's parking lot at Eugene, OR, one morning in May 1974. These birds migrate in groups at night, and several of them had flown into the guy wires of the tall TV antenna at the station and fell dead onto the parking lot beneath.



There were likely others laying dead in the fields around the parking lot. This type of event is repeated annually at many towers across the US, taking a swath out of the migrating neotropical birds that migrate between North America and Central/South America twice each year.

There is no way to know how many birds die from these collisions but estimates range from millions to one billion on the planet, annually. Only a small percentage of all collisions are likely seen because the obstacles we've created are off-road where birds are most frequently engaged in their daily activities. Although I (Jack Simons) have only seen two or three dead birds on the dike road along the south bank of the Umatilla River between Pendleton and Mission that I walk multiple times per week, it was only a day or two after this past Christmas on one of my walks when my sister-in-law pointed out a "bird hanging on a wire fence." When I looked to where she was pointing, sure enough, a dead Greater Yellowlegs was hanging next to a metal pole with its beak caught in the barbed wire fence (Click [here](#) for a photo on the Club's website).

Prior to the late 1980's, Greater Yellowlegs were not known to over-winter in Umatilla County. However, at least 10 different winters since January 1988, between 1 and 7 birds have been observed (and reported) along the Umatilla River (upstream from Pendleton) and lower McKay Creek. They are very rare here in winter, and it is even rarer to actually see one this time of year. But, to see a dead one hanging from a barbed wire fence is off the scale. Since the bird was next to a large metal fence pole, and it had a broken neck, it must have crashed into the pole at

night while flying from the Umatilla River to Mission Ponds. I could find no other injuries to the bird other than the broken neck. Prior to the collision, there had two of these rare winter visitors only a few days before in that exact location of the river bottom.

A few days later, Lynn Tompkins, Executive Director of Blue Mountain Wildlife, told us about her experiences dealing with injured birds that had crashed into things and the magnitude of her answer surprised me. Since Lynn deals with injured birds on a daily basis, she is easily the most qualified person in our area to report on bird collisions. Below is a portion of Lynn's response to our inquiry:

"We admitted numerous birds during the recent foggy weather: a horned grebe, an eared grebe, 2 coots, a Greater Scaup, two barn owls and a screech owl. They crashed into various things. One of the coots was hung up in a barbed-wire fence. Fortunately its injuries were minor. All the waterfowl with the exception of the other coot were released. One barn owl will be released soon. I'm still not sure about the other barn owl or the screech owl.



"We do tend to see more gunshot birds during the various hunting seasons. Yesterday I x-rayed a double crested cormorant that had been shot. Both its legs were broken and it was euthanized. At the same time I x-rayed a red-tailed hawk that was dead when found in a field near Umapine. It had also been shot.

"Although we admit gunshot birds every year, they are a small percentage of the total. I don't have the total number at the tips of my fingers, but out of the 920 admissions to date, about a dozen were gunshot. **What I can say for certain is that the vast majority of injured or displaced wildlife that are**



**brought to rehabilitation centers have had either a direct or indirect encounter with humans**

(emphasis mine). The most common causes of injuries are collisions with cars, windows, fences or power lines, cat attacks, electrocution and gunshot. We are finding lead in lots of hawks and eagles. My own personal opinion is we are finding lead because we are looking, not because there is more of it than in the past. During baby season lots of young song birds are caught by cats or kidnapped by well-meaning, but misguided, people.

“Of course the largest number of admissions is homeless baby barn owls whose homes have been destroyed when the haystacks housing their nests are moved before the young have fledged. This year 427 baby barn owls were admitted. Most were uninjured and were raised and released utilizing a method called hacking. We are working hard to reduce that number in the future by partnering with area scout and 4-H

## Artist's Corner...



*Cassin's Finch. An original watercolor by club member and watercolorist, Marilee Schiff.*

groups who are building owl boxes to distribute to farmers.”

Through awareness campaigns, Lynn is making progress in educating people about the hazards and unnatural situations humans have created for wildlife. Whether it is gunshot wounds from senseless individuals or accidental collisions with automobiles, birds will continue to need help in this world of over-complexity.

## Preventing Bird Strikes on Windows

*Editors Note: This article, which was written by Dr. David Bird, is extracted from “The Backyard Birds Newsletter, Early Winter 2011.”*

**S**TUDIES PERFORMED OVER THREE decades by Dan Klem, professor of ornithology at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, estimate that between 100 million and 1 billion birds are killed in collisions with sheet glass in the United States alone.

First and foremost, we must accept the clear reality that “birds simply do not see clear or reflective glass as a barrier to be avoided.” Not all birds hitting windows are killed outright. In general one out of every two strikes is a fatality. Some birds are only stunned and may recover, or they may die later or succumb as easy prey for a predator.

Birds hitting glass do not usually die from broken necks but from damage to the skull or brain. And, there is no rhyme or reason to the type or location of the windows.

Solutions are not easy for reducing bird strikes on windows. Decals, strung beads, bamboo or mylar strips can be effective when placed on the outside of the window and spaced about 4 inches apart. It is critical these items be placed on the outside of the window to be visible to the birds.

Probably the best solution is to cover panes with window netting or insect screening which is readily available from hardware stores. CollidEscape, a one-way window film that presents an opaque or translucent image to the birds outside but a fairly clear image to those living inside, is quite effective. For new windows, consider buying the new form of sheet glass that employs coatings that provide a clear view



from inside but shows a pattern on the outside which birds can see.

Other information may be obtained at:  
[www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions](http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions)

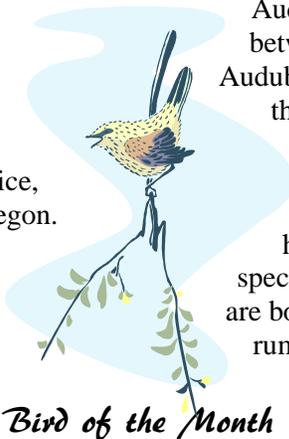
## Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*)

*Contributed By June Whitten*

**P**EOPLE TRAVEL GREAT DISTANCES to see warblers in winter, as well as in migration. Probably not many people come to Umatilla County to see Yellow-rumped Warblers, yet, they are year-round warblers here and quite unique in that aspect. If you give this some thought, you may be out birding soon, like this weekend, and searching out these lovely warblers who brave the snow, ice, and wind to spend the winter in Eastern Oregon.

Yellow-rumped Warblers adapt their feeding habits to the seasons, which enable them to spend the winters much farther north than their other warbler relatives. In warm seasons, these warblers eat mostly insects and are often seen fluttering out from tree perches to nab insects. Their diet includes caterpillars, leaf and bark beetles, weevils, ants, aphids, grasshoppers, caddisflies, gnats, and even spiders. They also eat spruce budworms, which are a serious threat to evergreen forests. But, when the insects are gone in colder weather, Yellow-rumps eat a variety of berries, including juniper, Virginia creeper, poison ivy and oak, and dogwood. Their digestive system allows them to digest bayberry and wax myrtle fruits, which is unique among warblers and is the main reason they can survive in much colder climates than other warblers.

Not all Yellow-rumped Warblers that nest in Eastern Oregon spend the winter here. While some do, others may be short-distance migrants or even some long-distance migrants. Many more Yellow-rumped Warblers will move into Umatilla County in the spring to nest in the coniferous forests and mixed deciduous trees along streams.



*Bird of the Month*

The female builds the nest while the male supplies some of the nesting material for her. The nest is a cup of twigs, pine needles, grasses, and rootlets. She lines the nest with lichens and hair from available animals such as deer, elk, or moose, which is woven into the nest so it may curl up to cover the eggs. It takes about 10 days to build this nest which is 3 to 4 inches across and about 2 inches tall when finished.

The clutch size varies from 2 to 6 eggs, and incubation lasts almost 2 weeks. Then, both parents tend the young for another 2 weeks before they can fly and feed themselves.

There are two forms of the Yellow-rumped Warbler, Audubon's and Myrtle. The main difference between the two is the bright yellow throat on Audubon's and the white throat on Myrtle. Of course, they both have the distinctive yellow-rump near the top of the tail. Are these two forms actually two separate species? Some scientists believe they are separate, and there has been much debate on declaring them two species. However, for the time being, anyway, they are both considered a single species, the Yellow-rumped Warbler. At one time it was thought Audubon's was a western bird, and Myrtle was mostly an eastern bird. The Audubon's variety is the subspecies most prevalent in Umatilla County. The ranges of the two subspecies do greatly overlap, however, and annually a few "Myrtle" warblers are seen, locally, mainly in spring and fall migration.



*Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's form).  
Photo by Karen Baxter.*



Yellow-rumped Warblers are not usually difficult to find in Eastern Oregon. They are common nesters in the coniferous forests of the Blue Mountains and abundant fall migrants, usually seen in flocks well



*Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle form).*

into October. They are often perched on outer limbs, quite high, and seen flashing their yellow rumps in acrobatic swoops for insects. They even feed on the ground, especially during fall migration. They are versatile birds, and by finding various food sources in all seasons, they are plentiful and frequently seen. The best place to observe Yellow-rumps in winter is the McNary Wildlife Nature Area, where they eat Russian olive fruits and insects (when they can find them). Other places with similar habitat will also be likely to bring results.

Some of the information for this article was obtained from:

[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Yellow-rumped\\_Warbler/lifehistory/ac](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Yellow-rumped_Warbler/lifehistory/ac)

## January/February Bird Sightings

*Contributed By Dave Herr*

**A**T THE LAST BIRD CLUB meeting Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) lead an interesting discussion about the timing of spring migration.

Although it is only mid-February, migration has already begun. Lots of

**American Robins** have been noted in our area during the last few weeks and Aaron believes these birds are traveling through our area on their way to their nesting areas north of us. Connie Betts found another harbinger of spring migration when

she reported 15 **Sandhill Cranes** along Emert Road February 10. More Cranes are sure to follow. A **Sage Sparrow** spotted by Aaron and Diana LaSarge (Diana) near Linton Mountain Road February 11, is clearly another early migrant.



On January 17, Jack Simons saw a **Pied-billed Grebe** in the Umatilla River opposite Mission Ponds. This was the second time since the first of the year that Jack reported seeing a **Pied-billed Grebe** in the river. Jack's hunch is that the grebe moves to the river when the ponds are iced over, then back to the ponds when the ice leaves. **Eurasian Collared-**



*Pied-billed Grebe. Photo by Aaron Skirvin.*

**Doves** seem to be doing well; Connie Betts reported 17 in her back yard near the Pendleton Community Park on January 22. Checking along the Columbia River the same day, Aaron and Diana found mostly expected birds, but did locate an **American Pipit** and **Western/Glaucous-winged Gull** along the river.



The previous day Aaron found a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at McKay Reservoir.

Walking his dogs along the Umatilla River near his home between Pendleton and Mission on January 23, Jack Simons flushed a **Greater Yellowlegs**. Jack noted this confirms his belief that a few **Greater Yellowlegs** spend the winter along the river. Walking between her home and the Pendleton Community Park January 25, Connie Betts spotted **Eurasian Collared-Doves, European Starlings, Red-winged Blackbirds, House Sparrows, American Robins, a Northern Flicker** and a very vocal and beautiful **Belted Kingfisher**. On January 26, Colleen Hewes found a **Great Horned Owl** between Pendleton and her home located SE of Pendleton.

Driving east on I-84 between Pendleton and Mission Jct. on January 27, Connie Betts noted a **Red-tailed Hawk** perched on almost every road sign except one, on which an immature **Bald Eagle** was perched. January 28, June Whitten (June), Aaron and Diana birded in the northwest portion of the county. June reported they found a total of 63 species during their travels. She said that hawks were still numerous in the area, and they found 3 **Golden Eagles** and several **Common Ravens** in a wheat stubblefield along Mac Hoke Road (near Nolin). She reported they saw 2 **Western Scrub-Jays** near the Fish View Room at McNary Dam, and they added **Common Loon** (Columbia River) and **Northern Shoveler** (pond along Hwy 207) to the county year list.

January 30, Aaron and Diana found a **Northern Pygmy-Owl** along Camas Creek about 7 miles downstream from Ukiah and a drumming **Hairy Woodpecker** at Battle Mountain Summit. Both of these species were also new county year birds. February 3<sup>rd</sup> was the last day Sherry and Robert Sallee saw the female **Anna's Hummingbird** that had continuously been in their yard along the Walla Walla River Road south of Milton-Freewater since November 2011.



*Anna's Hummingbird (female).  
Photo by Sherry and Robert Sallee*

Looking out her window near the Umatilla River in Pendleton on February 4, Lorna Waltz was surprised to see a **Varied Thrush** enjoying breakfast at her feeders along with the **Dark-eyed Juncos** and a **Black-capped Chickadee**. The same day Jack Simons found 4 male **Red-winged**

**Blackbirds** on territory "singing their hearts out." Jack noted it sounded like spring. Neal Hinds checked out Cold Springs NWR on February 4. He found a total of 38 species including a **Hermit Thrush** and two new county year birds, **Dunlin** and **Least Sandpiper**. Along with his other sightings, Neal

noted hundreds of **Northern Pintails** and a large raft of over **100 Common Mergansers** on the reservoir.

Ginger and Rodger Shoemake and Mike and MerryLynn Denny surveyed the Northern Umatilla County Raptor route on February 5. They found a total of 192 raptors including 103 **Red-tailed Hawks**, one **Rough-legged Hawk**, 65 **American Kestrels**, 9 **Northern**

**Harriers**, a **Coopers Hawk**, a **Northern Goshawk** (new county year bird), a **Barn Owl**, **11 Great-Horned Owls** and undoubtedly the best bird of the survey a **SNOWY OWL** perched on a rocky out-cropping above the Walla Walla River a few miles



*Dunlin. Photo by Neal Hinds.*



south of Milton-Freewater. Other sightings included more than 1300 **American Robins** in the apple orchards around Umapine.

After waterfowl hunting season, Jack Simons provides corn for a small local flock of about 20 **Canada Geese** in his back pasture. However, word of his generosity must be getting around because on February 5, Jack counted **137 Geese** waiting in his pasture for a handout. The proceeding day, Jack found a nice drake **Cinnamon Teal** on his front pond. This is the second **Cinnamon Teal** (both of them drakes) seen this winter in the county; usually the first Cinnamon Teal of the year aren't seen until late March or April. And on February 7, Jack found a male and female **Redhead** on Mission Ponds as well as a couple of early **Killdeer** on a gravel bar in the river near his house.

February 9, while looking for the **SNOWY OWL** that had been reported earlier, June, Marilyn Cripe and Carolyn Featherston found a pair of singing **American Dippers** along the South Fork of the Walla Walla River. This is the first report for this species in the county this year. Their best sighting of the day, however, was 2 dark gray **WOLVES**, apparently part of the "Walla Walla pack," standing in a field near Linton Mountain Road.

Taking a drive out Rieth Road to Echo and Echo Meadows (Emert and Rosenberg roads) on February 10, Connie Betts found lots of birds including over **1000 Canada Geese**, 26 **Tundra Swans** and thousands of **Ring-billed Gulls** in various fields. She also saw and photographed a **Pileated Woodpecker** near the eastern edge of Echo. However, her best

sighting was a flock of 15 early-migrating **Sandhill Cranes** along Emert Road. Bonnie Sager reported that every weekend she sees **Gray Jays** at her bird feeders in the Blue Mountains along Yellow Jacket Road.

Dolly Robison has reported several recent sightings. She continues to occasionally see **Western Scrub-**

**Jays** near her east-Hermiston home, and she reports seeing a **Great Egret** along Stage Gulch Creek in Stanfield. On February 10, while walking her dogs, Dolly heard an owl calling. Taking the dogs back to the house she was able to hear 2 different owls. Checking the recorded calls on the Audubon website she was able to identify them as **Western Screech-Owls**. Because there is only limited owl habitat around her home, Dolly is sure they were just moving through the area.



*American Dipper singing.  
Photo by Carolyn Featherston.*

While filling her feeders at her SW Pendleton home on February 10, Connie Betts was surprised to find a **Townsend's Solitaire** in her yard. February 11, Aaron and Diana drove the Walla River Road, Linton Mountain and surrounding roads to see if they could find the **SNOWY OWL** or get a glimpse of the wolves reported earlier. They had no luck

finding the owl or wolves but found several **Wild Turkeys** and near the Linton Mountain Road a **SAGE SPARROW**. Aaron notes the last record of a **SAGE SPARROW** in Umatilla County was February 22, 2009.



*Snowy Owl (first year male). Photo by Aaron Skirvin.*

Jack and Sharon Simons and Aaron and Diana checked 37 **Burrowing Owl** sites at the Umatilla Chemical Depot on February 12. They saw **15 Burrowing Owls**, but the real surprise

was finding 2 **SNOWY OWLS**, both of which Aaron reports were about 1/4 mile inside Morrow County. None of them had expected to find **SNOWY OWLS**, and everyone agreed it was a great surprise.



There must be quite a few eagles in the Pendleton/ Pilot Rock areas. On February 10, Connie Betts saw 3 **Balds** along the Umatilla River between Pendleton and Echo; February 11, Jack and Sharon Simons saw 2 **Balds** near their home east of Pendleton. The next day, Chris Burford traveled from Pendleton to Gibbon, and scattered along the route he found 5 **Bald Eagles**. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Jack and Sharon Simons spotted 3 **Bald Eagles** on their Great Backyard Bird Count route. Also on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Mike Bohannon (John Day birder) spotted 5 **Bald Eagles** and 2 **Golden Eagles** in Jack Canyon; returning to John Day the following day, Mike saw 3 **Bald** and 3 **Golden Eagles** at Nye Jct. Aaron and Diana also birded in Jack Canyon on the 18<sup>th</sup> and saw 8 **Bald Eagles** and 2 **Golden Eagles**.

Dan Baum saw 4 **Tundra Swans** at Mann's Pond on February 16. This was his second sighting of the swans at the pond since early February. On February 18, Neal Hinds re-located the pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** that has been seen off and on in the Columbia River below McNary Dam since early January.

Jack and Sharon Simons participated on the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 18. They drove from Mission/Pendleton via Rieth Road to Mud Springs Canyon Road then to Pilot Rock and back to Pendleton. They found 44 species for the day, with the following highlights: a **Western Screech-Owl** near their home east of Pendleton; a **Merlin** at Mission; 14 **Hooded Mergansers** at Mission Ponds; a

**Barn Owl** and a **Prairie Falcon** in Jack Canyon; and **74 Horned Larks** along Mud Springs Canyon Road.

The **Barn Owl** that has taken up residence in the crevice in the basalt cliff in Jack Canyon saw several birders on the 18<sup>th</sup>, as Jack and Sharon Simons, Aaron and Diana, and Mike Bohannon all (independently) stopped to see if the owl was back at this popular owl-viewing site.

On February 19, Aaron and Diana found 9 **Short-eared Owls** along Hwy 395 at Whittaker Flat, 3 to 6 miles south of Nye Jct. The same day, Nancy and Lyle Brown birded in the Stanfield-Echo area. They found lots of birds including 17 **Sandhill Cranes**, 6 **Tundra Swans**, 200 **Northern Pintails**, and 1000 **American Robins**.

Although it is still winter, spring migration is underway and birding is only going to continue to get more exciting. Please send all your sightings to me, Dave Herr at [dsherr1@mac.com](mailto:dsherr1@mac.com) or call 541-276-6413.

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