



Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 8, No. 5 Pendleton, Oregon May 2010

Bird Club Picnic at Battle Mountain State Park Saturday, June 19, 2010

Our annual summer picnic provides an opportunity to get acquainted with new friends or new birders. Please feel free to invite guests.

required, beverage of your choice, and all table service. Also bring a salad, dessert, or item of choice to share. Condiments and iced tea will be furnished.

Our annual summer picnic provides an opportunity to get acquainted with new friends or new birders, so please invite guests. Birding in the Battle Mountain/Albee area should be very good (weather permitting) at this time. The Jaeger's own 160 acres of forest land, and we should see many of the birds that are typical of the mixed conifer forests in the Blue Mountains.

Arrange your own transportation or car pool. If anyone needs a ride, call Lorna Waltz, 276-6353.

This year's annual picnic will be held on Saturday, June 19 at the Battle Mountain State Park off Highway 395 about 40 miles south of Pendleton. For those who want to do some birding prior to the picnic, we will meet at 6:00 a.m. at the Pendleton Safeway parking lot (NE corner). Joy and Steve Jaeger have invited Bird Club members to their property, located in the Blue Mountains a few miles NE of Albee, for a morning of birding. We will carpool from Pendleton to the Jaeger's property, and after a couple of hours of birding there, the group will drive to Battle Mountain State Park (~12 miles), arriving about 11:30 a.m. A high-clearance vehicle is necessary to get to the Jaeger's property

For those who can come later, we will start the picnic at noon at Battle Mountain State Park. Please bring your choice of meat to barbecue, buns if



Club members enjoying the 2009 picnic near Tollgate.



Calendar of Events

Bird Club Picnic

**Saturday, June 19, 2010
Battle Mountain and Albee areas.**

**Meet at 6 a.m. at Pendleton
Safeway parking lot (NE corner)
For birding in the Albee area
before the picnic**

OR

**Meet at Battle Mountain State
Park at noon for the picnic**

Bird Club Meeting

**7:00 p.m., Thursday,
October 14, 2010**

GROUSE OF THE WORLD

**Presented by Mike Gregg &
Jenny Barnett**

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

Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*)

Submitted by June Whitten

The Brown Creepers of Eastern Oregon usually hang out on mature pines and other conifers of the forests in the Blue Mountains. Their cryptic coloring makes them appear as part of the bark until they begin their spiral up the tree trunk in search of insects. The rather long, decurved bill is perfect for probing around and under the bark to pick out juicy insects on which Brown Creepers thrive.

Even with its fairly long tail, which helps balance the creeper while it probes for insects, it is only 5 ¼ inches long. The back, head, and tail are mottled brown and blend perfectly with bark. It does have a white breast and throat with a beige to white belly.



Bird of the Month

Brown Creepers occur across the United States, southern Canada, and Mexico. They are

somewhat migratory, but may only move to a slightly warmer area, lower in elevation, in winter. It is not uncommon to see a Brown Creeper in Eastern Oregon any time of the year. They are, of course, more visible in mid-to late spring when they are singing and beginning to nest. The song of the Brown Creeper is rather a high-pitched, thin series of cascading notes and not easily heard.

The breeding season typically begins in April when the



Brown Creeper. Photo by Karen Baxter.

female will make a partial cup nest, often under a piece of partially detached bark from a tree, or, rarely, in a tree cavity. While they forage on conifers, they may nest in either a conifer or a

deciduous tree. The nest consists of twigs, bark, conifer needles and moss. It is often lined with shredded bark and



feathers. When the nest is complete, it nearly closes the opening between the bark and the tree trunk. The usual clutch is 4 or 5 small (0.6") white eggs, flecked with reddish browns. The female broods the eggs and the male feeds her during the incubation. Both parents feed the babies, probably a total protein diet of insects. As soon as the young are mobile, they can creep upward. The fledglings roost in a tight circle with their heads pointing to the center.

Brown Creepers may be seen at lower elevations during the winter. Duane and I lived on Schroeder Road on McKay Creek for several years and at least one Brown Creeper was a winter visitor for several winters. Luckily, we had some conifers right outside the dining room windows, so we had great views of its spiral up one tree, fly down to another, and repeat the spiral.

In spring and summer, look for Brown Creepers in any mature stands of conifers. Battle Mountain State Park is one reliable location, but they may be found anywhere in the Blue Mountains where they find the correct habitat.

Some of the information from this article came from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Creeper

Birding in the Pacific NW: Washington State

Submitted by Barbara Clark

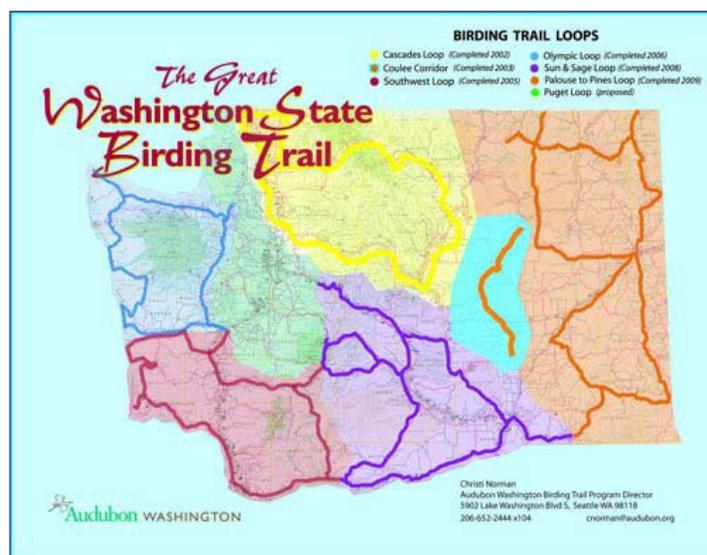
Pendleton Bird Club's closest neighboring bird club is the Blue Mountain Audubon Society, Walla Walla, Washington. In the May edition of their monthly newsletter, The Magpiper, Mike Denny (known to a number of our club members) wrote an article entitled "Time to Get Out in Nature". As the title suggests he's urging folks to call a friend, to put on their walking shoes and binoculars, pocket their favorite birding field guide, and get out into the spring air. He lists several places near Walla Walla that will yield good birding:



A walking path that starts right behind Kmart along Mill Creek and goes all the way east to Rooks Park.

- Trails that go all the way around Bennington Lake.
- Hundreds of miles of Forest Service roads and trails on the Umatilla National Forest just east of Walla Walla. (Maps are available at the Walla Walla Ranger District.)
- McNary National Wildlife Refuge west of Walla Walla.

In addition to Mike's recommendations, Audubon Washington's "The Great Washington State Birding Trail" maps claim to show Washington's best bird watching locations. There are six maps dividing the state into Loops: the Cascade Loop, the Coulee Corridor, the Southwest



Loop, the Olympic Loop, the Palouse to Pines Loop, and the Sun and Sage Loop. The seventh and last map due out in 2011 covering the Puget Sound area will complete the Washington birding trail. All the maps include information about habitat, bird species, access, and best seasons for birding.

The Sun and Sage Loop Map features 208 of Washington's 346 annually recorded bird species. Sun and Sage covers birding loops around Walla Walla, Kittitas, the Lower Columbia Basin and Yakima Valley. In addition to the sites listed by Mike Denny above, the Sun and Sage map includes Whitman Mission Historic Site and Ft. Walla Walla Natural Area especially as "family-friendly settings."

The Palouse to Pines map shows locations and loops from north of Walla Walla to the Canadian border and features 215 of Washington's recorded birds. On this map it is noted that all four Washington chickadees can be found in the Salmo Priest Wilderness: Boreal, Mountain, Black-

Capped, and Chestnut-backed. White-winged and Red Crossbills, Spruce and Dusky Grouse, and Boreal Owls live there as well! The Palouse to Pines map describes 51 specific birding locales ending with Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, a favorite spot of Ann Wyatt's that was featured in the November 2009 newsletter.

All the maps, including the Sun and Sage Loop and the Palouse to Pines Loop, may be viewed online (and hard copies may be ordered for \$4.95 each) at wa.audubon.org.

With the rest of spring and summer ahead, birding just across the Umatilla border into Washington could be rewarding!

Sources for this article: *The Seattle Times*, Jan. 27, 2010; *Blue Mt. Audubon Society's The Magpie*, May 2010; and the "Washington Audubon Great Birding Trail" Maps.

Some Birding Ethics

- Respect private property; do not trespass.
- Stay on trails and avoid disturbing habitat.
- Observe and photograph birds without disturbing them.
- Never chase or flush birds.
- Walk slowly and stay concealed.

April - May Bird Sightings

Compiled by Dave Herr

So far, this spring has been cold, wet and windy, but even with the less than optimum weather, lots of birds are being found. **Lazuli Buntings**, one of the showiest birds in our area, are back. Connie Betts first reported seeing one in her yard April 28. Since then Craig Kvern, Ann Wyatt, Tanya Harrison, Lorna Waltz and I (Dave Herr) have all reported seeing them at our feeders. **American White Pelicans** have also become more visible. Several folks have reported seeing small flocks soaring over the Umatilla River and around McKay Reservoir this spring. The major movement of **White-crowned Sparrows** started passing through our area in mid April, and all except a few stragglers have migrated through by now.

Joy Jaeger reports that she and her husband, Steve, were able to drive to their mountain cabin near Albee April 18. Joy has numerous bird nest boxes on the property and while there, they saw **Violet-green Swallows**



Bird Sightings

and **Western** and **Mountain Bluebirds** checking out the available nesting sites.

Kris Andrews (Kris), a birder from Williams Lake, B.C., visited Pendleton in mid April and was hosted to several birding trips by Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and June Whitten (June). On April 20, June and Duane Whitten took Kris birding in the area around

Echo and Stanfield Meadows. They found several **Swainson's Hawks** and a **Western Kingbird**. Both species of **Yellow-legs**, **Cinnamon Teal** and lots of



Black-necked Stilt. Photo by Karen Baxter.

American Avocets and **Black-necked Stilts** were at Stanfield Meadows. At Stanfield Meadows Road, Kris spotted the county's first **Blue-winged Teal** of the year swimming in the "Horseshoe Pond". April 21, June, Kris and Aaron birded in the northern portion of the county. Some of their more notable finds included **Long-billed Curlews** at Nolin, a **Great Horned Owl** nest with nestlings along Mud Springs Canyon Road; a mated pair of **Ferruginous Hawks** in Jack Canyon and **5 Common Loons** at McKay Reservoir. Aaron noted they are finding as many or more **Swainson's Hawks** than **Red-tails** on their trips, and Aaron believes there are more **Swainson's Hawks** this year (so far) than in past years. April 22, Aaron and Kris drove to Ukiah and the North Fork John Day River. Some of their more notable finds included 3 **Ferruginous Hawks**, 2 **Common Loons** flying low over Battle Mt. Summit, a **Merlin** (Tiaga subspecies) between Albee and Ukiah, **Chipping** and **Lincoln's Sparrows** and 1 **Sora** and 1 **Virginia Rail** along Soap Hill Road (about 1/4 mile south of Ukiah). Aaron noted the road to Tower Burn was open, but they found very few birds in the burn: 1 **House Wren**, 1 **Red-tailed Hawk**, a couple of **Northern Flickers** and a couple of **bluebirds**.

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

Walking his dogs along the Umatilla River behind his home, located between Pendleton and Mission, Jack Simons heard the unmistakable call of a **Northern Bobwhite Quail** on April 23. Although no longer a “countable species” in Oregon, some are occasionally released and manage to over winter for a year or two. On his walk, Jack also saw 2 **Pileated Woodpeckers** flying across Mission Ponds and at the ponds, a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** and a **Great Blue Heron**.



Female Calliope (left) and female Rufous Hummingbirds. Photo by Joy Jaeger.

On the same day, returning from Wanaket Wildlife Management Area, Tanya Harrison found the fields at the junction of Bensel and Alpine Roads, just north of Hermiston, had been flooded. In the area she found a large flock of **Ring-billed** and **California Gulls**, **Killdeer**, **Canada Geese**, 12 **Black-necked Stilts**, 2 pair of **American Avocets**, 2 **Greater Yellowlegs**, and at least one additional shorebird species too far away to identify.

April 24, Aaron, June and Kris birded throughout the northwestern section of the county. Although weather conditions were not optimum, some of their better finds included a **Lincoln’s Sparrow**, several **Ferruginous Hawks**, a **Loggerhead Shrike**, “lots” of **Black-necked Stilts**, 5 **Horned Grebes** and 1 late **Glaucous-winged Gull** at Hat Rock State Park. April 24, Joy Jaeger found both **Rufous** and **Calliope Hummingbirds** at her cabin near Albee. June Whitten saw a male **Rufous Hummingbird** in her yard in Grecian Heights in Pendleton on April 24. Birding in the Echo Meadows area on the 24, Nancy and Lyle Brown spotted a total of **36 Black-necked Stilts**, and amazingly 20 of them in a little bit of water north of Mann Pond. Nancy also reported there were hundreds of **White-crowned Sparrows** in the area.



Common Loon (a rare leucistic form). Photo by Kris Andrews.

April 25, June and Aaron found a **Hammond’s Flycatcher**, 2 **Orange-crowned Warblers**, a **Lincoln’s Sparrow**, a male **Cassin’s Finch** and 2 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** at the Pendleton Country Club. They located a female **Golden**

Eagle and pair of **Gray Partridges** along Wegner Gulch Road near Pilot Rock. Birding the same day, Diana LaSarge watched an **eagle** collecting nesting material near the old Cold Springs Highway. She found 4 **Buffleheads** at the McNary Wildlife Nature Area as well as several

Yellow-rumped Warblers and Painted Turtles at the ponds. There was a pair of **Canada Geese** with at least 20 goslings at Hat Rock.

Beginning her drive from Pendleton back to Williams Lake, B.C., on April 25, Kris saw and photographed a **white**

Common Loon in the Columbia River a mile or so upstream from the Sand Station Recreation Area. On April 18 and again on April 21, at least four Washington birders reported seeing a **white Common Loon** on Lake Roosevelt (the reservoir behind Grand Coulee Dam). Almost certainly, the loon Kris photographed on April 25 was the same loon seen on Lake Roosevelt a few days earlier because of the proximity of the sightings and because albinistic or leucistic Common Loons are exceedingly rare. The white loon was still near the Sand Station Recreation Area on May 11 (seen by Mike Gessel), May 14 (Aaron), and May 15 or 16 (Virginia Gumm and Daniel Poleschook, who are with the Washington Common Loon Conservation, BioDiversity Research Institute at Loon Lake, WA).

Checking Mission Ponds with his dogs on April 25, Jack Simons found 10 **Green-winged Teal**, 15 **American Wigeon** and an unexpected single drake **EURASIAN WIGEON**. While sitting on his porch the previous evening, Jack spotted a large, black bird circling his back yard. As he watched the bird (a **Common Raven**), it circled a hawthorn tree with a **Black-billed Magpie** nest in it. Jack scared the Raven, and the parent Magpies chased it off.

While soaking in her hot tub at her home in SW Pendleton the evening

of April 26, Jenny Barnett heard a **Common Poorwill** calling. What a relaxing way to add a new bird to the county year list!



April 28, Barbara Clark had a beautiful male **Rufous Hummingbird** visit the feeder in her yard near McKay Dam. Driving along the Adams Road on April 28, I spotted a migrating **Lewis's Woodpecker**. June reported a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** feeding with 18 **White-crowned Sparrows** in her SW Pendleton yard April 29.

June notes the Golden-crowned is a new bird for her yard list. While conducting Long-billed Curlew surveys at Wanaket Wildlife Management Area on April 29, Jenny Barnett heard several singing **Grasshopper Sparrows**, the first reported this year. She also found **Savannah** and **Vesper Sparrows**, **Horned Larks**, **Long-billed Curlews** and **Western Meadowlarks**.

April 30, Jack Simons had a male **Calliope Hummingbird** visit one of the feeders in his yard, which is located along Mission Road between

Pendleton and Mission. Walking along the Umatilla River near his house the following day, Jack watched 2 newly fledged **Red-tailed Hawks** flying alongside adult birds.

Checking Tower Burn May 2, Aaron noted that it appeared few migrating birds had returned to the area yet. He and June did hear a hooting **Dusky Grouse** and heard a **Fox Sparrow** singing in the area. They also found a **Golden Eagle** along Hwy 395 at milepost 58 and two more along Hwy 395 at Cape Horn. Aaron thinks there are probably 3 active **Ferruginous Hawk** nests along Hwy 395 south of Pilot Rock. Five **Common Loons** were on McKay Reservoir the same day.

May 3, Nancy Brown found one **Evening Grosbeak** in her Hermiston yard. May 4, Diana LaSarge had a female **Downy Woodpecker** visit her yard in SW Pendleton. Also on May 4, Lorna Waltz had a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** stop briefly in a silver maple tree in her NW Pendleton yard. I had also seen a flock of **Cedar**

Waxwings on Mount Hebron in NE Pendleton about the same time, and they were probably the same birds. Checking the Pendleton Community Park on May 7, Connie Betts was intrigued as she watched an **Osprey** trying to collect nesting material from a cottonwood tree. First, it tried to dislodge a large piece of bark, but when it

came loose, the bark was too big for the bird to carry. The Osprey was more successful on its second try; breaking off a smaller piece of bark, it flew north with it. Earlier in the week, an **American Goldfinch** flew into the patio door at Connie's home in SW Pendleton. The goldfinch died of its injuries, and planning to dispose of the bird later in the day, Connie was amazed to see an **American Crow** walk onto her patio, pick up the dead goldfinch and, after flying into a juniper tree in her yard, calmly eat it.



Dusky Grouse. Photo by Joy Jaeger.

May 6, Tanya Harrison was conducting plant surveys along Iskuulpa Creek where she found the year's first **Yellow Warbler** and **Cassin's Vireo**. On May 8, Tanya added two more county year birds while at Iskuulpa: **Nashville** and **MacGillivray's Warblers**. At her yard on Pendleton's North Hill, Tanya reported she had seen **Lazuli Buntings**,

White-crowned Sparrows, "bunches" of **American Goldfinches**, 1 **Dark-eyed Junco**, **House Finches** (including 2 "yellow" variants) and a **Purple Finch** that stuck around for at least 3 days. **Purple Finch** is rare and difficult to find in our area.



Grasshopper Sparrow. Photo by Bob Tapley.

Katherine Skirvin found the year's first **Black-headed Grosbeak** near the Pendleton Community Park on May 6. Birding the park on May 8, Connie Betts found a **Hammond's Flycatcher**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **House Sparrows**, a **Yellow**

Warbler, a **Chipping Sparrow**, **Killdeer** and 2 **Belted Kingfishers** flying up and down McKay Creek.



Watching the Pendleton High School baseball game at Bob White Ball Park in Pendleton on May 8, Tom Weeks spotted a large bird land on the light pole in center field. He investigated and discovered it was a **Pileated Woodpecker**. June notes that Pileated Woodpeckers seem to be showing up in town this year.

On May 8, Neal Hinds had an amazing find at Memorial Marsh, Cold Springs NWR: 2 drake **MANDARIN DUCKS**. The Mandarin, a close relative of our Wood Duck and popular with waterfowl fanciers, is native to extreme eastern Asia (Korea, Japan, Russia and China). To our knowledge, this is the first sighting of Mandarin Ducks in Umatilla County. Mandarin Ducks have been reported numerous times in North America but, in all cases, are believed to have originated from captive flocks, either intentionally released or accidentally escaped. Although we are not certain of the origin of these Mandarins, we are considering them to be escaped birds rather than wild birds that made their own way to Umatilla County from east Asia.



Lewis's Woodpecker. Photo by Dave Herr.

May 9, Chris Burford had a male **Western Bluebird** visit his Pendleton North Hill yard. Chris visits McKay Reservoir several times a week, and he reports he always sees **California Quail, Black-billed Magpies, Ring-necked Pheasants** and hunting **Osprey**. May 11, he heard a calling **Common Loon** at the Reservoir.

Lewis's Woodpeckers are now migrating through our area. May 10, Connie reported 2 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** flying around the Pendleton Community Park. On May 12, Aaron found 1 at McKay Reservoir. May 14, Jack Simons reported 1 in his back pasture adjacent to the Umatilla River, and the following day, Neal Hinds found 3 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** at Memorial Marsh, Cold Springs NWR. No longer a breeding species at lower elevations in the county, they do breed at Tower Burn, where June and Aaron saw over **20 Lewis's Woodpeckers** on May 16.

While working at Indian Lake May 13, Craig Kvern and Ron Lee found 2 **Gray Jays** (first reported this year). They noted the immature **Bald Eagle** they had reported previously was still hanging around Indian Lake, and it caught a fish while they were watching.

May 14, Aaron found a female **Wood Duck** with a dozen ~3-day-old ducklings at Mission Ponds. Aaron also added two new birds to the county year list the same day when he spotted 2 **Semipalmated Plovers** at a small puddle in a pasture along Stanfield Meadows Road and 2 **Franklin's Gulls** on McKay Reservoir. May 14, Jack Simons reported 2 **Black-chinned** and a **Rufous Hummingbird** were using his feeders. He has also been hearing a **Pileated Woodpecker** calling from his back pasture

May 15, I found 2 adult **Burrowing Owls** at a burrow along Hwy 37, two miles north of Pendleton. The owls are in the same location where June and Aaron discovered 4 juvenile **Burrowing Owls** last fall. Hopefully, the owls will be able to use this location to raise another family this year.

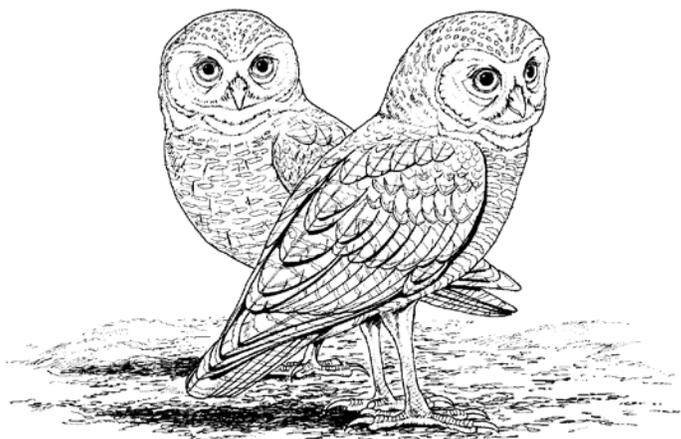
Aaron and June had a spectacular day when they birded in the southern portion of the county May 16. They tallied an amazing **121 species** for the day! Some of the highlights included 7 adult, alternate plumaged **Franklin's Gulls** and 1 still in winter plumage, 3 **Common Loons**, 1

Clark's Grebe, 3 breeding plumage **Horned Grebes**, about 20 breeding plumage **Eared Grebes**, **110+ Am. White Pelicans**, and 1 **Greater Yellowlegs** at McKay Reservoir; an adult **Bald Eagle** carrying a snake, 2 **Golden Eagles**, several **Lewis's Woodpeckers**, **Dusky Flycatchers**, **Orange-crowned Warblers**, **Lazuli Buntings**, **House Wrens**, and one **Spotted Towhee** in the Tower Burn; and 8 **Greater Sandhill Cranes** in a flock near Ukiah. Mid-morning, Aaron and June ran into Jack Simons while he was checking the nest boxes on the Albee Bluebird Trail. If Aaron and June had seen the **Short-eared Owl** Jack saw earlier in the day, their total would have been 122 species.

During the week of May 3-9, a total of 17 new species was added to the County year list and this probably represents the peak of spring migration in our area. However, birding is still going to be great for the next couple of months with new birds continuing to arrive and the start of the nesting season. So take advantage of all this bird activity and send your sightings to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413.



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