



Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 9, No. 3 Pendleton, Oregon March 2011



SPRING!! And What Are We Seeing???

“Kákya Taymut” usually posts the Pendleton Bird Club’s current month’s bird sightings at the end of every newsletter, but this March as the birds embark upon their annual journeys, pairings, breeding and nesting, let’s have a look at who has arrived and who is passing through, where they hang out, and what we might see if we, too, get out and greet the arrival of Spring 2011.

February-March Bird Sightings

Compiled by Dave Herr

A S I FINISH THE SIGHTINGS FOR this period, spring is upon us, and early migrants are starting to show up. Club members are reporting **Sandhill Cranes** flying over the area, and large flocks are reported from the Echo Meadows area. **Long-billed Curlews** are returning

and both species of **Bluebirds** have been seen. Now that our winter weather is waning, new migrants will continue to move into our area.

Dr. Mark Rhodes has seen 3 or 4 **Western Scrub-Jays** near the McNary Golf Course almost daily for the past months and also in several other areas in western Umatilla County. On February 25, Neal Hinds birded between the Port of Umatilla and Umatilla Marina observing 35 species in just 2 hours, an impressive list for late February!

On February 27 Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and June Whitten (June) were delighted to see a pair of **Ferruginous Hawks** in Coombs Canyon trying to get to their nest of last year, only to find a **Great Horned Owl** firmly seated in the nest, probably on eggs. More excitement ensued when they found a nearly



Lapland Longspur. Photo by Mike Danzenbaker.

full breeding plumage **LAPLAND LONGSPUR** along Mud Springs Canyon Road, the same area where this species was seen last year. June reported that the 85 plus **Wild Turkeys** they found just east of Ukiah were really not that "wild." Also unusual was a very dark-phase **Rough-legged Hawk** that had a black tail with narrow white bands and a narrow white tip, one of a number of **Rough-legged** and **Red-tailed Hawks** and **Northern Harriers** seen along their trip.

February 28, Dan Baum spotted a mature **Bald Eagle** circling over NW DeSpain in Pendleton. Later that day, along I-84 enroute to Tri-Cities, Dan counted over **30 Sandhill Cranes** in the Echo Meadows area. Further west, he spotted a **Great Blue Heron** and a **Great Egret**.

Aaron visited McKay Creek National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) when it opened to the public on March 1. He found 14 **Western Bluebirds**, an immature **Bald Eagle**, one **Double-crested Cormorant**, some **American Robins**, **Red-winged Blackbirds** and a few gulls. Checking McKay Creek NWR on March 4, Connie Betts reported seeing (and hearing) **Red-winged Blackbirds** and a selection of ducks including **Mallard**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Common Merganser** and **American Wigeon**. Her sightings also included a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, **Eurasian Collared-Doves** and an **American Kestrel**.

Katrina Dielman had 2 calling **Great Horned Owls** in her Pendleton North Hill yard on the evening of March 4. That same week, Geri Ruth reported the return of the **Osprey** that nests near Echo High School, the first sighting of the year for this species.

March 5, Aaron and Neal Hinds birded from Echo Meadows to Ukiah and back sighting 63 species. Some of the highlights included **Mountain Bluebird**, **Red Crossbills**, **Say's Phoebe**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Merlin**, **Ferruginous Hawk** and **Prairie Falcon**.

Although **Eurasian Collared-Doves** are breeding in our area, no one has yet found a nest. At Pilot Rock, Aaron and Neal spotted a very pale **Eurasian Collared-Dove** standing in what appeared to be a nest. Aaron will continue to check on this sighting. In Camas Prairie (NW of Ukiah) they observed a very large (female?) adult **Golden Eagle** with odd whitish coloration on its back. Keep your eyes open when in this area and see if you can relocate this distinctly marked bird.

On windy March 9 at McKay Reservoir NWR, Connie Betts reported that although it was too difficult to hold her scope steady, she found a flock of 24 **Tundra Swans** on the lake being lead by a domestic goose. She also saw lots of

American Robins, a couple of **Red-tailed Hawks** and 2 **American Kestrels**. At the Pendleton Community Park, Connie reports **Mallards** are almost always present along with at least one **Great Blue Heron** and a **Belted Kingfisher**.

Ann Wyatt had a **Spotted Towhee** in her yard in SW Pendleton on March 11. The same day, Joy Jaeger at her Poverty Flat cabin saw **American Robins**, a pair of **Red-tailed Hawks**, **Western Meadowlarks**, **Steller's Jays** and a pair of **Western Bluebirds**. Joy looked for swallows, but did not see any. On March 12, Neal Hinds counted 36 species at Cold Springs NWR where he

sighted at least 5 **Western Bluebirds** (a new species for the NWR) and heard 3 drumming **Hairy Woodpeckers**.

February 24 Dolly Robison reported seeing the **Great Egret** at Stage Gulch Creek and on March 2 observed



Bald Eagle, adult. Photo by Neal Hinds.



Sandhill Cranes. Photo by Aaron Skirvin.



15 Common Mergansers on the Creek. March 14, she saw a large flock of **Sandhill Cranes** flying north over the Forest Service Warehouse near Washington Elementary School in Pendleton.

March 12, June and Aaron found Echo Meadows full of **Sandhill Cranes**. June noted that at first it appeared there were two or three bunches of less than fifty cranes. Then for some reason one group flew and



Violet-green Swallow. Photo by Joy Jaeger.

other groups kept joining in the flight until there were probably 2 or 300 cranes, all calling. They not only saw the cranes, but also heard their lovely calls. They also saw 4 **Greater Yellowlegs** at Echo Meadows and along Emert Road and lots of **Northern Pintails**, **Green-winged Teal** and a few **Northern Shovelers**. Several **Great Blue Herons** were around the old heronry at "Horseshoe Bend" on the Rieth Road as well as many herons with what appeared to be nesting thoughts at the heronry near Echo also on the Umatilla River.

Water birds are starting to use the new sewer ponds near Athena along Route 11. Checking the ponds March 13, Aaron and June reported "routine" ducks and geese, 4 **Dunlin**, several **Killdeer** and at least one **American Pipit**. Also on March 13, Aaron and June spotted 4 **Violet-green Swallows** flying over Kings Corner Road.

At Pendleton Community Park March 15, Connie Betts noted a **Turkey Vulture** flying over, the first sighting of this species for the park checklist, and the first reported in the county this year. There were also 9 **Ring-billed Gulls**, one **American Kestrel**, **Eurasian Collared-Doves**, **House**

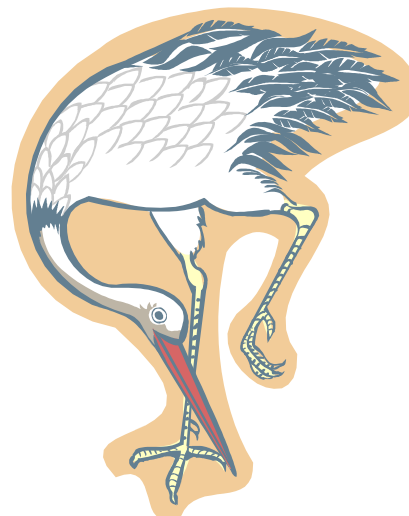


Sparrows, 2 **Mallards** and an **American Crow**. The same day, Lyle Brown found the first **Long-billed Curlews** for 2011 when he spotted 7 along Andrews Road. He also reported **Sandhill Cranes** scattered along the roads in the area. Connie observed several **Yellow-rumped Warblers** along the Pendleton Parkway between 9th and Main Street. March 19, Tanya Harrison reported a number of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** calling around her North Hill home in Pendleton. She also noted a very dark **Song Sparrow** at her feeders.

Dan Baum has reported a number of sightings: a large flock of **American White Pelicans** along the Columbia River north of Wallula Junction March 13; on March 15 a smaller flock of 8 to 10 circling Mann's Pond between I-84 and the Stanfield Meadows Road; on March 19, 3 pairs of **Long-billed Curlews** along Andrews Road in Echo Meadows. He noted there are many groups of **Sandhill Cranes** in the area. Along Emert Road he identified **American Wigeon**, many **Northern Pintails**, **Green-winged Teal** and **Mallards** and on Stanfield Meadows Road he spotted 3 pairs of **Wilson's Snipes**.

On March 19, Jack Simons saw a flock of 25-30 **Violet-green Swallows** flying over Mission Ponds. Checking McKay Reservoir the same day, Aaron and June spotted an alternate plumage **Common Loon** and several **Great Blue Herons** at the rookery on the east side of the reservoir.

With Spring started a few days ago, in the coming month there will be lots of new birds to report. Email your Spring sightings to me, Dave Herr, at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413.



Calendar of Events

Bird Club Field Trip

**SANDHILL CRANES
AT ECHO MEADOWS**

Saturday, March 26, 2011

Meet at 8 a.m.

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

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

Bird Club Meeting & Potluck Dinner

Potluck at 6:30 p.m.

**Thursday, April 14, 2011
followed by**

**BIRDS OF THE
COLUMBIA BASIN**

by Mike Denny

**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 Meeting

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

**AMONG PENGUINS
by Noah Strycker**

**Pendleton Presbyterian Church
201 SW Dorion 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 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

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

As Usual, Humongous ID Challenge Humbling & Provocative

By Jack Simons

SO YOU DIDN'T SCORE 156 POINTS out of 100 on this month's Third Annual Humongous ID Challenge, hey? Well, don't feel badly...for the third consecutive year, I messed up on either the slides/bird IDs/numbering/or slide timing. I'm still trying to figure out what a Double-crested Cormorant really looks like. But that's what makes this annual event fun and crazy.

In case you missed our March Madness bird club meeting, 30 bird club members came together to beat the annual challenge to identify 50 plus local birds before the "clock runs out." Of course it doesn't help to use slides that are slightly blurry (just like I see them in my binoculars) or behind a thousand branches ("Is that a robin or a squirrel?").

And where do these photo gems come from? Bird club members, naturally!! In fact, some of you send me your whacked-out photos during the course of the year with the caption, "Hey, Jack, don't you think this would make a neat photo for the ID Challenge?" and I look at the photo on my monitor and can't make out if that's a bird or an otter! Then a sly smile crosses my face and I think...*perfect!*

No matter how crazy we get, you guys always seem to take my antics in stride and, I hope, even learn a little in the process. They say that increasing the stress level before a lesson or test makes people learn more and I suspect knowing that the clock is ticking (Only five seconds for the 50 point BONUS bird??? Are you kidding? That's not fair!!!) has your brow beading with sweat. Good. Wait 'til next year.

Actually, next year I'm not going to do the Challenge (JUST JOKING!!!). However, I am getting tired of the same old tedious format so just to stress your life even more, I'm going to reformat the Challenge with multiple Rapid Fire sequences plus the new and exciting no-more-mister-nice-guy "Four Birds in Four Seconds" super challenge! So sharpen your pencils.



Bird of The Month: Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

By June Whitten

IN CHINA, THE EURASIAN WIGEON is considered a delicacy! Here, in Umatilla County, this wigeon is more apt to be considered a great treat to see—not eat! It is possible an occasional one gets shot by waterfowl hunters as they do travel with American Wigeons, but there is no great demand for Eurasian Wigeons as a delicacy on the dining table in the United States.

Eurasian Wigeons breed in the northernmost areas of Europe and Asia. Because it is a migratory species and winters far south of its breeding range, it is a rare to uncommon winter visitor to the United States, usually not far from the Atlantic or Pacific Coasts. The Eurasian Wigeon migrates to wintering grounds in England, Ireland, Scotland, Africa, and Asia but each year a few make their way to the United States.

The Eurasian Wigeon is closely related to its counterpart, the American Wigeon. They are both dabbling ducks and about the same size and shape. The male Eurasian Wigeon stands apart, however, with its rusty-red head and gray flanks and grayish back. The females are more difficult to tell from American Wigeon, due to much variation in coloring. The female Eurasian Wigeon usually has a warm-brown to reddish head and flanks. Females, however, can be either reddish in coloration or gray, making it more difficult to distinguish from an American



Eurasian Wigeon. Photo by Mike Danzenbaker.

Wigeon. Either very few female Eurasian Wigeons migrate to Umatilla County or they are overlooked, as a female is seldom reported.

Eurasian Wigeons along with American Wigeons like open, fresh-water wetlands with some marshes and taller vegetation. They feed by dabbling for underwater plant food and may graze in grassy areas, such as lawns, as well. Where they are common on wintering grounds, the Eurasian Wigeons form large

flocks. Since only a very few reach the United States, they usually join flocks of American Wigeons. Eurasian Wigeons nest on the ground, usually under some type of cover near water.

Sometimes, a Eurasian Wigeon will spend the entire winter in Umatilla County in an area such as the ponds at the McNary Wildlife Nature Area. The

pond at Hat Rock State Park is another favorite location for wintering Eurasian Wigeons. Another good place to look for wintering Eurasian Wigeon is the ponds on Stanfield Meadows Road.

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

Birding Service Opportunity

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

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



From the February 2011 Blue Mountain Audubon Society Newsletter The Magpiper

BIRDING ACRONYMS

Some common acronyms you may encounter when out with other birders:

LBJ/LBB: Little Brown Job and Little Brown Bird

This refers to any of a number of sparrow, finch or similar species that can be difficult to identify. While a birder may be able to classify the bird in terms of family, if discerning field marks are not visible the bird may be noted as a "LBJ" instead of a specific species.

FOY: First of Year

This refers to the first time a birder positively identifies a species within a calendar year. Some birders may also use this acronym to denote the very first bird they see in a calendar year regardless of species.

JIZZ/GISS: The vibe a bird gives off

A term used by birders to describe the overall impression or appearance of a bird according to such features as shape, posture, flying style, etc. Experienced birders can often make a reliable identification in the field at a glance by utilizing jizz.

IBA: Important Bird Area

An area recognized as being globally important habitat for the conservation of bird populations. These sites are small enough to be entirely conserved and often are already part of a protected-area network. They do one (or more) of three things:

Hold significant numbers of one or more globally threatened species

Are one of a set of sites that together hold a suite of restricted-range species or biome-restricted species

Have exceptionally large numbers of migratory or congregatory species

Upcoming Regional Events

From the March 2011 Grant County Bird Club Newsletter, The Upland Sandpiper

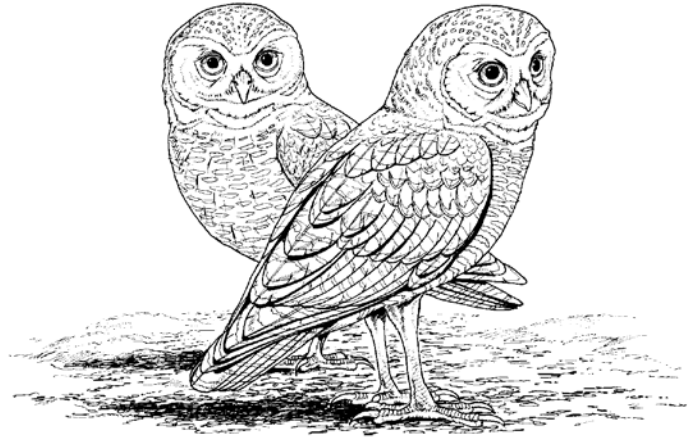
A COUPLE OF BIRDING EVENTS of interest coming up are the John Scharff Migratory Bird Festival scheduled for April 1-3, 2011 in Burns. Website is www.migratorybirdfestival.com. The following tours are being offered: Aquatic Health for the Birds, Birding British Style, Birding – Sunrise to Sunset, Birding the Neighborhood, Birds of Prey Brunch with the Birds, Digital Photography for Beginners, Discover National Wildlife Refuge, Harney Basin Rock Art, Harney Basin Working

Llama Ranch, Harney County Cattlewomen's Working Ranch, Paradise Birding- Blue Mountains Woodpecker Tour, Sage Grouse "Strutting" Early Bird, Sandhill Crane Discovery, Steens Mountain/Alvord Desert, Waterfowl Identification in the Field. and White Geese. You must preregister. Another is the 2011 Snake River Birds of Prey Festival. Website – www.SnakeRiverBirdsofPreyFestival.com Dates are May 13,14,15.



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