

# Kákya Táymut

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

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Volume 2, No. 11 Pendleton, Oregon November 2004

## **TEAM EFFORT MOVES LOGO PROJECT FORWARD**

By now most readers are aware that Pendleton Bird Club member's voted by a wide margin to select the Grasshopper Sparrow for our Club's logo. Voting took place at the Club's October meeting from a list of four possible candidates: Mountain Bluebird, Lazuli Bunting, Grasshopper Sparrow and Ferruginous Hawk.

Though most Umatilla County residents likely have never laid eyes upon this handsome member of the sparrow family, it represents a somewhat unique species in Umatilla County. This distinguishing trait alone probably had a lot to do with its selection. Immediately after the final vote was tallied, an oversight committee was formed to ensure the logo project moved forward smoothly. Committee members included Dannell Tapley, Connie Betts, Duane Whitten and Jack Simons.

Committee members met the following week to pool their thoughts on how best to create the Club's logo, with the consensus being that an artist's rendering was preferable to a color photograph. After reviewing numerous options, committee members selected the following display criteria: three-quarter profile; perched on vegetation representing the bird's local habitat; a uniform background color; and any identifying features unique to the bird.

These suggestions were then channeled to club member Dave Herr, who contacted a personal friend and professional artist by the name of Elva Hamerstrom Paulson. Elva is a professional wildlife artist who has lived in Oregon nearly thirty years. The daughter of ornithologist Frederick and Frances Hamerstrom, her interest in birds and art began early. Elva spends a great deal of time sketching in the field, while her husband, Dale, photographs. Elva has illustrated seven books, the latest being

"Birds of Oregon". Her art has been accepted in the Leigh-Yawkey Woodson Birds in Art Show three times, and twice she has been in the top ten finalists of the Federal Duck Stamp Competition. Elva has agreed to create the rendering slightly larger than life size using watercolor and pen & ink. The committee has a tentative date for completion of January 1, 2005.

Meanwhile, Blue Mountain Audubon Society and Pendleton Bird Club member Mike Denny generously offered his skills to create the logo on his computer. Mike will scan Elva's rendering, create the logo then digitize the graphic files for use in the Newsletter, on the web site, as embroidered fabric patches, etc. No date has yet to be set for the final unveiling but stay tuned!

It really does take a team effort to "bring all of the parties together". Thankfully, skilled volunteers and artisans are working hard to make a unique, relatively unknown little sparrow a proud symbol of the unique and beautiful county we call home.

*Submitted by Jack Simons*

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **Pendleton Bird Club Meeting**

**Thursday, December 9, 2004 7:30 p.m.**

Craig Corder will present a program on  
**BIRDS OF McNARY WILDLIFE AREA**

**First Christian Church, Pendleton, Oregon  
(On Main Street, across from the  
Pendleton Arts Center)**

**Umatilla County**  
**Christmas Bird Count**  
**January 1, 2005**

**Contact Kevin Blakely, Compiler**  
**276-2344, work; 276-5249, home**

**February 2005 Bird Club Meeting**  
**Thursday, February 10, 2005**

Potluck starts at 6:30 p.m., followed by  
**Birds of Mission Ponds**  
Presented by Jack Simons

Pendleton First Christian Church  
on Main St. across from the Arts Center

**CHRISTMAS FOR THE BIRDS**

Instead of doing a Christmas gift exchange, the members of the Pendleton Bird Club will have an opportunity to give to the birds! We can donate items for Blue Mountain Wildlife and know these gifts will be appreciated and well used.

Lynn and Bob Tompkins not only save hundreds of injured or immature birds, but they give countless programs in the community that give both children and adults more appreciation of the bird life around them. They are also kind enough to allow Pendleton Bird Club use of their copy machine each month for our newsletter.

To help support Blue Mountain Wildlife, please bring items from the following list to the December meeting:

Paper Towels, Wood Pellet Pet Bedding, Surface Wipes, Mazuri Rodent Pellets, Kitchen Shears, Wheat Bran, Garden Hose, Sprinkler, Postage Stamps, Dry Dog Food, Laser/Inkjet Printer Paper, Pea Gravel, Ink Cartridge for HP Deskjet 830C, Ink Cartridge for HP Laserjet 1000 series, Nails, Screws, Scratch Grains, Lumber of various dimensions.

The birds thank you in advance for your thoughtful donations this Christmas Season!

*Contributed by June Whitten and Lorna Waltz*

**FIELD TRIP REPORT:**

**McNARY WILDLIFE AREA**

It's always a treat to bird watch at McNary Wildlife Area, especially in early November, when you can see a large variety of birds and most of them at close range. Gulls congregate just below McNary Dam to feed on migrating salmon smolts; waterfowl begin arriving to spend the winter, and winter sparrows usually can be coaxed out of the brush with strategically placed bird seed.

The bird club's November 6 field trip to McNary Wildlife Area lived up to expectations. Along the Columbia River just below McNary Dam we readily found six species of gulls: Bonaparte's, Mew, Ring-billed, California, Herring, and Glaucous-winged. Ring-billed and the graceful Bonaparte's were the most numerous. Gulls are notoriously difficult to identify, due to varying plumages between juveniles and adults, variation among subspecies, and hybridization. But, with so many gulls flying, perching, and swimming, we had lots of opportunities to study the distinguishing field marks of most of the species at the dam.

One of our goals for the trip was to find at least one of the several Pacific Loons that had been observed at the dam in the past few weeks. While watching the gulls, someone pointed out a group of loons in the tail water below the dam. Eventually, everyone got good looks at the seven or so Pacific Loons that were very actively diving in the river. Later in the trip, we found a couple of Common Loons near some Pacifics, which offered good comparisons between the two species.

The observation ponds at the main entrance to the Wildlife Area were full of waterfowl, 11 species in all, including about 100 Wood Ducks. All of the adult male ducks were in fresh, brilliant alternate plumage and were easy to observe. This is an outstanding place to photograph waterfowl, and in December and January, even more ducks use these ponds. In the Columbia River adjacent to the ponds, we located six Barrow's Goldeneye, a species that is difficult to find in Umatilla County. With the Canada Goose fly-overs and Dave Herr's later

sighting of Red-breasted Merganser, we boosted the tally of waterfowl to 14 species for the morning.

The extensive trail system in the Wildlife Area winds through brushy habitat, which attracts many wintering songbirds. This is the most reliable place to find White-throated, Golden-crowned, and Swamp Sparrows in Umatilla County. Although we didn't find White-throated and Swamp Sparrows, we saw several Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows and Spotted Towhees that were eating the bird seed Dave had set out earlier in the morning. Several other species were attracted to the seed including California Quail, Black-capped Chickadee, Song Sparrow, and House Finch.

One member of our group, Neal Hinds, continued birding the area after we left and added Cooper's Hawk, Great Horned Owl, and Barn Owl to the morning's bird list, which totalled 56 species. Twelve club members attended the trip: Connie Betts, Russ Betts, Katy Clifton, Jean Wood, Dave Herr, June Whitten, Duane Whitten, Andrew Clark, Jack Simons, Neal Hinds, Aaron Skirvin, and Katherine Skirvin.

*Contributed by Aaron Skirvin*

### **2004 BLUEBIRD TRAIL RESULTS**

The bluebird nestboxes on both the Poverty Flats and Battle Mountain/Albee Bluebird Trails have been cleaned and are ready for new occupants next spring.

The nextboxes remain in generally good condition. Two boxes on Poverty Flats have been gnawed by a rodent, probably a golden mantle ground squirrel or a chipmunk. One of these boxes was well-stocked with a winter's supply of dried mushrooms. We left the mushrooms nearby on the ground, but they may very well be back in the nestbox by now. The holes that have been enlarged by gnawing may be repaired with a thin piece of plywood nailed to fit around the original entrance hole.

One box near Albee was the target for a couple of twenty-two bullets, but the damage is minimal. The bullet holes appeared after the nesting season, so, fortunately, no nests or young birds were harmed. We moved one nestbox at Battle Mountain to a different location, hopefully more to the liking of Bluebirds. One new box was added on Battle

Mountain, making a total of twenty boxes in that area.

On the Battle Mountain/Albee Trail, we estimate that approximately 25 Western Bluebirds and eight Mountain Bluebirds fledged. We have no way of knowing how many of the young birds survived after leaving the nest. Tree Swallows used four of the nest boxes, but at least one of these was after a successful bluebird nest in the same box. Between 9 and 15 Tree Swallows fledged.

The bluebirds on Poverty Flats had a difficult time during the cold, rainy weather in May and June. There were several dead babies in some of the nests. However, out of the seven boxes at Poverty Flats, ten or more Western Bluebirds fledged and one House Wren had a successful nest with three fledglings.

This report pretty well winds up the Bluebird Trail project until next spring. All in all, the project was quite successful for our first attempt at attracting bluebirds!

*Contributed by June Whitten*

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**Bird checklists, ID Challenge,**  
**Club Member's Photo Gallery,**  
**Newsletter Archive and more.**

[www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org)

### **INCIDENTAL BIRDING IN QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA**

*Editor's Note: Club member Jim Sawyer is a semi-retired pathologist who has lived in Pendleton since 1969. Assigned to work at Queensland Health Pathology Service, he and wife Julianne have been in Rockhampton, Queensland since July 1, 2004. "Rocky" is on the east coast of Australia 640 km north of Brisbane on the Tropic of Capricorn. It is subtropical and during the southern hemisphere winter is a very pleasant place. This is Jim's second article on their birding adventures in Australia. The first was published in the August 2004 newsletter. The Sawyers' return to the US is planned for January 2005.*

Winter has passed and we are now almost past spring. The weather seems to get a bit steamier each day. It has been interesting to observe the changes in activities with the change of season. Most of our birding is done incidental to other activities - a lot in our back yard and the neighborhood.

With the continuing drought, the water level at the lagoon on the edge of town has dropped. Most of the pelicans have moved elsewhere with a couple of dozen now seen on the other shore. The Long-billed Corellas are also gone, but there are now many Sulfur-crested Cockatoos in their place. Pale-headed Rosellas are quite numerous now, especially at the lagoon. Other new sightings at the lagoon include some interesting small birds like the Red-backed Fairy-Wren and the Large-billed Scrubwren. The latter is a small yellow-tan bird that works up and down in dead tree trunks poking into crevices and holes - a very busy critter.

We note increased territorial behavior, like the competition between the honeyeaters and the rosellas for nesting spots.

In Rockhampton there are three very similar black and white birds. The smallest is the ubiquitous PeeWee or Magpie Lark. The next in size is the Butcherbird, named for its habit of caching food for consumption later. It is mostly carnivorous. Despite its unseemly habits, it has the most beautiful flute like song, which we now hear frequently. The Australian Magpie is slightly larger than the Butcherbird and also has a nice flute like song. This magpie has a large local reputation for being aggressive and territorial during the nesting season. There are two corners near our place that were avoided for about three weeks. These birds have a habit of swooping on pedestrians - one actually touched Julianne's face. I forgot about them and jogged past this corner one day to be swooped four times. No harm done, but it is startling. It is reported that they occasionally draw blood.

There also seem to be larger numbers of the Laughing Kookaburra. It really does laugh, and loudly, mostly at dawn and dusk.

A few days ago, there was a new lorikeet - the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, all bright green except for yellow crescents on breast and flanks, and with a red

bill. It is much like the Painted Lorikeet, and they flock together. Galahs have also made their appearance recently. Although Galahs are widespread and common in Australia and an agricultural pest in some areas, we had not seen them until October.

Recently we had our first "vacation" since we have been here. At Cape Hillsborough National Park, on the coast north of Mackay, we were entertained by some new to us birds. The most spectacular was a little one - the Yellow Bellied Sunbird. Most of the entertaining, however, was done by pairs of Noisy Friarbirds. Noisy is right, and they do very acrobatic aerials. They became very reckless during their chases, occasionally crashing into things.

At Eungella National Park we saw the Eungella Honeyeater, endemic there, and several others including the Wompoo Fruit-Dove (very colorful) and the Little Pied Cormorant. Australian Brush-Turkeys were present at Cape Hillsborough and Eungella. These interesting birds have bright red heads with yellow wattles and neck band. The male builds a mound of organic material which produces heat as it decays. The hen then lays eggs there to incubate. A pair on a chase came noisily crashing through the woods knocking down whatever was in their path.

Eungella is the place to go to see the platypus in the wild. We did see them, but I guess they don't count, even if they have a bill!

*Contributed by Jim Sawyer*

### **OCTOBER-NOVEMBER BIRD SIGHTINGS**

Many interesting birds, including a number of new County year birds, were observed this report period. Blue Jays continue to be seen in and around the Pendleton area. Susan Sheoships reported a number of Blue Jays around her home at Thorn Hollow. Neal Hinds reports a Blue Jay is being seen periodically in Hermiston. Connie Betts photographed a Blue Jay feeding in her yard in the McKay subdivision in Pendleton. Two pairs of Blue Jays were found at Joe and Mary Cole's home near Pendleton High School, and 3 Blue Jays visited Connie Zahl's feeder in SW Pendleton. However the prize for finding the largest flock of Blue Jays goes to Jean Wood. Jean observed a flock of 9 Blue Jays while walking on Jay (how appropriate!)

Avenue November 12, near McKay Community Park. It would be interesting to know just how many Blue Jays are currently in Pendleton and if they will stay all winter.

In addition to the influx of Blue Jays, an unusually large number of Pacific Loons are being observed below McNary Dam. Craig Corder first noted a Pacific Loon at this location during the Pendleton Bird Club Big Sit on October 10. Pacific Loons continue to be seen there, with the highest number (20!) reported by Aaron Skirvin and June and Duane Whitten on November 11.

On October 16, Craig and Judy Corder located a flock of 20 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches near Tollgate. This was the first report of Rosy-Finches in the county this year. During mid and late October, Jane Holmes reported Ospreys behind her home along the Umatilla River in Pendleton. Susan Sheoships reported that her brother found six white swans at the Golf Course Ponds on October 21. Others checking the area after her report confirmed that they were Tundra Swans. On October 24, Aaron, June and Duane found 2 Mew Gulls below McNary Dam. On October 26, I (Dave Herr) had several Steller's Jays visit my feeder. Although they are common in the foothills and mountains, Steller's Jays are uncommon and infrequent visitors to Pendleton.

Craig and Judy birded at Cold Springs Reservoir on October 27. Best finds included 2 Snow Geese and 110 Tundra Swans. This is the largest number of swans they have ever seen in the area. The same day Connie Betts reported Black-capped Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Flickers, American Goldfinches, House Finches and House Sparrows sharing her feeder with a Blue Jay. October 29, June Whitten reported 2 Great Egrets, a Tundra Swan, 15 Hooded Mergansers and a great assortment of ducks at Mission Ponds. She also reported 4 Tundra Swans were still at the Golf Course Ponds. The same day Aaron made a great find at McKay Reservoir. He found a finch that he was able to identify as a PURPLE FINCH. This is only the 4<sup>th</sup> Umatilla County record and a great addition to the County year list. Jack Simons had 6 Evening Grosbeaks at his feeder on October 29. The same day he found a male Bufflehead along with 12 Hooded Mergansers on Mission Ponds.

On October 30, Mike and MerryLynn Denny found 2 RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS below McNary Dam. The same day, Craig Corder found a Clark's Grebe above the dam. On October 31, Craig and Judy found 2 GLAUCOUS GULLS along with 250 Bonaparte's Gulls below McNary Dam. GLAUCOUS GULLS are extremely rare in Umatilla County and this is another great addition to our County year list. Mike and MerryLynn along with John Gatchet birded below McNary Dam on November 7. Their best find was a THAYER'S GULL. This is another difficult gull to find in the County and yet another addition to our County year list. In addition to the gull, they found 2 SWAMP SPARROWS, 2 WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS and a Fox Sparrow.

I found 3 Surf Scoters above McNary Dam on November 8. November 9, Jack Simons found 3 Great Egrets at Mission Ponds. Last year, Jack saw the last Great Egret October 23, so they are staying in the area much longer this year. Later in the day, Jack saw his first Bald Eagle of the season flying over the river behind his home. On November 12, Connie Betts reported a Red-breasted Nuthatch at her feeder.

Aaron, June and Duane birded below McNary Dam November 11. Besides the expected gulls and loons, they found all 4 *Zonotrichia* sparrows feeding at birdseed spread near the parking lot. Sightings included 20 White-crowned Sparrows, 2 or 3 WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS, 1 Golden-crowned Sparrow and 1 HARRIS' SPARROW. November 12, birding in the same area I found 100 Common Goldeneye, 3 Barrow's Goldeneye and 6 Canvasbacks. These were the first Canvasbacks reported in Umatilla County this year.

Thirteen CATTLE EGRETS were found in Walla Walla County on November 8, west of College Place near the Oregon state line. On November 13, Mike and MerryLynn found a CATTLE EGRET in the same area, but on the Umatilla County side of Stateline Road: another County year Bird! On November 14 Craig Corder reported 2 Mountain Chickadees in his yard. The same day I had a Mountain Chickadee at my feeder in Pendleton.

It appears there may be an invasion of mountain birds into our area this winter. Already White- and Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, Mountain

Chickadees, Bohemian Waxwings and Common Redpolls have been reported in or near Umatilla County. Keep your eyes open for these and other mountain species and please continue to send your sightings to me at 276-6413 or at dsherr@oregontrail.net

*Contributed by Dave Herr*

PENDLETON BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

[www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org)

*Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant*

*Editor for November: Aaron Skirvin 276-1948*  
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