



Newsletter of the Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 3, No. 4 Pendleton, Oregon April 2005

Renewable Energy Projects – Can They Co-Exist with Wildlife?

Twenty-two Pendleton Bird Club members were treated to a presentation on “Western Bat/Bird Interactions and Habitat Mitigation Projects” at the April potluck meeting. Karen Kronner, professional biologist and president of Northwest Wildlife Consultants, Inc., shared some of her insights and wildlife research results with Club members.

Karen has 18 years of experience as a wildlife biologist and offers contract environmental consulting services, including environmental monitoring, wildlife and ecology investigations and natural resource inventories.

One of her latest projects involved monitoring of bat/bird interactions with wind turbines here in the Pacific Northwest. Her search of the literature revealed that bats (and birds) not only collide with wind energy facilities but also with lighthouses, communication towers, tall buildings, power lines and fences.

Bat mortality at wind facilities is widespread and has been observed in several western states, including Washington, Oregon, California, Wyoming and Colorado. Other states where bat mortalities have been documented include West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Of the 46 bat species in North America, 11 have been found as fatalities at wind facilities. However, no federally endangered or threatened bats have been found.



Tally results from 12 studies across the U.S. have shown bat mortality is lower in the west than in the east (675 mortalities per year in the west vs. 2,176 mortalities per year in the east). Presumably, bat populations are higher in the east resulting in higher mortalities. Overall 3,620 bat collisions were tallied.

These studies have prompted cooperative efforts by wind-energy industry and other groups (state and federal agencies, private industry, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations) to address the issues and recommend solutions to the problems.

Avian Interactions

Bats are not the only flying creatures known to die as a result of impacting a wind facility — birds also die from these impacts. The Altamont wind energy facility in California was one of the first designed in the U.S. and may be the least “bird friendly”. Over 400 raptors per year have been killed at this facility, including Golden eagles.

However, technology advances in turbines have resulted in more “bird friendly” wind energy facilities in recent years. Much has been learned since Altamont was built. Questions remain such as effects on bird populations and indirect impacts that could cause displacement of grassland birds. Much more will be learned about avian impacts as more wind project sites are monitored.

Karen’s workgroup has also been involved in an avian fatality monitoring study. Five projects were studied here in the Pacific Northwest a minimum of 1 year after construction. Fatality estimates from four of these projects indicate an annual mortality

range of —

- 0.6 to 3.6 birds per turbine per year
- 0 to 0.07 raptors per turbine per year

Thirty-nine species of birds were recorded as fatalities. Sixty-three percent of the tally was from Horned Lark, Ring-necked Pheasant, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Western Meadowlark and Gray Partridge. The high number of Golden-crowned Kinglet fatalities was likely due to collisions during night migration. One of the cooperating agencies actually setup a mobile radar unit to track bird migration at night to better understand this phenomenon.

Habitat mitigation is also a major concern because of the potential for these large scale projects to disrupt the environment adjacent to wind energy facilities. Karen noted the adage, “Avoid, Minimize and Mitigate” was the tool or protocol they depend on to deal with potential habitat loss. The first priority is to “avoid” a sensitive area; if that is not possible then every attempt is made to “minimize” impact on a sensitive area; and, if that fails, attempts are made to “mitigate” the loss in habitat.

Planning teams of engineers, biologists and landowners collaborated on habitat mitigation. Monitoring (before and after construction) these sites was crucial. Thus far, results are favorable. For example, the Stateline Washington habitat enhancement / improvement parcel is producing lush bunchgrass with good seed production. The Oregon site has young bunchgrass and temporarily disturbed areas are recovering.

Thanks to the continuing efforts of concerned professionals such as Karen Kronner, the future looks bright for renewable energy facilities to co-exist with wildlife here in the Pacific Northwest. This is definitely a win-win situation for people as well as wildlife. Now if only the politicians could see the benefits....

Contributed by Jack Simons

Newsletter No Longer Mailed via Postal Service

In the Bird Club’s February newsletter, we announced that the April 2005 issue of the newsletter would be the last issue the club will distribute to members through the postal service. For more information about this change in the

distribution of the newsletter, see the February 2005 newsletter.

For those who receive the newsletter via the postal service, this is the last issue we will mail to you. You have the following options for obtaining the newsletter in the future: 1) If you have an email address, please send it to us (Aaron Skirvin at skirvins@uci.net or Jack Simons at styletoil@eoni.com), and we’ll send the newsletter to you via email. 2) If you don’t have a computer or email address, you can have a friend print a copy of the newsletter for you. 3) If you have access to a computer, through a public library or a friend, you can view the newsletter on our website www.pendletonbirders.org and print a copy.

Calendar of Events

Field Trip

Saturday, April 23, 2005

Meacham Woodpecker Search

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
Trip Leader: Dave Herr 276-6413

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

April 29 – May 2, 2005

June Whitten, Trip Coordinator 276-9019

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, May 12, 2005 7:30 p.m.

Aaron Skirvin’s presentation on
IDng Spring Migrants
First Christian Church, N. Main, Pendleton, Oregon

Umatilla County Spring Migration Count

Saturday, May 14, 2005

For further information, contact
Aaron Skirvin 276-1948

Field Trip

Saturday, May 21, 2005

Battle Mountain, Ukiah, Albee

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton
Safeway Parking Lot
Trip Leader: Aaron Skirvin 276-1948

Field Trip

Saturday, June 4, 2005

**Birding in the Juniper Canyon –
Stateline Wind Farm Area**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton
Safeway Parking Lot
Trip Leader: Karen Kronner

**Sign Up for the Club's Fall Trip to
Malheur NWR and Steens Mountain**

The Pendleton Bird Club is sponsoring a fall trip to Malheur NWR/Steens Mountain on Labor Day weekend, September 2, 3, 4, and 5, 2005. We will stay at the Malheur Field Station, which gives us good access to birding areas around the refuge and Steens Mountain. Duncan Evered, Director of the Malheur Field Station, has us "penciled in" for the long weekend, but our reservation at the Field Station will not be confirmed until we send a deposit.

Since the Field Station seems to be getting busier and busier, it is apparent we need to get our deposits in early to reserve the better accommodations. We can reserve the "Owl" and the "Pelican" quarters on Labor Day weekend if we affirm our reservation early. I want to collect the deposits and mail them to Duncan by June 10. If you plan to participate in the fall trip to Malheur/Steens, please send or deliver your \$20 per person deposit to me by June 5.

Thanks for taking the time to do this now, so we are assured of satisfactory accommodations.
June Whitten 1837 SW Athens Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801 email: jwhitten@oregontrail.net phone: 276-9019.

New Winter Bird for Umatilla County

Long-time Umatilla County birder, Craig Corder, noted that Great Egrets were virtually non-existent in the county prior to the 1970's. Indeed, historical records showed the Great Egret's range extending north on the west coast only as far as southeastern Oregon. Egrets nested in the marshes of Harney, Lake, and Klamath counties, but retreated to Nevada, Arizona, and Mexico in the fall and winter.

Since the 1970's, sightings have become more regular in Umatilla County with a few egrets reported occasionally in spring or fall. Almost all reports were of single birds.

During the last four or five years, local sightings of Great Egrets have markedly increased, but the sightings were restricted to spring (April/May) and fall (August – October). However, in the past couple of years, the migrant egrets seemed to be staying a little longer in the fall, and sightings of multiple birds became more frequent.

By the fall of 2004, as many as eight egrets were seen at one time between Pendleton and Mission. In addition, they were now being reported in November and December, and we began to speculate that some egrets might over-winter in the area.

The winter of 2004-05 is now history, and we know that at least 3 Great Egrets spent the winter in Umatilla County: the first time Great Egrets have been reported over-wintering in the county. Two birds frequented the Umatilla River and Mission Ponds habitats east of Pendleton, and one was consistently seen in Stage Gulch Creek at Stanfield. Another was seen regularly along Birch Creek at the Pendleton Country Club until mid-December.

Two egrets were found along the Umatilla River east of Pendleton during the Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count, which was held on January 1, 2005. These were the first Great Egrets recorded in the 18-year history of the count.

We don't know why the seasonal abundance of Great Egrets is changing in the county. Factors such as an increasing egret population, improving habitat, milder winters, and global warming could affect the numbers and seasonal occurrence of egrets, locally.

The following observers reported sightings of Great Egrets between August 2004 and March 2005: Jane Holmes, Bob and Dannell Tapley, Karen King, Jack Simons, Dolly Robison, Caty Clifton, Duane and June Whitten, Craig and Judy Corder, Dave Herr, and Becky Hiers.

Contributed by Aaron Skirvin

Put Up Your Hummingbird Feeders

If you feed hummingbirds, each spring you may ask yourself, "When should I put up my hummingbird feeder?" The first migrant birds (Calliope and Rufous hummingbirds) begin moving through Umatilla County in early to mid April. They readily come to feeders to "refuel" for the next leg of their northward migration. Our summer resident Black-chinned Hummingbirds arrive between May 1 and 10, occasionally the last week of April.

Malissa Minthorn, who feeds dozens of hummingbirds at her feeders on Upper McKay Creek, reported this year's first hummingbirds (Rufous and Calliope) in Umatilla County on April 16. Malissa noted that the birds arrived at least a week later than normal this year.

If you haven't put up your feeders, now would be a good time to get them out of the box, clean and fill the bottles, and hang them where you can see them from your window. Fill your feeders with a solution of 1 part sugar and 4 parts water; do not add red food coloring. Preferably, use cane (rather than beet) sugar. White, granular, table sugar dissolved in clean, fresh water makes a high-calorie nectar savored by hummingbirds.

For answers to you hummingbird questions, check out Stacy Jon Peterson's excellent website, <http://trochilids.tripod.com/faq.html#nectar>.

White-crowned Sparrow Migration

The annual spring migration of White-crowned Sparrows is now under way in Umatilla County. Many thousands of White-crowns pass through the county on their northward migration in April each year, with numbers of sparrows peaking during the last two weeks of the month.



One interesting observation this year was that migrant White-crowns appeared a week or so earlier in the western part of Umatilla County than in the Pendleton area. Craig and Judy Corder reported "thousands" of White-crowns in the Hermiston area in early April. A week to 10 days later, the hordes of White-crowns began moving through the Ukiah/Pilot Rock/Pendleton/Adams areas.

Putting out bird seed may attract some of these spring migrant White-crowned Sparrows to your feeder. I've also noticed they relish the tender, young shoots of newly sprouted lettuce plants in the garden!

Contributed by Aaron Skirvin

Pendleton Heronry Expanding

The Great Blue Heron rookery on the east end of Pendleton's River Parkway is growing at a rapid pace now that several nests have nestlings. There are twelve nests in all, and at least eleven are attended by adult herons.

Great Blue Herons incubate their 2.5 inch eggs for approximately four weeks. Then the attentive parents feed and care for the young herons for another two months before they fledge. On Friday, April 15, several young herons, which appeared to be about two weeks old, were observed in two nests. With this information, it is apparent that these herons had eggs in some of the nests the first week of March. The babies hatched about the first of April.

Junior and senior students from Nixyaawii Community School (new charter school at Mission) observed the heronry on April 15, with the assistance of Aaron Skirvin, and June and Duane Whitten. Their teacher plans to evolve some math projects from their observations. Also, on April 22, fifth-grade students from Washington School will be taken on a bird walk on the Parkway, which will include observing the herons. Betty Klepper, Marilyn Jio, and June Whitten will lead this outing.

Most of the students are quite unaware of the bird diversity in their own back yard. So, these field trips are fine opportunities to not only increase students' knowledge of birds, but give them a sense of pride and ownership of the birds of the Parkway.

Contributed by June Whitten

March-April Bird Sightings

The **Ospreys** have returned to Pendleton, a sure sign spring is here. What fun to watch these beautiful birds flying and nesting along the Umatilla River. Our Umatilla County **Blue Jays** continue to be seen. Jerry Baker reported hearing a Blue Jay in Athena in early April, and Connie Betts is still seeing them at the Pendleton Community Park. Hopefully we will be able to verify nesting in the county this spring.

March 18, Paul Sullivan reported the first **Caspian Terns** seen this year in the county at the McNary Wildlife Area. Birding in the Albee/Ukiah area on March 19, Aaron Skirvin found a **TRUMPETER SWAN** on a stock pond near Ukiah. Could this could be the same bird that Bob Tapley photographed at the Ukiah sewage ponds on February 25? Aaron also found **31 Mountain Bluebirds** at the sewage ponds as well as a lone **Ruddy Duck**. On March 22, Jack Simons counted **127 Tundra Swans** flying over his home. The following day Val Bates counted over **100 Tundra Swans** on McKay Reservoir, probably the same flock. Rose Scott reported finding a **Black-necked Stilt** near Hermiston March 23. On March 24, I (Dave Herr) saw a **Turkey Vulture** flying south over Pendleton.

Bob and Dannel Tapley continue to monitor nesting raptors in the Holdman area. On April 2, Bob photographed a **Great-horned Owl** nest with at least one chick. April 3, Aaron and June Whitten found several **Williamson's Sapsuckers** at Battle Mountain and a **Pygmy Nuthatch** near Albee. The same day, driving along the Mud Springs Canyon road, they found **13 (THIRTEEN!) Short-eared Owls**. On April 4, Aaron reported finding a large flock of swallows at Mission Ponds and was able to pick out the seasons first **Cliff** and **Rough-winged Swallows** in the flock. He also found a pair of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** at the ponds as well as a male **Barrow's Goldeneye** at the Wildhorse ponds.

On April 5, Bob and Dannel reported finding several **Say's Phoebes** along the Coombs Canyon road and a pair of **Ferruginous Hawks** along Mud Spring Canyon road. Jack Simons reports that **Wood Ducks** continue to visit his pond near the Umatilla River east of Pendleton, and he is hopeful at least one pair will find the nest boxes he provided. The Gambel's race of **White-crowned Sparrow**

migrates through our area each spring and Craig Corder reported **thousands** moving through his Hermiston neighborhood the first week of April. On April 8 Craig and Judy reported finding a **Eurasian Wigeon** and a nesting **Killdeer** at Cold Spring NWR. April 10, Craig and Judy found a **Turkey Vulture** near Hat Rock and 4 **White-Throated Swifts** along the Columbia River near the state line. The same day June, Duane and Aaron had a great birding day, finding many new "county-year" birds. These included **Swainson's Hawks**, **Cinnamon Teal**, one male **Blue-winged Teal**, a **Brewer's Sparrow**, a **Barn Swallow** and **White-throated swifts**. Also on the 10th I found a **Sage Thrasher** and **Merlin** on the Speare Canyon road near Nolin. On April 12, Connie Betts made an exciting discovery. Connie is making a checklist of the birds found in and adjacent to the Pendleton Community Park, and on the 12th she observed a large raptor building a nest in the cottonwoods trees along the north side of the park. The bird was identified as a **Swainson's Hawk** and Connie reports that it is building two nests. So far only one bird has been observed so it will be interesting to see if it finds a mate and is successful in raising young. If so, it will make a great addition to Connie's checklist.

Craig and Judy reported finding 2 **Nashville Warblers**, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** and 2 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** in their Hermiston yard April 16. Birding in the Meacham area the same day Aaron and the Whittens found 2 **Red-naped Sapsuckers** and 5 **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** at Emigrant Springs State Park and a **Turkey Vulture**, 4 **Williamson's Sapsuckers** and a **White-breasted Nuthatch** along the Summit road.

As many of you know Craig and Judy Corder have sold their home in Hermiston and are moving to a 270 acre ranch near Cheney Washington. Their new location sounds wonderful, but Craig and Judy are sure going to be missed in Umatilla County. Craig has birded in the County for over 33 years and during that time has collected a huge amount of data about Umatilla County birdlife. Although they will be living in Washington I know that Craig and Judy will share that knowledge with the PBC as we develop the Umatilla County Annotated checklist. I would also like to thank Craig and Judy for their willingness to share their bird sightings for the newsletter. I am going to miss hearing from them. Remember to send your bird sightings to me, Dave Herr at 276-6413 or dsherr@oregontrail.net

We're on-line!

Visit the bird club's website at

www.pendletonbirders.org

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Photo Gallery, Newsletter Archive and more.**

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away.**

**You don't need to own a computer. Visit your
local library (it's free).**

Editor for April: Aaron Skirvin

Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant

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