



Kákya Táymut

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

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WINDMILLS AND BIRDS

Fourteen birders found more than windmills when we toured the Stateline Wind Farm off Butler Grade Road on June 4. Even before the caravan arrived at the wind farm, we had admired the vistas and stopped to watch a pair of Short-eared Owls and Long-billed Curlews, as well as a Red-tailed Hawk, in the field below the windmills. Florida Power and Light Public Relations Director Ann Walsh—assisted by her sons Stewart and Robert—explained the mysteries of the whirring windmills (we stood under one whose 75 foot long blades were not moving). Ann and trip leader Karen Kronner discussed the impact of the windmills and the roads built to reach them on the area's birds.

Then Karen led us on a search for Burrowing Owls. We were fortunate enough to observe a pair of owls who swooped up and back down a gully, stopping to rest near each of several badger holes and on the fenceposts above the gully. Aaron saw a Common Nighthawk and a Northern Flicker, and we heard a singing Grasshopper Sparrow, who also came in close to give us a good view, and a Brewer's Blackbird.

As we left the windmills, we spotted two pairs of Long-billed Curlews very close to the road; it's always a marvel to see these large shorebirds in dry grasslands, their preferred breeding habitat. We then drove up Butler Grade ("Lark Alley") accompanied by many Horned Larks and Western Meadowlarks.

When we stopped to eat our lunches at the junction with Vansycle Road, we found a male Bullock's Oriole in the riparian area of a small creek—then two males, squabbling a bit for territory. Other species at the lunch stop included a pair of Eastern Kingbirds, two Western Kingbirds, and a Bewick's

Wren, as well as nesting European Starlings, Mourning Doves, American Goldfinches, House Finches, Barn Swallows, and a Ring-necked Pheasant. On the drive home, by way of Helix, we added Rock Pigeons and an American Kestrel, four Say's Phoebes, a Northern Harrier, and Brown-headed Cowbirds to our list.

Birders on this trip were Karen Kronner, Jack Simons, June and Duane Whitten, Bob and Dannel Tapley, Rebecca Hiers, Don and Carole Guenther, Janet Ebaugh, Connie and Russ Betts, Aaron Skirvin and Bette Husted.

Contributed by Bette Husted

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Field Trip

Saturday, July 2, 2005

Birding in the Tollgate Area

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the NE corner of the Pendleton Safeway Parking Lot
Trip Leaders: June and Duane Whitten

Bird Club Picnic/Barbecue

Saturday, July 9, 2005

Battle Mountain State Park

(Note: this is a change in location; see article in this newsletter)

Meet at 3:00 p.m. at Battle Mountain State Park

Fall Field Trip to Malheur NWR

September 2 – 5, 2005

To sign-up contact June Whitten – 276-9019
See article in this newsletter

Club Picnic/Barbecue – Saturday, July 9 at Battle Mountain State Park

The location of the club's picnic on Saturday, July 9 has been changed from Langdon Lake to **Battle Mountain State Park**. The U.S. Forest Service has not opened Woodward Campground at Langdon Lake and cannot guarantee that it will be open by July 9. We could still use the campground for the picnic, but it would be extremely inconvenient to pack in the barbecues, food, and supplies from the locked gate to the picnic site.

So, instead of Langdon Lake, the picnic/barbecue will be held at the day use area at Battle Mountain State Park (same location as last year) beginning at 3 p.m. Battle Mountain State Park is located about 35 miles south of Pendleton along Hwy 395. There is some road construction in the area of the park, so you might have a short traffic delay on your trip to the park.

We will start the barbecues at 3:30 and eat around 4 p.m. Please bring your choice of meat to barbecue, buns if required, and all table service. Also, bring a salad, dessert, or item of choice to share. Condiments and iced tea will be furnished for all, as will the barbecue grills.

This event promises to have great food and lots of fun. We will have some spiffy, new Tee-shirts with the Pendleton Bird Club's logo (\$12) and a new Checklist of the Birds of Umatilla County (\$1) for sale at the picnic. If everything goes as planned, we also will have samples of a cap and polo shirt sporting the club's logo. Those interested in purchasing a hat and/or polo shirt will be able to place your orders at the picnic. All proceeds from the sales will go to the Pendleton Bird Club.

The picnic provides an opportunity to get acquainted with new friends or new birders, so please invite guests. Arrange your own transportation or car pool. If anyone needs a ride, call June Whitten, 276-9019.

Malheur Trip Set For September 2-5, 2005

Twelve members of the Pendleton Bird Club have paid their deposit to stay at the Malheur Field Station over Labor Day Weekend. Fall at Malheur/Steens Mountain is always a great trip!

This does not mean no one else can sign up to go. It only means that we have twelve reservations for sure. Anyone else who finds they can make the trip, can probably still have a place to stay. The sooner the reservations are made, the better the chance of getting in.

Please send a \$20.00 deposit for each person to June Whitten, 1837 SW Athens Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. The deposit will be forwarded to Duncan Evered at the Malheur Field Station and he will let us know if he still has rooms available.

Duncan did remind us that the total fee for single rooms is \$24.00. Last spring was an exception as he had quoted us \$20.00 if we had stayed in the trailers.

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

www.pendletonbirders.org

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

Swallows and Swifts of Umatilla County: Identification Guide

During the spring and summer, swallows and swifts are common and easily seen birds throughout most of Umatilla County. Seven species of swallows (one very rare) and three species of swifts (one very rare) are found in the county. Purple Martin has been reported only once (Milton-Freewater in April 1989), and Black Swift has been seen four times since 1990 in Umatilla County.

Swallows and swifts are truly spring and summer birds of Umatilla County: the first swallows (usually Violet-greens) arrive in the county about March 1, and the latest lingerers (Barn Swallow) leave for their wintering areas in late September. One or more of these species occupy the various grassland, wetland, forested, urban, and agricultural habitats throughout the county. They are most numerous, however, near rivers, streams, and lakes. At times in spring and early summer, several hundred to a few

thousand swallows and swifts may be seen hunting on the wing for flying insects over the Umatilla River, especially in the river canyon between Rieth and Echo.

Because swallows and swifts are superficially similar in size, form, and feeding behavior, and are often seen as flying silhouettes, they can be difficult to identify. This guide is intended to assist in distinguishing among the eight most common species in Umatilla County. Due to factors such as poor lighting, distance to the bird(s), or short length of time the bird is seen, you will not be able to identify every swallow you see. However, nearly every swallow that an observer sees well is identifiable.

Cliff Swallow – this is the only species with an orangish-buff rump. They also have a dark brown throat, and it's our only swallow with a white forehead. The Cliff Swallow is one of the most abundant and widespread bird species in Umatilla County from May through July. They nest in colonies consisting of up to several hundred birds and build their mud nests on vertical surfaces such as cliff faces, concrete bridges, and buildings, but usually under an overhang.

Barn Swallow – this is the only species with a long, forked tail. Juveniles have shorter tails than adults, so take a second look at swallows you see in mid to late summer. Back and wings are solid dark blue. They are found here between April and September, often around streams and ponds, using man-made structures such as bridges, culverts, and out-buildings as nesting sites.

Violet-green Swallow – this is the only species with a white rump and our only swallow in which the white on its cheek extends above the eye. In good light conditions, the male's wings and back are vivid violet and green. They occur throughout the county, though are most common along streams at lower elevations and in urban areas. This species also nests in low numbers in the Blue Mountains, especially at Langdon Lake, Battle Mountain summit, and Ukiah.

Tree Swallow – this species is all dark on the back, wings, tail and rump. Males are metallic blue on the back; females have a brownish-blue back. They are all white beneath; white cheek, but no white above the eye. This species is uncommon in the lower elevations of Umatilla County, but is more common

along streams, lakes, and wet meadows at the higher elevations.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – this is one of our two brown-backed swallow species and can easily be confused with the Bank Swallow. The Rough-winged has a dusky throat and upper breast. Their call is a flat, raspy, single, low note. They nest singly or in small, loose groups in holes in dirt banks or cliff faces.

Bank Swallow – this brown-backed swallow is all white underneath except for a prominent grayish-brown breast band. If you see only the back of this species, they are difficult to distinguish from the Rough-winged. Their tail is more deeply notched than the tail of the Rough-winged Swallow. Bank Swallow's call note is more "buzzy" than Rough-winged. They are colonial nesters that dig small burrows in vertical soil banks.

Vaux's Swift – this species is shorter than all of the swallows and swifts, and it has a stubby tail. The birds are all dark, though the breast is a little lighter than the belly and back. Their wings are noticeably narrower, but as long as or longer than a swallow's. They have a distinctive fluttering flight pattern, with more rapid wing-beats than any of the swallows. Vaux's Swifts are often seen flying over the coniferous forests of the Blue Mountains, but a few nest in chimneys in urban areas (Pendleton and Pilot Rock). During spring and fall migration, flocks containing a few dozen to hundreds of swifts may be seen flying over towns or streams.

White-throated Swift – this species is a regular but very uncommon spring and summer resident in Umatilla County. White-throated Swifts are noticeably larger than swallows and Vaux's Swifts, and they have a striking black and white color pattern underneath; the back and tail are black. This species nests in colonies in high cliffs. We know of three nesting locations in Umatilla County: along old Highway 30 about 1.5 miles west of Rieth; another small group along old Highway 30 about 0.5 mile west of Yoakum Bridge; and along the Columbia River near the Oregon-Washington stateline.

Contributed by Aaron Skirvin

Little League Heronry

The young herons are strengthening their wings and some are doing brief flights. Many are almost adult size and it is difficult to tell some of them from

adults. There were ten successful nests and to the best count available, about twenty four young herons are about to fledge.

Quite a few students and adults have been taken to view the heronry. Almost everyone is awed that this heronry was right in their "own back yard," and most of them had no idea it existed.

Contributed by June Whitten

May - June Bird Sightings

Bird sightings for the May — June period have been rather sketchy. This is most likely due to the fact that Dave Herr (long-time author extraordinaire of this feature) took off to California on his annual "working vacation" to teach bird recording techniques and communicated to all of our local avian friends to go into hiding until his return. However, there were a few birds that failed to get Dave's message and did make the sightings list for the past month.

On May 14, Ginger & Rodger Shoemake and Joe & Carolyn Corvino from Walla Walla saw a male **American Three-toed Woodpecker** excavating a nest hole at Target Meadows campground. On the same day, Dave Herr located a pair of **American Three-toed Woodpecker** at Woodward Campground (Langdon Lake).

On May 16 and 18, Aaron Skirvin saw an adult **Tundra Swan** at Mission Ponds. This is late for a Tundra Swan, which should be on its breeding grounds above the Arctic Circle. Though the swan walked with a slight limp, Aaron noted that it flew well.

While looking for **Bobolinks** at Ukiah on May 21, Nancy and Lyle Brown found a late **White-crowned Sparrow**; they also saw a couple of **Bobolinks** at close range.

On May 29, June and Duane Whitten reported a **Black-backed Woodpecker** along Hwy 395 just north of the Ukiah-Dale State Park. Duane Whitten photographed a male **Common Goldeneye** that was swimming with 2 females at Langdon Lake on May 30. The same day, Joy Jaeger reported a small group of **Clark's Nutcrackers** on her property a few miles northeast of Albee.

On June 7th, June and Duane Whitten saw the first **Common Nighthawk** of 2005 fly over the Little

League Park in Pendleton about 8:30 in the evening. What the Whitten's don't know is that I *also* saw a pair of Common Nighthawks flying over the Umatilla River (toward the ball park, naturally) around 7:00 pm that same evening but failed to report it the next day. Definitely my shortcoming — but this is not the first time this has happened. I recall last year the Whittens also reported the first Common Nighthawk of the year (yup — Little League Park again) while I had spotted a pair earlier that same evening — I swear this is true — and failed to report *that* sighting! ["Uh-huh", Ed.] Be forewarned June and Duane — next year I'm carrying my lap top with me!

On June 10th, Aaron, June and Duane spotted an adult **Bald Eagle** at McKay Reservoir. Aaron said this is the first Bald Eagle he has seen at McKay Reservoir in the month of June. That same day June had a report from Chad and Karen Smith at Adams (near Rothrock Road) that owls were living in a burrow near their home. June and Duane investigated and did find a likely Burrowing Owl *burrow* but no owls.

The next day Aaron reported the third **Burrowing Owl** sighting in the county this year. This sighting was along Hwy 395, 2 miles south of Nye Junction at approximately 4:30 a.m.

On June 11, Bob Tapley photographed a small flock of **American White Pelicans** in the Umatilla River near the mouth of McKay Creek.

Birding just below McNary Dam on June 17, Neal Hinds found a **Common Loon** in the Columbia River. This is an unusually late sighting for Common Loon in Umatilla County. Aaron, June and Duane saw the same loon the following day as it flew over then land on a pond at the McNary Wildlife Area.

We can thank our good friends Craig and Judy Corder for emailing the year's first sighting of a **LEAST FLYCATCHER** near Hat Rock on June 17th and 18th. The Corders, as many of you are aware, moved this spring to their new ranch near Cheney, Washington. Thanks for coming back to nail **number 218** on the **2005 County List**, guys!

On June 21, Mike Denny found a male **American Redstart** in a forested bog in the upper reaches of the West Birch Creek watershed. The same day, Mike saw a shorebird on a fence post near Ukiah

that he is almost certain was an **UPLAND SANDPIPER**. If you are birding in the Ukiah area, be sure to watch for this species, as it may breed annually in very small numbers in the wet meadows around Ukiah-Albee.

A **Great Egret** continues to be seen at Mann Pond along Stanfield Meadows Road. It was reported there on June 2, 18, and 23 by a variety of observers. Can it be long before this species begins nesting in Umatilla County?

And who says persistence never pays off? After going regularly to Mission Ponds for over a month, Aaron finally spotted the elusive (and rare in

Umatilla County) Black Tern on June 21st. This is only the second year (2004 was the first) this species has been sighted at the Ponds. Let's hope this rare visitor returns again and again.

Contributed by Jack Simons

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