



# Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 4, No. 5 Pendleton, Oregon May 2006

## The Jewel of Eastern Oregon

### BIRD OF THE MONTH —

#### LAZULI BUNTING (*Passerina amoena*)

LAZULI BUNTING, THE JEWEL of Eastern Oregon, is named for that beautiful semi-precious stone, the lapis lazuli. The stone and the male bunting are both that wonderful shade of blue with a hint of turquoise. Most people remember the first time their eyes beheld a Lazuli Bunting and their brain wondered if it was really a bird. The male has a blue head and back, robin-red breast, off-white belly, and two white wing bars.

The Lazuli Buntings arrive in Umatilla County around the first week in May. They are hungry from their migration route from Mexico and the southern parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and California, and will come to feeders or other seeds in yards and pastures. After they spend a few days eating their fill, they will move into higher, cooler areas to nest.

The female is a much plainer bird and not as easily spotted as the colorful male. She is a warm brown bird with a buffy breast and buffy wing bars. The wing bars are a good identification mark. Both male and female are about 5.5 inches long with an 8 to 9 inch wingspan. Since Lazuli Buntings are seed eaters part of the time, their bill is conical to accommodate seeds. About half of their diet consists of insects, and the babies are fed insects for their high protein value.

Lazuli Buntings prefer to nest in fairly arid areas where there is plentiful brush and tangled undergrowth. The nest is made of woven dried grass and forbs and lined with fine grass. Usually four bluish-white eggs, 0.8 inches long, are laid and incubated for 10 to 12 days. The nest is often only 3 or 4 feet from the ground but may

be as much as 10 feet. They may have two broods, and occasionally even three, each year.

The male is a practiced songster, and it makes him easy to find as he announces his presence and his territory. The song is described as a high, sharp warble, but experienced birders will tell you they have more than one song, or at least some birds do not have the same song as others.

May and early June are great times to watch Lazuli Buntings. Some good locations are the Old Cabbage Hill Road, up the Umatilla River, some of the brushy areas around Battle Mountain, Albee, and Ukiah.

*Contributed by June Whitten*



### CANADA GOOSE #339K RESIGHTED AT MCKAY RESERVOIR

ON APRIL 26, 2004, WHILE BIRDING at McKay Reservoir, I observed a Canada Goose that was “banded” with a white plastic neck collar. Inscribed in black numbers on the collar was “339K.” The goose was with a mate and four goslings. I reported the collar number to the Bird Banding Program, U.S. Geological Survey, and they promptly responded that the goose was banded as a gosling in 1996 near La Grande, Oregon. Brad Bales, waterfowl biologist with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, placed a collar on the female goose when it was “too young to fly” in June 1996. (See the July 2004 *Kákya Táymut* for the original account.)

Although several bird club members spent considerable time birding at McKay Reservoir in 2005, no one reported seeing goose #339K. However, on April 24, 2006, I was pleasantly



surprised to find goose #339K at McKay Reservoir, with a mate and three week-old goslings.

When you are at McKay Reservoir this spring/summer, be sure to check out the Canada Geese for neck collars. If you find a bird with a band or collar, please take the time to report your observation to the North American Bird Banding Program at **1-800-327-BAND**. You can also report banded birds to the Bird Banding Program on the internet. Information from bird banding studies help us understand the movement, survival and behavior of birds.

*Contributed by Aaron Skirvin*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Umatilla County Birding Weekend with Salem Audubon

**June 8 – 11, 2006**

**Pendleton Bird Club hosts Salem Audubon Society members for a weekend of birding in Umatilla County.**

**Salem folks will arrive on the evening of Thursday, June 8.**

**We will take field trips throughout Umatilla County on June 9 and 10.**

**If you want to participate, please contact Aaron Skirvin, [askirvin@wtechlink.net](mailto:askirvin@wtechlink.net)**

### Field Trip

#### Ladd Marsh and Grande Ronde Valley

**Saturday, June 17, 2006**

Trip Leaders: Trent Bray and Joanne Britton

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Pendleton Safeway parking lot. We will meet the birders from La Grande and Baker City in La Grande about 8:15.

### Field Trip (tentative)

#### Tollgate Birding

**Saturday, July 8, 2006**

### Annual Bird Club Picnic/Barbecue

**Saturday, August 5, 2006**

**Woodward Campground at Langdon Lake,  
Tollgate, Oregon**

Meet at 3:00 p.m. at Woodward Campground  
Stay tuned: more information will be provided in  
upcoming newsletters.

### **UMATILLA COUNTY SPRING MIGRATION COUNT**

**ON MAY 13, TWELVE BIRDERS** in seven teams searched throughout Umatilla County to find and count as many birds as possible in one day. The teams, all taking part in the annual North American Spring Migration Count, started counting birds about 5:00 a.m. and finished their routes by 10:00 p.m. We found 146 species, which compares favorably with 141 species in 2003, 141 species in 2004, and 147 species in 2005. We set the record for most individual birds counted — 12,297; the previous high count was 10,694 in 2003. Cliff Swallow once again was the most numerous species, with 3,969 birds counted. Even though Cliff Swallow has consistently been the most abundant species each year, this year we counted nearly twice as many compared to prior years.

Thank you to **Nancy and Lyle Brown, Dolly Robison, Bob and Dannell Tapley, June and Duane Whitten, Russ and Connie Betts, Dave Herr, and Jack Simons** for your help in counting Umatilla County birds and making our 2006 spring migration count a success.

**Here are the results:** Canada Goose 291, Wood Duck 39; Gadwall 12, American Wigeon 3; Mallard 153; Blue-winged Teal 1; Cinnamon Teal 43; Northern Shoveler 25; Northern Pintail 32; Green-winged Teal 5; Redhead 10; Ring-necked Duck 8; Bufflehead 17; Common Goldeneye 2; Common Merganser 57; Ruddy Duck 29; Chukar 7; Gray Partridge 1; Ring-necked Pheasant 96; Wild Turkey 4; California Quail 200; Pied-billed Grebe 1; Eared Grebe 3; Western Grebe 60; American White



Pelican 49; Double-crested Cormorant 19; Great Blue Heron 80; Black-crowned Night-Heron 3; Turkey Vulture 3; Osprey 10; Northern Harrier 12; Sharp-shinned Hawk 1; Cooper's Hawk 3; Swainson's Hawk 14; Red-tailed Hawk 53; Ferruginous Hawk 3; Golden Eagle 1; American Kestrel 54; Virginia Rail 1; Sora 1; American Coot 88; Semipalmated Plover 3; Killdeer 96; Black-necked Stilt 15; American Avocet 36; Spotted Sandpiper 10; Long-billed Curlew 11; Western Sandpiper 1; Least Sandpiper 2; Long-billed Dowitcher 46; Wilson's Snipe 5; Wilson's Phalarope 82; Red-necked Phalarope 1; Bonaparte's Gull 2; Ring-billed Gull 25; Forster's Tern 2; Rock Pigeon 412; Mourning Dove 347; Barn Owl 1; Great Horned Owl 12; Northern Pygmy-Owl 2; Short-eared Owl 3; Vaux's Swift 11; Black-chinned Hummingbird 5; Calliope Hummingbird 13; Rufous Hummingbird 8; Belted Kingfisher 2; Lewis's Woodpecker 14; Williamson's Sapsucker 4; Downy Woodpecker 1; Hairy Woodpecker 3; Northern Flicker 40; Pileated Woodpecker 1; Western Wood-Pewee 2; Hammond's Flycatcher 2; Dusky Flycatcher 4; Western Flycatcher 1; Say's Phoebe 12; Western Kingbird 136; Cassin's Vireo 13; Warbling Vireo 13; Steller's Jay 13; Clark's Nutcracker 6; Black-billed Magpie 252; American Crow 77; Common Raven 38; Horned Lark 145; Tree Swallow 14; Violet-green Swallow 479; Northern Rough-winged Swallow 170; Bank Swallow 360; Cliff Swallow 3969; Barn Swallow 215; Black-capped Chickadee 6; Mountain Chickadee 8; Chestnut-backed Chickadee 4; Red-breasted Nuthatch 15; White-breasted Nuthatch 2; Pygmy Nuthatch 2; Brown Creeper 1; Rock Wren 9; Bewick's Wren 6; House Wren 13; Marsh Wren 4; American Dipper 5; Golden-crowned Kinglet 3; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3; Western Bluebird 21; Mountain Bluebird 7; American Robin 287; European Starling 714; Orange-crowned Warbler 12; Yellow Warbler 103; Yellow-rumped Warbler 33; Townsend's Warbler 11; MacGillivray's Warbler 7; Wilson's Warbler 4; Yellow-breasted Chat 1; Western Tanager 5; Spotted Towhee 3; Chipping Sparrow 54; Vesper Sparrow 15; Lark Sparrow 6; Savannah Sparrow 45; Grasshopper Sparrow 3; Fox Sparrow 4; Song Sparrow 60; Lincoln's Sparrow 1; White-crowned Sparrow 27; Golden-crowned Sparrow 6; Dark-eyed Junco 14; Black-headed Grosbeak 8; Lazuli Bunting 39; Red-winged Blackbird 721; Western Meadowlark 167; Yellow-headed Blackbird 232; Brewer's Blackbird 493; Brown-headed Cowbird 51;



Blackbird species 215; Bullock's Oriole 8; Cassin's Finch 9; House Finch 75; Red Crossbill 3; American Goldfinch 35; House Sparrow 86.

*Contributed by Aaron Skirvin*

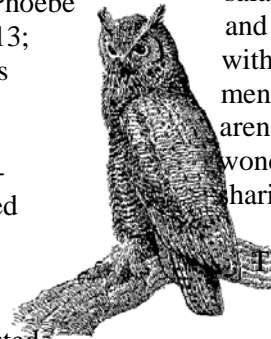
#### VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

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

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

#### PENDLETON BIRDERS ARE GORMET COOKS!!

**THE PENDLETON BIRD CLUB POTLUCK** on May 11 was well attended, and the food was not only plentiful, it was scrumptious! There were hors d'oeuvres, a Thai soup, a wide variety of both fruit and vegetable salads, and old favorites like potato salad, deviled eggs, chicken casserole, and macaroni and cheese. Then, there was a dessert table filled with luscious chocolate items too numerous to mention and an elegant lemon-bundt cake. If you aren't hungry now, you should be! It was, indeed, a wonderful meal and a great time for visiting and sharing stories.



The program was a real treat also. Our bird club is so fortunate to have such talented birders as Aaron Skirvin and Dave Herr. Aaron presented a Power-Point program on the more common warblers of Umatilla County, and then the rarer warblers, which may have only a few sightings. Dave provided the sound recordings for each bird. This was a learning experience to see and hear the warblers we often find in Umatilla County.

Thanks to everyone for the great food! A special thank-you goes to Aaron and Dave for the program. Maybe we can talk them into doing sparrows next!

*Contributed by June Whitten*

#### BIRD SIGHTINGS, APRIL – MAY 2006

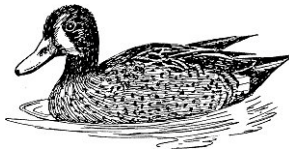
**AS I WRITE THIS, SPRING MIGRATION** is well underway, with new arrivals being reported daily. Even with the unseasonably warm weather we've been having, this is probably the best time of the year to go birding. It will be interesting to see if the warm weather has any effect on birds we are able to locate

in the following month, so keep your eyes open and take good notes.

Jane Holmes is one of the few people in Pendleton reporting **Pine Siskins** this year. Jane notes that in April she was still seeing them periodically. Birding with a group from Portland Audubon in mid April, Paul Sullivan reported finding **Long-billed Dowitchers, Bank Swallows and Caspian Terns** in the Hermiston area. During this report period, Aaron Skirvin made a number of trips to the Wanaket Wildlife Area, recording both species and bird numbers. On April 22, some of his better finds included a calling **Sora, Semipalmated Plover, Solitary Sandpiper** and a **Brewer's Sparrow**. On April 24, Aaron found 2 **Common Loons** on McKay Reservoir. April 26, Rose Scott reported 2 **Wilson's Phalaropes** along Emert Road. A **Great Gray Owl** was seen in the mountains above Milton-Freewater on April 29. Also on April 29, Jack Simons reported finding three teal species (**Green-winged, Blue-winged and Cinnamon**) at Mission Ponds. Birding in the Ukiah area the same day, Aaron reported finding a **Solitary Sandpiper** and **40 American White Pelicans** at the Ukiah sewage ponds and 12 **Sandhill Cranes** in the same area. Checking the cliffs south on Pilot Rock, he found one **Ferruginous Hawk** nest, and expects others are nesting in the area as well. On April 30, Aaron found a male **Lazuli Bunting** and **Brewer's Sparrow** along Barnhart Road and **Calliope** and **Rufous Hummingbirds** at his home feeder. On April 30, Connie Betts reported finding a nesting **American Kestrel** near the Pendleton Community Park and reports she is still occasionally seeing a **Tricolored Blackbird** at her feeders.

May 1, Connie reported finding a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** and **Evening Grosbeak** at her home. She also reported that a **House Finch** built a nest in one of her friend's hanging plant baskets. On May 5, four birders (Ginger Shoemake, Priscilla Dauble, Shirley Muse, Dawn Bishop) from Blue Mountain Audubon made a great Umatilla County find. Two miles south of Adams, along Wildhorse Creek, they found an adult **BLACK-THROATED SPARROW**. This is only the third recorded sighting of this species in the county! On May 7, Connie Betts reported a **MacGillivray's Warbler** and male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** in her yard. The same day, Bob Tapely reported a **Lazuli Bunting** at his feeder. Also on May 7, Aaron and June Whitten had a fantastic day of birding in the Ukiah area. Some of their more

interesting finds included a **Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Sparrows, Clark's Nutcrackers, Vesper Sparrow, Gray Flycatcher, Sandhill Cranes, 6 swallow species, Black-backed** and **Lewis's Woodpeckers, Williamson's Sapsucker, Townsend's Warblers, Spotted Sandpiper** and a **Tundra Swan**. On May 8 and 9, Andrew and Barbara Clark observed a female **LONG-TAILED DUCK** at McKay Reservoir. This is the first sighting of this species on the Reservoir. After checking out the Spring Creek **Great Gray Owls** on May 8, Russ and Connie Betts visited Indian Lake. There they found **Bufflehead, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Mallards** and several hundred **Rough-winged Swallows**. On the trip back to Pendleton, they found **Wild Turkey, Chukar** and a **Ruffed Grouse** along the East Birch Creek Road. On May 9, Jenny Barnett found the year's first **Grasshopper Sparrow** at the Wanaket Wildlife



Area. Leading a field trip with students from the Washington School on May 9, June and Duane Whitten were able to show the students a family of **Western Screech-Owls** nesting in a tree located on the school

playground. Now a sighting like this is a great way to get kids interested in birds! On May 10, Jack Simons found several **Wood Ducks** and a nesting **Ring-necked Pheasant** near his home. On May 14, Aaron located **5 WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS** at McKay Reservoir. This species is quite rare in Umatilla County. Joy Jaeger reports she has been finding many spring birds at her property near Albee, including both **Western** and **Mountain Bluebirds, Wild Turkeys, nesting Northern Flickers, American Kestrels** and **Pygmy Nuthatches** as well as a drumming **Williamson's Sapsucker**. On May 15, Tanya Harrison added another great bird to our county year list. She found a **MARBLED GODWIT** in a flooded field along Bowdin Road north of Hermiston. Aaron has also been working hard at adding new birds to our year list. On May 16, birding in the Ukiah area he added **Bobolinks, Green-tailed Towhees** and a **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (another difficult bird to find in the county). He reported that the old Tower burn area south of Ukiah is currently a great place to bird, but recommends you arrive early when the birds are most active and singing. On May 17, Aaron added another bird to our county year list: a **Northern Saw-whet Owl**.

I appreciate all the folks who have been sending their bird sightings to me. I'll be in California recording bird songs next month, so for just the next report



period; please send your sightings to Aaron Skirvin at [askirvin@wtechlink.net](mailto:askirvin@wtechlink.net) or 276-1948. Good Birding!

*Contributed by Dave Herr*

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