



Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 4, No. 7 Pendleton, Oregon July 2006

Field Trip July 8th to Weston and Tollgate

On July 8, Russ and Connie Betts, Jane Holmes, Betty Klepper, Fern Oliver, and June and Duane Whitten with their dog Birdie set off on a field trip led by Aaron Skirvin to the Weston and Tollgate areas. Jeremy Beam from Walla Walla joined us at Tollgate.

The first stop was along Kirk Road, just a mile or so east of Weston. Old apple trees and plentiful native brush provided habitat for a variety of birds. Altogether we spotted or heard 28 species, including California Quail, Mourning Doves, Downy Woodpeckers, Western Wood Pewees, Dusky Flycatchers, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Cliff and Barn Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees, Bewick's and House Wrens, Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, and, yes, you guessed it, European Starlings! Jane spotted a Gray Catbird that finally showed himself to the rest of us. Song birds were out in full voice at this site. We also heard and sometimes saw the following: Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Spotted Towhee, and both Chipping and Song Sparrows. We were all amused by the antics of male and female Black-headed Grosbeaks standing in the middle of the road and flitting up to catch insects. They were nearly fearless allowing us to approach much closer than usual, so hunting must have been extra good or the babies extra hungry. We also spotted Lazuli Buntings, Western Meadowlarks, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Bullock's Orioles, and American Goldfinches.

The next stop was Target Meadows where we drummed and sang (via recordings!) to entice a Three-toed Woodpecker but could never spot one. Target Meadows got its name because soldiers from Fort Walla Walla used the area for target practice up until 1906. This site provided the

following eleven species: Northern Flicker, Mountain Chickadee, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping, Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Junco. The mosquitoes were bad, but I guess that makes the birding good so we shouldn't complain too much.

We drove to Burnt Cabin Trailhead to look at birds and to snack on cherries that Aaron provided. Here we found by either sight or sound thirteen species. Both a Cooper's Hawk and a Red-tailed Hawk flew over to see if we had any fresh voles but were not too interested in our cherries. Aaron's sharp eye spotted a Calliope Hummingbird and a Red-naped Sapsucker that few of us had a chance to see because they zipped through so fast. Other species included a Hairy Woodpecker, Cassin's and Warbling Vireos, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Chipping Sparrow, and Western Tanager. We also had good looks at MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers in the small trees and bushes.

Jeremy, Jane, Fern and Betty had to leave and the Whittens, Betts, and Aaron went to Langdon Lake for lunch. They spotted some birds (Mallards, Common Goldeneyes, Osprey, Turkey Vultures, Spotted Sandpipers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Hammond's Flycatchers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Lincoln's Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos), but will probably remember longest seeing a herd of ten Rocky Mountain elk. The herd was a mixture of cows and bulls. They trotted out of the woods and waded belly deep into the lake. Apparently they were trying to escape flies that were pestering them.



After lunch the Whittens and Birdie had to leave. The Betts and Aaron stopped briefly at Tollgate to look at the feeders on the Bed & Breakfast and found 20 – 25 Pine Siskins, a Steller's Jay, and a Swainson's Thrush. They drove out McDougall Road on the way home and added a Western Flycatcher and a Rock Wren to the trip list. They also recorded a MacGillivray's Warbler along this road.

In all, there was a total of 62 bird species seen on this trip. The weather was perfect. We had great birding and good company. What more could one ask of a bright day in July!

Contributed by Betty Klepper

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

See announcement in this newsletter.

Malheur-Steens Mountain Field Trip

September 15 – 18, 2006

To register, contact June Whitten at 541-276-1948, or

email at jwhitten@oregontrail.net by July 24

See announcement in this newsletter.

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., October 12, 2006

**Pendleton First Christian Church on S. Main in
Pendleton**

Program to be announced

Club Picnic/Barbecue – Saturday, August 5, 2006, Woodward Campground, Langdon Lake, Tollgate

The Bird Club's annual picnic will be held on Saturday, August 5 at Woodward Campground at Langdon Lake. The picnic will begin at 3 p.m. 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.

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.

Fall Trip to Malheur & Steens Mt.: Sign-up to Reserve Your Space

Pendleton Bird Club's annual fall field trip to Malheur/Steens Mountain has been set for September 15, 16, 17, and 18. That is Round-Up week. Our rooms at the Malheur Field Station will accommodate 14 people.

Those who are interested in reserving a space, please send \$30 per person to June Whitten. We need to get our deposit in right away, because, as you know, the reservation cannot be held without it.

We are being charged a cleaning deposit this time-- apparently a new policy at the Field Station. The room rates haven't increased, and our rate will be about \$22 per person per day. I assume we will get the cleaning deposit returned. So, the cost will be very close to what it has been in the past. Your \$30 deposit will come off your total amount, so even though the deposit is higher than in past years, it just means you paid more up front!

You may make checks (\$30/person) payable to June Whitten, or Malheur Field Station, and I (June Whitten) will send the deposit to Duncan Evered as soon as possible. Please get a check to me by July 24 to reserve your space. June Whitten, 1837 SW Athens Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801 541-276-9019



Trip details will follow later for those who sign up.

Bird of the Month--Baird's Sandpiper **(*Calidris bairdii*)**

Shorebirds begin their southward migration quite early, many passing through our area by July. Due to the winter snowfall and the heavy spring rains this year, Cold Springs and McKay Reservoirs remain full with very little, if any, mud flats exposed. This is where shorebirds like to spend their time while here, refueling before continuing their southward migration. Therefore, the shorebird viewing in Umatilla County is very limited right now; especially, compared to last year's (2005) extended mud flats with both McKay and Cold Springs Reservoirs at near record lows in June.

But, as birders, we are eternal optimists. We're confident some shorebirds will stop over in August and September; among them will be some Baird's Sandpipers.

Baird's Sandpipers are usually fairly common here in fall migration. They are only slightly larger than Western Sandpipers, 7 1/2 inches in length compared to 6 1/2 for Western. They have a fairly stocky build, more like a Least Sandpiper, which is only 6 inches long.

Baird's Sandpipers are brownish, with many shades of brown, beige, and black with a scaly appearance on the back, caused by the light-edged feathers. The breast is also quite buffy, and the belly is whitish. Many of the fall migrant Baird's on the West Coast are juvenile birds, while the adults tend to take the Great Plains migration corridor.

Baird's have quite long wings, which project well beyond the tail tip. The bill is short, straight, and black. The legs are also black. In flight, they show a white stripe on the underside of the wings.

Baird's Sandpipers breed on high Arctic tundra and winter in Andean and southern South American areas. That is a long migration route so it is little wonder they start back fairly early.

Baird's prefer somewhat drier environments for foraging and are most often found

on the upper beaches in drier sand. They move rapidly and pick up prey with quick bill jabs. Insects are their most common prey.

Watch the reservoirs for mudflats, which hopefully will start emerging very soon. Try to find some Baird's in the flocks of Western and Least Sandpipers and compare their shape, bills, and wing length.

Contributed by June Whitten

June – July Bird Sightings

Summer is definitely here, with three digit temperatures predicted for the next few days. And as expected, there has been a corresponding drop in the number of bird sightings.

I just got back from a trip along Alkali and Mud Springs Canyon Roads and things were pretty quiet. There were a few **Horned Larks** and **Grasshopper Sparrows**, but the number of birds seen today dropped significantly compared to my trip to the area last week. As I drove along the route, I thought about all the **Short-eared Owls** that were found in this area last year. I have no idea why the owls are located in an area one year and totally absent the next.

On June 21, Ginger and Roger Shoemake and George and Deanna Jameson birded in the south portion of the County. Ginger reported they had a great day of birding, finding **Grasshopper Sparrows** and **Barn Owls** south of Pilot Rock, **Pygmy Nuthatches**, **Mountain Bluebirds** and a male **Williamson's Sapsucker** at Battle Mountain, and a **Cooper's Hawk** and **12 Lewis's Woodpeckers** in the old Tower Burn.

On June 22, Bette Husted reported finding two juvenile **Western Screech-Owls** feeding on what was probably a fledgling sparrow at her Pendleton home early in the morning. On June 26, Joy and Steve Jaeger reported finding the first "county-year" **Blue Grouse** near their property NE of Albee. Joy also notes that all of the "regular birds" are around their summer home, including **Western Tanagers** and nesting **Western Bluebirds**. Lee Farren reported that there is at least one **Barn Owl** roosting in Ukiah.

Jack Simons reported the flock of **American White Pelicans** continues to be seen periodically at Mission Ponds and along the Umatilla River in the Mission area.



On June 19, Aaron Skirvin found an adult **Common Loon** at McKay Reservoir. Aaron reported he found one of the **Barn Owls** in the cliffs near Pilot Rock that had been originally reported by Ginger Shoemake. The same day (June 21) he found **8 Common Poorwills** along the Gurdane Road.

Connie Betts continues to monitor bird activity at the Pendleton Community Park. The big news from the park is two juvenile **Swainson's Hawks** have successfully fledged from the nest Connie has been checking. I was concerned that the fireworks on the 4th would disturb the birds, but I guess they put up with the noise and smoke.

On July 16, Aaron drove to the Ukiah/North Fork John Day River area to look for Blue Grouse. He didn't find any grouse, but heard one **Canyon Wren** singing from high up on the clifftops at milepost 57 of Highway 395 (about 4 miles south of Ukiah-Dale State Park). Aaron reported this was the first time he had found Canyon Wren in that area.

Well, the shorebird migration has started and hopefully the water level at McKay Reservoir will drop enough to provide some shorebird habitat.

Thanks for your sightings this period, and please continue to send your reports to me, Dave Herr, at dsherr@oregontrail.net or 276-6413.

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

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

www.pendletonbirders.org

Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant

Editor for June: Aaron Skirvin

Phone Number: 541-276-1948

Email: askirvin@wtechlink.net

