



# Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 6, No. 3 Pendleton, Oregon March 2008

## REFLECTIONS ON PANAMA

JANUARY 27 -FEBRUARY 15, 2008

**Editors Note:** June Whitten has graciously agreed to write a three-part series on her recent birding trip to Panama. This article is Part I with Parts II and III due to be published in April and May.

### Chiriqui Mountains

Betty Klepper, Duane and I traveled to Panama with a VENT (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours) birding tour. Getting out of Oregon was our biggest hazard! We left Pendleton at 10 a.m. on January 27<sup>th</sup>, and six harrowing hours later we were checking in to the Shilo Inn in Portland. (Pendleton received 10" of snow that day, one of the largest snowfalls in recent years!) Up at 4 a.m. the next morning to catch our early flight, and I slipped on the wet tile in the bathroom and cracked some ribs. Oh well, on to the airport, and after they de-iced the plane, we were off to Houston and on to Panama City without further incident.

Panama City is a huge city complete with skyscrapers – we could have been in New York City!! We were met as promised and our driver was soon deftly taking us through much traffic for about 45 minutes to a very nice motel. We met a few of our fellow travelers, had a quiet dinner, and fell into bed, anticipating an early departure again in the morning. We were excited to be right on the Panama Canal, and hearing birds in the trees outside

our third-floor room, we hurried out on the small veranda. Great-tailed Grackles! For the first bird in Panama, not really our most desired bird!

Our group is now thirteen with Kevin Zimmer as leader. He certainly knows the ropes and speaks excellent Spanish, English, of course, and Portuguese as well. We go to a smaller airport and board for the town of David, located in Chiriqui Province in western Panama. Seems north, as it is almost to Costa Rica, but the shape of Panama is deceiving, the canal

running north and south. It is steamy hot in David, but we spend most of the day birding and have a nice buffet lunch at a hotel. We are looking forward to arriving in the Chiriqui Mountains and Los Quetzales Lodge, where it promises to be much cooler (which soon proves to be an understatement).

The lodge is very nice and the meals are wonderful: platters of fresh pineapple, papaya, cantaloupe, and watermelon

for breakfast and lunch, along with complete meals, and very nice dinners. No lingering here, we have an early breakfast and departure the next morning. We are loaded into 4-wheel drive vehicles, the people in back sliding back and forth on a center bench with no railing. I pleaded broken ribs and rode in front with the driver, who said this may be the worst road you have ever been on. Well, I doubt that, we have been on many back roads in Eastern Oregon. Wrong again! It is the worst road we have ever been on, fairly



Fiery-Throated Hummingbird, Volcan Poas National Park, Costa Rica. Photo by Michael Fogden.



straight up with huge holes and boulders! After a few bone-jarring miles, we get out to walk the rest of the way. It is almost daylight now, about 6,000 feet high, and we are freezing, even while climbing uphill.

Fortunately, the owner has cabanas at the top of this trail. Ito, the native guide, has a key and builds a fire in the wood stove. They also carried coolers of water, coffee, hot-chocolate, snacks and lunch up the trail – which we could barely make empty handed!

The birding is worth the trip, though. We are soon watching so many hummingbirds it is hard to keep track of them at the feeders: White-throated Mountain Gem, Green Violet-ear, Violet Saberwing, Snowy-bellied, White-necked Jacobin, and the star – Fiery-throated. Several species come on or near the porch, where we all stand, oohing and aahing!! Yellow-thighed Finch, Rufous-breasted Wren, Plain Wren, Flame-throated Warbler, Bananaquit, Golden-hooded Tanager and even some more familiar birds such as Blackburnian and Yellow Warblers. We were treated to one female Resplendent Quetzal, but we hope for more. And, later in the day, we go to Respingo, where we are treated to both a female and a male, so very beautiful. The long train is not actually a tail, but starts above the tail, and flows down, much wispier than pictures show.

We continue birding each day at a different location and at a heart-thumping pace. Ito ALWAYS says it is only 500 meters, even if it is at least a mile; and, Keven ALWAYS says we will be home at 3:30 and it is usually 5:30! We see lots of birds, however, even if it is a struggle to walk so far and fast. We visit a coffee farm (Finca Hartman) and have great birding there, as well as a tour of their

grown-in-the-shade coffee production. Here we were treated to Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Emerald Toucanet, Blue-crowned Motmot, Orange-bellied Trogon, and Fiery-billed Aricari to name a few. One evening after dark, we visit the cliffs near Ito's home and hear and see in the spotlight the Dusky Nightjar. Tropical Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, and Fork-tailed Flycatcher are common birds of the area.

We have another steep hike or two up from Respingo, in the National Park Volcan Baru. Here on the last morning, Big John, so nicknamed because we also had Little John, spied some Guans in the Quetzal tree. Kevin said those may be Black Guans, and Big John, peering into the still dark forest, says, they are, indeed, quite black! (As it turned out, they were Black Guans and we had already seen Crested Guans.) Now, just at daylight, we are in for a real treat as FOUR male Quetzales chase each other around the tree, while one female looks on rather uninterested. After some hiking, now at 8,000 feet, the sign said something about Boquette, which is on the other side of the mountain. It only seemed we were going all the way!

Our group ended up with 238 species in the five days we birded the Chiriqui Mountain area so it really was a wonderful birding adventure. With birds like Buffy Tufted-cheek, Ruddy Treerunner,

Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, and White-throated Spadebill on the list, it would be hard not to be thrilled.

Our information said to bring a light jacket, which wasn't nearly warm enough. We have let the company know we were extremely cold and needed warm coat, gloves, and hat. But, now we are flying from David back to Panama City, and then to the Canopy Tower for the second leg of the trip.

*Contributed by June Whitten*



The male Resplendent Quetzal. Photo by Ralph Paonessa.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Bird Club Meeting and Potluck

6:30 p.m., April 10, 2008

Potluck starts at 6:30 p.m. followed by  
“Kenya: Safari and Civil War”

Program by Dave Herr

Pendleton First Christian Church on  
N. Main Street in Pendleton

### Bird Club Field Trip

“Battle Mountain, Albee, and Ukiah”

Saturday, April 19, 2008

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Pendleton Safeway  
parking lot, NE corner.

We will carpool from Safeway.

Trip Leader: Aaron Skirvin, 276-1948

### Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., May 8, 2008

“Program on Mountain Quail”

By Jamie Nelson, ODFW Biologist

Pendleton First Christian Church on  
N. Main Street in Pendleton

### Bird Club Field Trip

“Spring Creek Great Gray Owls”  
(tentative)

Saturday, May 10, 2008 (tentative)

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Pendleton Safeway  
parking lot, NE corner.

We will carpool from Safeway.

Trip Leader: Dave Herr, 276-6413

### April 10, 2008, Bird Club Potluck

The Pendleton Bird Club meeting on Thursday, April 10, 2008, will begin with a potluck at 6:30 p.m. at the Pendleton First Christian Church. Please bring a dish of your choice, your own plates and silverware, cups or glasses, and serving spoons or forks. We plan to leave the basement at the church at least as tidy as it is on our arrival without anyone having to do dishes or much clean-up. Coffee will be provided.

In addition to the delicious food, our potlucks offer a great time to socialize with fellow club members and guests. We hope you are able to join us on April 10, 2008. Anyone needing additional information about the potluck may contact Lorna Waltz [clwaltz@eoni.com](mailto:clwaltz@eoni.com) or 276-6353.

### Donation Provides New Homes For Bluebirds

Thanks to a generous donation from Northwest Wildlife Consultants, Inc., a Pendleton-based consulting firm owned by Karen Kronner and Bob Gritski, to the Pendleton Bird Club, the club was able to purchase enough lumber for several new bird nest boxes. Jack Simons ordered the lumber from Kelly Lumber Supply, which gave the club a generous discount on the cedar boards. Duane Whitten built nine new bluebird nest boxes and four Western Screech-Owl nest boxes.

On February 25, 2008, Aaron Skirvin and Duane and June Whitten put up the new bluebird boxes along the already existing Bluebird Trail on the Albee Road. Normally, bluebirds begin returning to their nesting sites in the Albee-Ukiah area in mid-February. But, this year, with the snow still one to two feet deep in



the area, the bluebirds wisely delayed their return from their wintering areas.

While adding the new boxes to the route, we discovered that two of the original boxes had been stolen off the trees. It's disappointing, to say the least, that some scoundrel took advantage of the situation and helped him/herself to the boxes. While the boxes are not expensive, they do represent considerable volunteer time, effort, donations, and goodwill of club members to make this project happen. We didn't find any evidence at the sites that either box was damaged or destroyed. So, perhaps the culprit(s) put up the boxes on their own property for use by birds.

With the addition of the new boxes, the club now has a total of 21 bluebird nest boxes on the Albee Road Bluebird Trail. There are five more boxes along the Battle Mountain Scenic Corridor.

Almost all of the nest boxes are used each year, mostly by Western Bluebirds, some by Mountain Bluebirds, and a few, especially second nestings, by Tree Swallows. Red-breasted, White-breasted, and Pygmy Nuthatches, Mountain Chickadees, and House Wrens are fairly common along the Albee Road and occasionally nest in boxes, but so far none of these species have used the nest boxes.

During 2007, Jenny and Kristin Barnett helped monitor the Albee Bluebird Trail. The records show which nests were successful, some that may have been successful, and, of course, those that failed. We have no way of knowing the survival rate of the bluebirds which fledge, but we do know quite a number did fledge and very likely some survived the winter to return this year to nest along the trail.

In spite of the lingering snow (several inches deep) along the Albee Bluebird Trail, on March 9, 2008, Aaron, Duane and June discovered several pairs of Western Bluebirds and one or two pairs of Mountain Bluebirds on or near some of the nest boxes. Yes, spring is nearly here, and the bluebirds know it! From our perspective, however, it's still winter in the Ukiah valley. We just can't help wonder what the bluebirds are finding to eat when the snow is several inches deep and the exposed ground is still frozen.

*Contributed by June Whitten and Aaron Skirvin*

## Clean-Up — Pendleton River Parkway

**The annual spring clean-up of the Parkway** is scheduled for May 17. The Pendleton Bird Club will again volunteer to clean the area between the Main Street and SE Eighth Street Bridges. All volunteers are requested to meet at **Stillman Park at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 17**. If we have a good turnout of workers, we can be done by 11:30 or 12:00 — in plenty of time to partake of the barbecue provided by U.S. Bank. Please contact June Whitten at [jwhitten@oregontrail.net](mailto:jwhitten@oregontrail.net) or 276 - 9019 if you can help or need additional information.

*Contributed by June Whitten*

## Hummingbirds Will Arrive Soon

**If you feed hummingbirds**, each spring you may ask yourself, "When should I put up my hummingbird feeder?" The first migrating hummers (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 first summer-resident Black-chinned Hummingbirds start arriving between May 1 and 10, occasionally the last week of April. If you feed hummingbirds at your home or cabin at the higher elevations in the Blue Mountains, arrival dates may be delayed a few days or weeks.

If you're thinking about putting up your feeders, now would be a good time to get them out of the box and clean them. In case an early migrant may show up, consider filling and putting up your feeders about April 1. 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.

Be sure to hang the feeders where you can see them from your window.

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

*Contributed by Aaron Skirvin*



## February — March Bird Sightings

Spring has finally arrived (although it still looks like winter out my window) and early migrants are starting to show up. Harbingers of spring already reported include both species of **Bluebird**, **Sandhill Cranes**, **Long-billed Curlews** and **Violet-green Swallows**. Remember, you can keep track of new arrivals by checking the Pendleton Bird Club Website at [www.pendletonbirders.org](http://www.pendletonbirders.org). Just click on the 2008 County Bird List link.

The first **Western Screech-Owl** of the season was reported calling in Brian Whitten's yard on February 18. February 21, Aaron Skirvin found the first **Gray Jay** reported this year at Indian Lake. On February 22, Aaron reported 2 **Eurasian Wigeons** at the Wildhorse Golf Course ponds and one at Mission Ponds. Checking bluebird nest boxes along the Albee Road February 23, Aaron and Duane and June Whitten found **Evening Grosbeaks**, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and a **Mountain Chickadee**; all new birds for the year. The same day, Connie Betts reported 5 **Bald Eagles** soaring over the Pendleton Community Park.

February 24, Aaron and June Whitten birded several areas in the County. They found 4 **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** at the junction of Coombs Canyon and Mud Springs Canyon Road and a mile north found a **Merlin**. They reported 3 **Great Egrets** in the Stanfield area and a pair of **Chukars** along Barnhart Road.

In January and February Nancy Brown had a **PURPLE FINCH** coming to her feeders. This is a rare bird in Umatilla County.

Neal Hinds found the first **Sandhill Cranes** for the year. February 23, he and his wife Sandi saw a flock of 27 cranes flying overhead as they birded near Stanfield. Before going to work on February 27, Aaron saw a **Cooper's Hawk** and a **Merlin** near his home. Birding in many parts of the county the same day, Russ and Connie Betts found a number of interesting birds including the first **Rock Wren** reported for the year and numerous raptors including 27 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 3 **Rough-legged Hawks**, 6 **Northern Harriers** and 2 **American Kestrels**. The last week in February, Craig Kvern found several **Short-eared Owls** in a CRP field off the North Cayuse Road.

McKay Reservoir, closed to entry since September 30, opened on March 1. Checking the area the day it opened, Aaron found 3 **Bald Eagles**, a **Herring Gull** and a **Caspian Tern**. The tern was an unusual sighting since this species normally is not found in our area before late March.

Joy Jaeger found a pair of **Western Bluebirds** March 2 at their cabin at Poverty Flats. Joy and her husband Steve not only have nest boxes for Bluebirds, but also special nest boxes for Violet-green Swallows. Joy will let us know later in the spring how many of the boxes were used and by what species.

Lyle Brown found a flock of about 100 **Sandhill Cranes** at Echo Meadows on March 2.

Birding at McKay Reservoir on March 3, Connie and Russ Betts found more than 100 **Common Mergansers**, a few **Lesser Scaup**, **American Wigeon**, one **Double-crested Cormorant**, and one **Herring Gull** along with other expected species. Later in the day they reported 7 pairs of **Mallards** and 2 pairs of **Gadwall** at the Pendleton Community Park.

March 6, while walking along the Pendleton River Parkway near Washington School, I (Dave Herr) noticed a total of 19 **Great Blue Herons** flying downriver. I suspect that something scared them from the heronry across the river from the Little League Park.

March 8, Aaron and June Whitten found several **Violet-green Swallows** along the Umatilla River between Yoakum and Echo. The same day they found a flock of about 80 **Sandhill Cranes** along the Echo Meadows Road.

The following day, Aaron and June and Duane Whitten drove to Albee and Ukiah looking for bluebirds. Although there was still snow in many places they did add 2 birds to the County year list: **Mountain Bluebird** and **Pygmy Nuthatch**. Other birds of note included **Northern Shrike**, **Evening Grosbeak** and **Spotted Towhee**.

March 11, Lyle Brown found the year's first **Long-billed Curlews** at Echo Meadows. He also found 100 — 200 **Sandhill Cranes** in a field next to the freeway and 12 **Dunlin** in Stanfield Meadows. The following day Connie Betts found one **Greater Yellowlegs** at the Pendleton Community Park.



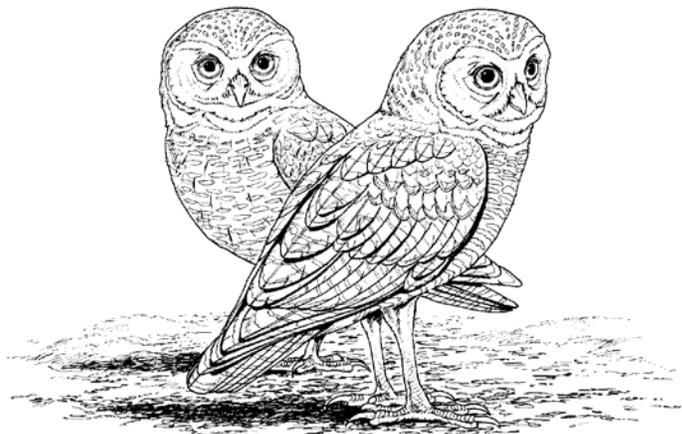
Aaron reports that on March 13, there were about 100 **Violet-green Swallows** perched on the wire and flying around the Osprey nest site at the east edge of Pendleton. The same day Neal Hinds found a lone male **Western Bluebird** just downstream from McNary Dam. Neal said he has been birding in that area for many years and this is the first bluebird he's seen in that area. A week earlier, Lyle Brown reported 5 **Western Bluebirds** at the McNary Golf Course.

March 15, Aaron and June found, along with the more common species, 2 **Herring Gulls** and 2 **Tundra Swans** at McKay Reservoir. Birding in many areas in the county the following day, some of their more unusual sightings included: several **Townsend's Solitaires** along the Thorn Hollow Grade, **Mountain Bluebirds** along Eagle Creek Road and a flock of **25 Sandhill Cranes** at

Echo Meadow. They also found 2 **Say's Phoebes** and 4 **Sandhill Cranes** along Highway 395, just north of the Highway 244 Junction. Aaron thinks they were **Lesser Sandhill Cranes**, the more common spring migrant in Umatilla County, instead of the Greater Sandhill Cranes, which breed in the Albee/Ukiah area.

As Aaron noted in a previous message, "now that Spring is here, birding will only get better." More and more spring migrants will be arriving. Please send all of your sightings to me, Dave Herr, at [dsherr1@mac.com](mailto:dsherr1@mac.com) or call 276-6413

**Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant**  
**Editor for March: Jack Simons**  
**Phone Number: 276-8566**  
**Email: [styletoil@eoni.com](mailto:styletoil@eoni.com)**



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Pendleton Bird Club  
P. O. Box 217  
Pendleton, OR 97801

