



Newsletter of the Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

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

Volume 7, No. 9 Pendleton, Oregon September 2009

Condors: October Bird Club Meeting

David Moen, Species Recovery Biologist at the Oregon Zoo, will kick off our new bird year at the October 8th Pendleton Bird Club Meeting. His presentation "Columbia Condors: Forgotten Giants of the Sky" will be at Pendleton First Presbyterian Church at 201 SW Dorian Avenue, Pendleton. The meeting begins at 7:00 PM. The Pendleton Bird Club welcomes the public and all bird enthusiasts.

undergraduate work in cultural anthropology earned him a BA from Biola University in 1998. +++

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



David states, "I grew up learning about native species at the Oregon Zoo. This ultimately inspired my graduate research focused on condors in Oregon. My field work includes experience with Aplomado Falcons in Arkansas, Texas; Stellers Eiders in Barrow, Alaska; migrant songbird surveys at Hart Mountain, Oregon; Sage Grouse and California Condors. I recently completed the first nest habitat surveys for condors in the region.

He is employed by the Oregon Zoo and US Forest Service (NWSA Americorps). David holds a MS of Education in Leadership for Ecology, Culture and Learning (LECL) program in the graduate school of education at Portland State University 2008. His

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., October 8, 2009

COLUMBIA CONDORS: FORGOTTEN GIANTS OF THE SKY

**Presented by David Moen
Species Recovery Biologist at the
Oregon Zoo**

**Pendleton First Presbyterian Church
201 SW Dorian Ave., Pendleton, Oregon**

BIG SIT! Bird Count

Sunday, October 11, 2009

**Contact June Whitten
at 276-9019 for details**



Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., November 12, 2009

Steens Mt. to Malheur: More than a Mountain and a Marsh

**Presented by Jack Simons and June
Whitten**

**Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton**

Bird Club Meeting

7:00 p.m., December 10, 2009

ANNUAL FUND RAISER AND PROGRAM TO BE ANNOUNCED

**Pendleton First Christian Church
North Main St., Pendleton**

Christmas Bird Count

January 2, 2010

**We need your help to count birds on
the 110th Christmas Bird Count.**

For more information, contact

Aaron Skirvin umatbirder@yahoo.com

or 541-276-1948

BURROWS AND OWLS

Contributed by Jenny Barnett/June Whitten

Will Burrowing Owls return to Wanaket Wildlife Area? It has been over 7 years since Burrowing Owls were seen on Wanaket Wildlife Area. Although never abundant, one or two pairs were known to nest in the vicinity until 2001. Biologists are unsure why the owls no longer nest at Wanaket, but the decrease is consistent with a decreasing population trend reported throughout the region. Habitat fragmentation and loss, and lack of suitable, naturally occurring nesting burrows have been suggested as possible reasons for the decline.

With hopes of solving some of the above problems, the Confederated Tribes, the U.S Fish and Wildlife, the Umatilla Chemical Depot, and the Pendleton Bird Club installed 4 artificial Burrowing Owl burrows on Wanaket Wildlife Area on August 28, 2009. The burrows were placed in two complexes of two burrows each. The burrows are close enough to Hwy. 730 to allow viewing from the road should the burrows attract owls. The equipment for the burrows was donated to the Pendleton Bird Club by Don Gillis of the Umatilla Chemical Depot.



The installations went very smoothly, with expertise provided by Don Gillis who has overseen the installation of several successful burrows on the Umatilla Chemical Depot; Mike Greg, USFWS biologist, who has also worked with the burrows on the Chemical Depot; and David Johnson, the owl expert from Virginia, who spoke to the Pendleton Bird Club last spring. These men not only provided the technical assistance, but were heavy on the shovels as well. Rich Scheele, Tribal wildlife biologist expertly dug the holes in the sandy soil with a backhoe. Pendleton Bird Club members, also good with shovels, were Jack Simons, June Whitten, Bruce Mayfield, Katrina Susi, Angela Baylink, and photographer extraordinaire, Dave Herr. The installation went so well and quickly we did not get to eat the lunches we brought!

Installing the burrows in late summer was important. During this season, juvenile owls are actively searching for new burrows in which to nest next summer, and the owls key into areas with new soil disturbance. Next spring, Wanaket staff and some bird club members will be monitoring the burrows on a regular basis to determine if they are being used by owls.

Then, as if by magic, 3 Burrowing Owls were spotted by Aaron Skirvin and June Whitten on Hwy. 37, just a couple of miles out of Pendleton, on Sunday, August 30. These juvenile owls were joined by a fourth juvenile owl on Wednesday, September 2, who perhaps had been there all along but out of sight in the burrow. It is unknown if these owls were born here in this wheat field, or possibly moved in later. No adults were ever seen by the numerous people who viewed the owls. +++

VISIT THE BIRD CLUB'S WEBSITE

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

www.pendletonbirders.org

Albee-Ukiah: Monitoring the Bluebird Trail in 2009

Submitted by Jack and Sharon Simons

Many club members recall that the Pendleton Bird Club monitors two bluebird nesting box trails in Umatilla County — one is 20 minutes from downtown Pendleton at Poverty Flats,



Kakya Taymut, Pendleton Bird Club Newsletter

the other one is approximately 40 to 50 miles south of Pendleton on the Albee-Ukiah Road between Battle Mountain State Park and the town of Ukiah. Photos of club members installing boxes are available at our website at http://www.pendletonbirders.org/nesting_box_trail_main.htm.

Annual monitoring of the Albee – Ukiah Trail has occurred consistently over the past several years by club members, including Jenny Barnett (and her young daughter) and more recently by June and Duane Whitten. In 2009, Jack and Sharon Simons volunteered to monitor the trail and asked Aaron for advise on how to monitor nesting success to gather information that could be used to benefit bluebirds using the site.

In the past 6 years the club has constructed and hung 32 nest boxes on this trail. One box is located at Battle Mountain State Park; 3 boxes are on Hwy 395 at Battle Mountain Summit; one box is approximately 1 mile south of the Albee Road – Hwy 395 intersection; and the remaining 27 boxes are located on Albee-Ukiah Road north of Ukiah. All 32 nest boxes now have GPS coordinates to insure no box is over-looked on the survey.

So far vandalism has been minimal, possibly because local residents have come to appreciate the large number of nesting bluebirds in their neighborhood. Weather and wildlife do take their annual toll, however, requiring some boxes to be replaced or restored. Duane has taken on the annual maintenance chores and can take credit for the excellent condition of the boxes on the trail.

History

The purpose of creating a bluebird nesting box trail was 1) to increase secondary nesting sites for the local bluebird population, 2) to stabilize or increase declining bluebird populations in selected areas and 3) increase public awareness of the importance of maintaining natural habitat for healthy bird populations. Unlike woodpeckers, bluebirds cannot excavate a nesting hole; however, they will readily nest in a woodpecker hole or nesting box. Up until recently, these secondary nesting sites were most often found in dead or decaying trees. However, the cutting of dead trees by the public for firewood has significantly reduced nesting tree sites thus making it difficult for bluebirds to successfully reproduce.

Club members have generously donated their time to make the trail a success. In addition, Kelly Lumber Supply here in Pendleton has regularly supplied price-discounted Tight Knot Grade Red Cedar

needed for box construction. Boxes are maintained annually as needed with weather and critters taking their toll. Sometimes a new roof needs replacing or, more often, a woodpecker has enlarged the original hole requiring a front panel be installed with the original 1 9/16 inch diameter hole necessary for bluebird nesting success.

Bluebirds have to out-compete more aggressive bird species such as starlings (or chipmunks) when the entry hole is too large. Even when the boxes are in prime condition, House Wrens and Tree Swallows compete for nesting box accommodations. With competition so high, this may be why bluebirds start to set up their nesting territories in early spring before other migrant species arrive. This year 11 bluebird pairs were observed near nesting boxes as early as March 21. And yes, it was snowing at the time.

Nesting Conditions

2009 was an excellent year for bluebird nesting conditions. There was a deep winter snow pack which melted off slowly into the spring season. This allowed spring runoff to percolate deep into the soil which provided perfect conditions for grasses and broad leaf plants to establish in areas adjacent to nesting boxes. The abundant plant life provided a rich source of nutrition for insects, the primary food source for bluebirds and a rich source of protein for chicks. With abundant water and food nearby, it was no surprise the nesting boxes were in use for the majority of the summer breeding period.

It should be noted that 2009 was a “La Nina” year which is generally characterized by high moisture levels in winter and spring. In contrast, 2010 is forecast to be a “El Nino” year which is generally drier with a reduced snow pack and spring rain. It will be interesting to see how the weather plays a role in next season’s effects on bluebird nesting.

2009 Observations

We tried to set an observation schedule to visit the trail every two weeks; however, that was not always possible. A more rigorous scientific schedule would have used daily observations but that was not practical for us, thus we had to make some assumptions when counting and analyzing the data. Nonetheless, we did make enough observations to record the type of species in each box; count the number of eggs and chicks in each box; and, make an educated guess on the number of chicks presumed fledged from each box.

Observations were made on the following dates: Mar 21; May 10 and 25; Jun 14; Jul 1



and 19; and Aug 8 and 24. The raw data is contained in a Word file that is available for the asking. Since it is 9 pages long it would not be practical to insert it into the Newsletter. The file has a page that summarizes the totals for the 5 categories we recorded. Feel free to email me (styletoil@eoni.com) if you would like to have a copy of the raw data.

For the Newsletter I’ve compiled numbers that compare the First Hatch to the Second Hatch, which provides a good comparison between the two brood periods. There were two bluebird species in the study area, Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird. Here is a quick summary comparing results of the First Hatch to the Second Hatch:

Type of Bluebird Species Nesting in a Box (out of 32 boxes)

First Hatch = 31 W. Bluebirds and 0 Mt. Bluebirds
Second Hatch = 18 W. Bluebirds and 1 Mt. Bluebird

Nest Building Success (out of 32 boxes)

First Hatch = 30 W. Bluebirds and 0 Mt. Bluebirds
Second Hatch = 18 W. Bluebirds and 1 Mt. Bluebird

Eggs Counted

First Hatch = 124
Second Hatch = 68

Chicks Counted

First Hatch = 117
Second Hatch = 46

Chicks Presumed Fledged

First Hatch = 110
Second Hatch = 44

Totals for the study period included counting 192 eggs, 163 chicks and 154 chicks presumed fledged. There were 3.7 fledglings per box from the First Hatch and 2.3 fledglings per box from the Second Hatch. I’ve never seen a flock of 154 bluebirds but that would be quite a sight, wouldn’t it?

Wooded Area Vs. Open Area

Over the course of the monitoring period we noticed what we thought was a distinct difference in the number of eggs laid, chicks hatched and chicks presumed fledged in two different locations on the trail. After turning off Hwy 395, Albee Road runs roughly east - west for approximately 4 miles before turning due south for about 5.5 miles.

The east-west section of the trail is bordered by coniferous forest on the north and a wide, grassy meadow on the south. In contrast, the stretch of trail

that runs north-south is mainly bordered by open grassy stretches. When we compared the first 9 boxes on the wooded section vs. the first 9 boxes on the open section of the trail, there were some significant differences in the number of eggs, chicks, and presumed chicks fledged, particularly for the second hatch.

Wooded Area

	Eggs	Chicks	Fledged
First Hatch	40	28	22
Second Hatch	8	5	5

Open Area

	Eggs	Chicks	Fledged
First Hatch	41	40	38
Second Hatch	37	22	25

We aren't certain why the second hatch numbers were reduced in the wooded area but predation by birds or animals may have been a factor. Food availability should have been the same for both areas. If more boxes are added to the trail in the future, we may want to consider adding boxes to the open area rather than the wooded area. Another year of observations will be needed before any conclusions can be drawn.

Conclusions

2009 was an outstanding year for bluebird nesting on the Albee Bluebird Trail with 154 presumed chicks fledged over the summer nesting period. Nesting conditions were excellent and the number of boxes occupied by nesting bluebirds was very high. Since 2009 was a "La Nina" year (and 2010 is forecast to be a "El Nino" year), we might expect to see a drop in the number of birds that will fledge in 2010. This is strictly a guess but the fact that there may be two distinctly different weather patterns back-to-back will make an interesting comparison. We will continue to monitor differences in nesting success between the Open Area and the Wooded Area to better understand future box placement along the trail. +++

Malheur/Steens Mountain Fall Field Trip

By Barbara Clark

"Bird Camp" is what Ann Wyatt calls the Pendleton Bird Club (PBC) field trips to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. On September 4, eleven members of PBC set out in four cars for four days of Bird Camp. The sun graced the days and the group came home having observed or heard 122 of the



Kakya Taymut, Pendleton Bird Club Newsletter

more than 320 species of birds that visit the refuge or call it home.

For June Whitten and many of the group, the little Northern Parula seen on our last morning at the Field Station was "the icing on the cake". The dear bird was out of its normal range. Betty Klepper noted that singleton birds so far from their peers often do not survive to reproduce and thus deselect themselves from their species gene pool...sobering thought.

The group bundled up for a windy, clear morning at the top of Steens Mountain looking down on 8 grazing bighorn sheep. The Black Rosy-Finch which is often seen there was elusive. That means another trip to Bird Camp for those of us who have yet to see this Finch.

Other highlights of the trip included a spectacular view of three Golden Eagles flying above the cliffs in the high country enroute to Fields. At Fields a Great Horned Owl welcomed the group to "the Sanctuary", a small wooded area with a path into the center where a bench has been placed for visiting with the owls and deer that frequent that oasis. Back on the refuge ponds near the Field Station the group was thrilled by a panorama of large numbers of White-Faced Ibis, flocks of Great Egrets mixed with Snowy Egrets. Between the reeds and the ponds young Virginia Rails and Sora busily poked in the mud for their dinner. Common Yellowthroats moved in and out amongst their larger pond mates.

With June Whitten's planning and Aaron Skirvin as field guide, Fall Bird Camp 2009 was a special birding adventure for Jack Simons, Duane Whitten, Betty Klepper, Lorna Waltz, Barbara Clark, Ann Wyatt, and John, Hero, and Haval Norman. +++

Big Sit Information

For SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2009

The Big Sit is scheduled again this year from midnight to 11:59 p.m. You may participate any desired length of time during that full day. Most people will probably arrive at a site around 7 or 8 a.m. and possibly move to another site before the day is over. This is a fun event where you actually sit in a designated circle with a diameter of 17 feet. Any bird seen or heard from the circle is counted. The participants may eat snacks, have hot or cold drinks, and have fun.

There is no charge for participation in the Big Sit and any person or club from any country may register a

Volume 7, Number 9 September 2009 Page 5

circle. Then a team leader will send the list of birds seen to Bird Watcher's Digest. One bird will be drawn from the total list; then, the circles that saw that particular bird will be put into a drawing. The lucky winner will receive \$500 to be used toward improving bird habitat, such as the artificial burrows for owls.

The Pendleton Bird Club's circles will again be at Cold Springs NWR and near the Columbia River from the wildlife area below McNary Dam. If anyone would like to establish a circle in a different location, such as McKay NWR, let June Whitten know and the registration will proceed. Plan to enjoy some good fall birding and fun with other birders on October 11. June Whitten – jwhitten@oregontrail.net

Bird of the Month

*Wilson's Snipe (*Galinago delicata*)*

Compiled by June Whitten

Wilson's Snipe is a rather common shorebird in Umatilla County, favoring wet grasslands often with nearby muddy flats. However, the cryptic coloration of the snipe gives it great camouflage and leaves it often unseen as it crouches in the grasses.

Wilson's Snipe, formerly called Common Snipe, was given the new name as scientific research proved the Common Snipe in Eurasia and now Wilson's Snipe in North America are two different species. They appear to be quite similar, but they differ in shape, patterning, and usually the number of tail feathers.

The most outstanding feature of Wilson's Snipe is its extremely long bill, which serves the snipe very well. This very long bill is flexible, that is the tips can be opened and closed with no movement at the base of the bill. Sensory pits at the tip of the bill allow the snipe to feel its prey as it probes deep in the mud for small invertebrates.

And, how is this for teamwork? The clutch size of the Wilson's Snipe is almost always 4 eggs. The male snipe takes the first two chicks to hatch and leaves the nest to care for them. The female takes the last two and cares for them. Apparently, the parents have no contact after this dispersal. They nest on the ground in bogs, swamps, and around the marshy grasses of ponds, rivers, and streams. They forage in marshes, wet meadows, wet fields, and the marshy edges of streams and ditches.

During the breeding season, the males make a low-whistled sound called "winnowing," to defend its territory and attract a mate. It is not a vocal sound, but rather is produced by air flowing over the outstretched tail feathers with each wingbeat. The outer tail feathers are greatly modified to produce the sound, being thin and curved.

The name Wilson was chosen to honor the early ornithologist, Alexander Wilson. Born in Scotland, he came to the US in 1794, and became a noted ornithologist and artist.

Good places to view Wilson's Snipe in Umatilla County include the wet meadows near Ukiah, Woodward Campground near Tollgate, and Memorial Marsh at Cold Springs NWR.

Much of the information for this article was obtained from:

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/wilsons_snipe/lifehistory

Book Review

Submitted by June Whitten

"BIRDS OF A FEATHER" – A Brief History of American Birding by Scott Weidensaul (Harcourt, 2007)

"Birds of a Feather" is another new book available at the Pendleton City Library in the new National Park section. Even if the part of the title about a brief history of American birding does not sound particularly interesting, this is not a ho-hum book. Scott Weidensaul is a wonderful writer and the entire book is filled with most interesting information about early ornithologists, their lives, and their many hardships.

The early ornithologists studied birds by their skins, as there were no really decent optics until World War II. Much fun was made, especially of a few ladies, who used their little opera glasses to see the birds instead of killing them. There were a few important women who were part of the early ornithologists. Florence Marriam Bailey and Mabel Osgood Wright were two who were influential in the field, mostly through their writing about birds. There is a picture in the book of a bird walk in the park, including both men and women. Everyone is dressed quite formally, especially the ladies complete with hose, heels, and hats.



Scott Weidensaul also has an important message for birders. Birders need to come together to make a difference in policy toward conservation of habitat for birds.

This book is well worth reading, and birders especially will enjoy it. Other books by Scott Weidensaul include "RETURN TO WILD AMERICA," "THE GHOST WITH TREMBLING WINGS," and "LIVING ON THE WIND." +++

Birding in the Pacific Northwest

See Thousands of Geese, Ankeny NWR

Submitted by Barbara Clark

If you're headed for the Willamette Valley, give yourself a break and take a couple of hours exploring the **Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge** (NWR). Ankeny NWR is located 12 miles south of Salem or 10 miles north of Albany on Interstate 5. Take exit 243, Ankeny Hill Road, and drive west ¼ mile to an intersection. Turn right at the intersection and proceed 1.5 miles on Ankeny Hill Road to the information kiosk and wildlife viewing area.

Ankeny NWR is one of three National Wildlife Refuges (William L. Finley, Ankeny, and Basket Slough) created in the 1960's in the Willamette Valley to preserve and restore some of the vanishing native habitats for wildlife. The primary management goal of these refuges is to provide wintering habitat for Dusky Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis* subsp. *occidentalis*). Unlike other Canada Geese, Dusksies have limited summer and winter ranges. They nest on Alaska's Copper River Delta and winter almost exclusively in the Willamette Valley. Habitat loss, predation and hunting have caused a decrease in populations. Dusky Canada geese can be distinguished from other subspecies by their large size and dark color.

Thousands of ducks, geese and swans can be seen in the refuge fields and ponds through fall and winter. Small numbers of bald eagles and the occasional peregrine falcon can be seen hunting the wintering flocks. Raptor sightings are common as resident birds are joined by migrants from farther north. The wintering waterfowl flocks start migrating north in March, shorebirds migrate through in April. Song bird migration peaks in early May. During this time Yellow Warblers and Willow Flycatchers can be found along Sidney Ditch and other waterways in the refuge. Broods of Mallards, Hooded



Kakya Taymut, Pendleton Bird Club Newsletter

Mergansers and Wood Ducks appear in June. The song birds start to migrate south in August and the flocks of geese fill the skies in late September. Migrating raptors increase in September. Rough-legged Hawks arrive in October as Turkey Vultures depart. Resident Northern Saw-whet Owls attract area bird watchers.

Ankeny NWR provides opportunities for birding and wildlife observation, hiking, photography, and environmental education. Visitor facilities include Ankeny Hill Overlook on Ankeny Hill Road and Eagle Marsh Kiosk on Buena Vista Road. Trails include Pintail & Egret Marsh Boardwalk and the Rail Trail, both on Wintel Road. +++

Ankeny NWR information extracted from: U.S. Dept. of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service brochure "Willamette Valley: National Wildlife Refuges"; Wikipedia, "Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge"; and Audubon Society of Portland "Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge" (contributions by Karen Viste-Sparkman).

Email to the Editors ...

from John Day

We've been wondering how many birders read our newsletter. Here is some good news from an out-of-towner, Tom Winters of John Day, asking to be put back on our newsletter email list. We had removed his name a few months ago because Jack Simons (our technology and photo editor) received several bounce backs when sending out the newsletters. Our policy is to remove names and emails when we receive 3 or more bounce backs in a row. Occasionally, we try to track down the person before removing the email address. However, for most of our "members" the only contact info we have is their email address.

On Fri, 9/11/09, Tom Winters, Grant County Bird Club wrote:

"Your club has had the most informative, interesting and enjoyable newsletters among all the clubs with whom we exchange. Keep up the good work and good birding." +++

August – September Bird Sightings

Wow, some pretty spectacular birds have been reported this period including **GREEN HERON, LEAST FLYCATCHER, MARBLED GODWIT, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** and 4 juvenile

Burrowing Owls spotted in a harvested wheat field. Read on for the details.

Karen and Jason Baxter sent us a photo of a **GREEN HERON** they found at the McNary Wildlife Nature Area on July 30, 2009. Aaron Skirvin noted this is only the 6th confirmed record of **GREEN HERON** in Umatilla County, and it has been 15 years since the last report.

Jed Volkman reported 3 to 5 hummingbirds using his SE Pendleton feeders in mid-August. One of the hummers was a female **Black-chinned** that may have been teaching her offspring how to feed at the feeder.

On August 18, Joe Corvino (birder from Walla Walla) checked out Memorial Marsh at Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge. He was unable to locate the **Snowy Egret** reported earlier, but did find several **Great Egrets**. His shorebird sightings included 5 **Semipalmated Plovers**, a **Greater Yellowlegs**, one **Solitary Sandpiper**, one **Spotted Sandpiper** and 45 **Least Sandpipers**. In addition he saw 2 **Eastern Kingbirds**, a **House Wren** and a **Prairie Falcon** riding the thermals over one of the ponds.

During the weekend of August 22 – 23, Joy Jaeger photographed a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at her property NE of Albee. Joy reported the hawk was mostly interested in harassing the **Steller's Jays**, which seemed more annoyed by than afraid of the Sharpie. After making their last check of the Albee Bluebird Trail on August 24, Jack and Sharon Simons stopped at Ukiah where they saw one and heard another **Eurasian Collared-Dove**. This is the first report of this species in the Ukiah area. It's not surprising that **E. Collared-Doves** have arrived in Ukiah, since they are rapidly expanding their range in Umatilla County.

I (Dave Herr) birded at Cold Springs NWR August 25. I drove to the west end of the reservoir and checked the area SE of the dam. Usually this area has fewer birds than the east end of the reservoir, but I did find about 100 peeps (mostly **Western Sandpipers**) and was able to identify 2 **Baird's Sandpipers**, 5 **Semipalmated Plovers** and one **Long-billed Dowitcher** along with many **Killdeer**.

Returning home the afternoon of August 27, Mike Denny was driving along Schubert Road in northern Umatilla County when he encountered a group of **18 Western Kingbirds**, all in a group on the same stretch of power line. Mike reported

this is the largest number of **Western Kingbirds** he has ever seen at once in Oregon.

August 29, Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and June Whitten (June) were driving on Highway 37, when about 2 miles north of Pendleton, Aaron spotted what he thought were several **Burrowing Owls** in wheat stubble field about 100 yards off the road. Although an unlikely spot for **Burrowing Owls**, they stopped and verified indeed there were three juvenile owls in the field. Aaron and June spread the word and over the next several days, many people were able to observe up to four juvenile **Burrowing Owls** in this unlikely habitat.

Checking Cold Springs NWR the following day, Aaron and June relocated the **Black Phoebe** at Memorial Marsh and found several migrant songbirds including **Nashville** and **Townsend's Warblers**, **Western Tanager** and **Olive-sided Flycatcher**. At the reservoir, there were about 500 shorebirds, mostly **Western Sandpipers**, but also some **Leasts**, quite a few **Baird's**, some **Pectoral Sandpipers**, 4 **Semipalmated Plovers** and one **Lesser** and one **Greater Yellowlegs**. Visiting the reservoir later in the day, Neal Hinds reported seeing a molting adult **Black-bellied Plover**, a **Peregrine Falcon** and an unidentified leucistic/albinistic sandpiper.

On August 31, Mike and MerryLynn Denny checked the Memorial Marsh at Cold Springs NWR. They were able to relocate the **Black Phoebe** found earlier in the month by Aaron. While looking for the Phoebe they identified a **LEAST FLYCATCHER**. This is a species not found in the county every year, and a great addition to the Umatilla County year list. Some of the Denny's other sightings included a **Hammond's Flycatcher**, **Western Wood-Pewee**, **MacGillivray's Warbler**, **Wilson's Warbler**, 5 **Great Egrets** and 5 **Blue-winged Teal** among the many other waterfowl they found in the area.

Checking McKay Reservoir on August 31, Russ and Connie Betts found a number of species including **American White Pelicans**, **Western Grebes**, **Double-crested Cormorants**, 3 **Great Blue Herons**, 2 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 4 **Ospreys** and hundreds of **Canada Geese**. Connie reported that when they were driving out, 2 adult **California Quail** and about a dozen babies ran across the road. Connie said the babies were so tiny they looked like a bunch of marbles rolling over the road.



September 1, Jack Simons reported seeing his first of the year **Common Nighthawk** over Mission Ponds. Jack also reported the same day seeing two juvenile **Belted Kingfishers** along the Umatilla River behind his home (located between Pendleton and Mission) catching insects swarming over the water. The same evening a juvenile **Great Horned Owl** was sitting in a tree 100 feet from his home.

Joe Corvino visited Cold Springs NWR on September 3 and reported finding the **Black Phoebe** (chased by an **American Kestrel**), a very thin **Lewis's Woodpecker**, a **Western Flycatcher**, and **Western, Baird's, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers**.

Jay Withgott and Jim Danzenbaker (birders from the Portland area) visited Northeast Oregon September 8 and 9. They reported that Cold Springs Reservoir was excellent for shorebirds and hosted at least **13 species**. At the reservoir, they reported finding 10 **Semipalmated Plover**, 17 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 1 **Solitary Sandpiper**, 1 **MARBLED GODWIT**, 2 **Sanderlings** (first county report for the year), 14 **Baird's Sandpipers**, 12 **Pectoral Sandpipers** and 200 peeps (mostly **Western Sandpipers**).

Connie Betts reported on September 8, she saw a **Downy Woodpecker** and **Black-capped Chickadee** in her yard in SW Pendleton. She also reported a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** had moved into her neighborhood. September 10, Connie saw the first fall **White-crowned Sparrow** in her yard. Also on September 10, Katrina Susi and Angela Baylink found a **Common Tern** below McNary Dam. This is the first report for this species in the county this year.

Andy and Ellen Stepniewski spent a long day at Cold Spring NWR on September 12. Starting early in the morning listening for owls, they heard calling **Barn, Western Screech** and **Great Horned Owls**. Next, checking the Memorial Marsh area they located a **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT**. This was the first report for the year, and **Common Yellowthroat** is a difficult species to find in the county. Most of us bird Cold Springs Reservoir from the south shore since all of the north shore area is closed to land travel. Although too far to identify species, through a spotting scope we can always see lots of shorebirds on the north shore. The Stepniewskis used their canoe to check this area out and made some remarkable finds. Of most interest, they counted more than **700 Western Sandpipers**, a remarkable

number of shorebirds for an inland reservoir. Their list for the day totaled more than 70 species, which included **14 shorebird species**. Two other great finds were an adult **Red-necked Grebe** and 4 juvenile **Sanderlings**.

Aaron and June birded in the southern portion of the county on September 13. They reported lots of birds in the Albee area including **American Robins, White-crowned, Chipping** and one **Brewer's Sparrow** along with an inquisitive **House Wren**. Between Albee and Ukiah they counted more than **24 Mountain Bluebirds**, but could not find any Westerns. Along Highway 395 between Ukiah junction and Albee Road they found 2 adult **Sandhill Cranes**. Aaron reported they had hoped to see a 3rd crane (juvenile) with the pair of cranes but could not find one, leading them to believe that this pair had failed in its nesting attempt in the Ukiah valley this year. Along the Gurdane Road they found over **80 Vesper Sparrows**, many **Savannah Sparrows**, 4 juvenile **Grasshopper Sparrows** and a family of 10 **Chukars**. In the stand of white poplar trees along Gurdane Road were a **Great Horned Owl**, a **Townsend's Solitaire**, a **Mourning Dove** and several **European Starlings**. A **Common Nighthawk** was perched on a powerline in Pilot Rock. Aaron noted that September 13 is getting quite late for **Common Nighthawks** in this area.

September 13, Jack Simons found 2 **Great Egrets** in the Umatilla River behind his home. Jack also reported he is now seeing many **Turkey Vultures** flying over the area each day.

White-crowned Sparrows, always an indication fall is approaching, are back in our area. However, lots of migrating birds are still to be found. Although the songbird migration is nearing an end, shorebirding will remain good for at least another month. Please send all your sightings of both unusual and common birds to me, Dave Herr at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413.

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