Kákya Táymut

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

‘First Bird Sighting of The Year’ Goes Global

Our Bird Sightings Editor, Dave Herr, emailed me back on Dec 31st to suggest we compile a list of “first bird sightings of the year” by club members. I thought this was a neat idea and sent out a quick blurb asking birders to send me the name of the first bird they saw in 2014 and the response was not only surprising but overwhelming!

At the time, Dave was relaxing on vacation at Siesta Key, Florida while you and I were enjoying our final hours of sleep here in Pendleton, thus Dave made the first club member sighting (for the record: 5:59 am, January 1st, 2014). His email back to me read: “Well as expected, my first bird of the new year was a Brown Pelican. I looked out over the Gulf from our balcony when I got up and first saw gulls flying around, probably Ring-billed, but could have been Laughing, so I did not count them. Brown Pelicans are pretty obvious, so they get #1.”

Okay. Brown Pelican is a pretty good bird, one you don’t see every day here in Pendleton. We’ve got better birds than that though; surely we can beat an old pelican!!!

Soon after, Bob Tapley in Arizona emailed to say his last bird of 2013 was a Eared Grebe but his first bird of 2014 was a Lesser Goldfinch (BTW, the only Lesser recorded); soon after Bette Husted emailed with two words: American Goldfinch!;

Meanwhile Jenny Barnett was walking down her driveway to pick up the paper when she spotted a junco. A few minutes later I received an email from long-time bird club member Paul Daniello with his sighting of a Tufted Titmouse! Where the heck was Paul? Then I remembered: formerly a Pendleton resident, Paul now lives in New Hampshire. I believe it was at this juncture that I realized I had put no restrictions on location of the sighting which meant things might get a little exciting, which proved to be a slight understatement....

Our own Ani Crawford (Newsletter author of “Walk’s With Ani...”) came through with a dandy: Great Horned Owl at 6:50 am (and, yes, at the time Ani was walking on the Pendleton Walkway in probably minus 50 degree weather!) This was followed by sightings from Andrew Clark (Eurasian collared-Dove) and Barb Clark (Dark-eyed Junco). Then a bombshell came in from Judith Johnson: “First a Red-bellied woodpecker, then a Pileated woodpecker, a downy and a hairy woodpecker at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.” Judith reported “lots of down and dead wood due to tree mortality from a beaver dam. I hear black-backed are also common here but have not yet sighted one.” Where in Pendleton was this woman reporting from? Try... Concord, Massachusetts!

A few minutes later, back in Pendleton, Frank and Clara Prindle reported that they were sitting at their kitchen table looking out the window “and a beautiful cock pheasant walked up the hill in the full sun – GORGEOUS!” That sighting will net the Prindle’s the coveted Best Bird Out of a Kitchen Window Award. Way to go and my kind of birding, Frank and Clara! Next Jenny B. wrote back to say,
“It is always inspiring to get a county year bird while at home in your pj’s.” (And for that update, Jenny gets the Best Dressed While Birding Award!) Connie Betts then reported her first sighting at 7:54 a.m., an American Goldfinch. Moments later Ann Wyatt reported not one but two birds, “in beautiful Baker City: One Magpie and a covey of (hungry) quail!” Okay, Ann, listing two birds simultaneously was clearly a protocol violation but we’ll forgive you this time.

Alison Timmons then reported a dandy raptor from West Richland, Washington: immature Goshawk at her feeders at 3:17 p.m.! That is an awesome find, Alison!!! Not to be outdone though, an email from global traveler Noah Strycker followed up Allison’s report. I had previously emailed Noah to ask him if he would like to participate in our little event and he responded with, “Sure, I’d love to participate. My first bird of 2014 was a Gentoo Penguin in Antarctica -- not a bad way to start the year! Good birding, Noah.” Ker-bam!! Wham-oo!! Take that Mr. Brown Pelican!!!!! (BTW, Noah will be our guest speaker at our April bird club meeting...you may recall his previous presentation to the club titled, “Among Penguins” in April of 2011). Clearly, Noah gets the Furthest Out in the Boonies Award – nice job and thanks, Noah!

The next report was from Pilot Rock birder Mayanna Kopp, who was recovering from cataract surgery but could see well enough to identify her first bird as “lots of American Goldfinches”. Valeri and Dave Motanic sent in a list of birds they had seen on the 1st with a Great Horned Owl as their first bird – nice bird to start the year, Val and Dave! Then, Pendleton resident Virginia Storey started her report with an apology: “Hi Jack, I’m sorry to report my first bird of 2014 was a starling. That’s just the way it is here on NW 12th street. You’d have to wear a blindfold not to see one. I hope the rest of the list is more interesting.” Yup, that’s the way it goes sometimes...but you weren’t the only one, Virginia. Read on....

Kate Mace of Pendleton reported, “My first was an Oregon junco -- on our deck railing.” This was followed by June Whitten’s report of a Red-tailed Hawk which was followed by Virginia Blakelock’s Dec 2nd sighting of a “collared-Dove” and 45 minutes later by Rich Scheele’s “Eurasian collared-Dove” report. Jean Reiher apparently found her first bird of 2014 too: “Starling (I tried to “not see it” while holding out for a Bald Eagle, but it’s hard to overlook any bird, no matter how mundane.)” Tough luck, Jean! Becky Hiern emailed to say, “I’m sorry, Jack, but I’m afraid my first bird this year was a starling. But I saw some really great birds on the first day of the year -- thanks to the Big Day!”

Susan Sheoships said, “we’re lousy with juncos but have also been seeing bald eagle down at the river.” Not to be outdone in the “mundane” category, Nancy Brown reported her “first bird was a House Sparrow and Lyle’s was a Junco. You wanted mundane, you got it.” Lorna waltz was at home when she spotted an “American Goldfinch” as her first bird.

And, finally, Dale Wilkins of Pendleton reported the only waterfowl for the first bird of the year sighting – an American Wigeon! Nice job, Dale, and for your efforts you get the Wise Old Wigeon award for the only waterfowl sighting.

So that just about wraps it up for 2014’s “First Bird Sighting of the Year” event. Oh wait! You want to know what I saw. Well, I must admit I did stack the deck a little. Before closing the curtain and going to bed on December 31st I peeked out the window at the front pond where greenhead mallards were gathering to roost. When morning arrived and it was light enough to see I grabbed a cup of hot coffee and confidently opened the curtain just a crack to peer down at the pond and saw...a sheet of ice! Rats! Now I had to take my chances on Plan B: the tall cottonwoods out back. Bald Eagles will sit in those trees this time of year, so I slooowly turned my head to see: two raucous and rowdy Black-billed Magpies flitting between the tree limbs...maybe next year.

“Thank You!” to all who reported their first bird sighting of the year. We’ll have to do this again next year, because at the least it gives us a clue as to how many different kinds of birds are bumping into people “in strange places” on January 1st.

PS. And, lastly, winner of the Better Late Than Never Award, was alert Pendleton birder Tanya Harrison who sent me an email dated January 6th with this report: “Hi Jack, my first bird of 2014 was a dead junco outside my window. The first live one was a gull flying over town. Tanya” Sorry, Tanya, dead juncos don’t count but surely “a gull flying over town” rivals a Brown Pelican.

Submitted by Jack Simons
Have you ever wondered what to call those pretty insects with four long, narrow iridescent wings and body that have flown in and landed on the trailside plants or maybe even on your binoculars? Is it a damselfly or a dragonfly? Pendleton Bird Club members at the February 13 meeting were treated to an entertaining and educational PowerPoint presentation by Kristen Gregg about the differences and similarities of the damselfly and dragonfly that we commonly see in the field during the warm season.

Kristen, daughter of Jenny Barnett and Mike Gregg, and a student at Pendleton Middle School, volunteered to give her presentation at the Bird Club meeting prior to the raffle and auction.

We learned that both insects go through an aquatic nymph stage that can last from 6 months to 6 years, are voracious predators of mosquitoes, and are commonly eaten by birds and frogs. Some of the differences between these two bugs are easy to recognize if they sit still long enough to be studied: when at rest the damselfly folds its wings on its back, where the dragonfly holds its wings straight out. Another easy to see difference is that the dragonfly has eyes on the top of its head, while the damselfly’s eyes are on the side of its head. If you would like to learn more about these fascinating insects, Kristen’s PowerPoint presentation is available for viewing on the web. It can be seen by clicking on the following link: http://www.startlogic.com/pendletonbirders.org/PDF%20Files/dragonfly%20and%20damselfly%20powerpoint.pdf

The Bird Club wishes to thank Kristen for taking the time to teach us about these brightly-colored, warm-weather bugs and resolve some of the myths that have been created about them. It was a special treat to have one of our youngest members share her interest with us.

Submitted by Diana LaSarge
**Bird Club Annual Fundraiser**

The February Bird Club Meeting & Annual Fund Raiser brought $1026.50 into the Bird Club treasury. Thanks go out to all who participated with donated items and who purchased raffle tickets and auction treasures. Thank you to Jeanne Jensen and Connie Betts who organize the raffle table and Lorna Waltz who keeps the refreshments available. Auctioneer (and comedian), Sandi Hinds and her husband and assistant, Neal, did a super job of entertaining the audience and auctioning items such as books, pictures, a Como dinner for six, bird feeders, bird nest boxes, an owl decoy, and several guided Birding Field Trips by our own renowned guides Aaron Skirvin, Jack Simons, and Neal Hinds.

The Club’s bank account currently stands at $2374.24 after the expenses of the meeting were paid. These funds cover our monthly meeting room expenses, annual website hosting fee, the annual donation to Blue Mountain Wildlife (our local, non-profit wildlife rehabilitation and education facility), guest speaker costs, some refreshment costs, and batteries & maintenance of our microphone and projector. The generosity of everyone at the fund-raiser means that annual dues are not necessary. Thanks again to all who donated items and purchased tickets and auction items.

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**Flocks and Formations**

**Globe-trotting Godwits...**

The longest nonstop migration in the world is the astounding flight of the **Bar-tailed Godwit**, a pigeon-size shorebird that nests in western Alaska. In 2007, scientists used a satellite transmitter to follow one godwit as it made a 7,200-mile nonstop flight across the widest part of the Pacific Ocean to its wintering grounds in New Zealand. Beginning in March, the godwits head north by way of the Yellow Sea in Asia, completing an 18,600-mile round-trip back to their nesting sites in Alaska.

*From “Bird Watcher’s Bible,” Pg. 284, Edited by Jonathan Alderfer, National Geographic, Washington, D.C.*

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**Bird Brain**

Israel leads the world in the amount of turkey consumed per person: more than 34 pounds per year, more than twice the average amount consumed in the United States. The first turkeys were brought to Israel from the United States in the 1950s. In a country where red meat is expensive and pork isn’t kosher, turkey consumption skyrocketed.

*From “Bird Watcher’s Bible,” page 303, Edited by Jonathan Alderfer, National Geographic, Washington, D.C.*

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**BirdNote Song and Story**

BirdNote is a two-minute radio show that combines rich sounds with engaging stories, to illustrate the amazing lives of birds and give listeners a momentary respite from the news of the day.

To listen to today’s program, click here:

http://birdnote.org/shows

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A sure sign of spring: Blue-winged Teal
Photo by Gregg Lavaty
THE NEW SIBLEY GUIDE: THE SIBLEY BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

Editor’s Note: June Whitten, who is birding in Chile/Argentina as this newsletter goes to press, provided the following book review on a new bird field guide. Next month, June will resume with her Bird of the Month column.

GOOD NEWS, BIRDERS! David Allen Sibley is publishing a new birder’s guide. The anticipation is nearly over as the new guide is due on the market on March 11, 2014. Even though Sibley’s 2002 guide remains a popular reference, almost every aspect of the book has undergone a remarkable makeover. Dozens of species have been added, most paintings have been revised, and hundreds of new paintings have been created.

The basic layout of the book remains the same but there will be obvious changes. Each species will retain a column but the text is in a different format. The sample page has two or three sentences containing the most important facts of the species at the top of the page just under the name of the species with additional important facts stated below the drawings.

Paul Lehman, who is a talented birder and guide for Wings, has done the maps for the new edition (and the first edition), which includes more than 600 updated maps. There is a lot of new information in the updated maps including some actual changes in bird distribution. Interesting too, Sibley at one time considered not having maps when he made the first edition. His thinking was the guide was for identification, and birds should be identified by appearance and sounds, range is just probability, not an identifying feature. He eventually changed his mind and decided to include range maps. The maps are all the same size and scale, so it will be easy to determine which species are likely in any particular region. I, personally, think the range maps are extremely helpful and am very pleased they will be updated for the second edition.

While the size of the second edition will remain about the same, the first edition had 544 pages but 80 pages have been added bringing the second edition to 624 pages. The new pages include 98 non-exotic rare species, including 18 seabirds. The seabird additions are mostly due to the increasing numbers and sophistication of pelagic birding.

The new edition also includes a good number of what were once considered super-rare or Code 5 birds (species recorded five or fewer times in the ABA checklist area). Sibley points out that many of these birds have been identified well over five times. Examples given include Willow Warbler, which has occurred 20 times in the last 10 years, and Sinaloa Wren at least 4 times in 10 years. Sibley views the occurrence of rare species as a prediction of which species will be needed in the book over the next ten years. He also believes birders should be aware of the possibility of rare and exotic species that may occur and go unidentified.

(Continued on Page 11)
A STORM HIT EARLIER IN THE MONTH leaving behind over 9 inches of snow along the river. Yes, I was out in it every day. Over the course of the four-day storm I was outdoors with my binoculars for over 20 hours. It was an incredible and unforgettable experience. I trudged along in the snow with my binoculars ready at all times. The deep snow brought the raptors out in full force. I spent hours following a male Northern Harrier as he flew up and down the river and the levee each day in search of food.

The highlight was on the third day of the storm. The male Harrier was flying back and forth along the levee when suddenly feathers began falling from the sky. I walked ahead to find that he had taken a House Sparrow in mid air. Feathers were still floating down from the sky when I got to the scene.

American Bald Eagles were a daily sight during the storm. On Saturday I counted three throughout the day. I was able to get close enough to one as it perched on a snag, to see its yellow talons clinging to the tree branch. The best eagle story is when I watched one flying in from the east early in the morning on day three. It headed straight for a flat spot on the cliff and as it landed the powdery white snow went flying up into the air in all directions.

Another highlight was on the day after the final snow. I spotted a Red-tailed Hawk perched on a snag across the river from me. I carefully situated myself behind a tree and began watching it eat its breakfast. Suddenly its mate came flying up from the ground (I hadn’t even see it down there) and the one on the snag jumped down into the snow and mantled its prey. Just then the male Northern Harrier came flying by close to the ground and right over the mantled bird. The mate of the Red-tail flew up and chased the Harrier off. After a minute or so the pair of Red-tails flew off towards their nest site.

The storm brought in three beautiful male Varied Thrushes. It was a joy to watch them each day. They continued on in their migration the day after the storm let up. Walking home one morning from going to see the thrushes, I saw a pair of Common Mergansers mating.

The storm also brought in one male Common Goldeneye, just for one over night stay. A lone Killdeer flew by overhead near the baseball field on the last morning. On the final day of the storm I was out walking when the sky began to darken. I immediately thought Starlings but there were way too many. I raised my binoculars to see over a thousand American Robins flying above my head. About two hundred of them dropped from the sky and perched in three nearby trees. I watched as they all found their places to settle in and rest. Some immediately began to sing, while a few others carefully filled their beaks with the powdery snow. Yes, they were actually eating the snow.

Just this week, courting and bonding has begun in the Great Blue Heron rookery. Four of the eight nests have been claimed with confirmed pairs in two of the nests. There are eight birds so far, the four without mates are flying around the rookery and strutting around along the branches without much success so far.

See you next month, Ani

You can read more stories by visiting my blog at http://anicraw.wordpress.com/
Editor’s Note: Creating A Bird-Friendly Yard by Rene Ebersole, was originally published in the July-August issue of Audubon magazine. I’ve summarized the article knowing that many bird club members love gardening as much as birding and might like to combine the two interests as a wildlife habitat project. At the end of the summary is a link to the original article published in Audubon as well as a 9-Step Guide to Transforming Your Yard.

LET’S FACE IT – we love our lawns! We water them, we fertilize them, we spray them to control weeds, insects and diseases and mow them incessantly to keep them attractive. Birds, however, may have a different perspective. From the perspective of a bird, a lawn is not much of a place to forage (unless you are a starling or a House Sparrow, perhaps) or build a nest or raise a family.

In the United States, there are now more than 45 million acres of lawns – an area eight times the size of New Jersey (or 70,312 square miles). And that number grows by a staggering 500 square miles each year. To keep our green carpets healthy we dump 70 million pounds of pesticides (mostly fertilizers) on them each year which is 10 times more than is used in farming. [These are staggering statistics by any set of standards -- JS.]

Of course, where there are lawns there was once habitat. Concerned gardeners, birders and home owners are replacing grass with shrubs, trees and flowering plants that provide birds with food, shelter and maybe a place to nest. Can these small changes have an impact on wildlife and birds?

University of Delaware Entomology Professor Doug Tallamy now has scientific evidence that show changes in habitat by homeowners can impact wildlife. Tallamy first noticed an odd relationship on a 10 acre former farmland plot he and his wife bought in 2000. Overrun with exotic plants, he noticed that the nonnative plants had little to no leaf damage from insects which were the opposite of the indigenous maples, oaks, cherries, and willows on the property. These native species were being fed upon by caterpillars.

Concerned as to why his exotic plants had no caterpillars, Tallamy conducted an exhaustive search of the literature and found no research on what affects exotic plants had on insect populations and the birds that ate them. It is now known that ninety-six percent of terrestrial North American birds raise their young on insects.

Rich in fat and protein, the insects of choice to feed a family of hungry chicks are caterpillars. It takes 390 to 570 caterpillars per day to feed a clutch of four to six Carolina Chickadees in the 16 days from hatching to when they fledge from their nest. “That can be more than 9,000 caterpillars to make one batch of chickadees,” says Tallamy. Surprisingly, almost all of a chickadee’s foraging occurs within 50 meters of the nest and not a mile down the road. This is why you need so many caterpillars in your yard.

But won’t these same caterpillars defoliate and kill the plants they are feeding on? Hardly. In fact nature has a creative weapon in the form of beneficial insects such as predatory wasps and flies (which lay their eggs on caterpillar eggs and larva), ambush bugs, and spiders that make a living off plant feeding insects. All of these species evolved together over millions of years with...
the end result being plant feeding insects rarely eat
themselves out of a home by killing their host plant
(which would be counterproductive for them in the long
run.) This biological equation has been in balance for a very
long, long time.

Where the equation became unbalanced was several hun-
dred years ago when humans introduced plants from other
continents into North America. It turns out that our plant
feeding insects feed almost exclusively on plant species native
to North America and will not feed on the aliens from, say,
Europe. Even if they could feed on these alien plants, our insects would most
likely die because their enzyme systems cannot
break down the toxins in the leaves of the imported
plants. Thus, introduced plants get a free ride from
our insect plant feeders while at the same time out-
competing our native plants by robbing nutrients,
water, and sunlight from them.

Tallamy was so intrigued with the relationship be-
tween small, homeowner created habitats and the
birds that use them, that he wrote a book called,
Bringing Nature Home. Now in its seventh print-
ing, gardeners and botanists regard his book as
the definitive source for information on this topic.
"The plants in our yards are just as
effective as the bird
feeder you
put up in win-
tertime," Tall-
amy says,
"because the
plants are
making the food that feeds the birds in the summer-
time."

Research now supports the importance of native plants in back-
yard habitats. However, it is more important than selecting
plants that host insects that birds
eat. Fruiting plants and seeds
fuel birds during migration so
these types of plants are equally
important. Plus it is important to
select plants for other features
such as shelter and nesting
structure. Birds also need
perches to keep an eye out for
predators; water for drinking
and bathing; even thorny plants
such as hawthorn as a fortress
against animal predators such as
cats.

Researchers also worry about
the possibility that well-
intentioned people could create a wildlife habitat that encour-
ages bird attraction but then release a pet cat into that environ-
ment. It doesn’t have to be your cat either; it could be a
neighbor’s cat or a feral cat. “The Smithsonian Biology Insti-
tute reported that between 1.4 billion and 3.7 billion birds each
year are killed by cats
roaming outdoors” [in the
United States].

“There is plenty of evi-
dence to show that anyone
can play a vital role in
preserving bird habitats,”
says Tallamy, who even
goes as far as to call it a
moral imperative. "Our
success is up to each one
of us individually," he
writes in Bringing Nature
Home. "We can each
make a measurable differ-
ence almost immediately
by planting a native
nearby. As gardeners
and stewards of our
land, we have never been so empowered – and the ecological
stakes have never been so high."

To read the entire article in Audubon magazine, plus the 9-Step
Guide to Transforming Your Yard click here:
http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/living/creating-bird-
friendly-yard

Submitted by Jack Simons
I got back from a 2-month vacation in warm and sunny Florida to be greeted by snow in Pendleton the day after I arrived home. Occasionally, when we get snow in the valley, some unusual birds show up at bird feeders. However, I only received reports of the expected species using area feeders during the snow.

Even before the snow, in late January Jack Simons (Jack) did have some unusual sightings at his bird feeders located between Pendleton and Mission. The first sighting was of 4 Wood Ducks at his feeders outside his kitchen window. On January 21, the number of Wood Ducks had increased to an amazing 21 birds. A couple of days after this, Jack counted 44 Wood Ducks under his feeders and in his yard. Although it is unclear why so many Wood Ducks have shown up this year, Jack wonders if the drought in California is pushing the birds north.

June Whitten and Carolyn Featherston birded along the Columbia River on January 22. Their “bird of the day” was a male Canvasback at Warehouse Beach. They also found an Eared Grebe, which is rare in winter, at Warehouse Beach and a White-throated Sparrow at McNary Wildlife Nature Area.

On January 24, Aaron Skirvin (Aaron) and Diana LaSarge (Diana) drove up the Umatilla River all the way to the Kiwanis Cabin. Their target species was Chestnut-backed Chickadee, which is fairly reliable at the cabin, and they found 6 of the chickadees in the trees around the parking lot at the cabin. They reported finding few birds, but on the way back to town they and several flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos.

On January 25, June Whitten (June) and Carolyn Featherston (Carolyn) decided to do some birding up the Umatilla River. June reported that it wasn’t a very birdy day but they still ended up finding a total of 32 species in their half day. Their bird of the day was a very cooperative Merlin. Some of the other species they found included a Rough-legged Hawk, one mature Bald Eagle and probably 2 immature Bald Eagles, a Northern Harrier, many Red-tailed Hawks and several American Kestrels. They saw Common Mergansers on the river and many at Mission Pond, and 2 pairs of Hooded Mergansers at Mission Pond.

January 25, Aaron and Diana birded in the southern part of the county then drove back along Alkali Canyon Road and Mud Springs Road until it dropped down to the Umatilla River. Aaron reports they found lots of Horned Larks in the higher elevations. Some of the highlights of the trip included one Northern Shrike, a Pileated Woodpecker along Rieth Road, and 5 Great Egrets, 6 Northern Shovelers, 10 Killdeer and a Greater Yellowlegs along Stanfield Meadows Road and Echo Meadows.

February 4, Connie Betts (Connie) reported she had one Varied Thrush and 3 Northern Flickers feeding in her Pendleton back yard. Later in the day, Connie reported a Bald Eagle flew over her home near the Pendleton Community Park. The same day, Aaron checked the roads west of Pilot Rock looking for Lapland Longspur and Snow Buntings. He failed to find Longspurs or Buntings, but did find a Northern Shrike and a few small flocks of Horned Larks.

February 5, Aaron headed to the Columbia River for some birding. He notes it was windy and cold along the river, but at Warehouse Beach there were quite a few ducks and at least 8 Bald Eagles. As he was returning to his car a beautiful adult Peregrine Falcon with a blue/gray back and black “helmet” flew over him. He found a Common Loon between Juniper Canyon and Stateline and
saw 2 Peregrine Falcons as he drove west toward McNary Dam. At the dam he found a Mew Gull along with the horde of Ring-billed Gulls. However, he did not see the Red-shouldered Hawk that had been wintering at the Wildlife Nature Area.

There was a significant snowfall in Pendleton between February 6 and 10 and activity at local feeders did pick up. Barbara Clark had between 30 and 40 American Robins in her yard near McKay Reservoir during the snow. She also hosted a pair of Northern Flickers as well as Dark-eyed Juncos, House Sparrows, House Finches and American Goldfinches. Carolyn Featherston reported she did not have much at her Pendleton feeders beyond the usual finches, Spotted Towhees, House and Song Sparrows. She does have a pair of Lesser Goldfinches that drop by periodically.

Nancy Brown added Harris’s Sparrow to the county year list, when one visited her Hermiston feeder February 8. The same day, Jenny Barnett, while skiing through Pendleton Community Park, spotted a “squeaking” Steller’s Jay. During the peak of the snowy weather on February 9, Jack Simons saw a Wilson’s Snipe in a small marshy area on his property near Mission. February 12 and 13, Connie had a number of American Robins visit her yard in SW Pendleton.

February 15, Aaron and Diana drove to Echo Meadows to look for Sandhill Cranes, which normally show up about this time of the year. They did not find any cranes, but searching through a large flock of blackbirds were able to pick out 3 Brown-headed Cowbirds. Along Sagebrush Road (north of Hermiston), they saw a Fox Sparrow and a Hermit Thrush. At the McNary Wildlife Nature Area the Corps of Engineers still had the water shut off to the ponds, but there was enough water to attract several species of ducks including 3 male Eurasian Wigeons. The Red-shouldered Hawk wintering in the area was also spotted. Driving out of the Umatilla Marina, Diana spotted a flock of large birds flying overhead, which turned out to be a group of 15 Sandhill Cranes. They discovered that the road into McNary Beach park was closed by a locked gate, which they later found out was due to vandalism at the park. At Warehouse Beach there were only a few birds at the swimming beach. A California Gull (first winter immature) was the most unusual bird that they could find. On the way back to Pendleton, they saw a Great Horned Owl perching in a grove of locust tree along Holdman Highway.

February 16, Rodger and Ginger Shoemake and Mike and MerryLynn Denny ran the Northern Umatilla County Raptor survey. Mike noted the numbers were down and included 80 Red-tailed Hawks, 2 Rough-legged Hawks, 8 Northern Harriers, 40 American Kestrels, one Merlin, one Bald Eagle and 7 Great Horned Owls. Other highlights included 3 Say’s Phoebes and 16 Lesser Goldfinches. The same day, Aaron and Diana birded in the south county. Highlights included 1 Killdeer and 1 Northern Shoveler at Ukiah sewer ponds, 4 Clark’s Nutcrackers about 3 miles east of Ukiah, 52 Wild Turkeys, 2 American Robins, and 10 male Red-winged Blackbirds in Ukiah, and 66 Canada Geese and a Northern Shrike on Camas Prairie. They searched for N. Pygmy-Owl, Canyon Wren, Gray Partridge, and Chukar, but could not find any.

February 18, Connie drove to Echo and out Echo Meadows Road and Emert Road. She found 13 Sandhill Cranes along Emert Road. She found a total of 6 Bald Eagles. Other birds of prey included a Great Horned Owl, 6 American Kestrels, 3 Northern Harriers, and one Red-tailed Hawk. About 100 Eurasian-Collared Doves were in a very small horse pasture which seemed unusual. Connie also reported seeing the large blackbird flock Aaron and Diana had noted when they visited the area.

Sherry Sallee reports that the 2 female Anna’s Hummingbirds she’s been seeing in her yard along the Walla Walla River south of Milton-Freewater survived the cold, snowy spell and
are still coming to the feeders. The last few years, the overwintering Anna’s had left the Sallee’s yard in early February. Sherry, and husband Robert, are hoping the Anna’s stay for the nesting season this year.

**Sandhill Cranes** have already returned to our area and flocks of **American Robins** are being reported. Other early migrants will start showing up in the next few weeks as well. So get out and do some late winter birding and please send your sightings to me, Dave Herr, at dsherr1@mac.com or call 541-276-6413.

*(Continued from Page 5)*

The book also adds a few distinctive subspecies. This is another fine feature as often subspecies become full species and it is always good to be aware of this possibility. Two subspecies that will particularly interest Umatilla County birders are Dunlin and Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Finally, the cover is a stunning female Magnolia Warbler. Sibley’s quote about his cover bird: “It was one of my spark birds when I was in third grade. My father was working at Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California, and when I came home from school one day, he was there with a brilliant male Magnolia Warbler that had been trapped and banded—very rare on the west coast, very beautiful, and very mysterious as it flew off into the woods and vanished.”

Locally, and the very best place to order books, the new Sibley guide may be ordered from Terry Dallas at Armchair Books. You will find the price will be as good, or better, than anywhere, and the service is excellent. Please wait, even though it will be difficult waiting, until the publishing date on March 11 to order the guide.

Submitted by June Whitten

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**Northern Harrier**

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