



NCW Bird Photo Contest

Our area is full of wonderful birds and talented photographers. We are anxious to see your best photos.

The first NCW Audubon photo contest begins on February 15, 2018 and is open to anyone living in Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan or Ferry counties. This contest will allow entrants to showcase their best photographs of Pacific Northwest birds. There is no cost to enter and the deadline for entries is March 30, 2018. Winners will be announced on April 13. A Grand Prize and two Honorable Mention winners in each of three categories – Professional, Adult Enthusiast, and Youth - will be selected by a panel of three highly qualified judges. The winning photographs will be printed as awards for the photographers. These prints will be premiered during the display of the National Audubon Bird Photography contest winners at the 2018 Leavenworth Bird Fest. Our winning photos will also be displayed at a variety of locations throughout North Central Washington for a period of six months after the contest ends.

To be eligible to win a prize, all submitted photographs must contain at least one Pacific Northwest bird. By submitting photos to this contest, the



photographer confirms that they have not added any elements to the image(s) and that processing of the image(s) involved only standard optimization (e.g., removal of dust, cropping, adjustments to color and contrast). Digital files must be fully edited to meet the photographer's intent and standards. Copyright remains the sole property of the photographer. Participating photographers will grant NCWAS use of images for display and educational purposes. Winning images may be presented in The Wild Phlox, the NCW Audubon website and other local and social media. Each photographer may enter up to three photos.

Judges: **Gerry Ellis** – a wildlife film-maker, photographer, and writer whose work has appeared in National Geographic, BBC Wildlife, the New York Times, Ranger Rick, and more. His work is now featured on the YouTube channel *Apes Like Us*, which

Volume 51 #5 February 2018

photo and article by Bruce McCammon, Wenatchee

he also hosts. Ellis is the author of more than a dozen children's books. Documenting nature for more than 30 years inspired him to found GLOBIO, a nonprofit, inspiring children to protect all life on Earth. **Heidi Newsome** - she oversees wildlife and bird projects for the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Mid-Columbia National

Wildlife Refuges. Her programs involve work with Burrowing Owl nesting and conservation, Long-billed Curlew and all types of waterfowl and upland birds. She is a regionally recognized bird and wildlife educator and conservationist. **Dennis Davenport** – an award-winning bird photographer, author and educator. Dennis has photographed birds and wildlife for over a decade and has won many awards for his work. His photos are published in several magazines and have been used by organizations to enhance bird and wildlife conservation.

Details about how to enter, the photo categories and the judges can be found on the NCW Audubon Society website (www.ncwaudubon.org). Contact Bruce McCammon at bruce.mccammon@gmail.com if you have questions.

The mission of the
North Central Washington Audubon Society
is "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing
on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of people and
the biological diversity of North Central Washington."

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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North Central Washington Audubon Society is on Facebook too

All phone numbers in the Wild Phlox are area code 509 unless otherwise indicated.

Great Backyard Bird Count In the Entiat and Your Own Backyards

Get outside, learn about birds and explore the beautiful natural area of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust's Stormy Creek Preserve in the Entiat Valley. Join CDLT and biologist/Land Trust site steward Phil Archibald, and Virginia Palumbo of the North Central Washington Audubon Society, for the Annual Great Backyard Bird Count at Stormy Creek Preserve on February 17, 10 am to noon. We will start with feeder counts at Phil's home adjacent to the Preserve, and Phil will give a history of bird trends from past GBBCs at Stormy. Virginia will then lead a snowshoe exploration of the Preserve. The house has amenities including water, toilet, phone, and tea. For the walk bring layers, warm boots, snowshoes, gloves, hats and binoculars. Possible sightings include all three nuthatches, Clark's Nutcrackers, White-headed Woodpeckers, Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins, Dippers, Bald Eagles, and Brown Creepers. Please register at hillary@cdlandtrust.org or call 667-9708.

For more ways to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19, please see <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Nine Issues \$15

I prefer to get the Wild Phlox electronically (email address required below)

Separate subscription to Phlox NOT needed for NAS members in good standing

Donation: I would like to support NCW Audubon's programs of education and conservation. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____

Please do NOT acknowledge my donation in the Wild Phlox

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Planned Giving: Please consider giving a planned gift to NCW Audubon to support our education and conservation programs for generations to come. Your charitable gift will be tax deductible. It could go to an endowment fund or to a specific program or as a gift to our general operating fund. Remember, your gift to North Central Washington Audubon will go to fund programs in North Central Washington!

To join the National Audubon Society which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see their website at www.audubon.org

Looking at this month's Wild Phlox, there is no excuse for any cases of the winter doldrums around North Central Washington. There is so much going on – field trips, classes, films, programs and planning for springtime field surveys and more field trips! Richard Scranton sent me a nice report from the January field trip to the Waterville Plateau and Bridgeport area. Birders had good looks at a Northern Goshawk hunting a quail-sized bird, numerous Rough-legged Hawks, American Tree Sparrows, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Northern Saw-whet Owls and Northern Shrikes. In case you missed that trip, Dan Stephens is leading his annual trip to the same region on February 3. You might want to give him a call see if there are any remaining slots on that trip.

Richard also sent me a note about the shrub-steppe songbird surveys in May and June. He will, once again, be coordinating this program for the NCW area. Watch for an article in next month's Wild Phlox or if you are in a hurry, you can contact Richard (all contact info for NCW Audubon is on page 2).

Starting on February 15, you can sign up for Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest activities. The festival dates are May 15-17 however some of their programs and field trips are sure to fill up early. Remember - David Allen Sibley is this year's keynote speaker. For more information, see www.LeavenworthSpringBirdFest.org

I received a couple of follow up reports from Christmas Bird Counts around the region. Mike Schroeder reported that Bridgeport counters were surprised to find a Sandhill Crane, Western Tanager and Western Screech Owl on their count! They also had high counts of Sharp-tailed Grouse (47) and Horned Grebes (178). Notable declines included Green-winged Teal (1), California Quail (280) and Dark-eyed Junco (221). They counted over 19,000 birds compared to an average of 23,384. In Chelan, Steve Easley reports that they had only 62 species compared to an average number of 77. It must be noted that the weather was miserable – icy, snowy and foggy! They had low counts of Horned Grebes (18), Great Blue Heron (4) and Black-capped Chickadee (4). There was a high count of American Coots (1259) and as is happening most everywhere, the number of Eurasian Collared-doves is growing (220). Thanks to Mike and Steve for sending their reports.

In not-so-good news, I read that some powered para-gliders were purposely disturbing geese and swans in the Skagit area where huge flocks of these white birds spend the winter. Drones are becoming another flying menace with many reports of them disturbing birds (and humans too). As these things become more popular and affordable, rules will have to be created and enforced to prevent them from running amok in the skies.



Northern Pygmy Owl
photo by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

February 3 Field Trip

Join ornithologist Dan Stephens for a birding trip to the Waterville Plateau to search for winter specialties of the area including Snow Buntings, Snowy Owls, Gyrfalcons and more! RSVP to Dan at 679-4706 or dstephens@wvc.edu. Plan to meet at the Easy Street Park and Ride and leave by 8:00 am and return around 4:00 pm on February 3.

Beebe Springs Temporary Closure

The Wednesday morning citizen science bird walks at Beebe Springs Natural Area are being stopped temporarily for the remainder of the winter. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has closed Beebe Springs until March 15, for both car and foot traffic. The birding trips will resume on Wednesday, March 21. If you are interested in joining any of the spring birding walks, please contact Virginia Palumbo for start times and details at vwpalumbo@gmail.com.

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

Douglas County: Western Bluebirds and a Peregrine Falcon were seen on the Bridgeport Bar. Many Snow Buntings were seen up Central Ferry Canyon. Hundreds of Common Redpolls were seen in one flock near Mansfield. Eleven Pine Grosbeaks were seen on Badger Mountain. A large flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-finches was seen at the top of Rock Island Grade.

Chelan County: Four Trumpeter Swans were seen at Beebe Springs in addition to a Northern Harrier, American Dipper and Western Meadowlarks. A Barred Owl was reported in a Chelan yard.

Okanogan County: Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen off of the Coconully Road. In the Okanogan Highlands there were Bohemian Waxwings and Wild Turkeys. A Great Gray Owl was seen flying across the road to the Havilah Sno-park. Northern Saw-whet Owls continue to be seen at Bridgeport State Park. A Snowy Owl, Golden eagles and White-headed Woodpeckers were seen along Cameron Lake Road. At our house in the Methow Valley, Common Redpolls are the most common feeder birds and a Northern Pygmy-owl stops by many mornings before it's fully light outside.

compiled from the ncwabird email list and eBird and Tweepers by Teri J Pieper

Music of the Earth

By Mark Oswood, Wenatchee
Larry and Penny Tobiska are "first responders" to donations received. The list of donors is derived from their records.



"It takes generosity to discover the whole through others. If you realize you are only a violin, you can open yourself up to the world by playing your role in the concert."
(Jacques Cousteau)

The donors listed below are first-string players in our ensemble. And some people play several instruments: donor, volunteer, leader. Together, we are part of the biological conservatory of North Central Washington.

There are thousands of needs for your time and heart and money. We are now, and always, grateful that you made room for us.

Our once-a-year donation request fledges in late summer. Below, we list donors making donations through mid-January. We'll list donors after mid-January in the September 2018 Phlox.

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Plus 16 anonymous donors, just as appreciated as those above.

The symbols designate gifts of special generosity:

* = \$100 (Great Blue Heron)

** = \$200 (Greater White-fronted Goose)

*** = \$500 (Magnificent Frigatebird)

Volunteer for Short-eared Owl Surveys

by Joe Buchanan, WDFW

The Western *Asio flammeus* Landscape Study (WafLS) seeks volunteers to help complete an eight-state citizen science project designed to gather information to better evaluate the population status of the Short-eared Owl. The Short-eared Owl has been listed in many western states as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need and recent information indicates a substantial population decline. These surveys are a critical starting point to fill information gaps for this species. Results will inform conservation actions by agencies and partners.

Volunteers will enjoy rural western landscapes at twilight while completing one road-based survey during each of two survey windows (1 – 21 March and 22 March – 15 April). The surveys consist of driving on secondary roads in eastern Washington, stopping at 8 to 11 points to complete a five-minute survey.

At each point volunteers will record detections of Short-eared Owls as well as some brief habitat information. The entire survey is completed within 90 minutes. Training material will be provided. Participants will need to follow field and data entry

protocols, have use of a vehicle, have a GPS (or a smartphone), and be able to identify a Short-eared Owl. Survey locations have been randomly selected by project planners, but actual routes within those locations will be identified by volunteers.

Help fill information gaps by signing up for a survey in Washington (or any of the other participating states: CA, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WY)! Visit the website (www.avianknowledgeinthewest.net/citizen-science/short-eared-owls/33-sign-up) for more details including the protocol, reports and publications, and how to sign-up. For any questions contact your state coordinator for Washington, Joe Buchanan (Joseph.Buchanan@dfw.wa.gov). We also need participants in Washington to register as volunteers with WDFW at (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/volunteer/>); at this link please click “Register to Volunteer” to reach the registration site. Questions about volunteering with WDFW should be directed to Christine Redmond (Christine.Redmond@dfw.wa.gov).

The Million Dollar Duck, a Film

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

On February 20 at 7 pm, Wenatchee Valley Environmental Film and Lecture Series presents *The Million Dollar Duck* sponsored by North Central Washington Audubon Society at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center. *The Million Dollar Duck* is a documentary that focuses on the strange and wonderful world of the Federal Duck Stamp Contest, the only juried art competition run by the

U.S. government. This film explores the eccentric nature of the contestants who enter each year for a chance at wildlife art stardom, while also reflecting upon the history and challenges facing the continued existence of this successful conservation program.

Duck Stamp art and books will be on display and informational handouts available.

“In music you have the Grammys. If you’re an actor, it’s the Oscars. If you’re a wildlife artist, it’s winning the Federal Duck Stamp Contest.” Mark Anderson, 2004 Federal Duck Stamp winner, *New York Times*. For more information on the Duck Stamp program, see www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp.php

A donation of \$5 to the museum is suggested. Refreshments will be served.

Getting to Know Your Board Members - Merry Roy

by Penny Tobiska, Wenatchee

Tell us a little about your background and how you became interested in the natural world.

I am not a biologist or botanist, but from early childhood I have loved nature. I guess you could call me a naturalist in the old sense of the word — self-taught and passionate. I owned all the little Golden Nature Guides and used them constantly. When my family went hiking, they would complain about me lagging, looking at flowers and birds. I did take one ornithology class at Indiana University, but I was an English major.

What are some of your other interests?

Having been a teacher for over thirty years, working with children is still in my blood. I lead hiking day-camps with kids, nature walks at summer camp, teach Sunday School, walk with grandchildren on the riverfront trail looking for baby geese, and help with “What’s That Bird”. I hike (we walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain the year I retired), enjoy bird festivals and bird



related travel, love to cook, sew costumes for grand-kids in Short Shakespeareans, play guitar and sing with various groups. And being an English major, I am a voracious reader, a writer and a poet.

What are your favorite birding spots in NCW and beyond?

I like to observe birds where I am. There were Gray-crowned Rosy-finches on Steptoe Butte in October, 100 Wood Ducks in Boise, and American Avocets wintering in the Bear River Refuge in Utah. There was a flock of bluebirds

in an Idaho rest stop shelter. A sweet Red-breasted Nuthatch is a regular at my backyard feeder this winter. Exotic trips yield exotic birds as they did on our trip to Costa Rica. My favorites include the motmots, the Sun Grebe we walked down a dusty road to see, and the male quetzal on his nest that finally emerged to call for his tardy mate to take over. Also, there were surprising birds, like the European Dipper in Spain that acted just like ours but wasn’t gray. I’m looking forward to future favorite sites and sightings.

2017 Conservation Update

Taken together, the issues we're involved with represent our efforts to protect and restore healthy natural habitats on a landscape scale across our region. We're currently involved with 10 issues, 4 of which we reported on in the December Wild Phlox. All 10 are works in progress, and most will take years to play out. We remain engaged, and will continue to work each going forward.

Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Vision – The Stemilt-Squilchuck area is situated in the foothills of the Cascades southwest of Wenatchee. Several years ago, there was a proposal to sell approximately 2,500 acres there for development of a resort. To head this off, a coalition of entities including The Trust for Public Land, Chelan County, and the Stemilt Partnership (composed of a mix of interests such as local agriculture, wildlife, recreation, and conservation) stepped up to devise a plan that would protect the area for the wide range of natural values it offers.

The main goal of this process has essentially been achieved – consensus was reached on a long-range plan which is now being implemented. NCWAS was fully engaged in the first phase of this process, the purpose of which was to generate a plan (and philosophy) of land use in the Stemilt region, which includes Wenatchee Heights and Squilchuck. The main agreement calls for development (houses, etc.) to be concentrated in the lowest portions of the basins, allowing cost-effective connections to utilities while preventing the blossoming of ranchettes in the upper basins. Meanwhile, the upper portions of the basins are largely to be reserved for mixed agriculture and recreation plus maintenance of migration corridors for wildlife (especially elk). NCWAS attends Stemilt Process meetings and remains fully engaged.

Colockum Wildlife Area Advisory Committee – Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) manages extensive tracts of land with high wildlife values lying within NCWAS's boundaries. A portion of one of them, the Colockum Wildlife Recreation Area (CWRA), interfaces the Stemilt-Squilchuck area in the upper reaches of the basin. Because of this overlap, and our involvement with the Stemilt Process, NCWAS has a seat on the Advisory Committee to the CWRA. We attended its September meeting in Ellensburg, which was the first time it's met since 2015. It's supposed to meet twice a year, and plans to do so going forward with the next meeting scheduled for April 2018.

Rock Island Ponds – Rock Island Ponds lie within the city of Rock Island a few miles south of East Wenatchee. The area, formerly a large natural gravel deposit along the Columbia River, has been mined for several decades: continuing to this day as a large gravel mining operation by Central Washington Concrete (CWC). Due to the mining activities, the area now hosts a series of small lakes and ponds offering fish and wildlife habitats and the potential for development of various compatible recreational activities. However, past studies of water quality and fish populations indicate many serious problems requiring resolution.

CWC will be completing its mining operations on the site over the next several years and consideration is now being given to the future of the ponds. In anticipation of this, in 2016 NCWAS assisted with development of a long-term vision centered on promoting the ponds as a destination fishing and birding area.

by Mark Johnston, Leavenworth

In early 2017, the City Council passed a resolution adopting the content of our proposal, and has begun taking the first steps to make it happen.

The City Council is currently in the process of updating its master plan and is working on this issue as part of it. They're also moving forward on coordinating funding efforts to support development of a site plan and the needed studies of water quality and fish populations and health issues. The master plan will hopefully firmly establish the vision for the ponds, and the water and fish studies will determine existing conditions and problems, so they can be successfully addressed. Also in support of this effort, we hope to establish a multi-year bird survey. It would be conducted by Rock Island residents and NCWAS members, and designed to identify specific species and numbers currently using the ponds.

Grizzly Bear Reintroduction to the North Cascades - In March 2017, we submitted a letter indicating our position on the North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan Environmental Impact Statement. We expressed support for reintroduction in general, and for either alternative C or D. They are the 2 most aggressive alternatives, with C simply calling for a somewhat slower and thereby longer-term approach to achieving a sustainable population in the area.

Methow Headwaters Mineral Withdrawal - This area lies on the southern end of a huge copper deposit stretching into Canada. The area known as the "Mazama deposit" is composed of relatively low-grade materials, but has the potential to yield 1 billion pounds of copper and other precious minerals such as gold. If development were to occur, it would impact approximately 3,000 acres with mining-related infrastructure, and likely require an open pit approach.

Because such activity would have significant negative impacts upon the area and natural values it supports, in November we, along with 12 other conservation organizations, signed a letter to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in support of a proposed 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal for the 340,000-acre Methow Headwaters Region.

Global Warming - National Audubon Society has identified global warming and associated climate change as the primary threat to birds. Given this, Audubon Washington and NCWAS are actively working to address Washington State's solutions to the problem.

Last February, we met in Olympia with our State Senator and Representatives. We discussed several issues; foremost among them global warming, and our interest in seeing them support market-based legislative solutions. The Legislature ultimately passed a few good, though minor, bills addressing the issue, but failed to enact more sweeping measures. With the recent election the senate's leadership will be in different hands for at least the next year. What this means for the likelihood of enacting stronger climate measures remains an open question. Some members are likely to be supportive of stronger climate bills, but not all. So, we still have our work cut out for us – success will depend upon bridging the political gap. We'll be actively involved on this issue, and hope to have some positive results to report next year.

Banding Birds at Big Valley

Are you a bird watcher who would like to take your birding experience to the next level? Would you enjoy seeing a Lazuli Bunting, MacGillivray's Warbler or Red-naped Sapsucker up close and personal? Then you might consider volunteering at the Big Valley Bird Banding Station! I established the station on the Big Valley Unit (a few miles upstream of Winthrop) of the Methow Wildlife Area in 2017 as part of the Institute for Bird Populations' MAPS program. MAPS stands for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship and is a continent-wide collaboration among public agencies, non-governmental groups, and private citizens to contribute to the conservation of birds and their habitats through demographic monitoring. Having operated a MAPS station in South Carolina for ten years, starting a new MAPS station in the Methow Valley was one of my goals when I moved to Winthrop in the fall of 2016.

The Big Valley MAPS season runs from late May through early August and consists of seven banding sessions spaced approximately seven to ten days apart. Birds are captured in mist nets, which are strung between poles and nearly impossible to see with the naked eye. After a bird is extracted from a net, it is placed in a cloth holding bag and taken to a central location where it is identified to species and banded. Data on sex, age, breeding condition, weight, fat, molt and feather wear also are recorded before the bird is released. Although ageing some species can be difficult, in most cases it only takes a few minutes to band and process a bird.

Starting a new banding station is challenging, but fortunately I was able to recruit a core group of volunteers



MacGillivray's Warbler

article and photo by Julie Hovis, Winthrop

who were willing and able to help on banding days. Thank you Jackie Hovis, Tim Paschke, Teri Pieper, and Scott Fitkin for your assistance and dedication! And despite my fear of the unknown, we caught birds – lots of birds! Banding station capture rates are reported as the number of birds caught per 100 net hours. The capture rate at Big Valley for the 2017 MAPS season was 77 birds per 100 net hours. In comparison, the 10-year capture rate for my South Carolina MAPS station was only 15 birds per 100 net hours.

In total, we caught 117 birds and 26 different species at Big Valley during the 2017 MAPS season. The most commonly captured species were MacGillivray's Warbler, House Wren, Yellow Warbler, Veery, Dusky Flycatcher, House Finch, Red-naped Sapsucker, Swainson's Thrush and Lazuli

Bunting. We also had a couple of surprises – a very unhappy male Pileated Woodpecker and a Townsend's Solitaire fledgling that looked nothing like an adult! As I sit here watching the snow fall on this gray winter day, I am already wondering what species will fill our nets in 2018 and if we will recapture any of the birds we banded in 2017.

If you would like to learn more about the Big Valley Bird Banding Station please give me a call (803-236-1268) or send me an email (jahovis711@gmail.com). I am looking for volunteers to help in 2018 and plan to offer several training sessions this spring once the snow clears and the temperature warms up. Although prior experience is helpful it is not required provided you are willing to learn. I also may offer some bird banding demonstrations this spring and summer if there is any interest, so please let me know!

Winter Waterbirds Class at WVC

by Susan Ballinger, Wenatchee

Would you like to learn how to identify some of the ducks and other water birds that winter along the Columbia River? North Central Washington Audubon Society's Jenny Graevell and Wenatchee Naturalist Susan Ballinger have co-designed this course to increase your observation skills in a collaborative setting. This hands-on course will use field guides, bird study skins, presentations, apps, and optics. Loaner binoculars will be available, courtesy of the NCW Audubon society. A Waterfowl ID booklet is included for each student. The Saturday half day field trip will be along the Columbia River where participants will practice birding skills under supportive guidance of the instructors. This combined classroom and field course can launch you on your way to becoming a better bird watcher alongside a group of other enthusiasts. The course is designed for people with some birding experience, but beginners are also welcome. Tuition scholarships available. Course dates: March 5, 7, and 10. Register at Wenatchee Valley College Continuing Education at <https://www.wvc.edu/academics/continuing-education/>.



Barrow's Goldeneye pair by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

February Wild Phlox

North Central Washington Audubon Society
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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

Items in bold text are sponsored or co-sponsored by NCWAS

February 2	Ants: Marching in Hidden Worlds	Okanogan Highlands Alliance program in Tonasket. www.okanoganhighlands.org
February 3	Waterville Plateau Field Trip	With Dr. Dan Stephens. See page 3 for details
February 15	NCW Bird Photo Contest	First Day to Enter. See page 1 for details
February 15	Leavenworth Spring BirdFest Registration	Register early at http://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/ events/2018-leavenworth-spring-bird-fest
February 16-19	Great Backyard Bird Count	See page 2
February 20	<i>The Million Dollar Duck</i>	A film about the Duck Stamp program. See page 5
March 1 - April 15	Short-eared Owl Surveys	Citizen Science! See page 5
March 5, 7, 10	Winter Waterfowl Class	At Wenatchee Valley College. See page 7
May 17 - 20	Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest	http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.org/



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Visit the NCW Audubon Society website for updates on these and other events
www.ncwaudubon.org