



The Wild Phlox

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Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest

The 17th Annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, May 16-19, celebrates birdsong and the natural world with top-notch bird guides, breathtaking scenery, new adventures and Richard Crossley as this year's keynote speaker!

Festival activities offer new and returning field trips for experienced birders and casual birding recreationalists that explore an array of habitats by boat, bus, boot, or bike. Our talented volunteer bird guides lead everything from rigorous off-trail excursions to gentle walks, river rafting and even birding by canoe on the Wenatchee River! Free events, family activities, opportunities to check out recreation on the river and classes for those who love the arts mean that Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest truly has something for everyone!

Wednesday, May 15, join artist/wildlife biologist Heather A. Wallis Murphy for an all-day nature journaling course to help participants become better observers of flora and fauna (see Heather's work at the top of this page). The workshop, held at Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort, offers a beautiful setting for indoor and outdoor learning, as well as a catered lunch by Kingfisher Restaurant.

Thursday is a great day to check out some river fun, bird atop Badger Mountain, and shop or dine at one of the fabulous Top Pick Sponsors in town. Enjoy the evening at the Bird Fest Art Show reception at Snowy Owl

Theater or snag a spot on an evening owl prowl.

Friday offers festival favorites such as Wetland Birders with the Upper Basin Birders, as well as new trips including the Mystery Morning Bird trip and a walk through Confluence Park in Wenatchee with photographer Bruce McCammon. You can enjoy art with Molly Hashimoto, a workshop on sagebrush ecology, and the Birder's Social just before the amazing photographer and birder Richard Crossley's Keynote address at Snowy Owl Theater.

Saturday is the pinnacle of Bird Fest!

by Brook Hinton and Richard Scranton

Wildlife Area. Other events include a free family Blackbird Island Bird walk, the Audubon Traveling Photo Exhibit, a Sip and Paint at Wenatchee River Institute, the tasty bird and brag Birder's BBQ at Red Tail Canyon Farm and a Song Bird concert by the Marlin Handbell Ringers.

Sunday features include exploring Blewett Pass, breakfast at Grunewald Guild, an encore of the Audubon Photography exhibit, and a writing and poetry class.

For more information and registration for these events and activities go to www.LeavenworthSpringBirdFest.org. Registration is open February 19 through May 1. Please note that registration for Sip and Paint is open at www.sipandpaint.org

The Annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest is made possible every year by the generous donations from local businesses, individuals, and partner organizations in the community including the Maria Norbury Foundation, the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, the NCW Audubon Society, the Washington Native Plant Society, Icicle Creek Center for the Arts, the USFWS, and Team Natureza. Please thank and support local businesses flying the yellow Bird Fest flag! Interested in volunteering? Contact Wenatchee River Institute Programs office at programs@wenatcheeriverinstitute.org.



Varied Thrush
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

More new trips for birders, beginners to experts, will be offered such as the 29 foot Langley Canoe trip on the Columbia thanks to Wenatchee Row and Paddle Club, Birding Boot camp, and an all day trip out to the Big Bend

The mission of the North Central Washington Audubon Society is to:
 “Enhance, protect and restore healthy natural ecosystems and native biodiversity using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation to promote the welfare of birds in North Central Washington”

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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.

April Field Trip

by Kav McGeough, Chelan

Saturday, April 27, 7:00 am

This trip will begin at the East Wenatchee park and ride located near the car dealerships (310 Rock Island Road) at 7 am. We will travel up Badger Mountain and stop at a few places in the montane forests in this area. From there we will continue to Jameson Lake. This area can be good for ducks and grebes, as well as shrub-steppe birds.

The remaining part of the trip will be visiting various seasonal ponds located east of Jameson Lake. We will be looking for migrating/breeding shorebirds and ducks. Birds we may see include Wilson’s Phalarope, Greater Yellowlegs, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Eared Grebe, Gadwall, Cinnamon Teal, and many more.

Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one, sunscreen, lunch, water, and extra clothing as the weather dictates. There will be some walking on unpaved surfaces for distances under a mile at a time, but most birding will be done from gravel roads. We should be back by 5:00 pm.

Contact me to sign up at kavanaghmcgeough@gmail.com or 425-281-5971. We need two other people to drive so please let me know if you are willing. Limited to ten participants.

North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

- Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Nine Issues - \$15 Suggested donation
- 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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To join the National Audubon Society which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see their website at www.audubon.org

Beebe Springs Natural Area will re-open to the public on March 16. Virginia Palumbo will resume her bi-monthly community science bird surveys on Wednesday, March 20 at 8:30 am.. Come join her to see what birds wintered there, and which early migrants might be moving through. To register or get more information, contact her at 682-5969 or vwpalumbo@gmail.com.

Were you able to attend one of the three presentations in NCW about the Arctic Refuge and Coastal Plain? I went to the event in Winthrop and was impressed by the stories and photos of the wildlife and habitat of this remote area. I am saddened by the Bureau of Land Management's plans to lease the area for oil and gas development. In case you missed



American Goldfinch
photo by Teri J Pieper

the programs, you can learn more at our website or by contacting Mary Gallagher at marywillardgallagher@live.com or 206-650-7511. If you wish to add your voice to this issue, comments are due by March 13!

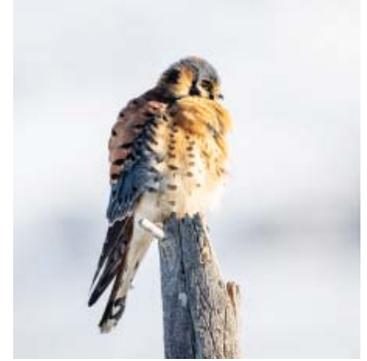
March means Spring is just around the corner. Well, in my case, mud season might be around the corner. Winter still has a strong grip on my world. Some years, I have heard a Say's Phoebe by now and I can recall seeing bluebirds in the snow too. Swallows could be arriving soon too. For now, I am seeing lots of finches, blackbirds that never left this winter, juncos and five quail that have survived cold and snow and the occasional visiting hawk or shrike. This morning I saw and heard two singing Cassin's Finches.

Recently, while skiing in the Early Winters area, I stopped on the groomed trail to take a break and looked across at a tree peppered with woodpecker holes. It was a Douglas fir

that has had some bug damage and probably won't survive. And then I saw it – a Black-backed Woodpecker making new holes! It was just fifteen feet away at eye level! What a special sight! I had my little point and shoot camera and was able to get some ok photos. As I put it away in its pouch I turned and looked down the trail and there was a coyote walking towards me! We were both surprised and it bolted into the woods, followed by a second, smaller coyote.

Thanks to Mary Gallagher for the following: "If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it." Quote by President Lyndon B. Johnson, when he signed the Wilderness Act into law in 1964.

Editor's Notes



American Kestrel
photo by Teri J Pieper



Black-backed Woodpecker
photo by Teri J Pieper

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

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

Chelan: Two Eurasian Wigeons, a Red-breasted Merganser and a Merlin were seen at Walla Walla Park. Two White-headed Woodpeckers and a Northern Goshawk were seen at Sleeping Lady near Leavenworth. A Barn Owl was seen at Sleepy Hollow. A California Scrub Jay was seen on Horse Lake Road. A Snow Goose was seen from the Horan Natural area. A Red-breasted Sapsucker was seen in Cashmere.

Douglas: Snow Buntings and two Snowy Owls were seen near Atkins Lake. Bohemian Waxwings were seen in Withrow. Long-tailed Ducks have been seen on the Columbia between Brewster and Bridgeport. Six Barrow's Goldeneyes were seen on the Columbia at East Wenatchee. Two Golden Eagles and a Red-breasted Merganser were seen at the north end of Jameson Lake. American Tree Sparrows were seen on Dyer Hill Road. Gray-crowned Rosy-finches were mixed in with Horned Larks near

Mansfield.

Ferry: A Pacific Wren and a Trumpeter Swan were seen at Haag Cove Campground.

Okanogan: A Black-backed Woodpecker was seen at the Highlands Sno-park and also along Methow Trails near Early Winters. A Northern Pygmy Owl and a Northern Goshawk were seen near Chesaw. Up to five Northern Saw-whet Owls were seen in Bridgeport State Park. A Snowy Owl has been seen more than once from Cameron Lake Road. A Long-eared Owl was seen near Conconully. One Tundra and eight Trumpeter Swans were seen near Washburn Island. A Northern Goshawk and a Yellow-rumped Warbler were seen on Washburn Island. A Great Gray Owl was seen near Pontiac Ridge Road. Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen at the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. Several Green-winged Teal were seen at the Cottonwood area on the Methow River.

Observations from a Cashmere Winter Walkabout by Joe Veverka, Cashmere

I once saw Magnificent Frigatebirds at dawn over the Arizona desert. A tropical storm had pushed the frigatebirds up from the Gulf of California the previous night and I was fortunate enough to be perched on a hilltop in the desert before sunrise to witness the bizarre and unexpected spectacle of these graceful long-winged seabirds gliding south over the creosote flats back to the Gulf. This memory continues to motivate me to get out after storms no matter where I find myself. Who knows what a storm will present?

Mid-February I found myself at home in Cashmere during the tail end of the first big snowstorm in what has become a series. The temperature was a crisp 14 degrees with a steady wind and light to moderate flurries. Old Man Winter was late but had undoubtedly arrived. I knew I wanted to bird after the storm and road conditions were such that I deemed it unwise to drive anywhere. Why not go for a post-storm walk around town?

I left my house on Perry Street at 11:23 am. First things of note were Varied Thrushes. They were roaming the streets in loose affiliations eating berries, seeds, pecking at the pavement, tearing at car tires and windshield wipers (?), letting out bits of ethereal song all the while. It seemed little avian miscreants had invaded this sleepy town and were now causing much conversation among the townsfolk - I've been asked by several people about them over the past couple months. It seemed every fence and yard had a couple thrushes. Where did they come from? Why were they here? What do they want? I digress; besides that movie has already been made. But they were omnipresent during my walkabout and it was a treat.

Near the boat ramp at Riverside Park I heard rich "chuwp" notes before spying a trio of Western Bluebirds twenty feet in front of my face; glorious splashes of color perched on naked twigs. The deep blue-orange color combination may be the finest arrangement in all birddom. What a contrast to the surrounding snow and gray! After a failed photo attempt, I continued on the levy along the Wenatchee River toward Riverfront Drive south to the retired sewage lagoons. Once upon a time this was a legendary Cashmere birding spot. Now Old Man Winter's steady exhale was blasting my face. Bleary-eyed and grimace-faced I did a 180-degree pivot and headed back for the relative shelter of town.

I found three Common Mergansers I had missed on my way out. They appeared comfortable on the river navigating through and diving under patchy flotsams of ice. A Brown Creeper was working the furrows of a cottonwood tree at the location an Acorn Woodpecker had been found a few winters back. Below the Cottage Avenue Bridge two dippers dipped on neighboring river stones chatting emphatically, presumably about the weather. Forty feet from the dippers a half dozen quail were taking snow baths together with their doodads (ornithological speak for the quails' head plumes - don't quote me on this) bobbing, on a snow-covered cobble bar.

Away from the Wenatchee River, I decided to explore a new route through Cashmere walking from Pioneer Avenue to Mission Creek Road and following it half a mile up to Binder Road. Mission Creek Road more-or-less follows Mission Creek which provides small clumps of habitat and the lovely sound of babbling water - unrushed. Unrelated, maybe, it also provides some yards with feeders. Trying to be discreet I managed to spy a Mountain Chickadee mingling with some Black-capped Chickadees at one feeding station while hearing a Steller's Jay squawking in a tree above another.

Binder and Tigner Roads produced little enjoyable birding and not for lack of birds. I regularly hanker for a good winter walkabout; I find them relaxing and quasi-meditative, a sort of winter bird ponder-wander. However, on this section of sidewalkless snow-choked road, every time a car passed I found myself tensing up thinking "okay this is it brace yourself" before the vehicle invariably passed by without incident. No physical harm but each time my mellow was amply harshed.

The high school grounds were empty except for a few people sledding down a small slope near the track. I wondered if these folks noticed the two Red-tailed Hawks, one dark morph and one light morph, circling together overhead or the immature Bald Eagle passing by. Hard to know and probably doesn't matter but you bet I was tempted to exclaim, Look! Do you see them?

North of the high school along Pioneer Avenue there are properties with views of Brender Creek. If you ask the right property owner you'll get good views of the small cattail wetland and stream. The rattling cacophony of Red-winged Blackbirds pouring out provided the appropriate soundscape and gave me a brief inkling of spring. There were more than forty Mallards dabbling frenetically and one male Green-winged Teal floating on the limited open water. Beyond the wetland on the far edge of a field I saw a pair of pheasants pecking seed heads. Like the bluebirds, that rooster stood in beautiful contrast to wintery surroundings.

I continued west on Pioneer Avenue into Evergreen Cemetery. Like so many cemeteries in the area Evergreen Cemetery has several evergreens and birch trees. I found both species of kinglets in the evergreens, American Goldfinches working birch cones, and juncos picking seed from the ground. There was a thrilling instant when I thought I heard the soft plaintiff call of a Say's Phoebe. I only heard it once and never located the bird or phantom responsible. For those not familiar with the Say's Phoebe, it may have the finest call in all birddom.

Evergreen Drive and Sunset Highway offered another harrowing half mile of intermittent adrenaline pumping road walking. Once I reached Mill Road I relaxed and happily resumed birding. I was surprised to see a little wetland with nice thickets. Again, thanks to Brender Creek.

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Getting to Know Your Board Members - Monica Maxwell

by Penny Tobiska, Wenatchee

One of our newest NCW Audubon Board members is Monica Maxwell, who recently moved to our area. In just a short time, she has increased our social media presence through our Facebook Page, Instagram and website. Thank you, Monica!

Tell us a little about your background and how you came to be interested in the natural world and birds, in particular.

I grew up on a small farm in Southeast Michigan where I spent quite a bit of time exploring outdoors. Quietly observing for hours, I loved learning how everything in nature is connected and dependent upon one another. I am a naturally curious person, a lifelong learner. I think a quote from Edwin Way Teale sums me up perfectly. "An interest in nature leads you into a kind of enchanted labyrinth. You wander from corridor to corridor; one interest leads to another interest; one discovery to another discovery. It matters little where you begin." I am particularly fond of birds for many reasons. They are beautiful of course, and amazing little survivors, but they're also everywhere. I was often ill growing up and I struggle daily with Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I can easily observe backyard birds with little effort, or I can get out and challenge myself when I'm feeling up to it.



Monica Maxwell
photo provided

How has this interest affected your professional life? My husband and I made the move to Wenatchee a little over a year

ago and I was lucky enough to begin working part time at Wild Birds Unlimited. I get to talk about birds, learn about birds, and teach others about them as well. My position there provided me the opportunities and introductions I needed to become involved in our local Audubon Society.

What are some of your other interests? I am inherently curious about the natural world in general - everything from Physics, Botany, Geology, and Ecology. I also very much enjoy philosophy, photography, and taking naps. I love to read, take classes, spend time with people I can learn from, and share things I have learned with others. I enjoy watching horror films with my husband Kris, sipping a nice glass of whisky, and playing with our two mini Aussies, Ahsoka, and Tarkin.

Do you have some special birding experiences, those "Wow" moments, that you would like to share with our readers?

Observing a new bird is always an exciting adventure for me, but the first time (and honestly every time) I'm able to see a Northern Saw-whet Owl, I feel deeply emotional. I first locked eyes with a Saw-whet on December 20, 2018 in Bridgeport while birding and learning with my friend Jenny Graevell. I will never forget that experience, that precious tiny being, or the way I felt.

Birding Without Borders - a Review

by Diane McKenzie, East Wenatchee

In *Birding without Borders, an Obsession, a Quest, and the Biggest Year in the World*, author Noah Strycker describes his 2015 travels to 41 countries on seven continents with a goal of becoming the first person to see over 5000 species (or half of the world's bird species) in one year. But, this is not just another book about a big year. Strycker is a very good writer and uses his year of global birding as a vehicle to talk about the history of birding, current issues in birding, ecotourism, and, most important of all, the importance of the community of birders. He also reflects on why we (and he) do things such as try to set records, and he tries to put what he is doing into perspective.

He tells us about many of places he visits and often reflects on the importance of birding in ecotourism and what a major difference ecotourism makes in the lives of many people in places as diverse as Ghana, Myanmar, or Ecuador. I would have appreciated information on more of the countries he visited.

Early in the book, Strycker sets out his guidelines/rules for sightings. One is that before being eligible for recording, a species must be sighted by two people. Although we often learn where, when and how he sees a new bird species,

Strycker emphasizes the birding community more than his bird sightings, and his reflections on the different birding cultures are interesting. He used the internet to connect with birders in other countries: local birders, official birding guides, drivers, and random strangers. These contacts were nearly always positive.

I like his acknowledgement that it is more important to become an expert on the birds and environment in one's own small portion of the world, rather than rushing around collecting a long list of birds. I appreciate that he talked about money and fatigue, and that he included a few nice photos, a list of what was in his backpack, a checklist of birds seen (he saw 6042 species – well over his goal of 5,000 species), and an index.

Strycker has written two other books: (both are also available through NCRL): *Among Penguins: A Bird Man in Antarctica*, 2011 and *The Thing with Feathers: the Surprising Lives of Birds and What they Reveal about Being Human*, 2014. Noah Strycker is a young man, and we should expect more interesting books from him.

Birding without Borders is definitely the best book on a birding big year that I have read

Please Brake for Birds

We are seeing large flocks of winter birds along our roadways. The juncos, siskins, purple and goldfinches, crossbills and more are attracted to what makes our winter roads safe to drive on—the grit and salt being applied. *

Unfortunately, we are also seeing many dead birds along the roadways as birds are slow to respond to approaching vehicles and vehicles are hitting them.

“Why do the birds eat grit? salt? and not fly out of my vehicle’s way?” An answer from <http://tailsofbirding.blogspot.com/2012/02/road-salt.html>: “*Those flocks of finches and juncos which we see along our roadways in the winter are eating dirt - they are ingesting the grit necessary to enable the gizzard to “chew” the seeds which they swallow whole...*”

by Mary Gallher, Lake Wenatchee

Coincidentally, they are also getting a good bit of salt as well, and this can present a problem for the birds... Too much salt is toxic, and so the birds are “intoxicated,”... That is, the birds don’t feel like moving and get run over, unless the approaching driver has a greater concern for the birds than getting somewhere...”

Please, just because the roads have been treated, slow down, it is Winter. Please watch out for the birds. You might just save a feathered neighbor (and yourself). Wave and be respectful to the plow drivers; they are keeping us safe.

**Here is a link to what Chelan County uses on our roads: www.co.chelan.wa.us/files/public-works/documents/roadwork/de-icers%2C%202018.pdf*

Methow Wildlife Area Nestbox Project

by Julie Hovis, Winthrop

As reported in the May 2018 issue of the Wild Phlox, a team of Methow Conservancy and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) volunteers cleaned out or replaced existing songbird nest boxes on several units of the Methow Wildlife Area in Okanogan County in late March 2018. I was able to monitor thirty of the boxes along or near Bear Creek Road during the 2018 nesting season to determine species occupancy, nesting success, and potential management needs. Not knowing what to expect, I was excited to find at least one nest attempt in each box. Three songbird species nested in the boxes. Western Bluebirds had the highest success rate; 11 (52%) of their 21 nest attempts were successful and fledged an average of 2.7 young per nest. Tree Swallows were slightly less successful; 9 (47%) of their 19 nest attempts were successful and fledged an average of 2.4 young per nest. There were 5 House Wren nest attempts, but I was unable to determine the outcome of those nests. House Wrens completely fill their nests with sticks, and because the boxes opened from the side to view the contents, I couldn’t see into their nests. Four Western Bluebird pairs raised 2 successful broods, but surprisingly none of the Tree Swallows attempted a second nest if their first attempt was successful.

Missing eggs, missing young, and dead young accounted for most of the bluebird and swallow nest failures. Some of these failures may have been caused by House Sparrow or House Wren attacks. Both species are very aggressive and will destroy or remove the nests, eggs, and young of other cavity nesting birds. I did confirm one nest failure caused by House Sparrows. As I approached a box with a Western Bluebird nest, a male House Sparrow flew out, and when I opened the box the nestlings inside had been heavily pecked and were dead. I didn’t witness any attacks by House Wrens but did find several bluebird and swallow nests with dead young near active House Wren nests.

I will be meeting with the Methow Wildlife Area staff soon to discuss plans for the 2019 nesting season. Hopefully we’ll be able to organize another volunteer day in late March or early April to clean out the boxes. I’d also like to discuss some ideas that might help deter House Sparrow and House Wren attacks. With their approval, I will continue to monitor the Bear Creek boxes. And I would like to recruit a few additional volunteers to monitor the boxes along Gunn Ranch Road, Rendezvous Road, and the Cottonwood Trail. If you are interested in helping or have questions, please email me at jahovis711@gmail.com.

Cashmere Walkabout

continued from page 4

With the exception of quail, Red-winged Blackbirds, and a male Downy Woodpecker tapping on a desiccated cattail, there was little activity. But I was happy to find this place so close to home. I bet in spring it’ll be hopping. From here I only had to walk across the BNSF railroad while counting a few pigeons and Varied Thrushes, past River Street Laundry, before arriving back to my own bird-filled yard at 2:57pm. There was a Varied Thrush chiseling away at a frozen suet cake and two on the ground. Huh! They eat suet?

The highlights of my 6.4 mile, 3 hour 34 minute, Cashmere winter walkabout include the Western Bluebirds and the huge numbers (150) of Varied Thrushes. The only species more abundant were juncos and starlings. I totaled 36 species not including the phantom Say’s Phoebe. Though the winter storm didn’t present any “holy smokes!” rarities this was an opportunity to learn Cashmere, its streets and its birds a little better. I’m often spontaneous with my birding. Little planning and spur-of-the-moment changes are hallmarks of my “method”. It was good!

A Flashy Red Crest

Is there a bird that catches your breath, raises your heartbeat (as you run to grab a camera or binoculars), and puts a smile on your face every time you see it? For me, I'd have to say it's the Pileated Woodpecker. I can remember the exact place and time I first saw one...in the woods outside a friend's home in Whitefish, MT where I was spending Thanksgiving Day back in 1974. The sight of the woodpecker's large black body, bold white stripes running down its face and neck, and flashy red crest planted a visual memory in my brain that has not been forgotten to this day.

Fortunately, Pileated Woodpeckers are year-round residents in North Central Washington. They are often seen in stands of mature forest with plenty of dead trees and downed logs. A Pileated pair stays together on its territory throughout the year and is not migratory. They can be heard loudly drumming with their bills on hollow trees to mark their grounds. Excavating deep into rotten wood to get at carpenter ants, they leave distinctive rectangular-shaped holes which are often seen along our forest trails. During harsh and cold winter weather, Pileated Woodpeckers are attracted to backyard bird



Pileated and Downy Woodpeckers

photo and article by Janet Bauer, Winthrop feeders, especially suet...which brings me to what inspired this short story.

I live along the Methow River with stands of old and dying cottonwood trees lining the river banks. A pair of Pileateds appear to claim this as their territory because every winter once it gets cold, they reliably show up for a snack of suet at my feeders. Their repeated visits have provided me with a few interesting observations. They are very vocal characters, always loudly calling for a minute or more from a nearby tree before swooping in for suet. Both a male and female come to feed but rarely at the same time. The female appears to have a bigger appetite or greater fondness for suet as she will feed twice as long as the male. They each will allow other small birds such as chickadees and Downy Woodpeckers to feed with them, but will aggressively chase off any Northern Flicker that tries to join in.

You would think that after all these years since 1974, I might lose my fascination with the Pileateds...but every time I see one flying in with its large black and white wings spread and brilliant red crest raised high, it's like the first time all over again!

Speculation on Varied Thrush Numbers

by Joe Veverka, Cashmere

This winter has been an exceptional one for the Varied Thrush in North Central Washington. It's been a topic of discussion with many people I've met while birding. If you have noticed high numbers, you're not crazy. They are real. This year the Leavenworth Christmas Bird Count (CBC) shattered its previous Varied Thrush high count of 75 with 301. The Wenatchee CBC recorded its second highest Varied Thrush count in its 58-year history at 334. 1987 wins with 560 counted. On my February Cashmere walkabout I tallied 150. Why are there so many Varied Thrushes? Did 2018 simply provide the Varied Thrush with perfect breeding conditions? Did reliable food sources in other areas of their range fail?

The Varied Thrush is a species known for large population swings that peak every two to five years. They breed primarily in dark wet mature forests from south of the Brooks Range in Alaska down to northeastern California. The breeding range includes the east slope of the Cascades to the Pacific coast as well as straddling the spine of the Rocky Mountains reaching areas of eastern Washington. We are surrounded on three sides, extensively to the north, by nesting Varied Thrushes.

Varied Thrushes move south from northerly latitudes and some populations down from higher altitudes in winter. They also change their diets primarily consisting of ground-dwelling arthropods during the breeding season to a staple of

berries and fruits in the winter. What better place to winter than the fruit-filled valleys along the Columbia River? Earlier in the winter, on several occasions, I witnessed dozens of Varied Thrushes feeding in the apple and pear orchards in the Wenatchee Valley. Most of the mountain ash, crab apple, and hawthorn trees I've been watching around Cashmere are now completely berryless. Maybe this is why within the past couple of weeks varied thrushes have been showing up at my suet cake and scuffing the ground below my feeders. Is food getting scarce?

I don't know exactly what conditions made this winter so great for the Varied Thrush in North Central Washington, but it may be assumed the requirements for a bumper crop of fledglings during the summer of 2018 were met. Not much research has been done linking numbers during the breeding season and numbers on traditional wintering grounds, but the little research I was able to find showed a positive correlation between the two. Perhaps, in addition to a good breeding season, berry and fruit crops in other areas of the Varied Thrushes' winter range have been lower than average. Regardless of the reasons, it is a real pleasure to have so many of these quintessential Pacific Northwest birds around my home.

See related article on page 4.

March Wild Phlox

North Central Washington Audubon Society
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Wenatchee, WA 98807

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

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

March 13	Deadline for comments	Arctic Refuge. See page 3 or our website.
March 16	Tundra Swan Festival	In Cusick! www.facebook.com/pg/TundraSwanFestival/about/?ref=page_internal
March 20	Beebe Springs Bird Walk	Bi-monthly walk with Virginia Palumbo. See page 3
March 20	Horan Area monthly bird walk	Every 3rd Wednesday, every month. See our website.
March 22-24	Othello Sandhill Crane Festival	www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/
March 25, 27, 30	Birding Basics at WVC	See last month's newsletter. It's on our website!
April 12-14	Olympic Bird Fest	www.olympicbirdfest.org
April 27	Field trip to Douglas County	with a new trip leader - Kay McGeough! See page 2
May 3-5	Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival	http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/
May 9-12	Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival	In Homer, AK. How do the shorebirds get there so quickly? http://kachemakshorebird.org/
May 16-10	Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest	Reserve your spots now! See page 1

You can find the Wild Phlox online at our website - www.ncwaudubon.org
The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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

