



## Birding with Class

Volume 45 #3 November 2011

### Birding Basics with CDLT and NCW Audubon

by Bridget Egan, Chelan Douglas Land Trust  
photo by Ken Bevis, Methow Valley

Last fall, a room full of eager learners gathered to learn the basics of birding but the lesson went well beyond expectations. The teacher, Susan Ballinger, covered everything from avian connections to dinosaurs to proper etiquette in the field, and her students were more than appreciative. The session was peppered with questions and laughs as Susan shared her experiences through the years.



Susan is a lifelong educator with a background in biology, and her energy and enthusiasm transform the material into a shared experience. The class did not just present a list of things to do or avoid – it showed how a love of birds connected us to conservation and

exploration. For beginners, the class was a great way to get

inspired, learn or refresh on some basics, and it was a great place to meet a birding buddy.

The Chelan-Douglas Land Trust and NCW Audubon are offering the class again this November and it promises to be another fun learning experience. The November 9 session gives all participants an opportunity to learn about bird behavior, habitat, and identification. It also reviews how to use most field guides, as well as practical tips for choosing binoculars and technological tools for the field. Participants in the workshop can also attend a class field trip on November 12 where Susan and NCW Audubon leaders will help the group identify common birds in a great local habitat – Horan Natural Area at Confluence State Park in Wenatchee.

Class: November 9, 6-8 p.m.

Optional Field Trip: November 12

Questions? 667-9708 or [bridget@cdlandtrust.org](mailto:bridget@cdlandtrust.org)  
Advance sign-up is required, and participants can register for this FREE workshop by calling the office or registering online at [www.cdlandtrust.org](http://www.cdlandtrust.org)

## Stories from Nearby and Far Away

In this issue we are fortunate to include a reprinted article from *High Country News*, a nonprofit media organization that covers important issues and stories that define the American West. *High Country News* publishes an award-winning newsmagazine, a popular website and a weekly op-ed column service, along with special reports and books. This article, *Helping Hummingbirds with Citizen Science*, highlights how people can get involved in a citizen science project that helps birds. Many thanks to *High Country News* for sharing this informative article with our membership. To view a PDF of the HCN article – with photos and diagrams in color – please go to our website; look for the Nov 2011 Phlox archive. For more info about High Country News, please see [www.hcn.org/](http://www.hcn.org/)

On page six of this issue, you will read about how ONE individual decided to do her part to help nesting Common Loons in our state. I think you will be encouraged by both of these stories and maybe even be prompted to help a species that is near and dear to your heart.



This male Rufous Hummingbird was part of a study in NCW to learn about hummingbird migration in 2010.  
photo by Teri J Pieper

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."

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Email - [info@ncwaudubon.org](mailto:info@ncwaudubon.org)

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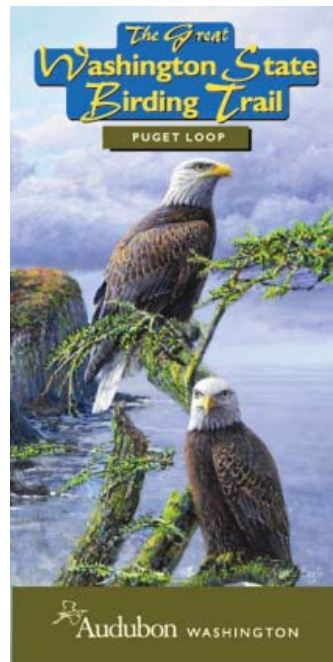
Mailing address - PO Box 2934 Wenatchee, WA 98807

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

## Puget Loop Debuts for Holidays

by Hilary Hilscher, National Audubon Society

Delight your favorite birders this holiday season with the newest and final map of the Great



Washington State Birding Trail: the Puget Loop. Hot off the press Thanksgiving weekend, this map features 220 of the 346 annually recorded bird species around Puget Sound from Seattle to Mt. Rainier, plus Lake Washington, Kitsap Peninsula; and Vashon, Bainbridge, Whidbey and San Juan islands. Travel by car, bus or ferry, or bike or paddle to the Puget Loop's 42 main sites and

18 "more birding" locations for avian highlights: Bald Eagles, Pileated Woodpeckers, Pacific Wrens, Anna's Hummingbirds, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Pigeon Guillemots - and more.

Order the Puget Loop, plus all six other routes of the statewide Birding Trail: [http://wa.audubon.org/birds\\_GreatWABirdingTrail.html](http://wa.audubon.org/birds_GreatWABirdingTrail.html).

### North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

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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](http://www.audubon.org) or drop us a note and we will send you a form for a special rate introductory membership.

A few weeks ago Don McIvor called me to say there was a Sandhill Crane in a farm field along the highway. He had seen it there two days in a row. While it's not too unusual to hear these magnificent birds calling in flight during migration, they are generally so far up that they are only seen as small shapes. Seeing one reasonably close to home was a treat. It stayed two days and lots of folks got to see it. In the spring the cranes migrate in large flocks like many of us have observed near Othello and east of the Okanogan valley. In the fall they seem to travel in smaller groups and it is not unheard of to see smaller groups in more far-flung places. I always enjoy seeing and hearing Sandhill Cranes and even use their call as my phone's ring tone!



Sandhill Cranes in Okanogan County, March 2011  
photo by Teri J Pieper

The October issue of the Birding Community E-bulletin says that Kentucky is ready to set up an authorized hunt for Sandhill Cranes, maybe as early as mid-December. Sandhill Cranes practically disappeared in the Southeastern U.S., going back at least to the 1930s. They have, however, been steadily increasing over the last two decades. There seems to be some disagreement over the exact number of cranes migrating in the East. Presently, there are no other eastern states proposing a season on the eastern population of Sandhill Cranes. In fact, Ohio even considers the Sandhill Crane to be endangered as a breeding species. Every reasonable expectation is that Ohio's cranes will have to fly across neighboring Kentucky in migration. Promoters of the hunt claim that there are now enough cranes to justify a hunt, a hunt that will not have a negative impact on the crane population or the wildlife-viewing public. There is a claim that the birds have actually become a veritable nuisance in some localities. Seventeen conservation groups oppose the hunt, claiming the science used by the state is inadequate, insisting, among other things, that the harvest rate proposed for Kentucky alone "could consume a substantial portion of the productivity of the breeding crane population in the Upper Midwest." The slow reproduction rate of Sandhill Cranes (a species which does not reach maturity until 5-7 years of age and a survival rate of only one young in three nests surviving to fall migration) has raised concerns over a replacement rate in light of the possible hunting season in Kentucky.

What do you think about hunting Sandhill Cranes? It is legal in Texas and some other states.

## Make Plans for Christmas Bird Counts in our Region

by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

Have you made plans for Christmas Bird Counts yet? The holiday season is busy with lots of events and visits to and from family and friends but let's not forget about counting our wintering birds. Here is a list of CBC's in our region and their compilers and contact information.

Watch for more details in next month's Wild Phlox.

**Leavenworth:** December 17. Karen Haire. karenhaire@nwi.net or Gretchen Rohde, gretchenrohde@me.com

**Bridgeport:** December 17. Meredith Spencer. merdave@homenetnw.net or 686-7551

**Twisp:** December 18. Leahe Swayze. leahe@methownet.com

**Grand Coulee:** December 21. David St. George. dstgeorge@TNC.ORG

**Chelan:** December 29. Steve Easley. seasley@nwi.net

**Wenatchee:** January 1. Dan Stephens. dstephens@wvc.edu

**Omak/Okanogan:** January 2. Heather Findlay heather@eaglesun.net 429-8167 or Gordon Kent at 422-6116

If you enjoyed the article, *For the Love of Hummers*, from *High Country News* and want to read more, we have provided a subscription form below. Mail it to:

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# A Book Review (and call for response)

*Zen Birding* by David M White and Susan M Guyette  
O Books, Winchester, UK/Washington, USA

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

*Zen Birding* is an interleaving of notes from David White's birding journals, mini-essays on birding as a spiritual practice, and small snippets of (Zen) Buddhist concepts. The book was started by White, during treatment for cancer and completed, after his death, by Susan Guyette. White was one of us – a long-time trip leader and board member for Audubon chapters.

For those Phlox readers whose path is elsewhere ("I'm a Presbyterian Birder, not a Buddhist Birder!") or who have an itchy allergy to the word "spiritual," the book can be read as a secular essay on the psychology, ethics, and philosophy of birding.

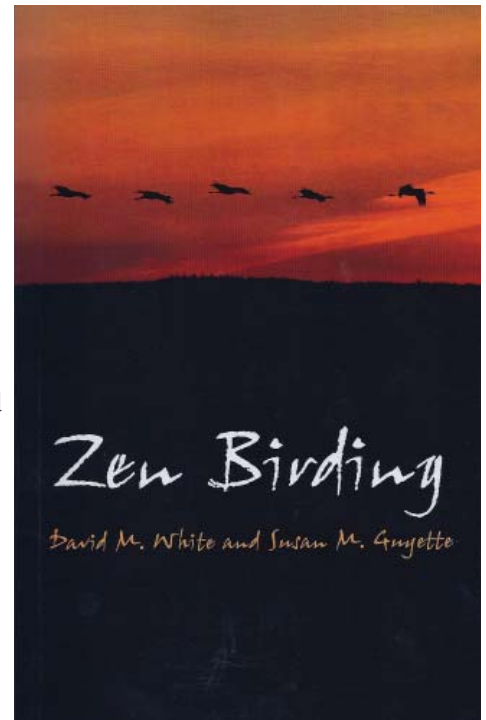
Birding, like all encompassing endeavors, gives rise to questions of personal practice. Is accumulating lists of birds seen important to me? To what lengths will I go to see a new or rare bird? Do I set out feeders, nesting boxes, and water sources? Am I a social birder, enjoying the company of other birders? What weight of evidence do I require to identify a bird? Such questions of practice can be illuminated by reflecting on one's experiences and intentions (modeled by the field notes from White's journals). Grounding such reflections in a tradition of experiential wisdom (Buddhism) provides some notions that many of us might find enlarges, rather than confines, our birding.

As an example, consider the Life List of birds seen (ubiquitous but not universal among birders). Such a list "... has personal rewards and it contributes to understanding birds and their seasonal distribution and to conservation efforts as well." But White and Guyette caution that listing can slide from a passion to an addiction and the chase to add new species to the Life List can become a teeth-clenched competition, against oneself and others. The Life Lists themselves aren't measures of one's personal worth nor scores but "... can be mnemonics about moments in one's life — moments in some special place on

this earth, coming into contact, however briefly, with a unique winged being never encountered before." So, seeing on one's Life List a checked box for the Black-footed Albatross can (like Proust's cookie dipped in a cup of tea) evoke remembrance, of sea birds seen far out and the kindness of a

person with Swarovski optics, letting everyone on the pelagic trip borrow a good look.

Chapter 2 of *Zen Birding* is entitled "Seven skills of birding." This chapter has lots of enlightening stories, good advice, and wonderments (e.g., research on the dreams of birds). But the list of seven skills deserves, I think, to be a shared meditation. I'm inviting all members of NCWAS and readers of the Phlox to sit with a cup of coffee or glass of wine and devise their own list of the Seven Skills of Birding. These skills could be purely physical (e.g., the ability to look with binoculars, out the window of a moving car, and not barf). But the skills could also include intellectual tools and personal qualities. Be brave; think widely. Please send your list of Seven Skills of Birding to me, in whatever way is most convenient to you (mail or email; contact info on p. 2). If we get enough responses, we'll congeal and share them; if we get few or no responses, this too will be enlightening.



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## Dog Days, Raven Nights at Barn Beach Reserve

Twenty years ago newlyweds John and Colleen Marzluff moved to a small cabin in Maine to conduct the first extensive study of winter ecology of the Common Raven, under biologist Bernd Heinrich. From field notes and diaries, they chronicle their work to learn about this species from hands-on, challenging observations and research, while pursuing another goal of raising, training, and racing the Siberian Husky sled dogs that helped with their work.

by Gail Roberts, Plain

John M. Marzluff is well known for work on ecology and behavior biology of Corvids and a professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington. He is also the author of four books. Colleen Marzluff is a wildlife biologist who worked as a research technician, and is an expert at raising and training sled dogs and herding dogs.

November 11, 2011, 7-9 p.m.  
Barn Beach Reserve  
347 Division Street, Leavenworth  
For more information contact  
groberts@barnbeachreserve.org  
or 548-7584

# Wenatchee Naturalist Program

## An In-depth Course on Local Natural History

by Susan Ballinger, Wenatchee  
artwork by Heather Wallis Murphy

We invite any curious adult who enjoys learning about the natural world to become a Wenatchee Naturalist. The Wenatchee River Institute is proud to announce this new program, held in the Wenatchee Chelan-Douglas Land Trust office. The course will feature the Wenatchee River watershed's diversity of life, with a focus on the shrub-steppe and the low-elevation montane forest, and riparian eco-regions. You will join other motivated and interesting adults who want to learn together about our local native plants and animals, habitats, and current natural resource issues. The aim of the Wenatchee Naturalist program is to cultivate and launch a corps of well-informed citizens who will actively volunteer for stewardship and conservation education projects within our community. This class is modeled after successful Master Naturalist programs on-going in over 40 other states.

The 12 week Wenatchee Naturalist I course consists of 50 hours of training including lectures, extensive handouts forming a resource notebook, expert guest speakers, hands-on labs, and 3 Saturday guided field trips. Students will keep a field journal and complete a citizen science project during the class. Upon course completion, participants are asked to give-back 20 hours of service during the next calendar year. Throughout the class, students will be introduced to local non-profits and agencies who welcome volunteers in the field. The class runs on Wednesday evenings, 6:00-8:30 p.m., February 1- April 18, 2012, at the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust office in downtown Wenatchee. The course tuition is \$300 and scholarship

opportunities are available. Free clock-hours and college course credit are available for teachers. The class is limited to 25 participants. Visit the Wenatchee River Institute website ([www.barnbeachreserve.org/programs](http://www.barnbeachreserve.org/programs)) to see the class syllabus and to read "frequently asked questions." Download the course application form and mail it in to reserve your spot!



Susan Ballinger is the course designer and instructor. As a biologist, naturalist, and educator, Susan Ballinger is respected for her depth of knowledge and ability to inspire. Born and raised in Montana, Susan developed a love of the outdoors that led to advanced degrees in Biology and Education and a

career-long commitment to making science understandable to the non-scientist. Her passion for experiential learning is evident in her award winning Shrub Steppen' Up Saddle Rock and River of Power Science curricula for regional school districts. She is recipient of numerous local and state awards, and her original work has been published in scientific journals and human-interest magazines. An energetic volunteer, she serves as State Director of the Washington Native Plant Society, Board member of Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, and Field Botanist for the University of Washington. When not researching, writing and teaching, you'll find Susan in the foothills she loves, often joined by her husband Paul and their three young adult children. Susan will be happy to answer questions about the Wenatchee Naturalist program. Contact her at 669-7820 or [skylinebal@gmail.com](mailto:skylinebal@gmail.com).

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## Goings On at the Basecamp

At the North Cascades Basecamp in Mazama, songbird habitat along the Audubon Trails to the Methow River is native and wild and the upper bench surrounding the lodge and cabin feel naturalized and cared for. However we realized the parking areas and the non-native grass and shade tree components of the facility were missing some critical habitat for birds - shrubs! So, we gathered root balls of native plants from Basecamp property, used our kids and wheelbarrows to haul plants up the hill, and marked out the areas to improve. In October, with help from Pacific Crest Outward Bound students who volunteered fifty person hours we turned a gravel parking area into a bird sanctuary that will give pleasure to us and our guests and sanctuary for native birds in the years to come! Together we began the project by ridding the parking lot of gravel, tilling the site and digging holes into hard-panned earth. Then we put

by Kim Romain-Bondi, Mazama

down compost, created a walking path, and planted our native shrubs throughout the area. We finished the effort with a layer of mulch. It is extremely pleasing to see how quickly a parking lot has been transformed into a new native shrub area to welcome the birds back in the spring! This winter the Basecamp will, once again host Thursday Night Soup and Natural History Presentations from December 15 through March 1. Cost is \$5 for a fun evening of freshly made soup and socializing with old and new friends and an exciting natural history presentation. In January we will host a Winter Tracking workshop with expert naturalist and author David Moskowitz. To find out more about these events see [www.northcascadesbasecamp.com/programs](http://www.northcascadesbasecamp.com/programs) or contact 996.2334 or [info@northcascadesbasecamp.com](mailto:info@northcascadesbasecamp.com)

# How do You Help Protect Birds?

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands

When she was three years old, Madeline of Okanogan County became fascinated by the beauty of the Common Loon and struck by the threat of a single lead fishing sinker. Wanting to make a difference, she visited stores with her mom and asked the managers to carry lead-free sinkers. When she was four, she wrote a letter to WDFW in support of the lead ban for loon nesting lakes; she dressed as a loon for Halloween; and she created a display about loons at the public library in Oroville. As a result of these efforts and Madeline's compassion for the struggling Common Loon in NCW, she was awarded the 2011 Youth Conservation Award by the Loon Lake Loon Association. Madeline is now five, and over the summer she came up with the idea to raise money for loon conservation by creating a set of products she could sell by donation. Realizing she would need some supplies, Madeline wrote letters and made phone calls, and received generous contributions from Tom Munson, Ginger and Dan Poleschook, Havillah Road Printing, David Rodstol Inc, Ultimate Baker, and Recycled Fish. With these supplies, Madeline made greeting cards, loon-shaped cookies, and packages of lead-free fishing tackle, and loaded them in her wagon. Madeline saw the Okanogan Family (Barter) Faire as an opportunity to tell the local community about her cause to help the loon. Determined to do her part, she pulled her wagon around the faire, telling her story to those who would listen and answering questions. Madeline raised \$85.24 that day, which she donated to the "Keep the Gift Alive" fund that stocks loon nesting lakes with fish. Madeline continues on, at times with a sense of urgency, "Listen – there are only 12 nesting pairs of loons left in Washington, and it's MY job to SAVE them!" We are looking forward to what she will plan next.



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## Bears of Washington

### Okanogan Highland Wonders - First Friday of the Month

by Julie Ashmore, OHA

Fall has settled into the Okanogan Highlands, and the outdoor summer program Highland Wonders is moving back indoors for the second season of its natural history educational series.

On Friday, November 4, Highland Wonders will search out a better understanding of Washington's largest and most recognizable mammals. Join Gus Bekker and Adele Waln of the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project for a presentation covering bear ecology, behavior and identification, comparing and contrasting the two bears that reside in Washington: black bears and grizzly bears.

"The information we share is science-based and factual, and allows people to gain a clearer understanding of the bear species of Washington," says Bekker. "Many of us have chosen to live near the forest or mountains, so it's important to know how to live among our wildlife neighbors."

This presentation will take a close-up look at bears and how to coexist in bear country; tips on living, hiking and camping in bear country; and how to tell the difference between a black bear and a grizzly bear. Lots of hands-on items will be available, such as a bear fur, skulls, teeth and bear print casts. The Grizzly Bear Outreach Project is an independent science-based, non-advocacy, community education project that began in 2002 in the North Cascades.

The exciting Highland Wonders lineup in the months to come includes Owls and Woodpeckers, Bats, Bighorn Sheep and Butterflies. While the series will take place on the first Friday of the month from November-May, please note that December will be skipped in light of the many events offered during the holiday season.

The Highland Wonders educational series features the natural history

of the Okanogan Highlands and surrounding areas. OHA's Education Program is designed to build the capacity of the community to steward natural habitats and resources, by helping to develop an informed and empowered population.

The educational series is offered by Okanogan Highlands Alliance, free of charge, as part of the Community Cultural Center (CCC) of Tonasket Friday coffeehouse. Dinner benefiting the CCC begins at 5:00 p.m. and the presentation begins at 6:30 p.m. with desserts, tea and coffee. The indoor events are held at the CCC, at 411 S Western Avenue, Tonasket, and details are provided on OHA's website: [www.okanoganhighlands.org/education](http://www.okanoganhighlands.org/education).

OHA is a non-profit that works to educate the public on watershed issues. For more information, email [julie@okanoganhighlands.org](mailto:julie@okanoganhighlands.org) or call 433-7893.

# Notes from Mazama

Deadline is fast approaching for the November issue and here it is a sunny, albeit cold, October morning. The birds know little about editor-inflicted deadlines, so even the flickers are un-inflicted.

We have had a Stellar's Jay hanging around for about a week. The first couple of days he (it?) stood haughtily atop the open-faced feeder demanding a handout. Being thus thwarted he must be doing what nature built him to do, so eats the manifold seeds from a plethora of grasses and other regenerating plants.

Aside from a Turkey Vulture coasting the thermals of Grizzly Mountain behind us, that is the only bird life I have seen in a couple



Clark's Nutcracker at the feeder last winter

of weeks. Well, there was an eagle surveying the highway for road kills. For accuracy's sake I will add the paucity of feathered friends is related only to our acreage; there were three magpies and a handful of crows dodging cars and grabbing quick morsels of dead deer on the highway to Winthrop. The eagle, haughtily perched on a snag, was a mile or so away and even if it was aware of the late deer, he had either filled himself already or recognized he was well outnumbered and disdained a birdy battle for badly bitten bones.

article and photo by Bob Spiwak, Mazama

The weekend past was opening day for deer hunting but little shooting has been heard hereabouts. The doe and yearling fawn that have been feasting on our strawberry patch (and everything else green) have been out of sight since Saturday. It's now Tuesday.

Earlier there was an apparent end to our "creature" in the pond. In more insectivorous warm days, we could discern the flip of a forked tail or a nose, and once it actually broke water. We will never solve the mystery of the perch and bass we saw last summer - whether they were holdovers of what we planted in the landlocked pond last year or some wag had planted them in our absence. They were only around for a couple of days, and then seemed to disappear, leaving, as before their arrival, only the creature.

Last week I walked around the pond looking for a piscine (fish) corpse at the bottom of the water and there was no sign of any fish fatality. My guess is that a heron has been picking them off, as happened when we were raising trout years ago. Somebody suggested an otter, which is not impossible, though I have not seen one or any sign in decades.

We'll probably have some snow next month and the chickadees and nuthatches will be back, maybe with a towhee pair for color.

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## Birding at the Movies

compiled by Teri J Pieper

Have you seen it yet? Seen *The Big Year*? It's a movie based on the book of the same name by Mark Obmascik. The story is about three birders competing to see the largest number of bird species in the US in one year. The book was based on a true story of the Big Year of 1998 and three birders - Sandy Komito, Al Levantin and Greg Miller - who chased Komito's record of 721 species. The movie, as stated in the prelude, is fiction based on fact.

Our own Heather Murphy has this to say about the movie: "About 10 of us Leavenworth and Wenatchee area birders went to *The Big Year*. It was a good and humorous movie, a sweet movie with nice messages. There were individual birding quests, as well as working together developing friendships along the way. Nice job on showing birds and why they are so intriguing. From a birder's perspective, I thought it portrayed "birders" well with a welcomed youngish infusion with the actors selected (Jack Black, Owen Wilson and Rashida Jones). The birders' world shows as one of wonder, excitement, integrity and "nerdism", which most of our society is just unfamiliar

with. It was fun to see other people obsessed with birding too. They made the distinction between being a "Birder" and being a "Bird Watcher". From an artistic standpoint, I really liked the use of "bird post cards" showing where birds were found on the aerial landscape shots. The scenery was lovely, though Anacortes and Coos Bay looked a lot like NW British Columbia. Birders will note some human vocalizations of birds were wrong, but, overall it was quite enjoyable and accurate. As a matter of fact, I have to go see it again, so I can catch all the birds in the various locations - 755 total for the Big Year!"

A birder in Colorado asked these questions about the movie: Did I see a birder in the field with a camera, but NO binoculars? Did I see THAT hawk in THAT weather? Does Attu come with bird name labels on every hillside and meadow? Could you see THAT owl in THAT national forest? (I looked it up - you could). But the biggest error is the repeated conceit that "Whoever sets the Big Year record is The World's Best Birder!"

It sounds like fun! Let me know what you thought of it.

***November Wild Phlox***

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**North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar**

November 4	Bears of Washington	Okanogan Highland Wonders First Friday. See page 6
November 9 & 12	Birding Basics with CDLT and NCWAS	Class and Field Trip. See page 1
November 11	Dog Days and Raven Nights	Barn Beach Reserve. See page 4
February 1 through April 18	Wenatchee Naturalist Program	Sign up now! See page 5
December 17, 18, 21, 29, January 1, 2	Christmas Bird Counts Leavenworth, Bridgeport, Twisp, Grand Coulee, Chelan, Wenatchee, Omak/Okanogan	Mark your Calendars. See page 3 For other Christmas Bird Counts around the state see the Washington Ornithological Society website www.wos.org



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[www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org)