



Volume 46 #3 November 2012

## Statewide Audubon Doings

by Rachel Scown, Plain

The annual Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) met on October 5, in Poulsbo, hosted by the Kitsap Audubon Society. Jeff Parsons, (NCWAS VP), along with Chris Parsons and myself as Conservation Committee chairs, represented our Chapter, joining representatives from twenty of the Washington Chapters.

Washington has 26 Audubon Chapters divided into five regions. We are part of the Eastern Region, with Blue Mountain, Central Basin, Kittitas, Lower Columbia Basin, Palouse, Spokane and Yakima Valley. Find out more about other Chapters at [www.wa.audubon.org](http://www.wa.audubon.org).

We began the day with a ribbon cutting to celebrate the seventh and final link in the Washington State Birding Trail – the Puget Sound Loop. Together with local chapters, Audubon Washington produced the first map of the birding trail in 2002, the Cascade Loop, which goes through our region. The Coulee Corridor followed in 2003, Southwest Loop in 2005, Olympic Loop in 2007, and the Sun and Sage Loop in 2009. All maps contain information about habitat, bird species, access, and best seasons for birding. Signs marking birding trail sites are in the process of being installed. For more information about the maps, see the article on page 6 of this newsletter.

Our keynote speaker was the president and CEO of the National Audubon Society (NAS), David Yarnold, who outlined the organization's Strategic Plan. He said "by working as One Audubon along the flyways of the Americas, we (chapters, centers and NAS) will deliver conservation impact at a hemispheric scale". The conservation strategies he talked about are formulated along avian migratory flyways (Pacific, Central, Mississippi and Atlantic) and include 'working lands'; partnering with landowners for the benefit of birds, people

and communities. Also, 'sharing our seas and shores,' by promoting healthy coastal areas and waters in the face of rapid coastal development and recreational use, global warming, and overfishing. Saving important bird areas (IBAs) will include chapters' stewardship of local spots, and partnering

with entities such as BirdLife International, communities and government agencies. In our Eastern Washington Region, threatened shrub-steppe habitat is a high priority.

The Greater Sage Grouse is an iconic bird species indicative of a thriving shrub-steppe ecosystem. Mr. Yarnold also spoke about promoting a healthy climate and clean energy future, citing the importance of proper location and regulation of alternative energy sources. The final point in the Audubon Plan is creating bird-friendly communities where birds find more places to nest, feed and rest. The entire Audubon Strategic Plan for 2012-2015 is available online at <http://www.audubon.org/>



A Gray Jay, aka as a Camp Robber looks for a handout from hikers at snowy Blue Lake in the North Cascades on October 17.

photo by Teri J Pieper

Breakout sessions of regional groups then convened to discuss and vote on Washington Working Group recommendations to determine how we will proceed in 2013. A majority of Chapter representatives voted to approve hiring a part-time Chapter Associate whose responsibilities will be to act as liaison between the Chapters and environmental lobbyists during the Washington State legislative session and to mobilize Chapter members to help carry out our conservation agenda, as well as to assist Chapters to build capacity and membership, and communicate between Chapters and other Audubon entities.

We will continue having structured contact among Chapters in order to exchange successes, projects, skills, resources, and lessons learned. This is a benefit of synergy and shared resources. A quote to close with: "Where birds thrive, people prosper."

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

## Bird Sightings

The Graevells had two new species visit their Badger Mountain cabin. Among the scores of White-crowned Sparrows, they saw a White-throated Sparrow, and a Fox Sparrow. Mixed within the group of sparrows were two immature Golden-crowned Sparrows. Jenny reports seeing her first Evening Grosbeak of the fall up at the cabin on October 21, and she has an Anna's Hummingbird at her feeder in East Wenatchee.

Torre reports from her perch above the Methow large flocks of American Robins passing through. Dark-eyed Juncos arrived about the first week of October. American Goldfinches were immediately attracted to the newly-filled feeders and they were joined by a group of about ten Gray Partridges. The water bowl has been especially popular with a variety of bird species. She also reports on a visit from two juvenile Northern Harriers and a Rough-legged Hawk soaring over her property.

At my house across the valley on October 22, we had visits from a Northern Pygmy Owl and a Northern Shrike. The finches quickly took flight. American Goldfinches are now joined by great numbers of Pine Siskins. At Harts Pass the previous week, we observed several migrating raptors including a Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Northern Harriers and unnamed accipiters.

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

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

After weeks of wishing for rain to moisten the ground and slow the wildfires, it's finally come. Just a week to go til November begins and the weather feels like the eleventh month already. Cold, gray and wet. It's no wonder people leave this place during this time of year and don't return until there is a good layer of skiable snow or even til spring. As I print photos of birds from our Florida trip, I am reminded that there is warmth somewhere, just not here, now. This newsletter has articles about wildflowers and how the fire-scorched hills above Wenatchee will re-bloom in the spring. More reminders that warmth will return.

The morning's birds were slow to get to the feeder. American Goldfinches, House Finches, Pine Siskins, Northern Flickers Downy Woodpeckers and Stellar's Jays are the regular visitors. We see occasional Cassin's Finches, Black-billed Magpies, Hairy Woodpeckers and the owl and shrike reported on the previous page. I see soaring Red-tailed Hawks searching for small mammals and Bald Eagles along the river taking advantage of spawning salmon. Our neighbor got a short video of a black bear on his game camera.

Your NCWAS board met last week to take action on distributing some of our tasks. Mark Oswood is coming to the end of his term as 'president for life' (not that his life is coming to an end at all, just his term) and wishes to spend more time with his wife and dogs. He will not be leaving NCWAS entirely and will continue to be our education chair, taking our programs and Analog Birds to school children and festivals around our four-county region. The Board wishes to express Many Thanks to Mark for his tireless efforts on behalf of NCWAS over the years! Penny Tobiska will take over program duties for the Chapter. She already has some good ideas. Jenny Graevell, the Badger Mountain 'bird lady' is going to be adding to our flock of field trips in the coming months. Chris Parsons has stepped forward to be the co-conservation chair with Rachel Scown. And Heather Findlay will soon be taking over all things 'membership'! It's a big transition with a bit of a learning curve so be patient as we get all the kinks worked out. And watch for the December Wild Phlox to learn about our new president!

Remember to check out the online version of this newsletter on the NCWAS website for the color photos! Also, don't forget, NCWAS is on Facebook. There you can find 'mystery bird photos' to hone your bird ID skills. And be sure to send us your 'letters to the editor and recent bird sightings!



Gray Partridges  
sometimes referred to as Huns or Hungarian Partridges  
photo by Torre Stockard

## Christmas Bird Counts

Making plans for the holidays? Don't forget to schedule time for the birds – counting the birds! Here is a list of upcoming Christmas Bird Counts around our region. You can find more information about the CBC's at [www.wos.org](http://www.wos.org) and in next month's Wild Phlox I will provide the names of the compilers and the meeting times and places.

National Audubon's president and CEO David Yarnold says that Christmas Bird Counts are the longest-running animal census in the world.

- Bridgeport - December 15
- Twisp – December 22
- Leavenworth – December 23
- Chelan – December 28
- Wenatchee – December 31
- Grand Coulee – January 3
- Omak – January 5

## Letter to the Editor

About a week ago, I was walking Elder Dog at Hydro Park (on Highway 28, between East Wenatchee and Rock Island). Hydro Park is on the Columbia River and has big ball/soccer fields. Two Belted Kingfishers were flying closely together "Top Gun" style, making their "bike chain coming off the sprocket" call. They were flying over the grass fields, then along the riparian trees at river's edge, then arcing out over the Columbia, flying just a foot or two over the water surface. It was quite a show. So, this looked to me like a male and female doing a "we are good together; let's make some eggs" display but this seems the wrong season. What do you NCWAS Better Birders think?

# OHA Presents: Highland Wildflowers

## Their Beauty and Their Biology

On Friday, November 2, Okanogan Highlands Alliance will open the third season of Highland Wonders with “Highland Wildflowers: their Beauty and Biology.” This will be a colorful and fascinating presentation by Dana Visalli of the Methow Naturalist. Appreciation of wildflowers can come from many angles – they are often beautiful to look at, they always have interesting biological adaptations that allow them to survive in a world full of chomping herbivores, and, they are inevitably connected in one way or another to the rest of their ecosystem. Highland and alpine plants live in even more challenging environments than average, and have difficult and exciting lives, which we will explore in this presentation. As we learn about our native upland plants, we will find that, as John Muir observed, they are ‘hitched to everything else in the universe.’

Dana Visalli has worked for the last twenty years as a professional botanist and naturalist. He has published the quarterly natural history journal, “The Methow Naturalist” for the past 17 years, and has directed a summer ecology camp for children for 20 years. He lives in the Methow Valley, where he is an organic market gardener, and maintains the regional species lists for flowering plants, mosses, lichens, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. “Flowers can be enjoyed on so many levels; they are beautiful, biological, ecological, sensuous,” Dana says. “Deciphering their secret lives only enhances our appreciation and awe for the world around us and within us.”

The event will also feature a photo gallery of the work

of Aaron Theisen, nature photographer, avid hiker and conservation volunteer. His series of photos taken in Okanogan Highlands roadless areas will portray the settings that are home to some of the wildflowers featured in Dana’s presentation. “I love the quiet beauty of the Okanogan

Highlands,” Aaron says. “I hope to inspire the public through my photos to cherish—and protect—the wild places of the Okanogan Highlands.”

The Highland Wonders indoor educational series brings the natural history of the Okanogan Highlands and surrounding areas to Tonasket on the first Friday of the month, from November through May (skipping December). Stay tuned for more exciting Highland Wonders events in the months to come. 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.

Okanogan Highlands Alliance is a non-profit that works to educate the public on watershed issues. The educational series is offered by OHA, free of charge, as part of the Community Cultural Center (CCC) of Tonasket Friday coffeehouse.

The presentation begins at 6:30 pm with desserts, tea and coffee; the dinner benefiting the CCC begins at 5:00 pm. The indoor events are held at the CCC, at 411 South Western Avenue, Tonasket, and details are provided on OHA’s website: [www.okanoganhighlands.org/education](http://www.okanoganhighlands.org/education). For more information, email [julie@okanoganhighlands.org](mailto:julie@okanoganhighlands.org) or call 433-7893.



Elkhorn clarkia (*Clarkia pulchella*)  
photo by Aaron Theisen

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## Mystery October Egg

On a regular morning dog walk last week, I came across this egg on a well-traveled game trail just below our house. I shared it with the online birding email lists and anyone else I could think of trying to figure out what kind of bird laid it and why now. There were many guesses as to the species – mostly ground nesting birds but no speculations for ‘why now’. Based on suggestions and studying my 1979 Peterson’s Field Guide to Nests and Eggs, I think it might be from a Dusky Grouse (right length, maybe too wide) or a Wild Turkey (small for a turkey). More likely in my mind is the grouse as they are seen on our hill and known to nest here. No one has complained about turkeys this year and their presence is usually noted when they are out and about. What do you think? And why now?

To see more photos and read more about the egg, see <http://myeverydayphotos.wordpress.com/2012/10/25/an-egg-in-the-fall/>

photo and article by Teri J Pieper



# Spring Beauty, in November

by Susan Ballinger, Wenatchee

The November program will feature Eastern WA University professor Dr. Robin O'Quinn. She will discuss her on-going research on *Claytonia megarhiza* (spring beauty) and talk more broadly about recent developments in plant taxonomy.

Dr. O'Quinn earned her undergraduate degree in botany at University of California, Davis and her PhD in Botany from Washington State University. Part of the EWU Faculty since 2007, she teaches Biological Investigation, Introductory Biology for Majors, a summer field course (Geology/Biology), and Molecular Ecology. Her research interests focus on the evolution of morphological diversity in plants (e.g. plant architecture). She aims to synthesize information from diverse fields to understand plant species diversity. She was most recently published in 2009 in the journal, *Molecular Ecology Resources*. Dr. O'Quinn is an active member of the Washington Native Plant Society and the Spokane area chapter.

At our November meeting, we will have the WNPS 2013 calendars for sale – it's a great way to support our chapter. You'll want to buy the photo calendar early so you can enjoy the stellar cover photo throughout the Holiday season. It is Mount Rainier's Paradise Valley taken by Richard Droker. He described the moment by saying we were "coming around a bend in the road as the sun came up and we encountered this scene of red (October) blueberries and white-frosted subalpine fir. Within a few short minutes the frost had melted". Enjoy the beauty of Washington's wildflowers and stunning landscapes showcasing Washington's native plants throughout 2013 while supporting the conservation work of the Society and its efforts to educate others about the value of native plants.

Wenatchee Chapter  
Washington Native Plant Society  
Wenatchee Valley Museum  
and Cultural Center  
127 South Mission Street  
Free and open to non-members  
November 15 7:00-8:30 P.M.



## Wenatchee Naturalist - A Wonder-filled Invitation for 2013

By Susan Ballinger, creator and lead instructor for Wenatchee Naturalist

The Wenatchee River Institute invites you to embark on a wonder-filled adventure by becoming a Wenatchee Naturalist. This third offering of the Wenatchee-based program begins in late January and is now registering inquisitive valley residents for spring (Jan. 30 – April 24th). The class meets on Wednesday evenings and includes 3 Saturday field trips (Feb. 9, Mar. 23, & Apr. 13). Field trips explore habitats along the White, Entiat, and Wenatchee River corridors, guided by expert guest field biologists. Every class includes hands-on activities and practice using a field journal. Registration closes on January 9, with the first Wednesday evening class on Jan. 30, 2013. Class size is limited to 24 adults and is designed for non-scientists. Tuition is \$335 and includes supplies, a field journal, and loaned equipment.

Over the 12-week course, you'll make new friends, discover lovely local places you'll want to visit again, and gain new eyes for the natural wonders of North Central Washington. This class is designed to inspire a deeper connection to the wonders of our valley and to bring new sources of joy to your everyday life. Throughout the course, students are introduced to an array of local conservation organizations and citizen science projects, to make it fun and easy to select 20+ hours of volunteer work, to complete after finishing the coursework. Teachers can sign up for 50 clock hours (free!) and have the option to do volunteering within their classroom. The Wenatchee Naturalist mission is to cultivate awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the Wenatchee River region by developing an active corps of well-informed community volunteers.

Comments made by spring 2012 class participants include:

- *I found the course to be just what I was looking for. Great intro, with loads of references for future use.*
- *I didn't realize how important the field journal is- it really hones observation skills...*
- *I loved the combination of geology, birds, botany (on the field trips)... Great views, very interesting, beautiful places...*
- *I have so much to learn- this class has opened up so much for me... Education is the key, and we need to educate the young ones to protect this immense, unbelievable diverse precious ecosystem. You've given us a leg up in this endeavor.*

Learn more about the program and download an application on the Wenatchee River Institute website at [www.barnbeachreserve.org/programs](http://www.barnbeachreserve.org/programs). Feel free to contact the course instructor, Susan Ballinger at 669.7820 or [skylinebal@gmail.com](mailto:skylinebal@gmail.com).



# Notes from Mazama

by Bob Spiwak, Mazama

Sunday morning, October 21; 28 degrees and sunny. Where the heck is the snow? The forecast all week has promised snow or at least snow and/or rain in dark and grim icons on the NOAA weather report for almost our exact location. And here it is another "Bluebird Day" even if the bluebirds are long gone.

The autumn leaves are (no pun) hanging on; those that were not dislodged by some hefty winds earlier in the week. I have been out daily, several times a day recording the splendiferous display. So much so, that my printer has run out of yellow ink. And as the days and the cold progress, the red shades from mahogany to scarlet. Suffused into the yellow background, this combination makes for exorbitant color panels. The ideal view beginning now and soon to diminish is the foreground colors with a background of snowy mountain peaks. Life is good.

Life is also good to our Wood Duck population. Last week we counted eleven individuals; all but two were drakes. These were the juveniles who never emerged to our sight as bobbing corks, but showed themselves as small ducks. Now they are full grown and daily the males become more colorful.

We feed them cracked corn and I have had concerns about our largesse delaying their migration. I consulted one of the 614 biologists in the valley who told me not to worry. However, he had previously told me in answer to another query that Wood Ducks do not dabble. I can safely argue the point. When a daggle of woodies are upended, under water and uncountable in their mass raid on the submerged corn, they act no different than the mallards. And if you have a problem with the word "daggle," it seems only proper that if a bunch of geese are a gaggle, a bunch of

ducks ought to be a daggle. So much for linguistics.

The only other bird in regular evidence is a Steller's Jay. Only one. When the snow flies and we again begin filling feeders we will have a half dozen or more at a time, grabbing food, tormenting the squirrels and aggravating the wintering chickadees and their icy ilk.

I feed the dog kibbles and canned food. She likes the canned stuff with gravy. The downside is the gravy soaks into the dry kibbles and the stuff resembles cooling brown lava after an hour or more. I take her bowl and scrape the gunk out under a pine tree in our parking area and the jay is soon there to partake of the bounty. It will be chastened by crows and ravens that want the morsels (ick!).

The downside of wonderful nature is that rodents - mice, chipmunks, squirrels and packrats - all have a taste for the insulation on electric wiring. Especially in winter. One night last year they attacked my car for the third time and made their debut in Ms. Gloria's. Overnight they chewed every spark plug wire in her Corolla. I got by easy and could drive mine to the mechanic, but hers had to be towed eighteen miles to Twisp and emerged with a bill close to \$400! The rodent vs. car conflict is so egregious that our mechanic will not allow certain people's vehicles in his shop. Corvids watch hopefully from our trees to see if we will be tossing dead mice captured in our cars.

The sun is now in a good place to shoot more color and I am off to burn some film. Film? Gasp! I can't help it, I have become incurably retro.

*Editor's note - An obsolete term for a group of ducks on the water is a paddling of ducks*

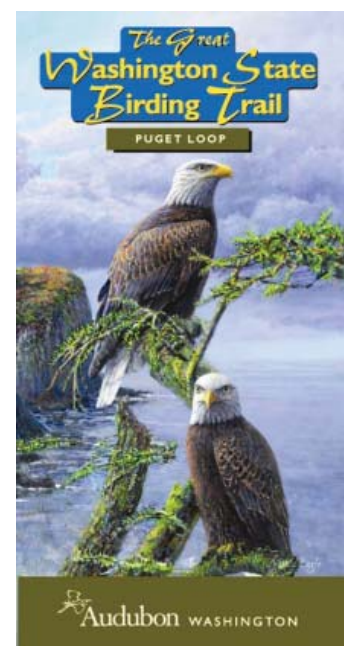
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## The Washington State Birding Trail Last Loop

by Christi Norman, National Audubon Society

"The Great Washington State Birding Trail is officially open and ready for birders!" proclaimed National Audubon Society President David Yarnold to 90 chapter members from around the state during the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) in Poulsbo on October 4. Yarnold saluted the 600 volunteers who worked with NAS's Christi Norman to create the seven loops that cover 3,000 miles within two million acres of protected habitat, supporting nearly 350 species. The decade-long achievement was funded by \$1.5 million from private and public grants, and individual and chapter donations. Along with full-color paper maps, birders can now access each route via the new "app" for iPhone and iPad, and an e-book. Signs are being installed to mark the 375 local sites. Birds' flyways are the glue that unites the Audubon Society today, President Yarnold emphasized during his ACOW keynote talk. Washington's lands and waters lie squarely on the Pacific Flyway from Alaska to Patagonia, with many Important Bird Areas included on the Great Washington State Birding Trail. Poulsbo Mayor Becky Erickson cut the ribbon for the last trail route, the Puget Loop; similar ceremonies are planned around the state.

*Editor's note - for more information or to buy a map, please email [cnorman@audubon.org](mailto:cnorman@audubon.org) or see <http://wa.audubon.org/great-washington-state-birding-trail>*



# Post-Fire update from the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust

by Sharon Lunz, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust

I suspect that the fall rains have never been more welcome in North Central Washington than this year. With over 100 fires burning at one time in our region and smoke so insidious, many residents were profoundly impacted by fire this fall.

The Chelan-Douglas Land Trust was directly involved in the “Canyons” fire in the Wenatchee Foothills, since we own or hold conservation easements on 3,212 acres in the Foothills and we are the manager of the Wenatchee Foothills Trail. Many of our properties burned in the first week of the fires.

We are very grateful that no homes were burned, thanks to the hard work of the fire fighters. The Land Trust’s undeveloped land along the city’s edge can better tolerate wildfire than our neighborhoods! While it is difficult to look up at the foothills and see so much black, it helps to remember that this shrub-steppe landscape is well adapted to periodic fires, and it recovers well.

We have evaluated the fire’s impacts on the Land Trust’s properties and have confirmed that most of the fire burned at a fairly low intensity on our land, which will allow for good recovery. The increased nitrogen from the fire can rejuvenate the system and can actually improve grazing for deer the following spring. Some of the riparian draws burned hot, but we expect that most of that vegetation will re-sprout this fall or next spring. Much bitterbrush and sagebrush that provide winter browse and cover for mule deer burned, with about 8% of the total winter range for the Mission herd affected. We have already started our post-fire restoration efforts. We are seeding over three miles of bulldozer lines with a custom native seed mix, removing some fences and rebuilding others, and preparing for increased runoff in gullies and draws. One of our biggest challenges will be addressing noxious weeds that try to take advantage of the soils disturbed by the fire.

Summary of fire extent on Land Trust property in the

Foothills:

- Sage Hills (32 acres) - 100% burned
- Horse Lake Reserve-former ranches (1,380 acres) – 30% burned
- Horse Lake Reserve - upper Fairview Canyon (320 acres) – 95% burned
- Blue Sage (81 acres) – 10% burned
- Broadview Heights (302 acres) – 50% burned
- Broadview Canyon (52 acres) – 75% burned
- Jacobson Preserve, Saddle Rock and Dry Gulch were not burned

We were happy to be able to reopen most of the Foothills Trails on October 10th. The main Foothills trail between Number 1 Canyon and Horse Lake is open, including the Homestead Trail on our Horse Lake Reserve property. Saddle Rock, Dry Gulch, and the Jacobson Preserve are all open. All trails that head up to the higher elevations are closed.

Seeing the effects of a fire up close is a special opportunity. We are asking trail users to help us protect this fragile environment by respecting trail closures, staying on the trail and not cutting switchbacks. Now more than ever human impacts can negatively affect the landscape.

We hope that our efforts the past several years to make the trails more sustainable will pay off. We have been realigning trails to make them better able to withstand erosion, and undoubtedly that work will be put to the test this fall and winter! Some of the steeper, unauthorized upper trails on the PUD Sage Hills property may not fare as well as those that we have worked on recently.

Stay tuned for lots of volunteer opportunities this fall and spring. If you would like to help, or be added to our volunteer email list please contact Tina Duffey, Trails and Stewardship Assistant at 667-9708.

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## Archeology of NCWAS: do you have artifacts (or memories)?

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

Our records of the earlier years of NCWAS are spotty and sparse. Were you a board member/officer or active member of NCWAS before the turn of the century (2000, not 1900)? If so, perhaps you have, lurking in a closet or your garage, a stash of meeting notes, Phloxes, clippings, correspondence, or other memorabilia? If so, we would appreciate having these documents as a donation or as a loan (so we can make copies). We are planning to organize our archives and concoct a family history. Maybe you have memories instead of artifacts? We need these too! Even small recollections can plug gaps in our history.

Questions? Please contact Mark Oswood (mailing address, email, phone on page 2) ... and if you are sending documents, please let us know if these are donations or on loan.

***November Wild Phlox***

North Central Washington Audubon Society

Post Office Box 2934

Wenatchee, WA 98807

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar**

November 2	Okanogan Highlands Wildflowers	With Dana Visali and Aaron Theisen, see page 4
November 15	Spring Beauty in November	With the Native Plant Society, see page 5
November 18	Learn about Lichens!	With the Wenatchee Naturalists, see page 4
December 15 December 22 December 23 December 28 December 31 January 3 January 5	<b>Christmas Bird Counts</b>	<b>Be sure and sign up for several. In our region there are CBC's in Bridgeport, Leavenworth, Twisp, Chelan, Wenatchee, Grand Coulee and Omak.</b>



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

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