



Volume 46 #5 February 2013

The Saga of Washington's Fish and Wildlife

NCW Audubon will pair up with the Wenatchee River Institute to bring Ken Bevis to the Red Barn at Barn Beach Reserve in Leavenworth on February 8. Ken will present a joyous, light-hearted musical celebration of Washington's wildlife.

People know animals in many ways. Aside from scientific details, how do we capture the awe and delight that creatures inspire? Ken has spent many years observing and thinking about fish and wildlife and using words, stories, songs and pictures in addition to occasional facts and figures, he

will provide a glimpse into the wild mysteries of Washington's wildlife. It will be an entertaining and engaging look, sometimes from the viewpoint of the animals themselves!

**The Saga of Washington's
Fish and Wildlife
with Ken Bevis
February 8, 2013,
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
The Red Barn at
Barn Beach Reserve
For more information
please call 548-7584**

Ken Bevis is a lifelong naturalist, fisherman, hunter and bird watcher. He works as the Watershed Steward for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in the Upper Columbia region, helping to bring back the once abundant salmon runs of the mighty Columbia. He holds several degrees from reputable institutions, and is also a singer/songwriter, specializing in songs about wild animals. Ken is known for his offbeat sense of humor and entertaining presentations. He lives between Twisp and Winthrop with his wife, Teri Pieper, two dogs, many deer, the occasional cougar and the numerous wild birds that perch on the snags he installed in the yard.



Ken sings to the forest at Lost Lake
photo by Teri J Pieper

How do you tell the story of such a rich place as Washington? Ken has images from many gifted photographers, stories about the creatures, and original songs about each one! This presentation is a mosaic of images, words and songs, taking the participants on a journey through animal lives and habitats. He will tell you things you know, and didn't know, about each species and then sing an original song about them.

Ken will talk and sing a song about a Snowy Owl photographed in the Lower Rendezvous, above Winthrop.
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."

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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

Six Streaked Sparrows

by Jenny Graevell, East Wenatchee



I know we have some witty members out there. Here is my challenge to you to come up with a catchy acronym or phrase to aid in remembering these six streaked sparrow species that we might observe in NCW.

North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

____ Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Nine Issues \$15
 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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Please mail check and form to Post Office Box 2934 Wenatchee, WA 98807-2934.

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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 or drop us a note and we will send you a form for a special rate introductory membership.

Editor's Notes

It has been a good winter for seeing interesting birds, so far. Many people have had a chance to see Snowy Owls in eastern Washington and it is all but guaranteed if they are looking west of the Cascades in the right places. Common Redpolls are, well common, this winter. They are regulars at my feeders and I have seen them on the ski trails around the Methow and on highway 20 headed towards Okanogan. Pine Grosbeaks have been showing up in Twisp and I have learned to recognize their calls. White-winged Crossbills are showing up sporadically but with less predictability than those other finches. At our house, even with increased numbers of redpolls, we are not going through as much seed as usual in the winter. The reason – a Sharp-shinned Hawk has chosen this as her feeding site. We see her at least a couple times a day when we are home and the little birds grow more wary with each passing day. Yesterday she flew onto the deck railing as I ate breakfast and she had a tiny nuthatch clutched in her talons. This morning she flew off with a Downy Woodpecker leaving a few spotted feathers behind. In the past, I have not been bothered by the occasional accipiter visit to the feeders but I am tiring of this one. She has no fear of us anymore.

This issue of the Wild Phlox is full of interesting birding news – from the Birding Buddies walks in the Horan Natural Area at Wenatchee to the Birding Adventurers going to great elevational heights to see the ethereal pure white ptarmigan! Jenny Graevell has provided us another page from her field journal, this time showing the differences in six streaked sparrows – birds that will soon be arriving in our region after a winter spent in warmer climates. These birds can often be challenging to identify in the field. Jenny's life-like drawings point out the characteristics to watch for.



Sharp-shinned Hawk waiting at the feeder photo by Teri J Pieper



These Bald Eagles and Common Ravens were feeding on a carcass in the Methow River photo by Teri J Pieper

In other bird sightings – Black-backed Woodpeckers are already moving into last summer's burned areas. They have been seen in the upper reaches of Central Ferry Canyon in Douglas County.

A Harris Sparrow visited the Horan Natural Area for a while and I saw a Barred Owl while skiing near Sun Mountain.

Local naturalist and avid reader, Beth St George has started a blog called BookWren's Journey at <http://bookwren2.wordpress.com/>. She is filling it with natural history and book reviews. In it you will find her observations and the books she is reading. On January 13 she said "Twelve Great Blue Herons sat hunched on the shore (of the Columbia) like tired old men."

Remember, NCW Audubon wants to hear from you - our members. Send us your bird sightings and also your 'letters to the editor'. We like to get photos, articles and artwork to feature in the Phlox. All of our contact info in shown on page 2.

Birding Buddies Start the New Year with a New Bird

On January 19, seven cold-hardy birders braved the freezing temperatures of NCW, in our inaugural Birding Buddies field trip to the Horan Natural Area north of Walla Walla Point Park in Wenatchee. In all thirty-one bird species were seen during the walk, including stellar looks at an Eurasian Wigeon - a life bird for three members of the group! The crisp cinnamon color of this uncommon duck's head along with its gray flanks made this dabbling duck easy to spot among the hundreds of grazing American Wigeon.

Dr. Dan Stephen's leads the next fieldtrip, on February 2, on the Waterville Plateau in search of Snowy Owls, Gyrfalcon, Snow Buntings, and more. Please meet at the Easy Street Park and Ride at 8 a.m., and expect a full day of birding. Bring a lunch, refreshment and dress in layers for the cold. Hope to see you there!

The next Birding Buddies walk will be in March. Watch the Phlox or our Facebook page for further info.

photo and article by Jenny Graevell, East Wenatchee



New (and Local) Bird Discussion Group

by Art Campbell, Winthrop

In December 2012, a new bird discussion group – ncwabird – was created to facilitate communication of bird sightings and general discussion of birds in Chelan, Douglas, Ferry and Okanogan counties. By mid-January, we had 19 members. We want to continue to expand our membership and welcome all who have an interest in birds to join the group.

You can join the site in either one of two ways. To protect the site and individual members, either way requires the approval of both the person joining (that's you) and the site's moderator (that's me). The first, and most direct, way to join is to send an e-mail to ncwabird-subscribe@yahoo.com from the e-mail address at which you want to receive postings. As moderator, I will receive that e-mail and then approve it. The second way is for me as moderator to send you an invitation, which you then approve. Of course, I'll need to know you're interested in joining in the first place, so you'll need to e-mail me at: rapakivi@methow.com. And, of course, you have the option of unsubscribing to the group at any time, but we hope you don't!

Emphatically, this is not a site just for rare bird sightings! Postings have included sightings of everything from canvasbacks and robins to white-winged crossbills, redpolls, and a snowy owl. All observations of birds – common, uncommon, or rare – and their behavior are welcome.

While we all enjoy hearing about sightings of rare birds, what we most hope is that this site will facilitate communication among the bird watching community in North Central Washington and that the postings on this site will help all of us learn more about birdlife in our three-county area. The site allows members to attach photos to their postings or to provide links to other material, such as videos or other websites.

If you enjoy birds, I encourage you to join the ncwabird group.

Editor's note - it was by way of the ncwabird list that I learned of the following fabulous and adventurous birding story!

An Adventure Above the Clouds

as told to Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley
photos by Libby Schreiner, Winthrop

In the valleys of eastern Washington, inversions have ruled the weather forecast recently. For those that feel trapped under the low gray clouds, a chance to escape to higher elevations is a welcome relief. Recently, a pair of birders from Winthrop did just that. Starting at the Boulder Creek sno-park, they rode their snow machine to Freezeout Pass and then skied to near the top of Tiffany Mountain where they found temperatures approaching 50 degrees! The long-standing inversion was obvious from up high. By the time they got to the last pitch, there was some open ground and exposed rocks, alternating with a thick icy crust that could

support their weight without skis so they walked the last bit. There, they saw the pure white wintering White-tailed Ptarmigan! What a treat! They stayed at the 8200' summit til sunset when they began the descent. The old snow machine ground to a halt about six miles above the sno-park so they put the skis back on and enjoying the waxing moon, Jupiter and the stars, made their way down and into the frigid 4 degrees fog where they left their car.



Editor's note - our newsletters are available on our website and there you can see all the photos in color. However, if you haven't seen blue skies in a while, that could be disheartening.

Washington Audubon Conservation Update

by Chris Parsons, Leavenworth

I am excited to be your Chapter Conservation Chair and want to thank Rachel Scown for her leadership and involvement with conservation issues on behalf of our chapter for all these years.

January has been a busy month for conservation. Here is a quick update:

- The State's Environmental Priorities Coalition, supported by our Audubon Conservation Committee, has voted to support the following priority issues:
- Clean Energy Solutions: Fulfilling our Clean Energy Initiative. Sustaining the success of I-937, our state's voter-approved clean energy initiative, in bringing investments, jobs, and economic development throughout Washington. Investment in clean energy industries and infrastructure is a priority, but we must be careful that this infrastructure doesn't harm birds and other wildlife, and is developed in a sustainable manner that reduces green house gas emissions and makes

us more energy independent as a society.

- Toxic-Free Kids and Families: Protecting children's health from cancer-causing flame retardants and helping to put businesses on the path to using chemicals that won't harm the environment or their bottom line.
- Pollution Free Prosperity: Preventing attempts to weaken, delay, or roll back state environmental laws and programs that are critical for clean air, clean water, and healthy ecosystems
- Support for Washington State Parks Operation Budget: With over 120,000 acres of park and wildlife habitat lands, State Parks' budget is threatened with no State General Fund funds for the 2013-15 biennium. With over 1/3 of State Park's workforce gone and rangers working part-time, this important natural resource agency that provides important recreational and natural resource stewardship services

is on the brink of closure. Support for \$27.2 million in operational funds will ensure that State Parks are operating and open for our birding and recreational needs.

- The State Conservation Committee and Chapters supported hiring a Chapter Associate position to assist Chapters with sharing critical issues during the legislative session and helping with Chapter coordination. This position will be hired shortly and will be situated at the Audubon Center office at Seward Park.

Environmental Lobby Day is on February 17th this year. Please plan on joining Audubon and environmental volunteers as we meet with our elected officials on pending legislation. We will be meeting at United Churches, 110 11th Ave in Olympia from 9:00 – 5:00. Please register at: <http://environmentalpriorities.org/> or for more information contact me at cjparsons@nwi.net

Notes from Mazama

It is January 16 and 12.1 degrees at 1,965 feet elevation. Up at Harts Pass, elevation 6,500 feet it is 31.5 degrees. This we know as a temperature inversion; as humans we expect those temperatures to be reversed. But then, as humans we expect a lot of stuff to keep us happier. Today and all week it ain't happening.

However, the birds seem happy. The usual chickadees and nuthatches are here in sort of a force. That qualifying statement is due to feathers that are appearing on the snow here and there indicating that something this year has been chomping on the little birds and indeed, there do seem to be fewer of them than in years past. Perhaps we have an owl in the barn, although we have not heard any owl sounds in over a month. Maybe a neighboring bigger owl is feeding on the littler hooters.

Also, there are Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers attacking the suet feeders. The square hardware cloth contrivances that hold the suet blocks are alive with those guys, swinging on the feeders, and hanging upside down as they raid the larder of the twitter birds. In turn they are dispossessed by the Steller's Jays whose number has grown from a loner at Christmas to half a dozen.

Our dog, 15 years old, deaf, blind and frequently

photo and article by Bob Spiwak, Mazama

disorientated has become a pickier eater than in her earlier years and frequently refuses to eat all the food in her dish. I used to toss the remnants in the garbage, but this year decided to fling it onto the snow for the jays in hopes of minimizing the attacks on other birds' meals. This has led to jay happiness, and better yet has brought a pair of magpies to the table.

For a while there was only one magpie, but a week or so ago it was joined by second. They wait in the scrubby willow over the frozen pond for canine mealtime. They are even more wary than the jays, and any motion toward the window to take a picture sends them flying away before I can get close enough. I was lucky two days ago, and have finally (maybe) gotten smart enough to toss the dog chow on a snow berm that can be photographed from farther within the house.

We look forward to spring when we will get birdsongs of appreciation for the meals.



Better optics for Small Hands:

Our *What's that Bird?* Program Gets New Binoculars

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

“What’s that Bird?” is our signature educational activity for elementary school children (and families). Our venues are usually entire classrooms or grade levels for a school as well as environmental and bird festivals.

The core of our “What’s that Bird?” program is a set of wooden bird models — life-size, hand-carved, and painted with realistic field marks. We turn kids (and families) loose with kid-sized binoculars and a modest checklist of bird possibilities. We have constructed a field guide to the most common birds of the region, providing a limited universe of identification possibilities.

The binoculars have been the weak part of this system — the cheapest obtainable compact binoculars (about \$10/pair). These binoculars have terrible optics (even the kids sometimes complain) and are essentially disposable (they

barely last a year of our hard use). Advice from optics dealers provided a list of features needed for an upgrade: good depth of field and field of view (easy for kids to find birds), small enough to fit the hands of middle-grade elementary school children (our major users), and tough (able to withstand generations of rough handling).

We settled on the Vortex Raptor 6.5x32. Eagle Optics offered a matching grant and we wrote a successful grant to the Charlotte Martin Foundation for remaining costs. We now have a set of 30 new binoculars, ready for spring events and for many years to come. Our thanks to Eagle Optics and the Charlotte Martin Foundation for providing grants that are a large boon for small organizations like NCWAS.

Okanogon CBC Highlights

by Heather Findlay, Okanogon

We had a great Okanogon-Omak CBC (Christmas Bird Count) January 5 on an overcast, snowy day. There were 3 teams to cover the designated 15 mile diameter circle centered on the Oak Street Bridge in Okanogon. This year we identified 67 species which is a new high beating our previous record of 61 last year. We observed several new species including an Anna’s Hummingbird that is non-migratory and has been visiting feeders in Omak since Thanksgiving. Also new to our count were Pine Grosbeaks, a Barn Owl in Omak, and Redhead ducks on Omak Lake. American Tree Sparrows were seen near Omak Airport. Large groups of Common Redpolls were seen in various locations. We saw more Gray Partridges than we usually

do. Bald Eagles were present in large numbers, as were Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks. A Northern Goshawk and a Prairie Falcon were exciting to see. We had more people than usual watching birds at their feeders and reporting in on what they saw. This “citizen science” is greatly appreciated and it’s fun to be getting more people involved in seeing which birds are in our area. The next planned Okanogon event will be the spring birdathon where we go out and see the birds that have arrived for the spring or are passing through to more northerly breeding areas. Anyone interested in birding in our area can get more information at our website, or contact me at 846-0475.

Okanogon Wildlife League Needs Your Help

by Lisa Lindsay, Oroville

Okanogon Wildlife League finished its first full season as a fully permitted wildlife rehabilitation center in 2012. For the year, we admitted 71 animals ranging from eagles to deer, Northern Saw-whet Owls to squirrels. We were able to successfully release 13 animals, transferred five, and had five in our care at the year’s end. Unfortunately, we had to euthanize eight, 38 died at the center and two died prior to or upon arrival at our facility. Although we could not help these animals, they did not suffer a harsher fate. Sixty-one of these were birds. We assisted two Bald Eagles and three Golden Eagles. One of the Golden Eagles, a large female, was stabilized at our facility and transferred to Washington State University’s Veterinary Hospital for flight conditioning. She was brought back to Omak at the end of her rehabilitation and released in an alfalfa field. She showered off through the sprinklers before landing in some scrub brush on a nearby hill. Our most common animals

were Great-horned Owls and American Kestrels, with six each. Ten of our admitted patients were mammals.

We are looking for all forms of support - volunteers, animal transport assistance, community event assistance and construction. We are anticipating an even bigger year this year as word of our services is spreading. We cover all of North Central Washington and would like to help as many animals as possible and offer peace of mind to the individuals and families that happen across those injured and orphaned. Please visit our Facebook page for recent updates and news or connect with us on our website for links to further statistics, goals, baby nests to knit or crochet and other items that can be made and mailed to us. We will need some construction help this spring in the form of some new enclosures, so if you are able to join us for a day and help erect some flight space, do contact us at <http://okanogonwildlife.webs.com/> or 560-3828

Great Backyard Bird Count Guided Counts in the Entiat and at Mazama

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. Read more about the GBYBC at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html

On Saturday, February 16, from 9:00 am to noon join biologist Phil Archibald for the Great Backyard Bird Count at the Entiat

Stormy Preserve. Participants should be prepared for inclement weather and dress accordingly. Binoculars are highly recommended. Participants should also bring snacks, water and a lunch. To RSVP for this event, please call 667-9708 or email Kelsey Schuttie at kelsey@cdlandtrust.org. There will be a 15 person limit for this outing.

Join Steve Bondi at the North Cascades Basecamp to count birds for the Great Backyard Bird Count citizen science program from 10 am – noon February 15 - 18. For more information call the North Cascades Basecamp at 996-2334 or see www.NorthCascadesBasecamp.com

Environmental Film Series Continues with *The City Dark* by Kelsey Schuttie, Chelan Douglas Land Trust

Tuesday, February 19, 7:00 pm at the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center

The City Dark is a feature documentary about light pollution and the disappearing night sky. After moving to light-polluted New York City from rural Maine, filmmaker Ian Cheney asks: “Do we need the dark?” Exploring the threat of killer asteroids in Hawai’i, tracking hatching turtles along the Florida coast, and rescuing injured birds on Chicago streets, Cheney unravels the myriad implications of a globe glittering with lights—including increased breast cancer rates from exposure to light at night, and a generation of kids without a glimpse of the universe above. Featuring stunning astrophotography and a cast of eclectic scientists, philosophers, historians, and lighting designers, *The City Dark* is the definitive story of light pollution and the disappearing stars.

All films start at 7:00 PM at the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center. The series is presented by Trust for Public Land, Chelan Douglas Land Trust and the Wenatchee Valley Museum. For more information call 888-6240 or visit www.wvmcc.org.

Winter Bald Eagle Surveys in the Methow Valley by Kim Bondi, Mazama

This winter, naturalists are braving cold temperatures while joining the North Cascades Basecamp to survey Bald Eagle distribution and night roosting locations in the Methow Valley. As the group is observing and documenting Bald Eagles and their locations, they are also becoming skilled at aging these slow-to-mature birds. Observers expected one of the eagles to be a first-year bird (born in 2012) as its head was dark brown, beak had very little yellow on it, and its eyes were still dark brown. At two, Bald Eagles have more yellow developing on their beak, lighter brown eyes, a lighter golden brown head, some white mottling on their chest, and a fair amount of white on the underside of their wings. At three, they have further lightened heads, beak, and eyes, as well as a dark brown stripe behind their eyes. A four-year juvenile resembles a mature adult, except for some minimal brown speckling on their head and tail. Other highlights of the surveys include great views of an adult Golden Eagle, two Red-tailed Hawks, and two Rough-legged Hawks near Twisp. If you’d like to learn more about Bald Eagles, these surveys are every other Sunday from 1 - 5:30 pm and cost is \$20 per person. Email info@northcascadesbasecamp.com, or call 996-2334 for more information.

Taking Flight Together National Audubon Convention in the Columbia Gorge

For the first time in 13 years, a National Audubon Society (NAS) convention will be held, and the site chosen is in Washington’s own Columbia Gorge. We are extraordinarily fortunate to have this opportunity to experience firsthand the excitement being generated by the NAS president, David Yarnold, and other leaders across the country, as well as to meet with Audubon members from near and far.

There will be four days of field trips, speakers, hands-on workshops, and many program options highlighting conservation successes from the four flyways across the country. Check out Audubon’s website at: www.audubon.org/2013convention. Registration opens in February.

For general conference inquiries and questions, sponsorship opportunities contact Cindy Sherwood at csherwood@audubon.org

by Rachel Scown, Plain
audubon.org or call 802-865-5202.

The event organizers are also soliciting ideas for proposed program sessions. Deadline for proposals is February 15.

This is a wonderful chance to expand our Audubon horizons and mingle with others of like interest. I hope to see an excellent turnout from our local bird and habitat conservation enthusiasts.

February Wild Phlox

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

February 1	Grouse of the Okanogan	Okanogan Highlands Alliance. See www.okanoganhighlands.org or 33-7893
February 2	Bird the Waterville Plateau	with Dan Stephens. See page 3
February 8	The Saga of Washington's Fish and Wildlife in Words, Pictures, and Song	At the Wenatchee River Institute at Barn Beach in Leavenworth 7:00 p.m. See page 1
February 10 & 24	Winter Bald Eagle Surveys	North Cascades Basecamp. See page 7
February 14, 21, 28	Cougars, Butterflies, Birds	Soup night and lecture series at North Cascades Basecamp www.northcascadesbasecamp.com/programs/ or 996-2334
February 15-18	Great Backyard Bird Count	See page 7 for local events or www.birdsource.org/gbbc for more information
February 19	<i>The City Dark</i>	Explore the dark skies. See page 7
February 21	Native Plant Society	Winter Social and Slideshow at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center 6:30 - 8:30



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