



Volume 43 #4 December 2009

## Christmas Bird Counts in North Central Washington December 15 through January 3

**Bridgeport – December 15.** Meredith Spencer is the contact at 509-686-7551 or merdave@homenetnw.net. Meet at the gas station on Bridgeport Bar, just like last year, at 7:00 am. Finish the day at Nell's Drive-In to tally everyone's birds and have a warm meal. Meredith is hoping for better weather this year!

**Grand Coulee – December 19.** David St George is the contact at dstgeorge@tnc.org.

**Moses Lake – December 19.** Doug Schonewald is the contact at dschone8@donobi.net.

**Twisp – December 27.** Ken Bevis

is once again compiling this count. He can be reached 509-997-0995 or krbevis@methownet.com. Following the count there will be a potluck dinner at Ken and Teri's house

**Chelan – December 30.** Steve Easley is the contact at 509-682-2318 or seasley@wenval.com. Meet at the Apple Cup Café at 7:00 am. End the day at the Apple Cup, meeting at 4:45 for dinner and to tally the results.

**Leavenworth – December 30.** Karen Haire is the contact at karenhaire@nwi.net. Gather at the end of the day to compile the results at Barn Beach Reserve.

**Okanogan/Omak – January 2.** Contact Heather at 509-429-8167 or heather@eaglesun.net OR contact Gordon at 509-422-6116. Meet at Todd and Heather's house at 6:45 am for coffee, muffins and maybe some oatmeal. They will have chili going for the end of the day tally.

**Wenatchee – January 3.** Dan Stephens is the contact at 509-682-6752 or dstephens@wvc.edu. Meet at the office of The Nature Conservancy for a chili feed and potluck to do the tally at the end of the day.

## NCW Audubon to Cosponsor 'Saving Luna' What can science learn from one lonely killer whale?

The Wenatchee Valley Environmental Film Series continues in January with the film 'Saving Luna', a tale about a young orca or killer whale, which became separated from his family and found himself lost off the wild coast of Vancouver Island. This film will be shown January 19th at 7:00 p.m. at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center. It is sponsored by NCW Audubon, Chelan Douglas Land Trust, the Trust for Public Land and the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center.

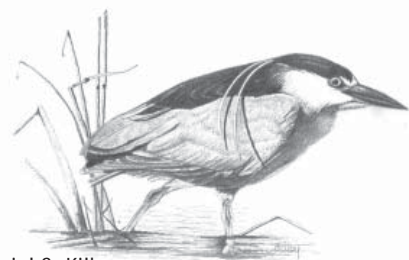
What should humans do when a wild animal tries to befriend us? It sounds

like a fairy tale, but in 2001, in Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, it actually happened. A lone killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) nicknamed Luna was separated from his pod. Without the company of other whales, this highly social mammal sought out human contact.

Luna's solitary presence and his efforts to connect across taxonomic boundaries left both scientists and policymakers baffled. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) – the Canadian government agency that manages marine mammals – decided that Luna should have no contact with humans.

January Program  
January 19, 2010, 7:00 pm  
Wenatchee Valley Museum  
and Cultural Center

Filmmakers Suzanne Chisholm and Michael Parfit are British Columbia writers and filmmakers who specialize in stories of the relationships between people and the environment. Michael has written for National Geographic and Smithsonian magazines, and is the author of four books. Suzanne has produced documentaries and stories for the National Geographic Channel and co-authored a book about weather.



Daniel S. Kilby

The mission of North Central Washington Audubon 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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Here it is, the day after Thanksgiving; holiday season is in full swing. Birds are fewer than they were during the migration but still there are interesting avian species around. Ken called on his way to work last week to say there was a white goose in with the flock of Canada Geese in a grain field heading towards Winthrop. Lo and behold I could see it in the spotting scope. Further views showed that indeed it is a Snow Goose! Another species for our loosely defined yard list! If we see it OR hear it from our ten acre yard, we include it. That's our rules. Do you keep a yard list? What are your rules? Share them with me for an

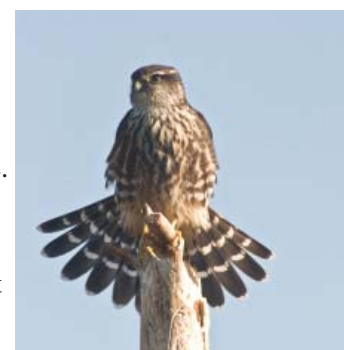
## Editor's Note



upcoming article in the Phlox. Today seemed like a good day to finish up the newsletter with time to spare for editing and proofing. The morning's work was interrupted when Ken said there was 'something' on the tallest 'planted' snag in our yard. Something it was - a Merlin! We were able to watch it for an hour before it flew down to the river and beyond. From what I can tell, it was a member of the

*taiga* subspecies as shown in the Sibley field guide.

There will be NO Wild Phlox next month. I will be busy with the Solstice, Christmas, New Years and Christmas Bird Counts. Hope you have a great season and the Phlox will return in February.



### North Central Washington Audubon Society Membership Form

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_ New Membership to National Audubon Society (NAS), includes one year Wild Phlox, \$20

(Renewals - Please renew your National Audubon Membership by filling out the forms sent to you by National and sending directly to NAS, thank you)

Make check payable to Audubon; mail to Post Office Box 2934 Wenatchee, WA 98807-2934.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Code C9ZY100Z

# Chris Street: A Tribute

photo and article by Kent Woodruff

Chris Street was an enthusiastic young biologist from Missoula who helped capture eagles, falcons, and hawks at Chelan Ridge; studied how woodpeckers responded to wildfires in Montana; and helped restore wetlands through beaver relocation in the Methow Valley. He was playful and full of energy. He passed away in November from complications related to cancer. Those of us who knew him are inspired by his spirit. He was always polite and respectful and was as humble as anyone I know. He was kind, generous, hard working (I could not get him to take it easy), adventurous (last summer he climbed 13 major peaks here in the Methow), positive, funny, and easy to be with. We should all aspire to be the kind of friend, partner, employee, and citizen that Chris was. He will be missed dearly.

The family has set up a memorial fund at HawkWatch International in Chris's honor that will help continue the work at the Chelan Ridge Raptor Migration Project that Chris loved so much.



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## Methow Conservancy 2010 Methow Conservation Course

### *Secrets of the Shrub Steppe*

by Mary Kiesau

Program Coordinator, Methow Conservancy

North Central Washington's shrub steppe ecosystem is teeming ecologically with wildlife and unique plants. It is also a rich part of our history and culture from Native American and early settlers' interactions with native plant communities to current uses. Join the Methow Conservancy for their 6th annual 6-week "Methow Conservation Course" to explore the secrets of the shrub steppe landscape. This six-week course will reveal hidden facets of our most ubiquitous landscape – its history, unseen influences, and mysterious plant and animal relationships.

The course will start with an overview of shrub steppe ecology from the Columbia Basin to the Methow Valley, focusing on the ecoregion's geological formation. We will then explore the early people of the shrub steppe landscape with guest speaker Jack Nisbet. We will burrow underground in the shrub steppe landscape to explore fossorial (burrowing) animal life; come to the surface to understand shrub steppe soils, teeming with life on this arid landscape; and elevate to unique habitats such as water courses and cliff bands, which are uncommon and hidden, yet integral to the flora and fauna of the shrub steppe ecosystem. The final conservation course lectures will focus on the ecological role that disturbances such as fire and grazing have played on shrub steppe vegetation communities, and how soil, hydrography, and genetic makeup of native plants are important for restoration efforts



Bitterroot, a flower of the shrub steppe  
photo by Teri J Pieper

both on a large and small scale. We'll also discuss the prioritization of shrub steppe landscapes in conservation, and how you can help preserve the cultural and ecological aspects of the shrub steppe in your own backyard.

The course runs for six weeks from February 1st to March 8th with one class per week on Mondays from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Twisp River Pub. For more details, including tuition and scholarship information, contact Mary Kiesau at the Methow Conservancy at 996-2870 or [info@methowconservancy.org](mailto:info@methowconservancy.org).



# Heart Warming Gratitude

by Mark Oswood

Our annual donation appeal always warms the cockles of my heart. It isn't that we've ever gotten a check with so many zeros that the envelope needed extra postage. Rather, it is that every check is someone's belief that our enterprise matters. You are a worker in that enterprise, by providing a donation that helps mail The Wild Phlox or keeps our Analog Birds in bushes for school kids to find or provides room rent for a program.

Our national financial systems seem safer now than last year. Still though, our binoculars for future-watching have lenses smeared with peanut butter fingerprints. When the future is unclear, making charitable donations requires belief that we can, together, leverage something too good to fail. Know that your donation to North Central Washington Audubon Society (and to other organizations and causes) is deeply appreciated.

Below, we list folks who have made donations through mid-November. As always, we will list donations received after mid-November in a late spring issue of The Phlox.

Ellen Agaard and Matt Corwin +  
Kit and Sharron Arbuckle  
Joseph Bailey  
Paul and Susan Ballinger  
Molly Beck and Barry Provorse  
Cordy Beckstead  
Gro Buer and Bruce Williams +  
Caryl Campbell  
Cholla Covert  
Stephen Easley  
Edward and Cheryl Faust  
Susan Fishburn  
Jeanie and Dennis Garrity  
Drew and Cathy Gaylord  
Dr. and Mrs. Wayne Gombotz +++  
Keith Guenther  
Margaret Gutteresen +++  
Richard E Hart  
Douglas Head  
Gail Jordan

Catherine Kent +  
Julie Loughheed  
Nihla Lowden  
Phyllis Madden  
Jody Marquardt  
Dick and Tip Martin +  
Michelle and Mark Mazzola  
Connie McCauley  
Ceceilia McFadden  
Diane Mc Kenzie  
Edgar Meyer M.D. +  
Teresa Moazed +  
Judith Moser  
Richard Murphy  
Patty Ostendorff  
Mark and Judith Oswood +  
Betsy Peirce  
Teri Pieper +  
George and Lila Putnam  
Steve and Nan Raymond

Gretchen Rohde  
Joseph and Merry Roy  
Harry and Donna Sanford  
Richard and Beverly Scott  
Eliot and Christine Scull ++  
Sally Soest +  
Carolanne Steinebach  
Penelope Tobiska  
Pat Whiting  
John Wilson  
Nine donors made donations no less appreciated for being anonymous.

The symbols denote donations of special generosity:  
+ = \$100 ("Great Blue Heron")  
++ = \$200 ("Greater White-fronted Goose")  
+++ = \$500 ("Magnificent Frigatebird")

Finally, in spite of checking, rechecking, and checking yet again, there is always the possibility that we've made an error of commission or omission (there were no crows or ravens available for a final audit). If you find an error, please leap up and tell us, so we can make it right

If you magneted the donation slip to the refrigerator – so that you could send in a donation in good time – but the slip fell off and slipped under the refrigerator to be eaten by the omnivorous dust bunnies – we've printed a replacement donation slip for your use.

Here is my/our donation of \$ _____		Please make checks payable to NCW Audubon and mail to PO Box 2934, Wenatchee 98807. Thank You!
Name	_____	
Address	_____	
	_____	

## One More Way to Experience the Chelan Ridge HawkWatch

Don McIvor of the Methow Valley visited the Chelan Ridge HawkWatch project in early October and was extremely fortunate to be there when researchers trapped and banded a Golden Eagle. Don had his video camera along and was able to capture great footage of the release. Thanks to the

wonders of YouTube, you too can enjoy this rare occasion! Here is the link to Don's video. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaYsrrXhsyI>. If you have trouble with that link, go to YouTube and search for Chelan Ridge HawkWatch.

# Notes from Bob's Journal

by Bob Spiwak

Well here it is mid November and time for the December issue already. The sun has been shining all day up here, the winds up to half-gale did not materialize nor did the mixed snow and rain that were forecast as late as last evening. There are still showers in the forecast. It is November 17, Tuesday, and the rain-snow mix is back in the prognostications for every day through Saturday at least.

Yesterday was another matter. It had snowed all the night before and most of yesterday, before turning to rain leaving us with over two inches of snosh, or snowy slush today that the sun mucked up even more. It was enough snow in the mountains however to shut down the North Cascades highway for the season. I know the wild turkeys will not mind.

We, a neighbor and I, raised a clutch of 21 gobblers about five years ago. It was fun watching them chasing grasshoppers through the late summer. We decided to move them to a wilder spot across a flood channel of the Methow River. They were happy to partake of the corn left for them and so were the deer and raccoons. It did not stop the turkeys from coming a quarter mile back to where they were raised. Adding to the entertainment, some might call it awe, was to watch these bulky birds launch themselves in the air and flap to roosts in the cottonwoods, fifty feet overhead.

When the snows came we were concerned about being sued if a driver swerved and crashed to avoid the turkeys that had no compunctions about walking along or across the highway. So three of us had a no-problem turkey hunt for Thanksgiving. Some of the turkeys were given away to people who had established flocks, far from the maddening road. Ultimately, as winter set in there were two big birds remaining. The neighbor is a 'summer person', and that left me to maintain the tom and his honey. Alas, one day she wandered onto the highway as the state snowplow was booming down and she became fricassee.

This left Tom all alone, and he bonded with my car, a dark blue VW that reflected his image. He would stand for up to an hour just looking at himself, he was so lonely. When I would pull out of the driveway he followed the car like a poorly disciplined dog. One day he followed me on a walk of about 200 yards to another neighbor's across the road. These people too, are summer folks, and have a small cabin with a full panel glass door with a shade pulled behind it. Tom found a better reflector than the car.

Turkeys, left in one place, tend to leave deposits and the this bird was no different. I cleaned up periodically. Then one day he disappeared and I only saw him once afterward. He had found his way downriver to another winter-vacant home that had double glass doors. He'd made quite a mess. The owner was telling me about it, and somehow I think he had a smug look. We never saw Tom again. I like to think he joined up with one of the increasing turkey groups, Wild Phlox if you'll excuse the pun.

Hope you enjoyed your meal.

## Rodeo Ravens

Five ravens  
Sit in the rodeo grandstands,  
the wind howls  
across Waterville's plateau.

Wheat bends, shakes and ripples,  
Air  
pushes, ebbs,  
then blows hard.

Clouds scuttle  
across deep blues,  
an overhead backdrop  
of movement.

While black ravens  
clown around  
empty silver bleachers  
wishing for hot dogs  
in the eddy...

Ken R . Bevis



Raven in Winter  
Acrylic Painting  
by Kathy Meyers

# Think Globally, Bird Locally

Some of our friends are on an endless quest to see as many of the world's 9,500 bird species as possible. Others try for at least one representative of each of the 207 families of Earth's birds. For most of us, bringing down the size of our world may be equally satisfying, a lot cheaper, and less strain on good ol' Mother Earth.

There are so many birders in the United Kingdom that they cannot all fit into prime birding localities at optimum migration times, so "Birding your Patch" has become very popular. A patch can be anywhere wild—your neighborhood, a park, a cemetery, a trail, or your own backyard. By paying close attention over time, you may become an expert on your patch, knowing what is always there and when the mobile creatures come and go. By paying close attention to a local area, we can also make contributions to scientific understanding.

After 15 years of bird touring, I was definitely ready to stay put and bring one place into focus, rather than glimpsing many. When I moved to a house on a Holstein dairy near Point Reyes, that became my patch, and a fine patch it is.

Over 20 years there, I found and came to understand 38 species of native mammals, 20 reptiles and amphibians, hundreds of insects and arachnids, and a modest number of birds. The bird list is not huge because of limited habitat, but I know the arrival and departure dates for migrants, the songs and calls of all the regulars, which ones nest where and when, and pretty much where they all forage and roost. There have been ten species each of owls and woodpeckers!

Here are some of the ways I have come to know my patch.

**Hummingbirds.** By feeding hummingbirds over the years, I determined that the average arrival date in the Point Reyes area for Allen's Hummingbird was January 27th. That knowledge was new. During the past three winters, those little beauties have been arriving measurably earlier. Might that be a piece in the puzzle of climate change?

**Mammals.** I did some live trappings of mice in hopes of catching *Zapus*, the jumping mouse. I would set eight traps

over a quarter-mile of trail at dusk and marvel at my captures at dawn. Over time, to my amazement, I briefly incarcerated three species of *Peromyscus* mice, having thought that only one was possible. There were many other rodents and shrews.

With protection, bobcats have become more numerous and easier to see. In the early morning, one or two often sit staring at gopher holes in the pasture. Once, when I was looking from a long way away, quite a large one was sitting there. "Nice," I said. "*Felix rufus*." Then it rose and sauntered along with its huge tail practically dragging on the ground. "Phew! *Felix concolor*, the big cat!"—a mountain lion.

**Birds.** One day we noticed a Turkey Vulture (TV) with a big albinistic wing patch sitting with the usual few normal TVs. Anytime an individual animal can be easily identified, there is a great opportunity to learn. For six years this bird departed every late April and returned every September. It was nesting elsewhere. When the bird was present, it was at the ranch constantly, with a similar number of its kind. This suggests that TVs may be spatially grouped on foraging territories. It would make sense that all of Marin County's 800 vultures could not go to the same roadkilled squirrel.

There have been several very rare birds at my patch on the Holstein ranch, and that's always exciting, but for me, understanding the ebb and flow of the more usual ones has caused great joy and spirit happiness. "Being one with nature" is a wonderful thing that can only be truly accomplished by staying in one place.

Postscript: We have yet to catch up with *Zapus*; there is always more to do!

*Rich Stallcup is the Naturalist at PRBO Conservation Science, founded in 1965 as Point Reyes Bird Observatory and now advancing conservation through bird and ecosystem research, from Alaska to Antarctica, on land and at sea. Rich contributes a regular "Focus" column to PRBO's quarterly journal, the Observer. For more information, see [www.prbo.org](http://www.prbo.org).*

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## The Great Backyard Bird Count February 12 - 15

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site.

For more information see [www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/) or check the February Wild Phlox

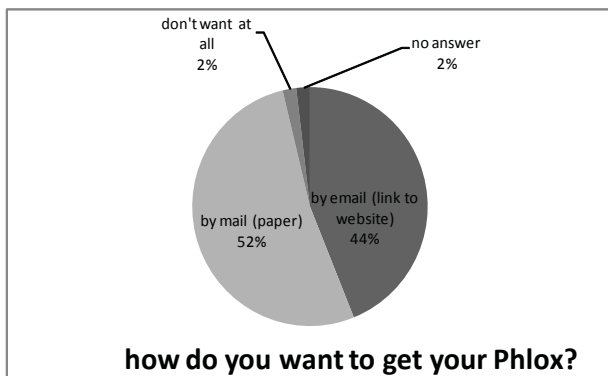
# Getting in Touch with Our Inner Chapter: The Fall Questionnaire

by Mark Oswood

We've had 107 questionnaires returned, from a sending of about 400. The people who responded are only a fraction (about ¼) of the entire membership and not a random sampling at that (just the folks who wanted to be counted and heard). Still, we got some great information. The handwritten comments on the questionnaire forms are the stuff of life: some people having hard times, some dealing with limitations, some saying thanks, some offering advice, and all reminding us to care about individuals.

In fact, it seems best to interpret the hard numbers of the questionnaire results in light of these comments, numbers and graphs balanced by the uncountable value of words. Here are five findings I've gleaned from the questionnaires.

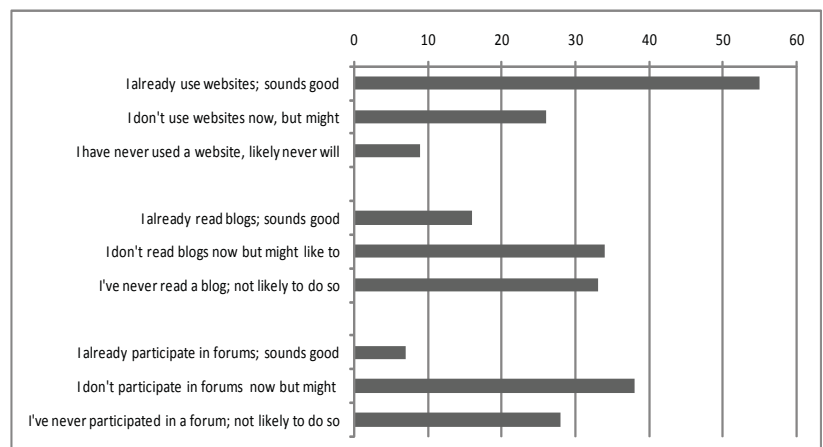
- A decided majority want to get the paper version of the Phlox, as opposed to the digital version. This seems consistent with results from questionnaires done by other Audubon chapters. In spite of the promised coming of a paperless society, many people find reading text



onscreen unsatisfactory. One of the advantages of the digital version is that photos can be glorious color instead of shades of gray. But we were reminded that our territory is deeply rural and many people don't have high bandwidth connections to the internet. It shouldn't be surprising that in a chapter of people who like to get outside and see, touch, smell and even taste their world, some find no room for computers at all.

- People want to go on field trips. Of all of the possibilities for "what activities do you want to do?" field trips of all kinds were by far the most checked off, trumping all other activities. Although some people were open to any kind of field trip, responders mostly took either the self-propelled (walking or biking) path or the vehicular road (by car or sleep over). For a sizable number of people, mobility limitations make the classic stop-and-bird car trip their way to go.

- Bird counts are a core tradition. Just about half of responders want to do the Christmas Bird Count and the Great Backyard Bird Count. The CBC and GBBC are some of the best examples of citizen science and our chapter's connection to something big and important. The GBBC is especially important to people who have focused their birding on their own yard (sometimes because of limited mobility), often crafting a landscape of habitat and feeders. Since so many people like to count birds, it might seem that Bird-a-Thons would be equally popular but birding for money (donations) must dredge up traumatic memories of selling band turkeys door-to-door as a child. In times past, Bird-a-Thons were a major fundraiser for NCWAS but only seven people checked this box.
- We need to have our activities available throughout our huge territory. Many people said that they want programs, field trips (and even social events and book discussion groups – surprisingly popular) near home. Most of our programs are in Wenatchee or Leavenworth. At a minimum, we need to expand to the Methow and Okanogan, and perhaps Chelan (epicenters of membership). But this will require that local members step forward to help organize field trips, have programs and discussions, and picnics in their community. Let's work on this as perhaps our highest priority – finding ways to be local.
- One way to connect members across our chapter is via the internet. We asked in the questionnaire about websites, blogs, and forums: do you already use, might use if we had for NCWAS, never used and not likely to do so? As mentioned, there is a sizable contingent of NCWAS that is mostly or entirely "off the grid" (low bandwidth or not interested in computer communications at all). Of the rest, most of you use websites. Many of you are willing to try a NCWAS blog or forum; we interpret this as "build it and they will come."





**December 2009 Wild Phlox**

North Central Washington Audubon Society  
 Post Office Box 2934  
 Wenatchee, WA 98807

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar**

December 15	Bridgeport CBC	See page 1
December 19	Grand Coulee CBC	See page 1
December 19	Moses Lake CBC	See page 1
December 27	Twisp CBC	See page 1
December 30	Chelan CBC	See page 1
December 30	Leavenworth CBC	See page 1
January 2	Okanogan Omak CBC	See page 1
January 3	Wenatchee CBC	See page 1
January 19	<i>Saving Luna</i>	Wenatchee Environmental Film Series. See page 1.
Feb 1 - March 8	Methow Conservation Course	Secrets of the Shrub Steppe. See page 3
February 11	Wind Power and Birds on the Waterville Plateau	Mark your calendar for this interesting NCW Audubon Program.
February 12 - 15	Great Backyard Bird Count	Everyone can join in the fun. See page 6.



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

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