



NCW Audubon February Program

Volume 43 #5 February 2010

by Jeff Parsons

The Withrow Wind Energy Project: Green Energy and Sage Grouse Conservation

Thursday, February 11, Beau Patterson of Douglas PUD will present a program about the Withrow Wind Energy Project. Both the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Douglas PUD have conducted significant studies of the wind energy potential and natural resources of the project area; new studies are planned to determine potential project impacts and appropriate mitigation. The up to 70 megawatt (MW) project would consist of up to 28, 2.5 MW generators at a site northwest of Withrow in Douglas County.

In 2006, Washington state voters approved ballot initiative 937. The measure requires utilities serving 25,000 people or more to produce 15 percent of their energy using renewable sources by 2020. In response to I-937, Douglas PUD began investigating potential qualifying renewable energy resources in Douglas County that could be developed, anticipating that growth in Douglas PUD's service area will meet the 25,000 customer benchmark. The Withrow Project proposal is the culmination of that effort.

At the request of county regulators and direction of the Douglas PUD Commission, the PUD investigated the largest possible project that could be built. This effort resulted in a potential 160 MW project covering approximately 15,000 acres. The WDFW expressed strong reservations about potential negative effects on the Douglas County Greater Sage-grouse population. The Greater Sage-grouse is a federal ESA candidate and is listed in Washington State as a threatened species. The species currently exists in only two populations in Washington, the larger of which occurs in Douglas County. Neither Douglas PUD, nor the WDFW, was willing to pursue a project that could potentially have a significant negative impact on sage-grouse. Although wind energy development effects on sage-grouse are largely unknown, both parties felt the potential risks were too great.

WDFW and Douglas PUD developed a new project proposal

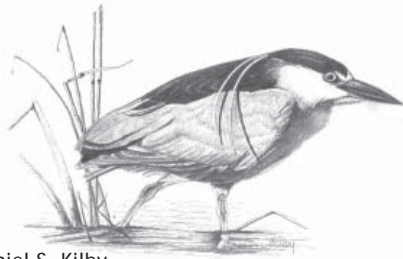
that minimizes potential impacts to sage-grouse.

The current project layout is consistent with both the Washington State Wind Power Development Guidelines published by WDFW (www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/engineer/windpower/index.htm), and the National Audubon position on wind power (www.audubon.org/campaign/windPowerQA.html). Douglas PUD is continuing to investigate whether to proceed with the current project configuration.

Beau Patterson received a BS in Wildlife Management from the University of New Hampshire in 1988, and an MS in Zoology and Physiology from the University of Wyoming in 1996. Prior to joining Douglas PUD, he worked 14 years as a wildlife biologist for the states of Wyoming and Washington, most recently as the WDFW district wildlife biologist for Chelan and Douglas Counties. He was a founding member of the Wyoming Sage Grouse Working Group, and continues to be a representative on the Washington State Sage Grouse Working group.

Following the presentation, program attendees are invited to join the speaker for informal discussion and refreshments.

Here are some online articles about wind power:
www.enn.com/press_releases/2486
www.wildlifemanagementinstitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=64:growth-in-wind-power-spurs-efforts-to-reduce-impacts-to-wildlife&catid=34:ONB%20Articles&Itemid=54
www.nature.org/magazine/autumn2009/features/index.html
www.hcn.org/issues/41.22/wind-resistance
Photos of existing wind power sites in Washington are on pages 4 and 7 of this newsletter.



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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NCW Audubon is in the enviable position of having enough funds to continue its programs in 2010. Other Chapters around the state and country are being forced to cut back on education activities and also to give up on printed newsletters. Our membership should be proud of our sound fiscal situation. Based on last fall's membership survey we have developed lofty plans to increase the number of field trips offered and also to have an increased presence on the Web so that we can provide interactive communication with our members regarding all things 'Bird' around North Central Washington. However, we do have a large deficit of active members. This is about to become painfully obvious. Our longtime (really long, long time) president, Mark Oswood is preparing to step down this summer and we have no one ready to fill his shoes. Not only has Mark acted as the president all this time, over the years as positions have opened and no one has stepped forward to fill them, he has added them to his duties. Some of the other jobs he has been doing include organizing and hosting our programs, recording meeting notes and handling all correspondence, shepherding the folding and mailing of the newsletter, fund raising, membership and education. You've seen the yearly articles asking folks to step forward and volunteer to be on the board. We have had little or no response to these articles. In the future, you may not see those articles again. Also you may not see NCW Audubon represented at Leavenworth's BirdFest or Salmon Festival. You may not see anymore NCW Audubon programs at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center or Barn Beach Reserve. And without people to support any of our activities, there won't be any reason to have a newsletter either. So take some time and think about it. Perhaps you would like to volunteer for our education activities, organize some programs, work on fund raising, take care of mailing and correspondence, or step into Mark's shoes and take the leadership of North Central Washington Audubon Society.

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.

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Chapter Code C9ZY100Z

Winter Birding with Dan Stephens on the Waterville Plateau

by Teri J Pieper

Dan Stephens will lead his annual field trip to see the wintering birds of the Waterville Plateau on February 6. Meet at the Easy Street Park and Ride near Wenatchee at 8:00 am to carpool and plan to return by 4:00 pm. Bring warm clothes, water, something to eat and don't forget your optics and bird books! Possible species include Snowy Owl, Gyrfalcon, Snow Bunting, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Shrike and many more. For more info contact Dan at 509-782-4890 or 509-682-6752.

Trumpeter Swan Shot Near Lake Roosevelt

by Teri J Pieper

On Monday afternoon, December 28, 2009, one adult Trumpeter Swan was shot by an unknown shooter, and had to be euthanized by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The shooting occurred on the Colville River, at the Valley-Westside Road crossing about three miles west of Colville.

This swan was in a group of three birds including one young bird, and had been in the Colville area since at least December 22. The disposition of the other two birds is unknown, although it is fair to assume that they were also fired upon.

Needless to say, local residents and birders were outraged. Warren Current of Colville, reports that the local birding

community centered around Colville and Stevens County has initiated a reward fund, reaching \$2000 of pledges, for the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator. Money will be collected in the event of an arrest and conviction. There has also been considerable support from members of the Washington Trumpeter Swan Society.

Three days after the shooting a lone Trumpeter Swan was spotted on Lake Roosevelt near the mouth of the Colville River. This is approximately seven miles west of the shooting incident. This may be one of the original three viewed on the Colville River prior to the shooting. There seems to be no known history of repeated Trumpeter Swan sightings in this area.

The Key to Understanding Trumpeter Swans: Family Bonds and Traditions

from The Trumpeter Swan Society Website

Trumpeter Swan survival is based on a foundation of strong family bonds and crucial learned patterns of habitat use (traditions) acquired by associating with older more experienced birds, usually family members.

Trumpeters may live 20-30 years in the wild. They usually maintain very predictable annual movement and habitat use patterns unless faced with a significant habitat change. In turn, they teach these patterns to their cygnets.

Pairs usually mate for life and return each year to the same nesting wetland, often using the same nest mound. After gaining flight in September, cygnets follow their parents to their wintering area and learn its resources and hazards while they remain with their parents through their first winter.

Cygnets often remain with their broodmates through at least their first year and may regroup with their parents at the usual family wintering site in subsequent winters. These strong family bonds help cygnets continue to learn key migration routes and food resources from more experienced adults.

When Trumpeters were reduced to near extinction, the damage was much greater than simply the great decline in numbers. Crucial knowledge of traditional migration routes and winter food sources was also lost. Recreating that

knowledge is one of the greatest challenges in the effort to rebuild secure populations.

For more information, read the 1955 classic "Travels and Traditions of Waterfowl" by H. Albert Hochbaum. A founder of TTSS, Hochbaum's final chapter "Broken Traditions" provides eloquent recognition of this invisible and long-term damage to Trumpeter Swan populations.

This is a follow-up to November's article on wintering Trumpeter Swan sightings.



Photo credit www.jessleephotos.com

The Wild Phlox February 2010

Woodpeckers of the Northwest

Back by popular demand, James Luther Davis (author of *The Northwest Nature Guide*) will present a program on “Woodpeckers of the Northwest.” The program, in partnership with “A Book for All Seasons” bookstore, will be held in The Barn, at Barn Beach Reserve, Friday February 19, at 7:00 p.m.

Wenatchee Valley Environmental Film Series: *Big River* and *Watershed Revolution*

Tuesday, February 16, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

The Wenatchee Valley Environmental Film Series will present two short films about rivers. *Big River* is a 30-minute documentary about the ecological consequences of industrial agriculture. The sequel to *King Corn*, it traces two college friends’ investigation of the environmental impact their acre of corn has on people and places downstream. *Watershed Revolution* interviews people working to protect the Ventura River in California through wetland restoration, open space acquisition, dam removal and water quality projects. Films sponsored by Washington Rivers Conservancy; series presented by WVMCC, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, Trust for Public Land. Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center, 127 S. Mission, Wenatchee (888-6240). \$5 suggested donation.

A New Book from Pete Dunne

by Teri J Pieper

Meredith Spencer sends this recommendation for a good read. It is Pete Dunne’s new book: *Prairie Spring; A Journey Into the Heart of a Season*. She says it sounds like this is a first in a four-part series. His wife is a photographer and together they spent 4 months in a RV, with dogs, enjoying spring on the prairie. Quoting from a review at www.birderslibrary.com, ‘As spring unfolds, the Dunnes move about America’s heartland, stopping in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, and South Dakota. Birds, of course, figure prominently into the account, as many of the characteristic species of this region are encountered. However, unlike Dunne’s previous *Feather Quest*, it does not focus exclusively on birds. It encompasses the entire ecology, and even history, of the American prairie. Topics range from birds to buffalo, farms to fire, wildflowers to weather.’

The Ecology of Winter Field Class

by Mary Kiesau

The Methow Conservancy presents The Ecology of Winter Field Class on February 20th. There is plenty for naturalists to enjoy afield in winter. On this 4-hour outing, we will practice our winter plant identification skills, follow animal tracks to decipher what kind of mission they were on, and observe the behavior of the winter birds we encounter. We will talk about the remarkable adaptations that allow plants and animals to survive the ‘energy bottleneck’ of winter....all the while watching for the first signs of spring! This fieldtrip will be conducted on skis (preferred) or snowshoes, and is limited to 15 people. You bring your own lunch. Cost is \$15/person and registration is required. Contact Mary at 996-2870 or info@methowconservancy.org to sign up or for more info

Spring Audubon Council of Washington

The Spring Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) will be hosted by Rainier Audubon Society March 19 – 21. It looks like they’ve got a great lineup of speakers and topics headlined under the theme ‘**Your Backyard – It’s Habitat!**’ The Featured Speaker will be Russell Link, Author of *Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest* and *Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest*. Guided field trips will go to Hylebos Creek, Shadow Lake Bog, Puget Sound Waterways and Green River Natural Resource Area (aka Kent Ponds).

To find out more information about this gathering of all of Washington’s Audubon Chapters see the Rainier website at www.rainieraudubon.org.



Wind power in the Columbia Hills.
Note pickup trucks in lower left next to tower.
Photo by Michael A. Schroeder.

Washington Ornithological Society Conference in Wenatchee

by Scott Downes

The 22nd annual conference of the Washington Ornithological Society will be held in Wenatchee at the Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center. The dates are June 11-14, 2010.

Wenatchee is central to a diverse suite of birds and habitats and this theme will be emphasized in the offering of field trips and the Saturday evening banquet talk. Field trips have been selected to cover a wide array of places and habitats, stretching from Lake Chelan in the north to Blewett and Colockum Pass in the South. To the west, trips will go as far as Lake Wenatchee where it encroaches on the higher east-slope Cascade environs. To the east, trips will range as far as the Waterville Plateau where shrub-steppe species intermix with lakes that hold breeding waterfowl and shorebirds. Another unique aspect of the area is the diversity of owling opportunities. A total of five night trips have been planned to four locations where owl diversity may include as many as six owl species in one trip. A unique night time trip is centered on Moses Coulee where Poorwills will be the focus along with another night flier, the spotted bat. The spotted bat is the only bat species in Washington whose calls are actually audible to the human ear!

The Wenatchee area is also home to one of the more endangered avian species in Washington State - the Spotted Owl. WOS and the USFS have agreed to not target this species during night trips, so as to not harm or stress the species. The leadership of WOS believes that species well-being comes before lists and it is the hope that WOS members share in this goal. As a compromise to this, the USFS has offered WOS a special invitation to view an active Spotted Owl territory by day under the supervision of the USFS. The Friday Blewett Pass trip will get this opportunity.

A large selection of trips are being offered; a total of 38 daytime trips to 15 different locations and five night trips to four locations. Dan Stephens, WOS board member and Wenatchee Valley College Biology professor, worked closely with other WOS board members to create an interesting list of field trips with something for everyone. As with previous conferences, field trips are limited to 12 individuals in three autos for daylight trips and six in two autos for owling adventures - so register early! Also, please consider carpooling from your home to the conference.

In order to optimize the birding experience for participants, carpooling will be used for all field trips. All field trips will depart from the Red Lion Hotel & Conference Center in Wenatchee. Trips and trip leaders may be subject to change. If you possess a US Forest Service Pass or a WDFW sticker, please bring it along. Also, if you have an FRS radio, please bring it too. Check the website at www.wos.org to see updated field trip descriptions, trip leaders, and other further information as it becomes available. Note that mileages are only approximate, exact mileage will vary depending on the exact route taken.

We have designed a variety of trips, including one half-day trip called Wenatchee Hot Spots. This trip should return by 1:00 each day for those that need a little break in the weekend, but still want a field trip every day. Complimentary with this half-day trip is an afternoon field sketching workshop by local artist and biologist Heather Murphy from 2 - 4 pm on Saturday. Be sure to check out the description under the field trips if this interests you. She is the artist for the Conference T-shirts. The board knows that it is not possible to please everyone, and they hope a variety of trips and trip lengths will help to

make an enjoyable weekend for all. In addition to the wonderful trips and habitats are the list of leaders, many who are among the best in the state and are well known and popular leaders.

Friday evening, the Washington Bird Records Committee will present **The Art of Vagrants**. Have you wondered how people target rare warblers during migration? How it's possible to scan a mudflat full of peeps to find that rare stint? Members of the WBRC will help show the tricks to this "magic". Information including migration patterns, how weather relates to vagrants and identification tips for picking vagrants out of flocks of similar species will be revealed.

Saturday evening, Ken Bevis will present **Black Rocks to White Snow Fields: Birds and Habitats of North Central Washington**. Habitats in this region vary widely, from breathtaking high mountains, to subtle shrub steppe. The pictures and words will tell a story. Understanding the habitats of the area can help members know and appreciate the varied bird distribution of North Central Washington

So mark your calendars for June 11-14, 2010 and begin to think of all the wonderful field trips to participate in. Registration begins April 1st!

Editor's note - Registration materials are available on the WOS website (www.wos.org) beginning February 1. This conference is open to all WOS members. The mission of WOS is to increase knowledge of the birds of Washington and to enhance communication among all persons interested in those birds. Basic individual membership is \$25. The cost of the conference is \$45 and each field trip costs \$10. Accommodations and meals are available at the Red Lion. Please see the WOS website for details.

Think Spring!

Native Plant Society Spring Social

by Susan Ballinger

The Wenatchee Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society invites members and non members to the annual chapter Get Ready for Spring Social on February 18, 2010 6:30- 9:00 PM. The evening begins at 6:30 PM with socializing while enjoying savory hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer, or soda. A large collection of regional wildflower guides and herbarium specimens (pressed plants) of locally common bisquitroots will be on display. A slide show program follows to give a visual jump-start for the parade of spring wildflowers that will soon carpet the Wenatchee Valley. Attendees can take home a species lists for common plants of the Wenatchee Foothills. The social will be held at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, 127 S. Mission Street in Wenatchee. The event is free.

This is a chance to get acquainted with members and to learn more about the Washington Native Plant Society. For more information about the chapter, visit www.wnps.org/chapter_info/wenatchee/home.html or contact local chapter co-chairs Susan Ballinger (skylinebal@gmail.com) and Pam Camp (pacamp@nwi.net)

Members of the Washington Native Plant Society share a common interest in Washington's unique and diverse flora. We represent all levels of botanical knowledge, from professionals and experienced amateur botanists, to beginners just becoming curious about the beautiful plants and habitats of our state.

For more than 25 years the Washington Native Plant Society has enjoyed educating itself and others about the value of plants native to the Evergreen State. Public outreach efforts such as our successful Native Plant Stewardship Program, our Ivy OUT Program and Growing Wild heighten the awareness of the value of native plant ecosystems and sustainable living.

Conservation and advocacy make the Washington Native Plant Society the voice for native plants. Our greatest conservation work is on-the-ground and around the state where hundreds of Society members volunteer their time to restore habitats, strive for good conservation policies, conduct native plant inventories and monitor rare plant populations.

Budget Issues in Washington

by Teri J Pieper

The governor is required by law to present a balanced budget to the state legislature. This year Governor Gregoire had to find 2.6 billion dollars to cut. So far, she has identified \$779 million in additional funding but that still leaves nearly \$2 billion in program cuts.

One program identified for elimination is the Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The WNHP manages site-specific and species/ecosystem-specific information on priority species and ecosystems; those that are rare or have very limited distribution.

Specifically, the WNHPs mandate is to:

- Identify which species and ecosystems are priorities for conservation effort,
- Build and maintain a database for priority species and ecosystems,
- Share the information with others so that it can be used for environmental assessments and conservation planning purposes.

In addition to the maintenance of priority species and ecosystems information, the WNHP provides assistance in the selection and nomination of Natural Area Preserves (NAPs) and Natural Resources Conservation Areas

(NRCAs). NAPs and NRCAs, managed by the Washington Natural Areas Program, are sites established to protect outstanding examples of native ecosystems; habitat for endangered, threatened, and sensitive plants and animals; and scenic landscapes.

The WNHP is also part of NatureServe; a network of 80 natural heritage programs located in all 50 states, all Canadian provinces, and several Latin American and Caribbean countries. NatureServe, together with its natural heritage and conservation data center partners, collects and manages detailed local information on plants, animals, and ecosystems, and develops information products, data management tools, and conservation services to help meet local, national, and global conservation needs.

In these days of difficult economic times, we all know that some programs will have to be cut or taxes will be raised. If this program is important to you, contact your legislators, Peter Goldmark (Commissioner of Public Lands) and the governor.

editor's note - this is only one of many programs around the state in danger of losing their funding. To learn more about this program please see www.dnr.wa.gov, www.natureserve.org/, or www.wnps.org/

Electronic Devices in the Field

How Do You Use Them?

by Teri J Pieper

The Cornell Blog of Ornithology recently announced a new eBird app for the iPhone called BirdsEye. With it, tech savvy birders have resources to identify birds, see photos of each species, listen to recordings of bird songs and calls and read tips on behavior and habitat. These tips were written especially for the app by long time birding veteran and author Kenn Kaufman. BirdsEye will even keep track of life lists and will tell you how

many birds near you could be lifers! So far it is only available for iPhone but the website indicates it may be developed for other so called 'smart phones' like Droid or Blackberry.

Being a person badly in need of a new cell phone and having lusted after the iPhone for no practical reason I can identify, I am curious to learn about other birders' experience in the field with these so called smart phones and/or mp3 players. More

and more interesting 'apps' are being developed for these devices all the time and I am curious to know how people are using them. Also, I wonder about the learning curves? And do you ever wonder if being buried in your electronic device you might miss something actually happening?

I'd love to hear about experiences you've had or you have observed for a future Phlox article.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12 - 15

What is the Great Backyard Bird Count?

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. We'll be adding updated GBBC materials for the next count as they become available.

Why Count Birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time. Scientists use the counts, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more meaningful and allows scientists to investigate far-reaching questions.

How to Participate

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.
2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. You may find it helpful to print out your regional bird checklist from www.birdsource.org

to get an idea of the kinds of birds you're likely to see in your area in February. You could take note of the highest number of each species you see on this checklist.

3. When you're finished, enter your result at www.birdsource.org. You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission on March 1st.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.

(editor's note – if you need assistance getting your data onto the web, let us know, we will send you data forms and then you can then send them back to us and we will take care of getting the data online. See contact info for NCW Audubon on Page 2)



The Wild Horse wind power project near Ellensburg.
Photo by Michael A. Schroeder.

February 2010 Wild Phlox

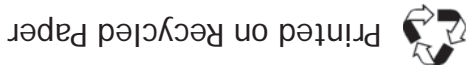
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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

February 6	Bird the Waterville Plateau	Dan Stephens leads the trip. See page 3
February 11	Withrow Wind Energy Project	Monthly Audubon program. See page 1
February 12 - 15	Great Backyard Bird Count	Count your birds! See page 7
February 16	Big River & Watershed Revolution	Wenatchee Environmental Film Series. See page 4
February 18	Native Plant Society Social	Get ready for Spring Willdflowers. See page 6
February 19	NW Woodpeckers	Barn Beach Reserve. See page 4
February 20	Winter Ecology in the Methow	Methow Conservancy. See page 4
March 19 - 21	Audubon Council of Washington	Hosted by Rainier Audubon. See page 4
June 11 - 14	Washington Ornithological Society	Annual conference in Wenatchee! See page 5



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