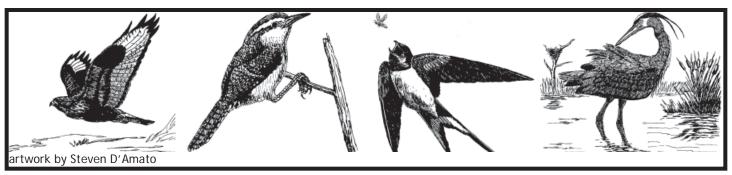
NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE WILD PHLOX



Volume 43 #9 June 2010

Many Birds Potentially Affected by the Gulf Oil Spill

Many bird species, in the midst of spring migrations across the Gulf, rely on healthy marshes and beaches as resting spots before they continue their journeys further north. Many other species are beginning to nest and breed in sensitive Gulf wetlands. The following are a few of the birds threatened by the oil spill.

Brown Pelicans – the state bird of Louisiana – nest colonially on barrier islands and feed on fish in nearshore waters. They have just begun their breeding season, and many pairs are already incubating eggs.

Reddish Egrets are large, strictly coastal egrets known for wild dance-like behavior as they hunt for prey in the surf. Their numbers have dwindled due to habitat loss and disturbance, and because they are specialized residents of coastal environments, they have nowhere else to go if their feeding and nesting grounds are fouled by oil.

Other large wading birds: Many herons, egrets and other species feed in marshes and along the coast, and they nest in large colonies called rookeries. The central Gulf Coast region hosts continentally significant populations of many of these birds.

Beach-nesting terns and gulls: These birds nest and roost in groups on barrier islands and beaches. Some species have begun nesting or building pair bonds in preparation for nesting. Because they roost and nest directly on the sand and plunge-dive into the water to catch fish, they are extremely vulnerable both to oil on the surface of the water and oil washing ashore.

Beach-nesting shorebirds: These birds nest on the ground on barrier islands and beaches. They feed on small invertebrates along the beach or – in the case of oystercatchers – on oysters.

Marsh birds: Secretive marsh-dwelling birds are at risk if significant amounts of oil wash into coastal saltmarshes. Because many of these birds are so secretive, their population dynamics are already poorly understood, and recovery

from The National Audubon Society efforts would be difficult or impossible if oil accumulates in the marshes where they live. These include Mottled Duck, Clapper Rail and other rails, Seaside Sparrow and other marsh-dwelling songbirds

Ocean-dwelling birds: Birds that spend a significant portion of their lives at sea may be affected by oiled seas. If they make contact with the oiled water, they could ingest oil or get it on their feathers, and the presence of the oil could also affect their food supplies. These birds are difficult to monitor,



Reddish Egret photo by Bill Stripling, courtesy of the National Audubon Society

and potential impacts of the spill on their populations is not fully understood.

Migratory shorebirds: These birds' lives span the entire western hemisphere. Many species are currently en route from wintering grounds in South

America to breeding grounds in boreal forests and arctic tundra. They congregate in great numbers on beaches and barrier islands to rest and refuel during their long journeys.

Migratory songbirds: Many of our most colorful and familiar summer songbirds fly nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico twice each year as they migrate between their breeding grounds and wintering grounds. The biggest push of spring migrants moves across the gulf during a two-week period from late April to early May. They depend on clear skies and healthy habitats on both sides of the gulf in order to survive the journey.

Audubon staff and volunteers are following impacts of the gulf oil spill on birds and other wildlife.

For current updates, see www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/gos/dispatches.html



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."

NCW Audubon Contacts
President - Mark Oswood
662-9087 moswood@nwi.net
Vice President - Vacant
Treasurer - Teri J Pieper
630-6224 teripieper@hotmail.com
Secretary - vacant

Education - Mark Oswood 662-9087 moswood@nwi.net Newsletter - Teri J Pieper 630-6224 teripieper@hotmail.com Membership - Mark Oswood 662-9087 moswood@nwi.net **Conservation** - Jeff Parsons 548-0181 jparsons@nwi.net Bird Sightings - Torre Stockard birdsightings@ncwaudubon.org Field Trips - Karen Haire 548-4566 karenhaire@nwi.net **Programs** - Bridget Egan 433-7306 mtnegan@gmail.com Webmaster - Torre Stockard webmaster@ncwaudubon.org

Board Members -

Jeanie Garrity
667-2407 wtanager@nwi.net
Penny Tobiska
ptobiska@nwi.net
Rachel Scown
860-6676 raeplay6@aol.com
Heather Findlay
846-0475 heather@eaglesun.net

Other Contact Information www.ncwaudubon.org/ info@ncwaudubon.org ncwaudubon.blogspot.com/ PO Box 2934 Wenatchee WA 98807 In between all the exciting weather and the daily arrival of colorful neotropical migrants, it's amazing

Editor's Note

that any work gets done at all. And let's not even mention the spring wildflowers (On a bird walk this week our group was lucky to see Calypso orchids and the bitterroot flowers are bursting out all over). Yesterday, after the Black-chinned Hummingbirds arrived, our feeders went through two quarts of sugar water (one cup sugar to four cups water). The Evening Grosbeaks, along with Cassins Finches, Pine Siskins, Red-winged Blackbirds and the newly arrived Blackheaded Grosbeaks, among others, have gone through fifty pounds of black oil sunflower seed in about ten days. At the nest, the single young Red-tailed Hawk is gaining real feathers and growing like mad. With only one bird in the nest, this nestling gets all the benefits of both parents' hunting skills. I'm sure glad I am not feeding that one too!

Looking through this newsletter, a person might think that all the interesting stuff is happening in the northern part of our region. I'd sure like to highlight the birds and birders of Chelan and Douglas Counties also. Keep this in mind as you are enjoying your summer, and think about submitting an article or picture from your summer birding adventures.

On the top of page four, you will find an article by Torre Stockard asking for help to create a birding guide for

NCW. Do you have some ideas for that? Be sure and send them to her. This is the last Wild Phlox til September. So for the summer, watch Ponderings and Peregrinations (ncwaudubon. blogspot.com/) for the latest updates, and check the website (www.ncwaudubon.org/) for more information on NCW Audubon, birds and birding around the area.

Juvenile Bald Eagle photo by Teri J Pieper

Chapter Code C9ZY100Z



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Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Nine Issues \$15				
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North Central Washington Audubon Society

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Many Thanks to the Generous Donors who keep NCW Audubon Aflight

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

So many nonprofits are in the talons of a raptorial economy. Spare money is sparse, all over. We are, therefore, exceptionally grateful for the donations that let us serve you and your families and our community. Your donations are massively multiplied (because we are all volunteers), as captured in the famous equation: $e = mc^2$, where e = the energy to accomplish good stuff, m = motivated volunteers, and c = your contributions.

We have a once-a-year donation appeal, in late summer. Donations from August to mid-November, 2009 were reported in the December Phlox. Below we list, with remembered gratitude, donations made since then.

Bill and Janice Asplund	Ralph and Betty Hagenbuch	Chris Rader
Pattie Fehr Baumgardner *	Ken Heinle *	Meredith Spencer
Janet and Dale Crouse *	Carl and Helen Kjobech	Susan Valaas
Vicki DeRooy	Jeff Parsons **	and four anonymous donors, equally
Thea Fager	Frank Ping	appreciated

The symbols denote donations of special generosity:

- * = \$100 ("Great Blue Heron")
- ** = \$200 ("Greater White-fronted Goose")
- *** = \$500 ("Magnificent Frigatebird")

We checked our records so many times that the records refused to be checked again. Still, mistakes are cryptically colored. If you spot a mistake, please let us know, so that we can see it too and make it right.

Summer Bird Walks

by Teri J Pieper, Twisp

A group of birding acquaintances got together this week for a birding walk in a lovely riparian area along a stream, with beaver ponds and a multi-faceted canopy of aspens and cottonwood, willows and dogwoods, pines and douglas fir trees. One side of the stream had a long open hillside. The couple who brought the group together played their iPod-based bird calls for all of us to learn the various warblers and other spring migrants in the area. It was a delightful morning of good company and good birds, even with marginal weather.

During the course of the walk we discussed doing this regularly over the summer, and at the end of the day we came up with a list of dates when we will meet again for bird walks. Feel free to join us. We will visit various places around the Methow. We do not have a 'leader'. None of us are real 'expert' birders. All birding abilities are welcome and we hope to learn from one another.

We will meet at the MVSTA parking lot next to Winthrop Physical Therapy and Fitness Center at 7:30 am on June 15 and 23, July 6 and August 9. Should we vary from these dates and times, we will post changes to the NCW Audubon blog and website (see page 2). If you have any questions, contact me by phone or email.

Are you organizing bird walks in your area? If so, email them to webmaster@ncwaudubon.org for inclusion on the blog and website!



Barrows Goldeneyes take off at Pearrygin Lake photo by Teri J Pieper

Evening Family Time

Crows jab the silent evening, commanding, screeching, Caw caw caw come home.

Gloria Piper Roberson

Guide Us to NCW Birding! by Torre Stockard, Winthrop

Where do you like to go birding? Do you know of hotspots for particular species? Places to go at different seasons?

We thought it would be useful to create a guide on our website to birding locations throughout our membership region, encompassing Ferry, Douglas, Chelan, and Okanogan Counties. With such a broad North Central Washington membership, we know you folks must have valuable local knowledge of favorite haunts!

Please send information to webmaster@ncwaudubon.org. Examples of helpful information to include are: county,

closest town, land owner, ABA Washington guide page numbers, GPS coordinates, habitat type, name of reserve/park/geographic feature, street names, parking/restroom facilities, whether or not a 4WD vehicle is required, best times of year to visit, species expected. To view a sample

website, please see http://www.lowercolumbiabasinaudubon.

Thanks for sharing!

org/BirdingLocations.htm.

Chance (sometimes) Favors the Prepared Birder, or WTH was That? A Recent Post from The NCWAS Blog

Posted by Don McIvor, Twisp

What a great time of year to be out with a pair of binoculars! Whatever drove me to come inside to this stupid computer... well, more on that in a moment.

Migration is in full swing and the activity level out there is frenetic. It seems that every bird is either trying to gather more food for the journey northward, or organize a nest and corner a mate for a short stay here. And it's a great time to be on the lookout for rarities, if that's your MO.

I was driving to Twisp on Tuesday, following the Methow River home. Just upstream from the townlet of Methow, I glanced over the embankment into the river. The river was down from an early season high water mark, but there was still a lot of water coming down the valley. (editor's note - recent high rains have made the river rise even higher)

What I saw at 55 mph was a pair of Canada Geese (those are the ones that go "honk, eh") bobbing in the water against the far bank, and a pair of birds in the middle of the river that looked exactly like...Long-billed Curlews? Marbled Godwits? Bristle-thighed Curlews?

To the relief of most of my passengers, I rarely turn around for birds. This time I got turned around (twice) and off the road just in time to see the Canada Geese shoot the rapids, and no sign of the mystery shorebirds. At 55 mph you catch so few details, and your mind tries

hard to fill in the blanks. They were bigat least the size of small ducks, but more slender. Their plumage was mottled or "marbled," heads small and necks long in proportion to body size. Any details of the bills were lost against the dark water.

Occam's razor suggests the most parsimonious explanation. Nothing more than a pair of female Mallards, or at best Green-winged Teal, glimpsed too quickly to capture anything but a tangle of field marks and then elevated in my mind to a rarity. Now I just need to get over it and move on.

This morning I took a quick trip to the Beaver Pond at Sun Mountain. I had my binoculars, but I had ulterior motives, hoping our spring rains had encouraged some tasty fungi to emerge. No such luck. But it was a glorious morning and I got good looks at Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers on the pond. There seemed to be an abundance of Red-naped Sapsuckers, and a few Orange-crowned Warblers moving through. Nothing unusual, at least till I got back to the truck.

I had parked on the flat above the pond where the Corral Trail crosses the road, hoping to put myself into Blue/ Dusky Grouse terrain. I heard one, a single distant hoot of derision at my expectations. I parked facing up valley, and was admiring the view of snowy Mt. Gardner when a large bird launched off

the ridge and took to the air. I figured it was one of the Ospreys that perennially nest at the pond. In my binoculars the long neck of the bird and rounded wings dismissed the idea of the Osprey, and I tried hard to turn the bird into a Great Blue Heron, another likely pond denizen.

A long time ago I spent a couple of years chasing Sandhill Cranes, until finally I convinced Utah State University it would be best to award me a Master's Degree so that the cranes and I could get on with our lives. Failing to turn the bird over the Beaver Pond into anything else, I finally had to acknowledge it was a Sandhill Crane. It disappeared below the tree line and settled on the far side of the pond.

Cranes are rare in the Methow. A respectable migration of the birds passes just to the east of us, heading up the Okanogan River to Canada and Alaska. But they rarely stray westward. This year it seems a few did. I heard another report of 200 cranes in the valley. We have some decent breeding habitat for cranes, and it would be wonderful if the one I spotted had a mate and decided to stay. The parsimonious approach suggests otherwise, while a birder can always hang on to hope.

editor's note: Ponderings and Peregrinations, the new NCW Audubon blog, can be found at http:// ncwaudubon.blogspot.com/

Native Plant Field Trips, as Numerous as the Wildflowers

Part 2 - Summer

It's the glorious, gorgeous, growing season – a great time to learn about the wild plants all around us. The Okanogan Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society offers easy meadow strolls, bracing mountain rambles, butterfly watching expeditions, and seed collecting excursions.... from now until the leaves fall in autumn.

All outings are free, but you must contact the trip leader in advance to join a field trip. Some dates and locations may change as the season progresses.

Wednesday, June 9, **Location to be announced.** On an easy-to-moderate walk, Rosalee will tell us about the edible and medicinal properties of the plants we see. This trip is limited to 12 people. To join this field trip notify Rosalee de la Foret 997-0545. princessrosalee@yahoo.com

Thursday June 10, **Robinson Creek.** We'll follow the trail along Robinson Creek; more details to be announced later. Meet at 9 a.m. at the MVSTA trailhead parking lot in Winthrop, near the gym; we'll rendezvous with any Mazama people at the Mazama Store. This trip is limited to 12 people. To join this field trip, contact Karen Edwards, 996-2889. 4tarn2swim@ methownet.com

Sunday, June 20, Quasi-Annual Solstice Butterfly Count

A day set aside to observe and learn to identify butterflies. 9AM-2PM, meeting place and location of the count depend on how the spring unfolds. To join this field trip notify Dana Visalli, 997-9011. dana@methownet.com

Saturday June 26, Goat Peak butterfly walk. Butterflying for beginners, and plants too, with a moderate walk up the Goat Peak trail. Bring close-focus binoculars, nets, jars, and butterfly field guides if you have them. No collecting, just catch-

and-release. Meet at 9 a.m. This trip is limited to 12 people. To join this field trip & get directions, contact Joyce Bergen, 996-7808. magpie@methownet.com

Canyon Walls

Red sandstone banded in purples, grays and whites knows a million years.

Gloria Piper Roberson



It's not just about plants. Here Margaret Fitch examines an Echo Azure butterfly during an April WNPS field trip near War Creek. Photo by Tom Forker

Life Cycle

Sticky, delicate spider lace traps a white moth, mourning widow eats.

Gloria Piper Roberson

July date to be announced, **Shrub-Steppe Seed Collecting**

Rob Crandall, owner of Methow Natives, will demonstrate how to collect grass and forb seeds. Our goal is to collect seeds both for ourselves and for our chapter's Naturally Beautiful Roadside project. Location by Joyce Bergen, Winthrop and time will be announced later in the season. To join this field trip, notify Joyce Bergen, 996-7808. magpie@methownet.com

Saturday, July 10, **Tatie Peak.** Tatie Peak, south of Hart's Pass on the Pacific Crest Trail, is a good place to catch the early summer wildflower peak display. Relatively level terrain until the final quarter mile of moderate ascent to Tatie Peak. Meet at 9 a.m. at the MVSTA trailhead parking lot in Winthrop, near the gym. This trip is limited to 10 people. To join this field trip notify Tom Forker, 996-8256. mpettelle@centurytel.net

Sunday, September 19th, Cutthroat Pass. A one-way hike up Porcupine Creek and down through the Cutthroat Basin, about 10 miles total. We will hike up from Rainy Pass on the PCT, passing through forest and heather meadows and ascending above treeline to Cutthroat Pass, where views and alpine terrain await. The descent includes the possibility of a side trip to Cutthroat Lake and the surrounding meadows. Vegetation is varied, and mushrooms can be abundant in September if it has rained recently. Meet in the parking area behind the Do-It Center and Hanks at 8:00 a.m. or in the MVSTA trailhead parking lot west of Winthrop Physical Therapy at 8:30 a.m. Expect to return to Winthrop at about 6:30-7:00 p.m., Twisp at about 7:00-7:30. This trip is limited to 10 people. To join this field trip notify Sandra Strieby, 997-2576. sandra102@centurytel.net This trip requires a car shuttle and at least two vehicles, so please let the trip leader know if you can drive and the capacity of your rig.

editor's note: On a recent Native Plant Society outing, we spent most of the time looking at birds, including a White-headed Woodpecker, a pair of Red-naped Sapsuckers and many others!

Notes from Bob's Journal Springtime in Mazama

Article and photo by Bob Spiwak, Mazama

I'm looking out the window at a squirrel gorging on bird seed from a hanging feeder that is too close to the table we set out for mass dining. I did this because nighttime temperatures have been near freezing and the ground feeders' food has been blown around and away by heavy winds for a week.

The table draws birds of a feather that flock together and some that don't. It is a nice spring feather salad, twelve feet away from our big window. Yellow birds, red birds, red-headed birds, stripey birds, noisy birds, quiet birds. Three of four perennial favorites

are here now - a pair of Mourning

Doves and a hen Mallard. This is the first drakeless year after many years with the pair, and we wonder what has happened to him. She is at the pond daily. Last evening she was quacking in spurts from somewhere in the brush that surrounds the big pond. The calls are sporadic and I was hopeful she might be calling some young, but there has not been a ripple to indicate there are any around. Calling her mate? Later on, I saw movement about thirty yards across the pond on a rocky slope. I got the binos out and never did see her as a duck, but after several minutes of searching I spotted her yellow feet. Having growing experience in



Birds of a Feather - Cassins Finches at Bob's feeder

birding, I have learned to look a little above the feet to find the bird and sure enough there she was, her camouflage making her virtually invisible on the bank among the rocks. Other than her gaudy slippers. I have surmised that Duc kabella has not yet come up with camo feet for ducks.

My wife made a discovery that keeps larger birds from suet feeder cages. Simply take a plastic sandwich container bottom and upend it over the feeder. This has limited visitors to chickadees, nuthatches and woodpeckers, and increases

the life of the food block.

On a native plant walk last week my wife remarked to a biologist on the trek that we have had no deer on the property this spring. Having been in the area earlier on a tracking outing he responded that you rarely see deer if there is a cougar in the neighborhood, and as I may have mentioned in an earlier treatise, we had at least one very big one close by, and there were signs of several along the river, a quarter mile away.

Last night I saw the first bat of the season doing his batrobatics over the pond so I assume that as the weather begins to gradually warm, there are aquatic insects airborne.

Birding at the Basecamp

Mazama, WA

by Kim Bondi, Mazama

For over 20 years, the North Cascades Basecamp has been a haven for naturalists and recreation enthusiasts. Located up Lost River Rd near Mazama, the 22 acres of old growth cedar forest, beaver ponds accessing the Methow River, cottonwood riparian floodplain, and ponderosa pine woodland provide an abundance of biodiversity and birding opportunities. New owners and birders Kim and Steve Bondi have worked as wildlife biologists for over 15 years, and have worked towards conservation in the Methow Valley for over 8 years. They are excited to share this treasure with others who also appreciate their love for the outdoors.

Audubon's Great Washington State Birding Trail - Cascade Loop Map highlights location number 40 as the North Cascades Basecamp. Walking the Audubon Certified loop trails (since 1986) on the property

during the spring and summer, birders can expect to see Swainson's Thrush, MacGillivray's and Townsends Warblers, Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, Veery, Ruffed Grouse, Rednaped Sapsuckers. Pileated, Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadees, Northern Pygmy-owls, Brown Creepers, and Pine Grosbeaks can be seen through fall. One can hope for a glimpse of the nesting Peregrine Falcons on Goat Wall, or Barred Owls in the near vicinity.

To take advantage of the excellent wildlife habitat and the wealth of naturalist and artistic talents in the Methow Valley, the Bondi's are initiating the North Cascades Ecology Center at the Basecamp. The Basecamp and Ecology Center will host retreats,

lead classes, offer courses, and bring speakers to the facility. Look for announcements of upcoming guided bird walks on NCW Audubon's Ponderings and Peregrinations blog site at nwcaudubon.blogspot.com/.

Stop by to walk the trails, check out the facility, and meet the new owners. You can find the North Cascades Basecamp at 255 Lost River Rd., Mazama, WA or call 996-2334. Visit the website (which will be online in the upcoming weeks) at www.northcascadesbasecamp.com. For more information on the facility and room reservations, see the current website at www.northcascadeslodge. com.

Tiny Bird

His iridescent red-feathered bib shimmers black in summer shadows.

Gloria Piper Roberson

Mark your Calendar for Chelan Ridge HawkWatch 2010

I realize that summer is just getting underway (I hope, today's weather not confirming that) and fall migration seems a long time away, however the Chelan Ridge HawkWatch site will be up and running on August 20th. Mark your calendars and be sure to visit this wonderful research and education site right in our own backyard.

In 2009 observers counted 2,325 migrating raptors of 16 species. 664 birds were captured and banded. Species seen last year included Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Prairie Falcon and Peregrine Falcon, along with some unidentified birds passing quickly overhead and at high altitude.

The Chelan Ridge HawkWatch site, like so many other educational resources, has been seeking grant funds to keep it running. Currently it has enough money for the 2010 season, but its future is always in doubt. If you'd like to support it, donations may be sent to HawkWatch International in

Learn about Nature Photography with the Chelan Douglas Land Trust

by Bridget Egan, Wenatchee

Part of the joy of hiking through the seasons is taking photos to collect images of the many birds and blossoms that we see. Sometimes, though, our excitement outmatches our skill. On a recent trip to Death Valley, I took a record number of photos of the stunning spring bloom. One flower in particular, the Desert five-spot, made me swoon and clogged up my memory card with its striking shape and soft pink hue. When I finally loaded my pictures onto the computer, I had only one photo of that little mallow that wasn't faded, blurry, or just plain not pretty. I've had the same experience trying to capture the play of light on early autumn leaves.

This June, all of us novice photographers can learn a thing or two about capturing the beauty and drama of our landscape from an expert. Mike Irwin, Wenatchee World photographer and writer, is leading a hike for the Chelan Douglas Land Trust that focuses on a low-gear—almost nogear—approach to visualizing images and getting the most of outdoor photographs. Mike's classroom will be the beautiful Wenatchee Foothills where he will help basic and hobby photographers improve their shots. All participants need to bring is a simple point-and-shoot camera and a love for birds, flowers, and vistas. The June 19th class is free but limited to 12 attendees. Call Bridget at 509-667-9708 to sign-up.

by Teri J Pieper, Twisp direct support of Chelan Ridge. Their website is http://www.hawkwatch.org/ and lists all the contact info.

Chelan Ridge is a partnership between the Okanogan/Wenatchee National Forest, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and HawkWatch International. Volunteers are always welcome. In addition, they are looking for staff for the upcoming season. Anyone willing to take on two months of burly field time working with raptors and the public every day, please call Kent Woodruff, US Forest Service wildlife biologist at 996-4043.

Chelan Ridge HawkWatch project will start August 20 and be there every day through October 20. For more information, see the HawkWatch website or call the Methow Ranger District office at 997-4003.

Early Morning Stream

White fog curls beneath a stream's icy blue waters seized in reflection.

Gloria Piper Roberson

Art, History, and Natural History at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center

by Bill Rietveldt, Wenatchee

The traveling exhibit "The Mapmaker's Eye: David Thompson on the Columbia Plateau" (commemorating the bicentennial of Thompson's explorations in the Northwest), will be at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center's (WVMCC) Main Gallery July 2 through September 25.

Another exhibit titled "The Naturalist's Eye: Heather A. Wallis Murphy" will also be on display. It includes wildlife journals from her years with the US Forest Service to the present, along with drawings, paintings and more.

There will be two receptions for the exhibits as part of Wenatchee's "First Friday" series. The reception on July 2 will be in honor of David Thompson, then on August 7 meet and visit with Heather. You can enjoy free admission on both days and refreshments 5 to 7 p.m. For more on David Thompson, author and historian Jack Nisbet will present a program at the museum on Tuesday, July 6. Contact WVMCC at 888-6240 or visit www. wvmcc.org.

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SUMMER 2010 Wild Phlox

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

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