



Volume 48 #7 April 2015

## 2015 Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest

Bird Fest brings together an exciting lineup of events and speakers

by Julia Leach  
Wenatchee River Institute

Celebrate the return of spring and migratory birds to the Wenatchee Valley at the 13th annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, May 14-17!

Throughout the four-day festival, bird by boat, bus, boot, or bike on expert-led field trips and enjoy activities and classes for a wide variety of ages and experience levels. We have several new trip offerings this year, and also will be welcoming back some old favorites.

On Friday evening, UW professor and Corvid expert Dr. John Marzluff, whose research on ravens and crows has been featured in the New York Times, National Geographic, and on PBS, will be speaking at Tierra Retreat

Center's lodge. Dr. Marzluff's new book, *Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife*, reveals how suburbs and city parks may, in fact play a key role in preventing loss of species in the face of the dramatic disruptions of climate change and other human impacts

On Bird Fest weekend, head to Barn Beach Reserve for nature walks and hands-on science activities with Wenatchee River Institute, and arts and crafts projects with Artis, a local visual art non-profit, and long-time Bird Fest partner. Sarvey Wildlife Center will return with their "Alive: Look a Raptor in the Eye" show featuring live eagles, hawks, and owls. Buy and paint your own bluebird box from "Daniel's Birdhouses," and peruse vendor and educational exhibits at Bird Fest's Migration Marketplace.

Enjoy music Saturday afternoon at the Song Bird Concert at Snowy Owl Theatre, with performances by the Marlin Handbell Ringers, Columbia River Flute Choir, and featuring Grammy Award-winning woodwind and ocarina musician Nancy Rumbel. Come early for a pre-concert nature walk around the grounds of Icicle Creek Center for the Arts and an artist's reception at Snowy Owl

Theatre, featuring the work of local artist and naturalist Heather Murphy.

Head out to Red-Tail Canyon Farm on Saturday evening for an outdoor BBQ (reservations required), live music, and beautiful scenery, followed by the Bird Fest Keynote Address. Bird Fest is thrilled to have Kim Bostwick, Senior Scientist for Public Engagement at BirdNote, as our Keynote speaker this year. Kim's research has focused on the behavior and evolution of some of the most unique birds of the tropical rainforests, and she is perhaps best known for her feature on PBS's "Nature," where she danced like a Red-capped Manakin to the tune of Michael Jackson's "Billy Jean."

Learn more about these and the rest of our exciting lineup of 2015 events and speakers at [www.LeavenworthSpringBirdFest.com](http://www.LeavenworthSpringBirdFest.com). Online registration for many events begins on Monday, April 6th at noon.



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."

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North Central Washington Audubon Society is on Facebook too

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

# April Birding Buddies Walk

Come explore the birdlife at Beebe Springs Natural Area on a trip led by Virginia Palumbo on April 18. This area hosts an increasingly diverse array of birds as the area matures after renovation a decade ago. A new beaver pond is bringing in Virginia Rail and Wilson's Snipe. A pair of resident Golden Eagles lives nearby and they are frequently seen. An American Dipper makes occasional appearances, along with a wealth of ducks, shorebirds, passerines and other raptors. This guided bird walk is limited to the first ten NCWAS members to register. Please RSVP to Virginia Palumbo at 682-5969 or palumbov@nwi.net to reserve a spot on this trip.



Gold-crowned Sparrow  
 photo by Teri J Pieper

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To join the National Audubon Society which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see their website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) or drop us a note and we will send you a form for a special rate introductory membership.

We just returned from a two-week road trip to California. Our travels took us as far south as Big Sur and then we returned following the coast of California and Oregon. I cannot count all the miles of windy roads and how many times we crossed the coast mountain range. The first week was more leisurely but on the way back we had to set up and break camp each day. Along with making sure the dogs were fed and walked, I did not have much time for birding. However, I did manage to see two new life birds – California Condor and Lesser Goldfinch. We searched and searched for the condors along the Big Sur coast and looked at more Turkey Vultures than I care to remember. Finally on our last day, as we were heading north, we stopped at a highway pullout and soon Ken said “Look at that one! It’s a condor!” I was skeptical but indeed, it was easy to see the difference. We had brief looks – about three seconds for each of us before it flew inland and away from us. What a treat. The Lesser Goldfinch is certainly not ‘lesser’ in any way that I could discern. The male was every bit as bright and cheery as the American Goldfinches I see around here. At an RV park in the oak hills of northern California, I also enjoyed a flock of clown-like Acorn Woodpeckers making a racket with calls and drumming, presumably to attract a mate.

Back at home, all the snow is melted. We were rather shocked to see the blackened hillsides, dotted with new green growth where they’d been snow-covered when we left two weeks before. Tiny wildflowers were already in bloom – yellow bells, spring beauty, buttercups, bluebells, prairie stars. I am relieved that they survived last summer’s fire. The bigger flowers – balsamroot and lupine – are mostly gone. I see smaller versions of them just starting out, but not the big mature plants. I continued a search I’ve tried several times since we’ve lived here for a tiny wildflower named *Dicentra uniflora* – steer’s head, a rare spring perennial. From descriptions I’ve heard of it, our place has good habitat for this unusual flower. It grows in gravelly soils, at low to high elevations and it likes disturbance. After several failed attempts, I finally did find it, just feet from our driveway! The flower was already fading but there it was – unmistakable! What a relief to cross that off my bucket list.

We are enjoying the Western and Mountain Bluebirds and the Tree and Violet-green Swallows here at home as they check out the nest boxes and hunt for bugs on the fly. The first hummingbirds, Calliope, returned on March 28. It is a week or two early for hummers according to our records of the last seven years. The Red-tailed Hawks’ nests we watched in past years are both gone as a result of fire and wind last year; however I am seeing them in the area so I wonder if they’ve found or built a new nest.



Steers head, *Dicentra uniflora*  
photo by Teri J Pieper

## NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from Tweepers and the  
ncwabird email list by Teri J Pieper

A male Harlequin Duck was seen on the Methow River early in March. Violet-green Swallows returned to much of our region in the first week of March and a Marsh Wren was seen on Roses Lake near Manson. And the same week, a flock of Snow Buntings was seen in the Pipestone part of the Methow Wildlife area. Greater Sage-grouse were displaying at a lek near Leahy Junction in northern Douglas County. In the Okanogan Highlands a variety of winter birds remained early in March: Snow Buntings, Gray-crowned Rosy-finches, Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls. Also in the Highlands a Great Gray Owl, Williamson’s Sapsucker and Ruffed Grouse were seen. In the lower Okanogan, a large flock of Bohemian Waxwings was observed. Dusky (formerly known as Blue) Grouse have been displaying for the last couple of weeks in the Methow. A Western Bluebird, a White-headed Woodpecker and a displaying Golden-crowned Kinglet were seen on Chelan Butte in mid-March. A Canyon Wren was seen and heard in Pipestone Canyon. Sandhill Cranes have been seen, heard and photographed in the hills east of the Okanogan River. Tundra and Trumpeter Swans have been seen on Little Twin Lake near Winthrop. A young Trumpeter Swan was seen on the Okanogan River. In Ferry County, a Pacific Loon was seen on Sanpoil arm of the Columbia. Two Bewick’s and one Rock Wren were seen on highway 21 south of Republic. There were numerous Barrow’s Goldeneyes at Curlew Lake State Park and also at Mud Lake. In Douglas County there was one report of a Great Gray Owl near Badger Mountain! Chestnut-backed Chickadees were seen at Pearrygin Lake State Park. Near Winthrop, flocks of Clark’s Nutcrackers continue to visit suet feeders. Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds returned to feeders near Winthrop.

# Governor Appoints Audubon Volunteer to the Fish and Wildlife Commission

WDFW Press Release

Governor Jay Inslee has appointed fishing columnist Dave Graybill and retired public health physician and dedicated Spokane Audubon volunteer Kim Thorburn to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The commission is a nine-member citizen panel that sets policy for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Members are appointed by the governor to six-year terms and are subject to state Senate confirmation. Three members must reside in eastern Washington, three in western Washington, and three may live anywhere in the state. No two members may live in the same county.

“We’re extremely pleased to welcome these great additions to the commission,” said Brad Smith, commission chair.

“These are two strong individuals and we are looking forward to seeing their perspectives brought to the table.”

Inslee appointed Thorburn, of Spokane, to fill a vacant eastern Washington position that runs through 2016.

Thorburn has degrees from Stanford University and the University of California at San Francisco. She previously worked as a professor of medicine for the University of Hawaii, as the director for Spokane Regional Health

District and, most recently, as the medical director for Planned Parenthood of the Inland Northwest. Thorburn has held offices for the Spokane Audubon Society and Washington Ornithological Society and was the recipient of WDFW’s 2010 Volunteer of the Year award for her efforts to help bring sage grouse and sharp-tailed grouse back to Lincoln County.

The governor also appointed Graybill, also known as the Fishin’ Magician, to a term ending December 31, 2020. Graybill, an avid angler who lives in Leavenworth, writes sport fishing columns for Washington newspapers and has a regular radio broadcast. A long-time Washington resident, Graybill participates in several outdoors organizations, including the Icicle Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Coastal Conservation Association. He also has served on the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Board. Graybill is a graduate of the University of Washington. The governor appointed Graybill to succeed Rollie Schmitten, of Leavenworth, who did not seek re-appointment when his term expired at the beginning of this year.

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## WDFW Begins Status Reviews on 17 Wildlife Species

WDFW press release

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is seeking updated information about 17 wildlife species as part of a review of native wildlife populations listed by the state as endangered, threatened or sensitive.

WDFW will accept public comments through February 11, 2016, on the 17 species, which include the Bald Eagle, Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse American White Pelican, Common Loon, Sandhill Crane and Peregrine Falcon. A full list of the species is available on WDFW’s website at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/status\\_review/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/status_review/).

The comment period is part of a process to update status reports for each species and determine whether the species warrants its current listing or deserves to be reclassified or delisted.

WDFW is specifically looking for information on:

- Species demographics
- Habitat conditions
- Threats and trends
- Conservation measures that have benefited the species
- New data collected since the last status review for the species

Public input is an essential part of gathering the best

available scientific data for any species, said Penny Becker, acting manager for WDFW’s diversity division. “We are interested in obtaining information from the public, including non-governmental groups, universities, private researchers and naturalists,” Becker said. “Such groups and individuals could have valuable data, such as annual population counts or privately developed habitat management plans.”

Written information may be submitted through WDFW’s website at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/status\\_review/comments.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/status_review/comments.html), via email to [TandEpubliccom@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:TandEpubliccom@dfw.wa.gov), or by mail to Penny Becker, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091.

Updated status reports will be posted on the department’s website as they are completed. Additional public comment would be sought if WDFW proposes to change a species’ status after concluding its review. Over the last year, WDFW has accepted comments on 15 other species, including gray wolves, Spotted Owls and killer whales. Updated status reports on those species will be posted online as they are completed. The public will be invited to comment on several more endangered, threatened or sensitive species in the coming years as WDFW conducts reviews.

# Wenas Audubon Campout

## Memorial Day Weekend Wenas Creek Campground

by Doris Johnson

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

The annual Wenas Audubon Campout takes place on Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26) at the Wenas Creek Campground south west of Ellensburg. This casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website ([www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org)) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information. Pre-registration is not required. The campout is free and open to all ages; however, donations are encouraged. Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass ([www.discoverpass.wa.gov/](http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/)). For more information contact Doris Johnson, [dellenj@comcast.net](mailto:dellenj@comcast.net)



Northern Pygmy-owl  
photo by Rick Rottman

by Karen Mulcahy, Winthrop

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## Fodder from the Feeder

Is there anyone who has not seen a pygmy owl this winter? I saw my first on the day of the Twisp CBC. Kudos to Virginia P who was part of our group scouting the Twin Lakes area. She spotted one atop a Ponderosa Pine, near the end of our birding day. We were both so excited we hugged! It was a life bird in the wild for both of us. After this sighting, I began to hear of many more. One of the local glass blowers in the valley had one that hung around just to snack on the finches and sparrows at her feeders. People on the NCWA bird email list kept reporting sightings. Have there always been this many pygmies around? Was there a natural cause? Perhaps Washington State's largest wildfire had some influence?

So, it was not surprising that a few days before Christmas I looked out at our backyard suet feeder and noticed a puffy ball at the foot of the tree where it was hanging. I called to my husband and we both looked, noticed the blood scattered about, and almost at the same time we said pygmy! This tough little bird was chowing down on a mourning dove - a bird almost twice its size. Rick got out his camera and we watched this guy for three days. He stashed that bird in the crook of the tree and came back daily to feast. He moved it several times. He even tried to score another by hanging out on a dead tree snag we have wired up in front of our feeders at our front window. We didn't see him make another kill, but my husband finally got a great shot worthy of next year's Christmas card. The pictures of the pygmy feasting on the dove didn't seem very festive!

The Northern Pygmy-owl is a seven-inch, 70 gram powerhouse that lives and hunts in the montane forests common in our Methow Valley. They range from just south of Alaska down to the Honduras, where they live in

the highland pine and cloud forests. They have two dark patches on the back of their head that eerily resemble eye spots and may fool their predators which are primarily larger owls or raptors. Unlike other owls, they don't have asymmetrically placed ears and are diurnal (out and about during the day), causing ornithologists to believe they rely more on sight for hunting. They mainly eat small birds, but will dine on small mammals or reptiles, and insects. Pygmies don't use human nest boxes and don't excavate their own cavities. They lay two to seven eggs in existing tree cavities. The female incubates them while the male feeds the family.

If you haven't seen one this year, try looking for them perched at the very top of snags or ponderosa pine. It seems the best way to spot one is to listen for their high-pitched evenly-spaced hooting calls. Better still, if you hear a group of chickadees or sparrows kicking up a fuss - they might just be mobbing a pygmy. You can't blame them!



Northern Pygmy-owl with its cached Mourning Dove  
photo by Rick Rottman

# Okanogan Highlands Alliance Presents: Living with Fire

by Julie Ashmore  
Okanogan Highlands

On Friday, May 1, Jason Llewellyn and Dale Swedberg will co-present about fire ecology and fire history, and share our region's story of fire management in the past, present, and future. Dale Swedberg will provide an intro to fire history and fire ecology. Jason Llewellyn will discuss what goes into a prescribed fire, from the decision to use fire as a tool, through the planning phase, to carrying out the plan and keeping fire where it is intended. Comparing and contrasting fire behavior in areas that have been deprived of fire with areas that have been managed with fire, the audience will receive a first-hand account of the dramatic differences. Living in an ecosystem that has been dependent on fires for millennia, we can either tolerate wildfires or support prescribed burning, but it is impossible to have neither. "We all are affected by fire somehow," Jason says, "and without efforts to use it as a management tool, we are going to continue to see large areas of catastrophic fire that devastate communities and the landscape. We live in a fire dependent ecosystem, so we are only able to deny the land fire for so long." This event will demonstrate how prescribed fires emulate natural conditions,

maintaining fire-based ecosystems, and preventing hotter fires that would do more damage than good. Come enjoy this exciting and informative presentation about Living with Fire. As Jason says, "Wildfire is a war, prescribed fire is a tool, no fire is not an option!"



photo by Jason Llewellyn

OHA's educational events take place at the Community Cultural Center (CCC) of Tonasket, beginning at 6:30 pm, with a dinner benefiting the CCC at 5:15 pm. The dinner will be \$7.50 for CCC members and \$8.50 for non-members (no charge for the presentation).

OHA is a non-profit organization that works to educate the public on watershed issues. The Highland Wonders educational series features the natural history of the Okanogan Highlands and

surrounding areas. OHA's Education Program, which is offered free of charge, is designed to build the capacity of the community to steward natural habitats and resources by helping increase awareness of local natural history. Donations are always welcome. Details are provided on OHA's website: [www.okanoganhighlands.org/education/hw](http://www.okanoganhighlands.org/education/hw).

## Native Plant Society Events in the Methow

by Dana Visali, Methow Valley

April 11-12: The Ice Age Floods and Sun Lakes Flora with Dana Visalli. This is an overnight outing to Sun Lakes State Park, where we will walk on and off trail about four miles on both days (the footing is rough and uneven, but individuals can turn back at any time), enjoying spring flowers and practicing our keying. We will also study up on the Missoula Floods that roared through this area 16,000 years ago. We will camp at the park campground, with a little plant keying and folk music in the evening. Contact Dana to join, 997-9011, [dana@methownet.com](mailto:dana@methownet.com)

April 25: Patterson Mountain with Therese Ohlson. This is an approximately three mile round-trip hike with 500 feet of elevation gain.

Therese is a professional botanist; she will have a species list of the plants on the hike for all participants. Meet at 10 AM and bring a lunch for the approximately three-hour leisurely hike.



Yellow bells in a burned area  
photo by Teri J Pieper

Park at the boat launch area midway along Patterson Lake; you should have a Discover Pass for the parking lot, or you

can hope to squeeze into the free area along the road. Reserve your spot with Therese at 997-0118, [peteandtherese@gmail.com](mailto:peteandtherese@gmail.com).

April 26: Goat Wall with Eric Burr. Meet at 9 AM at the Mazama Store. This is a steep, rough foot path up through cliffs, so the group must stay together, but the flowers and views are excellent. Those wishing to hike the three steep miles to Mazama, can arrange their car shuttles at the store. The up and back hike from the climbing rocks is much shorter, but still somewhat steep and rough. Bring a lunch as we'll be very leisurely, weather permitting. Participants have to contact Eric on the 24th, the 25th or the morning of the 26th at 996-3101 as he will be away prior to that.

# Okanogan Birding by Ear Field Class May 31

by Heather Findlay, Okanogan

Join trip lead Mark Johnston for a 'birding by ear' field trip in the Okanogan area. Mark is a long-time birder and has led many field trips for the Seattle Audubon Society. He recently moved to NCW and will continue to lend his expertise and leadership to Audubon members and birders in North Central Washington with field trips, workshops and involvement on our board of directors.

Potential locations for this trip include the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area and Green Lake. More details will be available mid-April. For more information contact Mark Johnston or Heather Findlay (see page 2).

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## Observing and Respecting Roosting Owls and their Habitat

by Dan Stephens, Cashmere  
President, Washington Ornithological Society

Owls, in particular Long-eared Owls, are fascinating raptors that you don't see every day due to their nocturnal habits and secretive ways. When a roosting owl is located, it is natural to want to observe it.

This winter, two Long-eared Owls were found roosting on a road near Stanwood. As word got out, more and more observers visited the site, resulting in dozens of visitors at once - not all of whom respected the owls' needs. They approached too close to the owls, usually in an attempt to get a better photograph.

Roosting owls want to stay as still as possible. This is a defense mechanism so that they remain as undisturbed as possible. There are telltale signs that a roosting owl has been disturbed including a forward crouching defensive stance, wide open eyes that follow the observer, and changing positions on its perch. The very last thing that an observer should do is get too close which causes an owl to flush. Often, a day-flying owl can attract the attention of larger daytime predators to the detriment of the owl.

Study the behavior of the owl to determine how you should proceed once you have located one or if you are tracking an owl that has already been located by somebody else. As a general rule, keep well back from roosting owls as they will

become alarmed. Be aware of your effects on the habitat surrounding the owl. Abide by the established codes of ethics that cover observation and photography of wildlife: Nature Photography: <http://www.naturephotographers.net/ethics.html>

Birding: <http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html>

These owls need all their calories to survive. Please do not force them to use important energy reserves to flee from you or your pets by getting too close. Help these owls to live alongside us without being harassed. If they are left undisturbed, they may return in future years for all of us to once again have the opportunity to observe these magnificent secretive birds.

The Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) was founded in 1988 to to increase our knowledge of the birds of Washington and to enhance communication among all persons interested in those birds. WOS provides a forum for birders from throughout the state to meet and share information on bird identification, biology, population status, and birding sites. Membership is open to all persons interested in birds and birding. WOS is a non-profit organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code.

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## Sandhill Cranes in North Central Washington

Libby Schreiner and Victor Glick got this outstanding photo of Sandhill Cranes east of the Okanogan Valley in March. Have you been seeing or hearing cranes? Their melodic voice is always a vocal reminder of Spring for me.

*Our newsletter is available online at [www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org). There you will see the newsletter photos in full color. It's worth a look.*



***April Wild Phlox***

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**North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar**

Items in bold text are sponsored or co-sponsored by NCWAS

April 11-12	Study native plants at Sun Lakes	With the Native Plant Society. See page 6.
April 18	<b>Birding Buddies</b>	<b>At Beebe Springs with Virginia P. See page 2.</b>
April 22	Earth Day Naturalist Walk	With Chelan Douglas Land Trust. See www.cdlandtrust.org/
April 25	Sam Hill Wildflowers	With Chelan Douglas Land Trust. See www.cdlandtrust.org/
April 25 and 26	Study native plants in the Methow	With the Native Plant Society. See page 6.
May 1	Living with fire	Okanogan Highlands Alliance. See page 6.
May 14-17	Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest	<b>Celebrate the return of Spring. See page 1.</b>
May 23-26	Wenas Audubon Weekend	<b>Birds and flowers of the Wenas. See page 5.</b>
May 31	<b>Birding by Ear</b>	<b>In the Okanogan. See page 7.</b>



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