



Volume 50 #4 December 2016

Christmas Bird Count Season How Many Counts Will You do?

by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

Audubon's 117th Christmas Bird Count will take place this winter between the inclusive dates of Wednesday, December 14th, 2016 through Thursday, January 5th, 2017. Your local count will occur on one day between those dates. Participate in as many counts as you wish!

All participants must make arrangements to participate in advance with the circle compiler but anyone can participate.

There is a specific methodology to the CBC. Each count takes place in an established fifteen-mile wide diameter circle, and is organized by a count compiler. Count volunteers follow specified routes through the designated 15-mile (24-km) diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally - all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day. If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher.

If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler. Check out the sign-up link above during the sign-up season for information on how to contact the compiler.

The data collected by observers over the past century allow Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys, such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long-term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat, and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well.

Christmas Bird Counts in North Central Washington

Bridgeport's count will be held December 15. Meet at McDonald's restaurant in Brewster at 7:30 am. Contact Meredith Spencer for more information at 686-7551 or merdave@homenetnw.net

Leavenworth's count will be December 17. Those interested in participating can contact Gretchen Rohde before December 15 at design@thedesigntax.com. Birders will meet at 4:30 PM in the Red Barn at Wenatchee River Institute, 347 Division Street, Leavenworth, to compile lists.

Chelan's count will be December 28. Meet at the Apple Cup Café at 7:00 am for breakfast or coffee, and to receive circle assignments. Meet in the afternoon at 4:15 at the Lake Chelan Methodist Church for a warming chili supper and to share count reports. Contact Steve Easley, the compiler at 682-2318 or seasley@nwi.net or Dan Smith at 682-9653 for more information.

The Wenatchee CBC will be held on January 1, 2017. Please contact Dan Stephens at dstephens@wvc.edu or 679-4706 to participate.

The Twisp CBC will be held on January 1. Dave Rudholm is the compiler. Participants will meet at the Twisp Valley Grange before and after the count. For more information, contact Dave at davidrudholm1@centurytel.net or 429-1105

The Okanogan/Omak count is January 2. Meet at Heather Findlay's house at 6:45 am. Contact Heather at 429-8167 heather@eaglesun.net for more information.

If you will be traveling in Washington during the CBC season and want to count birds in other regions, see <http://wos.org/cbc/> for a listing of counts around the state.

The mission of the
 North Central Washington Audubon Society
 is "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing
 on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of people and
 the biological diversity of North Central Washington."

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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North Central Washington Audubon Society is on Facebook too

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

Songbird Stamps Take Flight

The U.S. Postal Service® celebrates four songbirds that brighten cold winter days. The *Songbirds in Snow* stamps each features one of four birds: the Golden-crowned Kinglet, the Cedar Waxwing, the Northern Cardinal, and the Red-breasted Nuthatch. Illustrator Robert Giusti painted the original designs in acrylic on canvas board, depicting each bird perched on a snow-covered branch. He and the art director chose these four birds for their color, attractiveness, and adaptability to the small format of a postage stamp. For more information about the featured birds see https://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2016/pr16_063.htm



North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

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

I prefer to get the Wild Phlox electronically (email address required below)

Separate subscription to Phlox NOT needed for NAS members in good standing

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

Please do NOT acknowledge my donation in the Wild Phlox

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Planned Giving: Please consider giving a planned gift to NCW Audubon to support our education and conservation programs for generations to come. Your charitable gift will be tax deductible. It could go to an endowment fund or to a specific program or as a gift to our general operating fund. Remember, your gift to North Central Washington Audubon will go to fund programs in North Central Washington!

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

It's been kind of a dreary damp gray November following the wet October most of NCW experienced. There have been a couple of morning with wet snow on the ground but it was gone by evening each time. The sun rarely shines. November would have been a good month to leave town! I have gotten a lot of inside work done so it's not a total loss. This morning on my regular dog walk I got to see a pair of Northern Harriers hunting on the hill above our house. Also, there was a very dark Red-tailed Hawk and lots of Common Ravens. A mule deer died on our hill about half a mile from here and the ravens and magpies have celebrated the feast.

Our bird feeders are out and filled with sunflower and nyger seeds. I also put out some peanuts in hopes of seeing jays again but only magpies come by to clumsily grab the nuts before flying away to eat them. Most of the feeder birds are House Finches and American Goldfinches with occasional visits from Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and a Northern Flicker. I have also been seeing a Northern Pygmy-Owl and that might explain why we have few small birds at the feeders. One day it even used the bird bath! This one is far more jumpy than the pygmy owls I have seen in recent years, rarely staying still long enough for me to get my camera and make a photo. It's the season of Christmas Bird Counts. How many will you do? Looks



Northern Pygmy-owl
photo by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley



Northern Pygmy-owl
photo by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

like just one for me this year. Someday it would be fun to go someplace warm for the holiday season and count the birds we see here in the summer. Have you ever done that?

The American Birding Association sent out a recent email promoting the organization with a link to their Birders' Guide to Gear for 2016 and also for 2015. These are online publications with equipment reviews covering tripods, gps units, tech tools, clothing and more. They can be found at <http://bg.aba.org/i/753549-nov-2016> and <http://bg.aba.org/i/605604-dec-2015>. Perhaps they will give you some holiday shopping ideas?

Happy Holidays to everyone. Remember – The Wild Phlox takes a winter break; the next issue should be in your mailbox around February 1, 2017!

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from the ncwabird email list and eBird and Tweeters by Teri J Pieper

There were two reports of Black-backed Woodpeckers in the Haney Meadows area near Blewett Pass. Also seen there were Clark's Nutcrackers, Gray Jay and Common Ravens. An American Tree Sparrow was sighted in Horan Natural Area and at Walla Walla Park a Bonaparte's Gull and Red-breasted Merganser were seen. Another report indicated there was a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls. On the Columbia near Chelan Falls there was a Surf Scoter and six Barrow's Goldeneyes. Two Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported at Eagle Creek, near Leavenworth. A Merlin was seen at the Chelan Riverwalk Park.

There were a couple flocks of Bohemian Waxwings, totaling about 40 birds in a crab apple at the corner of L (Heritage, or Woods) and 5th on the southern Waterville Plateau. Rough-legged Hawks and Lapland Longspurs were also seen. There were at least two reports of a Gyrfalcon near Mansfield. Long-eared Owls were reported near Lamoine. Four Greater Sage-grouse were seen west of Mansfield.

A late Say's Phoebe was seen near Winthrop. Snow Buntings were seen on Lewis Butte near Winthrop. A Marsh Wren was seen on Alder Creek near Twisp. A Canyon Wren was reported on Alder Creek Road. Two Golden Eagles and a Prairie Falcon were seen on the trail above Pipestone Canyon near Winthrop. Bohemian Waxwings were reported in the Okanogan Highlands. Sandhill Cranes were seen from the Bridgeport State Park. A Northern Saw-whet Owl was seen in the park. A Long-tailed Duck, Red-necked Grebes and a Pacific Loon were reported at Conconully. An American Three-toed Woodpecker and a Northern Pygmy-owl were reported at Salmon Meadows Campground.

A Bewick's Wren was seen along the Sanpoil River. Bohemian Waxwings were reported in Ferry County.

With Great Gratitude

by Mark Oswood, Wenathceee

Even in times of turmoil and uncertainty, we Auduboners keep on doing the same things. We see birds as windows into the natural world. And we have a long-term care policy about life on earth, terra-generations into the future.

“I was creating the world I wanted ... once it is created, you invite others, and then you attract those who have affinities, and this becomes a universe, this becomes not a private world

at all but something that transcends the personal ...” excerpted from *The Diary of Anais Nin*

Thank you for having such affinity and for being part of the Audubon universe.

Below, we list the people who said “yes” to our annual donation request, through mid-November. We’ll list donors after mid-November in the September 2017 issue of the Phlox.

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We get mail

Dear NCWAS:

My aunt, Anesthesia, is visiting from the Old World. Some years back, Anesthesia became sole heir to the Stroganoff fortune on the passing of her husband, Beef. Anesthesia is a great fan of NCWAS (I send the Phlox along to her) and would like to make a donation. But I've already used my donation slip. What can we do?

Slipless in Leavenworth

Dear Slipless:

We always provide an extra donation slip in the December Phlox, for just such occasions. If your aunt's stay extends into the new year, our Christmas Bird Counts and winter field trips would welcome Anesthesia.

Here is my/our donation of \$_____

Please make checks payable to NCW Audubon.

Thank You!

Name _____

Address _____

Donors will be acknowledged (name but not address) in a future issue of the Phlox. If you do not wish to be acknowledged in the Phlox,

Please check here

Paul Bannick in NCW

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands

Did you miss seeing award-winning photographer Paul Bannick in Wenatchee this fall? You have two more chances on December 6 and January 6 to see and hear him in NCW! Paul returns to our region with a presentation based on his new book, *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls*. In *Owl*, Paul uses his intimate yet dramatic images to follow North American owls through the course of one year and in their distinct habitats. Readers follow along at the nest as each stage in an owl's life is chronicled: courtship, mating, and nesting in spring; fledging and feeding of young in summer; dispersal and gaining independence in fall; and, finally, winter's migrations and competitions for food. For owls, every day brings a new challenge to survive, and this book shows readers how owls use the unique resources available to them in their habitat to face those challenges.

All nineteen species found in Canada and the United States are featured in photos and narrative throughout the book, with a special focus on the Northern Pygmy-owl, Great Gray Owl, Burrowing Owl and Snowy Owl. Paul's startling images reflect their shared behaviors as well as some surprising exceptions and adaptations. More than just a

The Methow Conservancy will host Paul Bannick during its annual Holiday Social on December 6 at the Winthrop Barn. The evening begins at 6:00 pm with a holiday party, featuring free appetizers and drinks. The Methow Conservancy will also announce the recipients of their annual Conservation Awards. For more information contact the Conservancy office at 996-2870 or mary@methowconservancy.org

The Okanogan Highlands Alliance (OHA) will host Paul Bannick at their monthly Highland Wonders event on January 6 in Tonasket at the Community Cultural Center. Dinner is available at 5:15 for \$8 or \$9. The presentation is free and begins at 6:00 with book signing and the talk at 6:30 pm. For more information contact OHA at julie@okanoganhighlands.org or 476-2432

backdrop, the four featured owl habitats—forest, grassland and steppe, boreal, and Arctic—reveal wildly rich stories of their own.

Owl is a stunning follow-up to Bannick's bestselling title, *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, giving bird lovers yet another gorgeous photographic tribute, engaging natural history, and a compelling call to preserve the habitats that sustain these most iconic of birds. *Owl* was recently selected as one of fifteen finalists in

the 2017 Pacific Northwest Book Awards Shortlist, by the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association. More than 350 titles published in 2016 were considered and 6 winners will be chosen and announced in January 2017 (www.pnba.org/2017-shortlist.html).

Paul Bannick is a widely published wildlife photographer specializing in the natural history of North America with a focus on birds and habitat. He has received the Canon Prize of the International Conservation Photography Awards, as well as first place in the "Birds and Their Habitat" category in Audubon magazine's annual contest. He lives in Seattle; learn more at www.paulbannick.com.



Northern Hawk Owl nest
photo by Paul Bannick

Burrowing Owl family. photo by Paul Bannick



Fodder From the Feeder

by Karen Mulcahy, Winthrop

I have been away from the valley far too much this fall season, spending most of my time in the wilds of northern Ontario attending to family issues. It was a joy to return home recently and see fall's beauty fading and lots of fresh snow in the mountains and to see and hear birds and wildlife again. What a stark contrast to where I had just been, and a prescient reminder of the importance of preserving the precious land that is the Methow Valley.

I grew up in Sudbury Ontario, a city about 250 miles north of Toronto, in Canada. Sudbury started out as a forested area on the Canadian Shield east of the great lakes. There are four lakes within the city, and many, many more dot the landscape all over northern Ontario. It must have been a beautiful, although perhaps harsh and forbidding area years ago. No problem. Mankind being what it is - they logged the hillsides, and then proceeded to establish open pit mines throughout the area. When those weren't producing enough, they went underground. The result was a landscape devastated by all of these factors, and during my youth, a place plagued by the worst acid rain in the country. Then they built the tallest smokestack in the world to push the effluent from the smelters into the upper atmosphere where they believed it would dissipate and be less harmful. Instead it proceeded to destroy the surrounding lands.

As I walked the old neighborhoods, I was astounded to see that some of the land has recovered. At one time, many hillsides were so damaged from the process of heap roasting to obtain the ore that you couldn't grow a blade of grass there. Since then a clay mulch spray has been developed that holds grass seeds. Now I see trees where there was once only black rock.

What has all of this done to the birds that should inhabit this area? I am sure they were not as plentiful as other areas in the north back in the 1950's and 60's. Fall migration had already occurred when I visited recently, so birds were not numerous but I could see chickadees and sparrows in the brush that is now more plentiful. There seemed to be an abundance of gull species and crows, but this could be due to the many lakes found there. A quick check of the bird lists for Ontario showed 255 species in Greater Sudbury area; it seemed to be the least number of species for all of the Ontario sections.

I remain hopeful for this ravaged land. Forty-five years ago, many of the lakes in the area were so eutrophic (rich in nutrients and so supporting a dense plant population, the decomposition of which kills animal life by depriving it of oxygen), it spurred a movement to clean them up and restore habitat. They scrapped the existing biology curriculum in junior year and replaced it with an ecology curriculum. The lakes sport fish now, and no doubt, greater bird diversity exists than was present in those past days.

Many of us have heard of the Canadian mining company that petitioned to do some test drilling on Flagg Mountain near Mazama to determine the viability of a profitable copper mine. This mine would be disastrous to the Methow Valley and its ecosystems. Since returning, I have heard that a bill is in the works to protect the valley lands, possibly restricting mining forever. As one who has experienced firsthand the devastation this industry can bring, I can only hope this bill becomes law. Yes, we do need the minerals mines provide but there are certain places that should just not be mined. Trust me, this is one of them.

Winter Field Trips

by Mark Johnston, Leavenworth, Allisa Carlson, Okanogan, and Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

Mark Johnston will be leading a trip for NCWAS members to western Washington on January 21 and 22. The trip will leave from the Easy Street Park and Ride at 6:00 am on Saturday the 21st and return late Sunday afternoon. Birding highlights could include various waterfowl, alcids, loons, grebes gulls, passerines, raptors, swans, Snow Geese and more in a variety of habitats including fresh and salt water and wooded areas. The trip will cover from Seattle and north to the Samish Flats near Mount Vernon. Contact Mark at s697striata@frontier.com or 253-297-0705 to sign up. This trip is limited to eleven (11) birders. Overnight accommodations will be at a motel north of Seattle. Scopes will be very useful. Plan to bring lunch and snacks and dress appropriately for the weather.

Dan Stephens' annual winter trip to the Waterville Plateau will be February 4. Meet at the Easy Street Park and Ride at 8:00 am. This trip often sees Snowy Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, Snow Buntings and other winter specialties of the plateau. For more information contact Dan at DStephens@wvc.edu

NCW Audubon and Seattle Audubon will once again be hosting a two-day field trip to the Okanogan Highlands and potentially going as far south as the Waterville Plateau on February 18 and 19. There are seven (7) spots available for NCWAS members. Contact Allisa Carlson for more information at allisamae@gmail.com or 206-697-3919

Looking Forward to Spring

by Brook Hinton, Leavenworth

Save the Date! This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Leavenworth Spring Bird Festival hosted by the Wenatchee River Institute! Come celebrate an amazing legacy of conservation, community, education, and birding May 18-21, 2017. Volunteer, sponsor, and stay in the loop with all of the details as they unfold at www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.org.

Getting to Know Your Board Members

by Penny Tobiska, Wenatchee

Since we are such a large chapter, geographically speaking, many of us have not had the opportunity to meet face-to-face. (Mark Oswood says our four counties are the size of Belgium.) Therefore, over the next year, the Phlox will profile a board member a month so that you will get to know us a little better. We hope this will facilitate communication between our members and the board. Look for us at community forums, celebrations, and presentations. We would love to meet and talk to you. The following is a series of questions Art Campbell, our president, answered via email.

1. Tell us a little about your background and how you came to be interested in the natural world.

“I grew up on the East Coast - Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. In 1969, two friends and I took the family station wagon and travelled out West visiting the Sierras, Cascades, and northern Rockies. Our visit to Seattle and backpack in the North Cascades was drenched by continuous rain. Despite that damp experience, after graduating from college in 1973, I moved to Seattle, and have lived in Washington ever since. As a child and teenager, although I loved hiking and being in the mountains, I never paid much attention to birds and the natural world. That changed in my last year in college in North Carolina, when, somewhat on a whim, I took an ornithology class. In addition to class and lab time, our instructor took us on several field trips. One of our field trips was to a local golf course. At one point our class was clustered near one of the greens on the course. Far down back along the fairway, a small flock of birds flew across the fairway landing in a tree. Our instructor said, “Stay here”, and took off running down the fairway. We saw him lift his binoculars and then wave frantically for us to join him, where he pointed out a flock of crossbills, unusual in North Carolina. I later asked our instructor what made him take off down the fairway, and he



Art Campbell
photo by Michelle Dewey, Winthrop

said, “It was something about the way they flew as a flock”. I thought, that’s amazing and pretty cool. On a later spring field trip to the North Carolina coast, we saw many birds, including lots of warblers, an egret rookery, and a sharp-shinned hawk flashing by. This trip sealed the deal for me, and I’ve been enjoying birdlife ever since. Since migrating to Washington, I’ve conducted bird and geology field trips, organized and run the Christmas Bird Count in Skagit Bay, and participated

in citizen science bird surveys. In 2011, my wife, Michelle, and I moved permanently to Winthrop, where we enjoy birds year around.”

2. When you are not enjoying birds, what are your interests? “Hiking, photography, sports, reading.”

3. How do you see our Audubon chapter’s role in the “green community” of NCW? “I see our chapter’s role primarily as providing education regarding issues surrounding the preservation and conservation of species, especially birds, and their habitats and as directly advocating for and advancing regional and local efforts to conserve important habitat.”

4. What do you think the future holds for our chapter? “As the North Central Washington region experiences the increasing effects of climate change coupled with the effects and requirements of a growing population, the natural environment issues we focus on will become ever more important and challenging for our region to address. I believe this means that our chapter will serve an increasingly prominent regional role in advocating for the preservation of our native species and habitats and in achieving a sustainable balance in our region between humanity and nature. A key challenge for our chapter in successfully moving forward in this role will be in attracting younger members who become engaged and carry our work into the future.”

Do You Have Over-Wintering Anna’s Hummingbirds?

Susan Ballinger, creator of the Wenatchee Naturalist program is looking for volunteers to count over-wintering Anna’s Hummingbirds at their feeders during the Great Backyard Bird Count. Birders are invited to share their photos of home-made hummingbird feeder heaters on the NCW Audubon and Wenatchee Naturalist Facebook pages. To learn more about the reporting methods and other information watch those two sites next month.

NCW Birds on BirdNote

Did you happen to turn on Northwest Public Radio recently and hear a familiar voice on BirdNote? This fall, BirdNote and Northwest Public Radio (NWPR) took a closer look at conservation issues for birds in North Central Washington (NCW) and what local residents are doing to help. Three different episodes featured local birders including Ken Bevis and Lee Johnson and others. In case you missed the shows on the radio, they are archived at <http://birdnote.org/birds-north-central-washington>. There are links to other BirdNote shows including one that featured Mark Oswood and NCW Audubon’s ‘What’s That Bird?’

December Wild Phlox

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December 6 & January 10	Paul Bannick in NCW with his new book on owls	In Winthrop with the Methow Conservancy and in Tonasket with the Okanogan Highlands Alliance. See page 5.
December 10	NCWAS Early Winter Field Trip	With Mark Johnston. See last month's Phlox.
December 15 - January 2	Christmas Bird Counts in NCW	Find one near you! See story on page 1.
January 21 & 22	Northwest Washington Field Trip	With Mark Johnston. See story page 6.
February 4	Waterville Plateau Field Trip	With Dan Stephens. See story page 6.
February 18 & 19	Birding the Okanogan Highlands and Beyond	Joint trip with NCW and Seattle Audubon. See story page 6.
February 17 - 20	Great Backyard Bird Count	Plan now! See http://gbbc.birdcount.org/
May 18 - 21	Spring Bird Fest	In Leavenworth. Save the Dates!



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