



Get Geared Up for the Great Backyard Bird Count

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17. Anyone anywhere in the world can count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada. “People who care about birds can change the world,” said Audubon chief scientist Gary Langham. “Technology has made it possible for people everywhere to unite around a shared love of birds and a commitment to protecting them.”

In North America, GBBC participants will add their data to help define the magnitude of a dramatic irruption of magnificent Snowy Owls (although not in our region). Bird watchers will also be on the lookout for the invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove to see if it has expanded its range again. GBBC observations may help show whether or not numbers of American Crows will continue to rebound after being hit hard by the West Nile virus and whether more insect-eating species

are showing up in new areas, possibly because of changing climate.



Brown Creeper
photo by Gregg Thompson

Last year’s Great Backyard Bird Count shattered records after going global for the first time, thanks to integration with the eBird online checklist program launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab and Audubon. Participants reported their bird sightings from all 7 continents, including 111 countries and independent territories. More than 34.5 million birds and 3,610 species were recorded — nearly one-third of the world’s total bird species documented in just four days.

Volume 47 #4 February 2014

from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology,
Ithaca, New York

“This is a milestone for citizen science in so many respects—number of species, diversity of countries involved, total participants, and number of individual birds recorded. We hope this is just the start of something far larger, engaging the whole world in creating a detailed annual snapshot of how all our planet’s birds are faring as the years go by,” said Cornell Lab director Dr. John Fitzpatrick.

“Canadian participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count has increased tremendously in recent years, and it’s wonderful to see this program growing globally,” said Bird Studies Canada President Dr. George Finney. “The count is introducing unprecedented numbers of people to the exciting field of bird watching.”

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature and make a difference for birds. It’s free and easy. To learn more about how to join the count visit www.birdcount.org and view the winning photos from the 2013 GBBC photo contest.

editor’s note - if you need assistance posting your bird counts to the website, please contact one of our board members for assistance

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.

Birding Buddies TWO Field Trips

by Jenny Graevell, East Wenatchee

On March 8 Meredith Spencer will lead a trip to Bridgeport Bar (Shrable Corner). This is where we went during the Hawk Festival. Meet at 9:00 am for about three hours. No restrooms are available, so stop in Brewster on your way.

Virginia Palumbo will be leading a walk at the Beebe Springs Natural Area (near Chelan Falls) from 9 – noon on April 12. Three natural habitats are being restored here - shrub/steppe, riparian, and native grasses/wildflowers. With the Columbia River and its side channels and marshes, the beautiful Beebe Creek, native plantings, and plenty of dead snags, there are lots of birds to be seen. We could see eagles, Osprey and other raptors, Great Blue Herons, kingfishers, early spring warblers and swallows, vireos, waterfowl & shorebirds, woodpeckers, maybe a dipper, shrike or river otter. We will also explore a new trail close by, following a smaller creek up to a waterfall. See you there!

Please call Jenny Graevell at 886-4518 to register for either or better yet, both of these great walks. We will keep you posted about these two events on ncwardubon.org and on the North Central Washington Audubon Society Facebook page.

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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 or drop us a note and we will send you a form for a special rate introductory membership.

Remember the birds of last winter? All we could talk about was Snowy Owls, White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, and Pine Grosbeaks! This winter could not be more different when it comes to the birds. And the weather too. My feeders seldom need to be filled. The few American Goldfinches and House Finches are joined by Mourning Doves, the occasional Mountain Chickadee, Black-billed Magpie and Pygmy Nuthatch. Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers round out the list of birds we see daily. There are of course, still Common Ravens, Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles that glide by. We have not seen a Pine Siskin or a Red Crossbill at our feeders all winter. Steller's Jays aren't even coming for peanuts. So what's up with this drastic change from last year? I suspect it is the weather although further north in Canada there are reports of good snow cover. Maybe it's because we have so little snow and all the birds are spread out – not concentrated at feeders? I really don't know. Maybe some good data will be gathered during the upcoming Great Backyard Bird Count to show where the birds are this winter.

There was some good news for the Washington County Cumulative Year List project headed up by Matt Bartels. Two new compilers stepped forward in our region to keep track of the bird species in Chelan and Okanogan Counties. Virginia Palumbo has taken over from Dr. Dan Stephens in Chelan County and NCWAS's Membership Chair, Heather Findlay is keeping track of Okanogan County. To learn more about this all-volunteer citizen science project see www.wabirder.com/county_yearlist.html.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is in the third year of Golden Eagle nest site monitoring. This is part of a greater study across all of the western states. After the past two years of data gathering, forty known nest sites are documented in our state. Our four-county region has a large number of potential habitat areas that haven't yet been checked out. The WDFW relies on eBird reports to document nest sightings. Their office is staff-limited, so this is where citizen reporting (through eBird) could add valuable information. For example, no nest sites have yet been reported in the Entiat Valley although there might be suitable habitat. The breeding season is from February through June, and the report of multiple birds seen in one area would trigger WDFW biologists to seek out a nest. The nice thing about Golden Eagle nest monitoring is that folks can't really get very close to the nests (no hazard to the birds) and the sightings can happen on public access roads, etc. (no trespass issues). So if you are out birding and notice Golden Eagle activity please report it to eBird or if you are not using eBird, please contact one of our board members and ask to have the report made for you.

In early December I traveled to Vieques, an island in the Caribbean that is part of Puerto Rico. This was my first venture to someplace truly tropical and I have to say that I really liked it. A lot. The trip was organized as a yoga retreat but we also spent quite a bit of time on the beaches, snorkeling and exploring the island. I was quite taken with the amazing flora of the place. Plants that struggle as house plants in our arid climate were growing as roadside weeds. I was distressed by the number of introduced and feral animals that were everywhere. Cats, dogs, chickens and horses really have the run of the place while endemics struggle. I saw my first mongoose and iguana and both are non-natives. I was surprised at the lack of birds – both in numbers and biodiversity. I don't know if it was the season or maybe the fact that the island is so small – only twenty miles long, or the fact that it used to be a bombing range for the US Navy and it is still recovering from that or a combination or something else altogether. Still, I managed to add a dozen species to my life list including the colorful Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo. Would I return? Oh yes. The people were friendly; the climate was wonderful; and the snorkeling was really exciting for me, a novice. And I am sure there are many more birds to see.



This Magnificent Frigatebird was not a new species for me but it was one of the few birds I had an opportunity to photograph

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from the ncwabird email list and Tweepers

On December 10 a Snowy Owl was reported on highway 17 between highway 2 and 172. Along the Loop trail in Wenatchee many waterfowl were seen in December including Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, a Wood Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, American Wigeons, Hooded Mergansers and three Snow Geese with the Canada Geese. During the Bridgeport CBC a Black-backed Woodpecker and Common Redpolls were seen in Central Ferry Canyon. On the 24th a Gyrfalcon was reported on the Waterville Plateau, east of Mansfield. Also on the 24th, Red Crossbills were singing in Central Ferry Canyon and in the wheat fields a flock of Horned Larks included a calling Lapland Longspur. On the Columbia there was a Merlin, Pacific Loon and a Bewick's Wren was seen at Cassimer Bar. After Christmas, Meredith saw a Merlin of the prairie or richardsonii race. In the hills high above Winthrop, Pileated Woodpeckers were putting on a show as if it were spring. In early January a flock of 300 Snow Buntings, 20 Horned Larks and 4 Lapland Longspurs was observed near Havillah. Also reported in that neighborhood – Three-toed Woodpeckers and a Northern Pygmy Owl. A Three-toed Woodpecker was reported in Central Ferry Canyon. The Omak CBC featured a Western Tanager! On Chelan Butte there was a pair of White-headed Woodpeckers. Bohemian Waxwings seem to be pretty easy to find. I've seen them in ancient apple trees in different areas of the Methow Wildlife Area and others have been reported on the Waterville Plateau and Okanogan Highlands. Bald Eagles are showing up in greater numbers with calving season underway in the Methow Valley. They are known to eat the afterbirth. Last week I heard singing Red Crossbills near Winthrop.

Who Made Those Tracks?

I am going to share something very exciting.

I used a chart from Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature and Survival for Children to help me identify and track animals. I have found it helpful for learning tracks and you may too.

We saw some very cool coyote tracks on the road to our rural mailbox, about half a mile from our house. I think it is female because of the size of the tracks. Female tracks are smaller. Sometimes she was going slower and then faster. I could tell if she was running because of the spacing between her tracks. The greater the distance between the tracks, the faster the animal was going.

That was when we noticed that the tracks disappeared! But, we suddenly noticed that the tracks turned around. So our coyote didn't disappear, she just turned around. But why? Do you think she was scared of the houses?

I would like your opinion (please). To answer my question, please go to <http://kidblog.org/OutreachExplorers>, and look for "Madeline" in the blog directory.

We saw some (elk or moose) tracks about a quarter mile from our house. We were very excited when we got to see the weird tracks. We measured the width and length



Madeline's hand next to the (mysterious) elk track.
photo by Julie Ashmore

by Madeline Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands of the tracks. Me and my mom used the measurements to find out that the tracks were elk!!

I have a suggestion that will make your tracking more fun. Try this game that I made up that makes tracking more fun for me. It's simple, just find some tracks and then follow the tracks and go at the speed that you think the animal was going. It helps me be like that animal.

Have you gone tracking before? If so please say so on the blog.

editor's note: Madeline lives in Okanogan County near the Canadian border, in the hills leading to the Okanogan Highlands, at 3,000 feet elevation. She is seven years old and enrolled in a school program that allows her to do a large portion of her school work from home, with regular classroom time also. Her time at home allows her to keep a close watch on the plant and animal life around her, learning firsthand through observation. She is also passionate about supporting the highland Common Loon population and can be seen each year at the Barter Faire, pulling her red wagon full of handcrafted items for sale to support loon banding, research, and fish stocking.

PBI Biodiversity Expeditions in South America

by Peter Morrison, Winthrop

Pacific Biodiversity Institute conducts assessments of ecological condition, surveys for imperiled species and advanced spatial analysis of conservation issues. We conduct research and provide information on the status of North American landscapes and biodiversity, wilderness, wildlife habitat, endangered species, forests, wildfires, and alien plant invasions. We also provide assistance in conservation planning and watershed analysis. We offer a variety of conservation science educational programs.

South America is where the incredible biodiversity of the earth reaches its maximum expression. That is why we call it Biota Maxima. South America contains the top 4 countries in the world in terms of bird diversity. It is a bird and nature lover's paradise. You can join Pacific Biodiversity Institute on an expedition to explore South America's biodiversity hot-spots and immense wildlands.

PBI's expeditions (now in their 4th year) focus on exploring and collecting information on the biodiversity and enormous conservation opportunities that exist in South America. We engage in three types of biodiversity expeditions in South America - all tied closely to our South American Wildlands and Biodiversity Project. PBI is looking for

skilled bird enthusiasts from North America to join scientists, conservationists and birders from South America to help document the rich bird diversity of specially selected areas. The expeditions vary in their mission, scope and the degree of comfort and physical difficulty. All expeditions have many of the same elements: exploration of amazing places, participation in science and conservation, birding, experience of the big wild, general wildlife observation, cultural-social connections, archeological sites. To learn more about these expeditions visit our website: http://www.pacificbio.org/expeditions/expeditions_south_america.html

This year, we have 5 expeditions that you might be interested in joining – all in northern Argentina – and all focused on the most important bird areas and biodiversity hotspots of that country. Most of our expeditions are two weeks in duration. You can participate in more than one expedition, if you are qualified. The first expedition starts in mid-February and the last expedition ends in April. For more information about the location and dates of the expeditions visit the web page above.

For more information please see www.pacificbio.org/expeditions/expeditions_south_america.html or email us at expeditions@pacificbio.org

Why Antarctica?

by Marilyn Strickwerda, Chelan

Antarctica is the coldest, highest, driest, windiest continent on earth. When one prepares to go to Antarctica, almost everyone will ask, "Why Antarctica?" On February 17 at the Manson Grange, as armchair travelers, we will journey to the great white continent with Don and Ruth Van Wechel. We will explore a bit of her history, view a portion of her wildlife, and get just a glimmer of her awe inspiring scenery. Sit back and sense the magic she has cast over explorers, whalers, and tourists alike.

Nothing compares to Antarctica is presented by the Lake Chelan Fortnightly Club at the Manson Grange Hall, February 17, 7:00 pm. To get to the Manson Grange: Follow signs to Manson from Chelan on the north shore of Lake Chelan. The Grange Hall is one block past the Lake Chelan Building Supply, at the corner of Wapato Way and Totem Pole Road.



Photo by Don Van Wechel

The Saga of Washington's Fish and Wildlife

On February 7, wildlife biologist Ken Bevis, who is also a singer/songwriter, will provide an entertaining evening of stories, photos, songs and science, to get a closer understanding of some of Washington's fish and wildlife ... sometimes from the viewpoint of the critters themselves! This family-friendly program will be fun for all ages and children are welcome. Species to be featured in this presentation include: bull trout, salmon, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, Snowy Owls, black bear, Sandhill Crane, and more.

"Wild animals are fascinating. I find it extremely interesting to consider their world," says Bevis. "They undoubtedly have perceptions and realities that we can never know, but we can imagine. Mixing biology, music and pictures can take us to that place, and hopefully help us appreciate them more."

Ken is the Stewardship Wildlife Biologist for DNR's Small Forest Landowner office (SFLO), with statewide responsibilities. He helps landowners with 10 or more acres to develop wildlife habitats through on-site visits, teaching workshops, and helping develop Stewardship plans for their lands. This position is a particularly good fit for Ken, utilizing his communication skills as a teacher and entertainer, and wide knowledge of fish and wildlife. Ken is also a photographer and a singer/songwriter who specializes in songs about wild places and animals. Ken is a lifelong hiker, hunter, fisherman, skier, bird watcher and avid naturalist. He has lived in eastern Washington since 1986, and has held a variety of positions in Natural

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands

Resource management in this region. He has worked all across the eastern slope of the Cascades, and has experienced most corners of the beautiful Evergreen State through work and play. Ken attributes his fascination with wild creatures and places back to his native Virginia; playing in the woods, camping with Scouts and family and hunting with uncles.

The Highland Wonders indoor educational series brings the natural history of the Okanogan Highlands and surrounding areas to Tonasket from November through May (skipping December). OHA's Education Program builds awareness and understanding of local natural history, with the goal of inspiring community members to become more involved in the stewardship of our natural habitats and resources.

Okanogan Highlands Alliance is a non-profit that works to educate the public on watershed issues. Highland Wonders presentations are offered free of charge to the community, and donations are welcome. The indoor educational series is offered by OHA, at the Community Cultural Center, the "CCC," of Tonasket (411 S Western Avenue, Tonasket, WA). The February 7 presentation begins at 6:30 p.m. with desserts, tea and coffee; the dinner benefiting the CCC begins at 5:00 p.m. The meal is \$7.50 for CCC members or \$8.50 for non-members; \$5.00 for kids under 12; a dessert and one beverage are included for dinner guests. Details about Highland Wonders are provided on OHA's website: www.okanoganhighlands.org/education/hw. For more information, email julie@okanoganhighlands.org or call 433-7893.

A Movie (coming soon) and a Book (you could read before the movie)

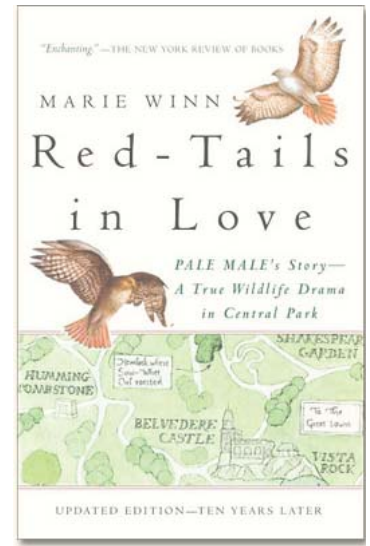
by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

The Legend of Pale Male is the March showing in the Environmental Film Series (Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center; 18 March; 7:00 pm).

We'll have a longer description of the movie in the March Phlox. For now, here's a short description:

"*The Legend of Pale Male* is more than an extraordinary piece of New York history. It documents the mysterious power possessed by a single red-tailed hawk to open the eyes and hearts of die-hard city dwellers to the wonders of nature. Join filmmaker Frederic Lilien, whom we meet as a young man from Belgium looking to change his life, on an eighteen-year journey through life, death, birth, hope, and redemption."

One of the human characters in the movie is Marie Winn, a NYC naturalist and author. She wrote a modern classic of birding books, *Red-tails in Love*, describing the events depicted in the movie (and more). This book and the movie go together synergistically. The book embeds the story of Pale Male in a readable natural history of Central Park. We're thinking that some of you will want to read the book before seeing the movie in March, so that your brain will be filled with places for the movie images to dock.



Notes from Mazama

December and January proved to be eventful in the wonderful world of West Boesel wildlife. The pond iced over and the ducks kept coming for handouts of cracked corn. With minimal snowfall, the wild Mallards, sometimes six of them, could peck away at the surface and not burrow bills into the snow. We had some apprehension about the vulnerability of the birds, and eagerly awaited the day they would do what was expected and fly away to a warmer place where their feeding would be among hundreds of others and not easy pickings for a cougar or raccoon.

We did not consider birds of prey, and one late December day there was a large bird visible through the window. It appeared to be pecking at the seed. At first glance it seemed to be a grouse, a large one, but through the binocs it was obviously a hawk of some sort tearing at the throat of a dead Mallard. I went out to the blind and made some pictures, and thus emboldened carefully walked onto the deck nearer the carnage. The bird looked at me and tried to fly away with its breakfast, but the duck was too large and the attacker flew off.

The next day the scene was the same, only a different female Mallard. The event occurred farther out on the pond and I brazenly went right for the deck. This time the hawk saw me but went ahead with his meal until I descended onto the pond. It flew away and left another corpse.

I awaited its return the next day, but while there were three ducks, there was no hawk. However the following day it returned, this time with a drake Mallard, again at its



article and photo by Bob Spiwak, Mazama throat and farther away yet. I wanted better pictures than the hurry-up previous shots and walked slowly on the ice. It must have been habituated to my presence because it looked up and then continued feeding until I was about ten feet away, when it departed. The ice was crackling and I retreated to terra firma.

That was the day we stopped feeding the ducks, and we haven't seen any since. The hawk was identified by Ornotho-guy Kent Woodruff as a young Northern Goshawk, identifiable by a blond eyebrow.

In other airborne matters, we have had Alexis Billings here almost every day the first half of January. She is working on her doctoral thesis from University of Montana, specializing in the language of Steller's Jays. When we spoke about her setting up sound equipment last fall, I told her she could expect a mother lode of jays here in winter, sometimes seven or eight pairs. However, while the Christmas count tallied a larger than usual number of the blue bombers in the Methow area, up here we have had at most two pairs, and this has been echoed throughout the area. But Alexis sits dutifully in the snow almost daily and is getting some results. One already obvious is that eight miles to the west, the birds are a lot more skittish about danger alert calls than they are here. Why is she so interested in jays. "I have always loved corvids, and the jays are so sassy," she said.

editor's note - see related story on the top of the next page

Looking at, Listening to Jays

by Alexis Billings, University of Montana

You may have seen me lurking in your neighbors yard or driving up and down Hwy 20 in a Jeep with Montana plates. I'm not lost. I am a visiting PhD student from the University of Montana and I am here to study the Steller's jays of the Methow Valley.

My research is focused on how animals communicate about danger and predators and a part of this is trying to figure out how Steller's jays combine two alarm calls and mimicry to encode information about predators.

I use a variety of playbacks to elicit different calls and behaviors at different bird feeders throughout the valley. The research is going well, although because of the mild winter the birds are less dependent on feeders and therefore a little more difficult to work with. However, the people, views and copious amounts of bakeries have eased that frustration. If you see me out and about, feel free to stop me and ask questions

Winter Waterfowl ID Class

by Susan Ballinger, Wenatchee

Would you like to learn how to identify some of the ducks, geese, and other water birds that winter along the Columbia River?

Wenatchee Naturalist Susan Ballinger and co-leader Jenny Graevell have designed this course to increase your observation skills in a collaborative setting, using field guides, bird study skins, presentations, and high quality optics. The field sessions will be held at Walla Walla Point Park. This combined classroom and field course can launch you on your way to becoming a better bird watcher alongside a group of other enthusiasts. No past experience required. Dates are February 19, 20, 26 and March 1. See our website for the detailed and updated schedule.

Scholarship applications are available. Contact ptobiska@nwi.net for more information.

Wenatchee River Institute Welcomes New Staff

by Julia Leach WRI

The Wenatchee River Institute (WRI) announces two staff changes. The Board has hired Janet Nazy as their new Executive Director. Janet recently hired Julia Leach, who joins the staff as the Bird Fest and Adult Education Coordinator. Janet has extensive experience leading non-profit organizations on both sides of the Cascades. She has a passion for the environment and understands the importance of connecting kids and adults with the natural world. Janet has been active in nonprofit management for more than 25 years, with specialization in fund development, strategic planning, financial management and communications. She worked as a fund development director in the Seattle area for ten years, as well as being a volunteer and board member for environmental and social service nonprofit groups. For the past 15 years she has held executive director/CEO positions for the Washington State Recycling Association, Mid-Columbia Girl Scout Council and the Partnership for Water Conservation. Janet has a degree in technical communications/journalism from the University of Minnesota.

Julia Leach has a Bachelor of Science degree in Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology from Western Washington University. After six months of hiking (and birding!) on the South Island of New Zealand, she landed in Leavenworth and fell in love with the mountains, rivers, wildflowers and wildlife. Julia worked with various conservation and community-oriented organizations in the Wenatchee Valley and was an AmeriCorps intern for the Cascadia Conservation District in 2011-12. She has volunteered for several WRI programs including guiding Bird Fest field trips for the past two years. "Julia's past Bird Fest experience, plus her energy, enthusiasm and knowledge make her a welcome addition to the staff," said WRI executive director Janet Nazy. "Besides coordinating this year's Bird Fest, Julia will be working to develop and expand our Adult Education programming."

Founded in 2005, the Wenatchee River Institute connects people, communities, and the natural world providing year-round outdoor youth environmental science education, adult educational programs, nature festivals, and enabled access to nature. This unique organization is located at the extraordinary Barn Beach Reserve, a 9-acre nature sanctuary bordering the Wenatchee River in Leavenworth, Washington. WRI partners with dozens of area organizations and businesses on events, programs and initiatives that promote appreciation and understanding of the natural world, stewardship and conservation values.

The Wenatchee River Institute's support comes from businesses, foundations and individual members who care about community, environmental education, and the natural world. For more information, please visit www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org or call 548-0181.

Tracks

Gently falling snow
covers tracks
where cougar has
slunk nearby
the glowing windows
and barns
of people
dogs and goats
Simply being
in their small
civilizations,

But yellow-eyed
wild cat exists
in a
primordial state
aware,
and keen to eat,
survive.
only occurring
where they are
and
not necessarily
knowing
our rules.....

Ken Bevis 1/9/14

February Wild Phlox

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

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February 1	Waterville Plateau Field Trip	email dstephens@wvc.edu or see December Wild Phlox.
February 7	The Sage of Washington's Fish and Wildlife	Presented by the Okanogan Highlands Alliance in Tonasket. See page 5.
February 14-17	Great Backyard Bird Count	Count birds in your own backyard. See page 1.
February 17	Why Antarctica?	At the Manson Grange. See page 5.
February 19	Winter Waterfowl ID Class	Classes and Field Trips! Through March 1. See page 7.
March 8	Bridgeport Bar Birding	Birding Buddies early spring trip. See page 2.
March 18	Pale Male	Read the book; see the film. See page 6.
April 12	Beebe Springs Birding	Birding Buddies on the Columbia. See page 2.



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