NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON AUDUBON SOCIETY



Volunteers Needed for Sagebrush Songbird Surveys

Volume 49 #6 March 2016 by Richard Scranton, S Wenatchee

Audubon is looking for birders interested in doing survey work in shrub-steppe habitat to help establish the distribution of key species of conservation concern in Eastern Washington. Focal species include the Sagebrush Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, and Brewer's Sparrow. This is year two of a planned five-year study. Field training is required for all new participants and is offered on Saturday, March 26 from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm at The Nature Conservancy's Whispering Lake Lodge in Moses Coulee. The training will be dedicated to simulating the actual experience of running a survey in the field. We will have experts on hand to help with field identification for many of the species we will encounter and everyone will get lots of practice using GPS units and filling out the necessary forms. There will be posters set up for you to sign up for particular survey sites. eBird training will be offered for those wanting to sharpen their skills on March 29 and 30. See article on page 7 for more information.

This is a great opportunity for volunteers to participate in an important citizen science project focused on birds. In the next few weeks, we will need to ground-truth sites that look good on the ArcGIS maps to determine which locations we will use this year. If you would like to help with this process, please let me know. There will be about fifteen sites in the NCW area with each site surveyed once a month for three months. The site surveys are tentatively scheduled for April 14-17, May 12-15, and June 2-5.

Please contact me for more information or to sign up for this year's Sagebrush Songbird Survey at rscran4350@yahoo.com.

Sage Spirit: The American West at a Crossroads

North Central Washington Audubon Society and Audubon Washington are proud to present conservation photographer Dave Showalter, author of *Sage Spirit: The American West at a Crossroads*. There will be two programs in NCW hosted by Wenatchee River Institute and The Methow Conservancy.

Through his stunning photography, Showalter presents a vision for an American West where people and wildlife thrive side by side, replete with birdsong and the sweet aroma of sage. His images carry you through the vast terrain of the American West that is inhabited by Burrowing Owls, Sage Grouse, cranes and other wildlife. Sage Spirit promotes an inclusive approach to conservation - one that seeks to preserve economic livelihood and treasured lifestyles as well as a priceless ecosystem - and highlights the solutions that Westerners are already advancing, from sustainable ranching to renewable energy development.

Showalter will present photos and stories to inspire conversation about the importance of shrub-steppe habitat and public lands in Eastern Washington. The gradual disappearance of sagebrush habitat in the West is having a profound effect on a wide variety of wildlife species such as the Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, pygmy rabbit, and mule deer.

The Bureau of Land Management is currently in the midst of a planning process that will affect the future of our iconic shrubsteppe habitat for the next thirty years. Audubon Washington and its active chapter network in Eastern Washington are sponsoring a series of presentations by Dave Showalter to help protect the Greater Sage-grouse, a keystone species for the health of the Sagebrush Sea.

Showalter will present on March 14 at The Red Barn at Barn Beach Reserve in Leavenworth with doors open at 6:30 for no-host refreshments. The presentation will also be held on March 15 at 7 pm at the Twisp River Pub in Twisp with doors opening at 5:30 and optional dinner at 6. Audubon Washington will have books for sale and signing at the events.

by Audubon WA

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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Save the Date: Spring Bird Fest

The 14th Annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest is May 19-22. Noted wildlife artist, Tony Angell will be the keynote speaker! Look forward to all of your favorite field trips plus some new ones this year. Also paddle boarding, a mini- film festival, wine, art, and Family Discovery Day! See their website at www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/.



Loggerhead Shrike in Arizona photo by Teri J Pieper

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I recently flew home from a ten-day road trip in Arizona and southern California. I'd never Editor's Notes been to that region so for me, it was a new adventure everyday. I joined friends down there who have been touring in a 33 foot motorhome since November and were taking two weeks off from their musical gigs in order to enjoy National Parks and other spots of interest. Before going I did some research about birding in the SW and when I arrived I realized that traveling in a 33 foot motorhome, while it has many conveniences, it also has some drawbacks. It is not very maneuverable and is not conducive to driving on gravel or rough roads. We did manage to enjoy some good birding and one of the highlights of the trip was a visit to the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum. I highly recommend this stop. It's a great introduction to the habitats of the local desert and to the flora and fauna that live there. Another great site was Whitewater Draw. It wasn't on my original list of places to see; one of my traveling companions found it on her smart phone while we were talking about seeing Sandhill Cranes. To get there, we drove south, nearly to Mexico through some fairly dreary-looking tiny towns and agricultural areas. At last, we were on the final stretch and I think the descriptive words that were going through our minds were 'out in the middle of nowhere'. We were arriving the night before to see the cranes at sunrise and we had no idea where we would stay. Luckily, when we finally got to the parking lot we found eight or ten other rv's of various shapes and sizes in a rough circle and our excellent driver was able to parallel park her coach in between an old converted bus and a tear drop trailer attached to a smaller SUV. Outside, the cranes' calls were all around us. It was getting to be dusk and we walked over to the wetland and sure enough, there they were – many thousands or even tens of thousands I would guess. All night they serenaded us with their continuous calls. It was magical. Early in the morning, I rolled out of bed and pulled on my big pack full of gear and went out to the dike that overlooked the wetlands. It was cold. Really cold. I had no idea I could be that close to Mexico with the temperature hovering around twenty degrees! Whitewater Draw is a former cattle ranch in the Chihuahuan Desert now owned by Arizona Game and Fish. From the information I could gather it is managed for wintering cranes and waterfowl and other wildlife. Not only were there many cranes but also lots

and lots of waterfowl – Northern Pintails, Mallards, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teals, Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers and more. I saw one American Avocet and showed it to a birder from Alaska who was delighted to add it to his list. There was also one Great Egret and I saw a Loggerhead Shrike. There were lots of Wilson's Snipes, Western Meadowlarks, White-crowned Sparrows and other common birds too. It was delightful find in the desert of SE Arizona.



Sandhill Cranes and waterfowl at Whitewater Draw, AZ photo by Teri J Pieper

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

Okanogan County continues to produce excellent winter birding reports. In Conconully - White-winged Crossbills, Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Grosbeaks, Prairie Falcon, Northern Goshawk and along Happy Hill Road - Sharp-tailed Grouse. Timentwa Flats - Snow Buntings, Gyrfalcon. Bridgeport State Park -Northern Saw-whet Owls continue. Okanogan Highlands - American Three-toed Woodpecker, Ruffed Grouse, Graycrowned Rosy-finches, Common Redpolls, Northern Pygmyowl, Gray Partridges. In Libby Creek, south of Twisp, a Barred Owl was heard. Our feeders, between Twisp and Winthrop continue to host Common Redpolls and they've been joined by Clark's Nutcrackers, Red-winged Blackbirds and recently, much to our dismay, European Starlings. The Methow Valley Raptor run reported 31 Bald Eagles (a mix of adult and immature), 4 Red-tailed Hawks, 1 Merlin, 1 Northern Shrike, and 1 American Kestrel. All sightings occurred on the secondary roads between Gold Creek and Twisp. An American Dipper was singing on Beaver Creek and in Mazama there was a singing Canyon Wren.

compiled from the newabird email list and Tweeters by Teri J Pieper

In Douglas County on Bridgeport Hill Road there were multiple reports of Sharp-tailed Grouse and at least one Greater Sagegrouse was seen. A Gyrfalcon was seen east of Mansfield on Highway 17. And three Snowy Owls we seen, also east of Mansfield.

There is a new blog for birding in Chelan County - www. chelancountybirding.blogspot.com. At Bebee Springs a Virginia Rail was seen. At Rocky Reach Dam there were Say's Phoebe, Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, Townsend's Solitaire. Golden Eagles were reported at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery and on highway 97. At Confluence Park – the first report of Violetgreen Swallows; also Bewick's Wren and Greater White-fronted Goose. Number 2 Canyon next to Wenatchee had Western Screech Owl and Great Horned-owl. In Cashmere there were Pine Grosbeaks.

In Ferry County there were reports of an early Western Bluebird and a Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Chapter Conservation News

Audubon chapters serve their members' interest in birds and birding in many ways, ranging from leading field trips and sponsoring events focused on birds and nature, to more generally keeping abreast of issues affecting birds. We all enjoy birds and hope our Audubon membership will support efforts to protect them. This is where our conservation work comes in. NCWAS is currently involved in several processes with potentially significant impacts on the welfare of birds in our region. The following is a thumbnail sketch of a few of them.

The Upper Wenatchee Community Lands Plan

(UWCLP) – This process came into being about a year ago, composed of a coalition including Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, The Trust for Public Lands, Chelan County, and Nature Conservancy. Its focus is on approximately 38,000 acres of Weyerhaeuser land in the area between Lake Wenatchee and Blewett Pass. Weyerhaeuser is potentially open to selling these lands for conservation. The UWCLP was set up to take stock of these opportunities. NCWAS began working a few months ago to prioritize parcels with the most benefit to birds, ecological integrity, and native biodiversity. Within the next month or so we will have determined those we believe to be of highest priority. Next, as soon as we can get into the backcountry, we will begin visual assessment of select parcels for subsequent referral to the UWCLP team.

Rock Island Ponds – Within the City of Rock Island and near the Rock Island Dam are a series of ponds created in the last several decades by Central Washington Concrete (CWC) gravel mining operations. These ponds have come to provide freshwater habitat of substantial importance to birds and fish. Mining activities are expected to come to an end in the next several years. The city is now looking at updating its comprehensive plan, and as part of that process has the opportunity to consider how to best plan for the future of the ponds and adjacent lands. To take advantage of this opportunity, we recently met separately with CWC and the Mayor of Rock Island to discuss the possibility of setting up a working group to assist the City in coming up with a plan. It would focus on creating healthier waters and habitats that will support substantial fish and wildlife populations and thereby maximize the recreational opportunities they can sustainably and compatibly support. We received a positive response from both the Mayor and CWC and are now in the process of putting together a proposal for consideration by the City Council.

Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Vision – The Stemilt-Squilchuck area is situated in the foothills of the Cascades southwest of Wenatchee. Several years ago, there was a proposal to sell approximately 2,500 acres for development of a resort. To head this off, a coalition including The

by Mark Johnston, Leavenworth

Trust for Public Land, Chelan County, and the Stemilt Partnership (composed of a mix of interests such as local agriculture, wildlife, recreation, and conservation) stepped up to devise a plan that would protect the area's wide range of natural values. The main goal of this process has essentially been achieved – consensus was reached on a long-range plan which is now being implemented. NCWAS was fully engaged in the first phase of this process, the overarching purpose of which was to generate a plan (and philosophy) of land use in the Stemilt region which includes Wenatchee Heights and Squilchuck. We remain involved in the implementation phase which is now underway.

Horan Natural Area – Lying between Confluence and Walla Walla Parks in Wenatchee, Horan Natural Area is an urban oasis for birds. A constructed complex of ponds and channels has provided habitat for waterbirds but the major water sources for these wetlands have ended in recent years. Consequently, the ponds and channels have variable water levels and are sometimes dry. The Chelan County PUD is studying the feasibility of new water sources for the Horan wetlands, including wells or pumping from the Columbia River. NCWAS has been part of early discussions that included PUD, WDFW, and WA State Parks professionals, and remains involved going forward.

WDFW Wildlife Management Plans – Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife manages extensive areas of land with high wildlife values lying within NCWAS's boundaries. They are currently in the process of updating some of their wildlife management plans. We have been and remain involved in the update process for the Okanogan Valley Plan (Sinlahekin and Scotch Creek areas).



Bald Eagle photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

Citizen Science at Beebe Springs

Come join us for a twice monthly e-bird survey at Beebe Springs (near Chelan Falls). The data is shared with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Dates are the first and third Wednesday of the month; start time is variable as the seasons change. We meet in the Beebe Springs parking lot where a Discover Pass is required. The walk is just under two miles, on a fairly level gravel trail. See ducks, shorebirds, raptors, warblers, and other riparian passerines. Contact Virginia Palumbo (palumbov@nwi.net) for the time and to confirm attendance.

Gifts of the Crow with John Marzluff **Okanogan Highlands Alliance Highland Wonders**

On March 4 researcher, professor and author John Marzluff brings to Highland Wonders his extraordinary research on the intelligence and startling abilities of corvids-crows, ravens, and jays. With amazing stories of these brilliant birds, Dr. Marzluff will shine a light on their fascinating characteristics and behaviors.

Crows are mischievous, playful, social, and passionate. They have brains that are huge for their body size and exhibit an

avian kind of eloquence. They mate for life and associate with relatives and neighbors for years. And because they often live near people-in our gardens, parks, and cities—they are also keenly aware of our peculiarities, staying away from and even scolding anyone who threatens or harms them and quickly learning to recognize and approach those who care for and feed them, even giving them numerous, oddly touching gifts in return. The ongoing connection between humans and crows-a cultural co-evolution-has shaped both species for millions of years. And the characteristics of crows that allow this symbiotic relationship are language, delinquency, frolic, passion, wrath, risk-taking, and awareness—seven traits that humans find strangely familiar.

Crows gather around their dead, warn of impending doom, recognize people, lure fish and birds to their death, drink beer, turn on lights to stay warm, design and use

March 4 at the Community Cultural Center (CCC), 411 South Western Avenue, Tonasket.

Dinner at 5:15 benefitting the CCC; \$7.50 for CCC members, \$8.50 for non-members. Presentation is FREE.

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.

Questions? www.okanoganhighlands.org/education/ hw, julie@okanoganhighlands.org, or 476-2432.



Crow with crab photo by Dr. John Marzluff

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands

by Virginia Palumbo, Chelan

tools, use cars as nutcrackers, windsurf and sled to play, and work in tandem to get cheese whiz out of a can. Their marvelous brains allow them to think, plan, and reconsider their actions.

With funny, awe-inspiring, and poignant stories, Gifts of the Crow will portray creatures who are nothing short of amazing. A testament to years of painstaking research, this presentation will be a thrilling look at one of nature's most wondrous

creatures.

John Marzluff, Ph.D., is Professor of Wildlife Science at the University of Washington. His research has been the focus of articles in the New York Times, National Geographic, Audubon, Boys Life, The Seattle Times, and National Wildlife. PBS's NATURE featured his raven research in its production, "Ravens," and his crow research in the film documentary, "A Murder of Crows." His book, In the Company of Crows and Ravens (with Tony Angell) blends biology, conservation, and anthropology to suggest that human and crow cultures have co-evolved. With his wife. Collen, he has just published Dog Days, Raven Nights, which combines reflection with biology and the recreational pursuit of dog sledding to show how a life in science blooms. He is currently leader of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Team for the critically endangered Mariana Crow, a former member of the Washington Biodiversity Council, and a Fellow of the American Ornithologist's Union.

Fodder From the Feeder

It's melting everywhere. The days are getting longer and spring feels just around the corner. So I decided to leave the suet feeders empty and stock up on seed. The nutcrackers and flickers left for my neighbors' feeders and lo and behold, all the little songbirds came back. One day I went out to a symphony of bird sounds - the twittering of crossbills, many kinds of finches, nuthatches and chickadees. And one single redpoll! He had been here before the nutcracker invasion, and he returned with a flock of House Finches he seemed to be hanging with.

This lone Common Redpoll seems an oddity. Usually, these small finches travel in large flocks – sometimes numbering in the thousands when they are migrating. They irrupt irregularly, with 22% of the species wintering in the USA. They like seeds from willow and birch catkins and frequent backyard feeders, preferring nyjer thistle. They are

distinguished from the other finches by their red forehead patch, yellow bill and black chin.

These are very hardy and smart birds. They can survive -65°F weather and will tunnel into the snow four inches below the surface to roost to keep warm. They shake the birch catkins so seeds fall to the ground and are easier to harvest. They can store two grams of seeds in their throat pouches for later eating. In winter they consume 42% of

their body mass each day! By November they have 31% more plumage than they had in July for winter survival. And while many of us in the lower 48 struggle to see these little guys, they are quite successful worldwide. They breed in all the lands that ring the Arctic Ocean and their

by Karen Mulcahy, Winthrop estimated total world population is 160 million. It remains to be seen how climate change will affect their breeding success. As Audubon's recent magazine points out, climate change has already affected their Arctic breeding habitat in so many ways.

Our first winter in the Methow was 2012-2013 and there was a small flock of redpolls using our feeders for several weeks. It was lovely to watch them up close and personal. They have never returned in such numbers but we have seen them in groups at others' feeders this year. The ncwabird email list has noted several sightings at various feeders, as well as a lone redpoll amongst a flock of finches. I like to think it's the same fellow as mine.

And never fear - the nutcrackers and flickers came back as soon as I refilled the suet. I have purchased a suet feeder that has a protective cage around it in the hopes the smaller

> songbirds will come back and partake. I have seen a finch and a Mountain Chickadee hopping nearby, but none inside sampling the suet. Sigh. One can hope.

On a final note, we missed doing a January Winter Raptor survey, but we did do one on February 6. Participants were Rick Rottman, Michelle Dewey, Art Campbell and myself. It was a wonderful day of birding, thanks to our expert spotters. We saw 38 raptors -31 Bald Eagles, 4 Red-tailed

Hawks, 1 Northern Shrike, 1 Merlin, and one American Kestrel. The Merlin put on quite a show, stretching his legs and spreading his wings.

We plan on one more survey in March. Thanks again to Art and Michelle!!

Lichens - More than Meets the Eye!

by Don Schaechtel, Wenatchee

On Thursday, March 10, the Wenatchee chapter of the Native Plant Society will present Lichens – More than Meets the Eye by Richard Droker, photographer and lichenologist. The program will be at the Wenatchee Museum and Cultural Center, 127 South Mission Street from 7:00 to 8:30 pm.

Often overlooked, lichens are beautiful, fascinating, diverse and important components of the Earth's terrestrial ecosystems. Each lichen incorporates representatives of two and sometimes three of life's kingdoms. As duel and treble organisms they must resort to curious methods of reproduction. Particular lichen communities occur on differing rock types, kinds of trees and soil and even abandoned cars (current record is 54 species on a Ford Bronco). An illustrated overview of lichens including their biology and relationships with plants, wildlife and people will be presented.



Common Redpolls photo by Rick Rottman

Spring Bird Walks in Okanogan

Come welcome spring on an informal bird walk around Woody Island in the City of Okanogan. Woody Island is home and refuge to an assortment of wildlife. We will spend our time walking the island's trails and seeing what emerges. The diverse habitat of the island hosts a large variety of warblers and other spring migrants, as well as resident favorites such as Bald Eagle, Song Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, and various woodpeckers. The route is about 1.4 miles roundtrip and relatively flat. The Woody Island Trail was created as a twelfth grade Okanogan High School English finals project. The students cleared paths, and laid crushed rock with help from the City of Okanogan's Maintenance Crew. To provide more by Alisa Carlson, Okanogan

information about the island, two interpretive signs were designed by the Ecology of the Okanogan high school class and tell the story of the salmon in the side channels along the Okanogan River. The signs were installed in the fall of 2015.

There are currently two walks scheduled. Meet in the parking lot at the Agriculture Service Center at 1251 South 2nd Ave in Okanogan. We will walk or drive (about 1/4 mile) to the trailhead. The walks are scheduled for April 23rd and May 21 from 8-10:00 am. Please contact Allisa Carlson at 422-0855 ext. 111 or allisamae@gmail.com if you have any questions. Sign up is not required.

eBird 101 Workshop: Sign Up Now!

Would you like to learn how to become a citizen scientist birder, sharing what you see in the field with researchers nationwide? Have you heard of "eBird" but aren't sure how to get started? As an eBird user, do you have some questions about how to enter your sightings, using your smart device, or setting up locations? If you've answered "yes" this eBird 101 Workshop is designed for you! Participants can attend a free, two hour workshop either on March 29 from 6–8:00 pm in Wenatchee or on March 30 from 9-11:00 am in Leavenworth. An optional one hour

field data collection practice will be offered from 11amnoon, after the Wednesday training.

The presenter is Wendy Connally, who works for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as the Diversity Division's Citizen Science Coordinator. The

workshop is co-sponsored by Chelan-Douglas Land Trust (CDLT) and Wenatchee River Institute (WRI), in partnership with Audubon Washington and North Central Washington Audubon Society (NCWAS). These organizations have on-going projects supported by local citizen scientists: volunteers who partner with scientists to answer real-world questions.

Wendy will start with the basics enabling a person not yet familiar with eBird to leave the workshop ready to set up an account, start collecting data, and entering bird observations. People already familiar with eBird will get to learn more about using the web-based tools and maps to advance their knowledge.

The March 29 workshop will be held at the CDLT office, 10 N. Wenatchee Avenue. For more information or to sign

up for the March 29 workshop, contact Hillary at Hillary@ cdlandtrust.org or 667-9708. The March 30 workshop will be held at the Wenatchee River Institute Red Barn. For more information or to sign up, contact Brook Hinton at bhinton@wenatcheeriverinstitute.org or 548. 0181.

Starting this spring, Conservation Fellow Susan Ballinger and Stewardship Director Neal Hedges are launching eBird routes on two CDLT properties: Horse Lake Reserve and at Mountain Home Preserve in Leavenworth. Labeled metal posts mark mapped points. Observers download and use

field data forms to follow a eBird is a real-time, online checklist that allows users site-customized observation to document the presence, sex, and abundance of protocol. Later, the user enters bird species at specific locations. Citizen scientists the data on the eBird website, volunteer to record bird species and upload their data and shares it with CDLT. If into a national database. eBird users can maintain you'd like to become a CDLT their personal bird records, explore collective data, eBird volunteer, contact Susan create interactive maps, graphs, and bar charts. It is at susan@cdlandtroust.org. easy to get started: set up your own personal eBird account at http://ebird.org/content/ebird/.

Audubon Washington has partnered with NCWAS to

implement the Sagebrush Songbird Survey, a five-year shrub-steppe bird monitoring project. See the related article on page 1. This training will help prepare volunteers to feel comfortable collecting and entering accurate bird data into eBird, using project-specific protocols. Richard Scranton, NCWAS, will review the Sagebrush Songbird Survey eBird protocols at both workshops.

Wendy will offer a technical session for local eBird project leaders on March 30 from 1-3 pm at the Red Barn at Wenatchee River Institute in Leavenworth. This will be a chance for experienced users to ask questions, dialogue, and to learn how to compile data sets collected over a series of years. Registration for the technical session is appreciated. Contact bhinton@wenatcheeriverinstitute.org or 548-0181 ext.4.

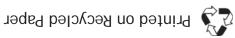
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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar Items in bold text are sponsored or co-sponsored by NCWS

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

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