



# The Wild Phlox

Published by the North Central Washington Audubon Society

Connecting People with Nature since 1966



Artwork © 2018 Heather A. Wallis Murphy

Volume 53 #8 May 2020

## The Economics of Drilling in the Arctic

by Mary and Tim Gallagher,  
Lake Wenatchee

We have been waiting since September 2019 for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to release the Record of Decision (ROD) on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The ROD will explain the administration's "reasons" for moving forward with oil and gas lease sales. Following the ROD, will be a "Call for Nominations" when companies will submit their leasing interests. An official "Public Notice of Lease Sale" will then be issued at least 30 days before the date set for the lease sale. The lease sale will be held online with no public engagement.

While BLM has remained silent on the ROD, the financial side of the proposed Arctic lease sales is changing rapidly. British Petroleum is selling all its Alaska operations to Hilcorp, a privately-owned company, with a troubled safety and environmental track-record. Conoco Phillips announced on April 7 that it will cease all North Slope expansion activity at this time.

Several major banks have announced that they will not finance any new Arctic oil and gas drilling projects as part of their updated climate and environmental commitments. These banks include Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs Corporation Inc., JP Morgan Chase, and Swiss based UBS Group AG

along with a dozen additional European and Australian banks. Just today, April 20, Citigroup released an updated energy policy that rules out financing for oil and gas exploration, development and production projects in the Arctic. If you are a customer or have stock in these banks please contact them and say, "thank you". Public opinion does matter to them.

Most of the major banks hold their shareholder meetings in the Spring. Right now, Bank of America needs to hear from you, especially if you are a customer or have stock with them. Ask them to "please join the other major banks and agree to not finance any new Arctic oil and gas drilling projects".

Please contact these large asset management companies: Morgan Stanley, BlackRock, State Street, and Vanguard. These firms are the top shareholders in nearly every major publicly traded company. BlackRock recently promised to use its outsized shareholder power to vote down the boards of companies not making fast enough progress on climate issues, as well as to vote for initiatives that will advance climate-friendly goals. State Street has expressed simi-

lar goals, but Vanguard has failed to make any commitments. Your voice and where you invest your money do matter to these financial institutions.

The biggest impact may be the free fall of the price of a barrel of oil, currently resting near \$25 a barrel. This price is just over one-third the amount utilized in the draft Environmental Impact Statement of \$85 a barrel. Remember the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017? Republican projections were that these lease sales would create billions of dollars in revenue for the State of Alaska and the Federal government. With today's economy these assumptions are incorrect.

The approach is simple at this point. The current administration will not listen to us, the people. Contacting those controlling the financing of new drilling in the Arctic just may be the answer.



Barrow's Goldeneye  
photo by Pat Leigh, Winthrop

The mission of the North Central Washington Audubon Society is to: "Enhance, protect and restore healthy natural ecosystems and native biodiversity using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation to promote the welfare of birds in 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.



Western Bluebird above  
Red-breasted Nuthatch below  
Photos by Pat Leigh, Winthrop



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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



I keep thinking, ‘can everything get any more difficult’ and then I read or listen to something in the news and, indeed, yes everything can get more difficult. I should be careful what I think.

## Editor’s Notes

Recently our valley lost a wonderful person – Mary Kiesau. Mary worked for the Methow Conservancy for many years, coordinating outreach and education programs and teaching natural history. I think she knew every plant, every bird and its call and every animal track that ever crossed her path. She was always learning new things and happily sharing her knowledge with others. In recent years, Mary struck off on her own – doing photography, teaching drawing and more natural history. We were not close friends, but our paths crossed often – at Conservancy events, bird banding and in recent years at dog agility practice. Mary loved her dogs, all rescues, passionately like she did her life partner and her close

friends. Mary was only 45 when she passed away due to melanoma. She is missed by many. As I walk through the spring wildflowers, I am reminded of her because she knew them all and would happily answer my questions each spring.

This Wild Phlox seems different in many ways. It is full of photos and poems instead of newsy articles about events coming up. I am glad to know that people are being inspired by the natural world around them as we all shelter in place. This newsletter also looks different. The Adobe software I have used for years finally gave up the ghost and we may have to buy a new version of it. So, I am learning Publisher and grappling with its lesser capacities while producing this newsletter for you to read on your screens. The best part of having an electronic version is that the photos are amazing! The worst part is that we do not have email addresses for everyone, so some people are missing out on their monthly Wild Phlox newsletter. Maybe monthly is not the correct term. It comes out nine times a year.

Take care. Check in with your friends, especially those that live alone and enjoy the natural world as much as you can while sheltered in place.



American Goldfinch and House Finch  
Photo by Pat Leigh, Winthrop

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## Backyard Sightings

by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

After giving it some thought, I decided not to post the monthly bird sightings that I glean out of eBird, Tweetsters and local reports. We are not supposed to be doing non-essential travel and I do not want to be accused of encouraging that. Instead, I will describe a little bit about what I am seeing in my generously sized (fifteen acres) backyard.

This morning while walking the dogs, I enjoyed lots of balsamroot, serviceberry, currants and lupine in full bloom. Many of the tiny wildflowers like steershead, yellow bells, shooting stars and spring beauty have already faded. Some mule deer watched us from high on the hill above. Tree and Violet-green Swallows darted this way and that. A vibrant Western Bluebird went back and forth with a snappily dressed Yellow-rumped Warbler. An American Kestrel, half of the pair using one of our nest boxes, called angrily about someone getting too close to its territory. House Wrens sang their happy song from nearly every shrub it seemed and Northern Flickers continued to beat on snags and nest box roofs and proclaim their territory. They have been doing this for weeks now. Pygmy Nuthatches did the same but in their own diminutive style. Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds took turns at the feeders and displayed for unseen mates. A Dusky Grouse continued to boom in the distance while Western Meadowlarks sang from the tallest trees and snags.



Western Meadowlark  
Photo by Pat Leigh, Winthrop



# Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest Cancelled

by Naomi Liebhold,  
Wenatchee River Institute

For the ongoing safety of our community, we have made the decision to cancel Bird Fest, originally scheduled for May 14-17. We are so sad to be doing this! We are working with our partner, NCW Audubon, to see if we can reschedule Bird Fest for later in the year. Stay tuned for updates.

On a more positive note, we are working on Bird Fest related virtual engagement. Stay posted on our website for more details as they are released. <https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/bird-fest/>

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## Wenas Audubon Campout Cancelled

by the Wenas Committee

The first Wenas campout was held Memorial Day weekend in 1963. It has continued without interruption except for May 1980 with the eruption of Mount St. Helens. That is until now. We are sad to say that the annual Wenas Memorial Day Campout has been cancelled for this year. The Wenas organizing committee has determined that considering Covid-19 and looking at the health and safety of everyone attending, that it would not be responsible to hold this popular event as usual. We just are not able to guarantee the safety of attendees and are not willing to take that risk.

While we have all age levels attending, ours is generally an older crowd and therefore our risk profile is greater than average. Since we have people coming from all over the state, if just one contagious person were there, not only might attendees get sick, but they might bring COVID-19 to areas that have been somewhat unaffected so far.

Yes, we would be outside and there is ample camping space to maintain social distancing. However, there would

be no way to sanitize the porta-potties after every use or maintain social distancing on field trips or at the campfires. As a result, we have made the not-so-easy decision to cancel for this year. We hope all of you continue to get out for walks in your neighborhoods to watch birds and enjoy nature.

Two of the organizing committee members have shared they are planning their own campout over Memorial Day weekend so that they may continue the tradition, though with a somewhat modified version. They are planning to set up tents in each of their own yards and then they are going to get on their phones and share stories of other Wenas campouts they have attended. What a great idea!

Please keep checking the Wenas website and Facebook page as we get closer to Memorial Day weekend. There is a possibility that we might be able to put together a virtual campfire program with a guest speaker.

In the meantime, Stay home, Stay healthy and we will see you Memorial Day weekend 2021.

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## Free Birding Software

by Pete Thayer, Naples Florida

After 26 years, I am starting to gradually wind down Thayer Birding Software. As part of my exit strategy, I realized that the decision to offer our birding software now to anyone for free just made a lot of sense. Thousands have already taken advantage of this offer.

Use this software to learn about the amazing birds in your yard and in your country. Watch videos of bird behavior, hear their songs, and take hundreds of fun quizzes on the birds of North America. Use the ID Wizard if you are not sure of a bird's name. Compare two birds side-by-side.

If you like, use the promo code PeteThayerFree to change the price from

\$49.95 to \$0.00. [As a joke, I once made a promo code for a friend of mine. PeteThayerIsAWonderfulGuy. It still works.]

This program runs on computers using Windows 7, 8 or 10. It will also run on older Mac Operating Systems such as Mac OS X 10.9 - MacOS 10.13. This includes High Sierra, Sierra, El Capitan, Yosemite and Mavericks.

It is very easy to download a copy: Simply visit [www.ThayerBirding.com](http://www.ThayerBirding.com). Click the "Windows or Mac download" button. Now click the "Add Promo Code button". Type in PeteThayerFree. Click Apply. Click Free Checkout.

Happy Birding!



White-headed Woodpecker  
photo by Pat Leigh, Winthrop

## Waterville Plateau

The roller coaster highway unfurls,  
two lanes straight through greening wheat fields.  
Sporadic farmhouses sail by  
and occasional falling down barns,  
but we have a mission and halt only  
at shallow vernal ponds hosting Green-winged Teal,  
Gadwalls, Ring-necked Ducks,  
and Northern Shovelers with Cyrano de Bergerac beaks.  
On the far side of one pond,  
four Black-necked Stilts probe  
the shoreline for crustaceans.  
Humped along another shore,  
one hundred Sandhill Cranes gather  
and cackle.  
We watch quietly,  
eat our picnic lunch, drink our water  
and slip away.  
Merry Roy

## Stilt Walkers

Black-necked stilts walk  
on long delicate red legs,  
picking their way  
through flooded pastures.  
They tilt forward,  
probing the mud for delicacies  
with needle like bills,  
run on backward-bending legs,  
and launch into the air,  
those red legs trailing like ribbons behind.  
Merry Roy

## Sky Pirate

Hooded beaks, keen yellow eyes,  
mean talons, hawks  
spying from the cross-arms of power poles  
flaring their red tail feathers,  
pirates of the shrub-steppe  
Susan Sampson

## The Maple Circus

I survey the leafless and ancient Norway Maple  
from the vantage of our second floor bathroom window.  
It's a circus!  
Goldfinches like torches decorate the branches  
and shift positions with startling speed. Acrobats!  
Two flickers, male and female, perch on adjoining limbs.  
One flies abruptly to the next limb, the other  
with but a moment's hesitation,  
follows and the first flies again,  
over and over like a relay but only one team,  
finishing full circle  
and then offstage.  
A nuthatch plays the magician, appearing and disappearing  
and then POOF —gone.  
What will the next act be?  
The butter-butt team on the flying trapeze?  
But no, the show is over for now, and the birds  
have vanished.  
Discarded seed is all that remains  
like popcorn on the ground,  
and the pigeon janitors are cleaning up.  
Merry Roy



Sandhill Cranes in the Methow  
Photo by Pat Leigh, Winthrop

# Bird Memories

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

My late father-in-law Frank Horn was a birder. He was a high-ranking employee of the FAA who admitted, that when an unusual bird was sighted near one of the airports in a region he administered, FAA officials would find reason to fly in to inspect his airports, and he would take them birding. He claimed that on a birding outing, his group was following an owl hooter who made noises to call a Spotted Owl. He hooted, he heard the response, he led his group—and came across another owl hooter.

When she turned 21 in 1943, my mother enlisted in the Women's Army Corp and served in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines, driving a typewriter for General

MacArthur's island-hopping campaign. In New Guinea, the quartermaster's whistle would awaken the WACs to start their workday - but kept getting earlier and earlier. They discovered that a Lyre Bird had learned to imitate the whistle, and the bird was an exceedingly early riser.

I attended elementary school in Florence, OR, in the 1950s, then a village of 1,500 people on the Oregon Coast. We did not have a cafeteria, so we all brought lunch from home, and right after lunch, the janitor collected our lunch waste and incinerated it in a burn barrel behind the school. The gulls loved him. After we ate our lunches and the gulls ate our waste, we settled into our seats to the pattering sound of seagulls running on our roof.

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## Everyday Birds

by Merry Roy, Wenatchee

Ever since I read Lyanda Lynn Haupt's first book *Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds: Notes from a Northwest Year* (2001) I have felt vindicated in watching those common birds many of us see all the time. Lyanda is a naturalist, an eco-philosopher and speaker, connecting people with nature in their everyday lives. She is the director of education programs in the Seattle Audubon Society and a seabird researcher for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Some of her other books include *Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom From the Urban Wilderness* (2009) and most recently *Mozart's Starling* (2017). What birds could be more ubiquitous than crows and starlings?

Have you ever watched a common everyday bird and seen what seems to you to be amazing behavior? My husband and I were walking along the Columbia River in East Wenatchee and saw two crows wading along a rocky beach. They poked their beaks in between the pebbles and rummaged around until they pulled out a freshwater clam. One crow flew away with his prize, but the other, intent on dinner, brought it to the water's edge and hammered away at the clam until he could gobble up the tender morsel. My grandchildren love to find clam shells along the river's edge, but none of us suspected that crows did that too and made a meal of it.

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## More Everyday Birds

by Penny Tobiska, Wenatchee

**American Robin:** During spring and summer, American Robins frequent our yard for worms in the garden and occasional splashes in the bird bath. Recently, however, Mrs. Robin sat on the edge of the bird bath with a sizable batch of thatch in her beak that she had collected from our lawn. She bent over and dipped the wad in the water several times until it was just to her liking and flew into our large Birch Tree (presumably to continue her nest building). This behavior was new to us.

**American Crow:** We all are familiar with the cawing crows in our neighborhoods and parks. Last weekend, as my husband and I canoed in the Horan Natural Area and the channels of Confluence State Park, we heard noises that sounded for all the world like Spanish Castanets. What is that? After more clack clacks and a couple of paddle strokes, we could see two crows through the trees, at least one of them was the clacker. Is this a mating ritual? A quick search of the Sibley's app had no recorded sounds like this.



Trumpeter Swan, not an everyday bird  
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop



# My Happy Duck

Photo and story by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

With our current situation of unsettling news and social restrictions, I find myself out birding more than ever. One bird that never fails to improve my mood is the male Ruddy Duck. He is bold and bright in the spring with a sky-blue bill, flashy white cheek patch, and gleaming reddish body. He shows off to the females by holding his tail straight up, raising his neck high, and then rapidly beating his bill against his neck with enough force to create a swirl of bubbles in the water. The show ends with his head jerking forward and a low belching sound let out. I think it looks like he is putting on his best smile at the end...which always makes my world a happier place.



Leucistic Common Loon on the Columbia near Orondo  
photo by John Zanol



## King of the Woods

A song by Ken Bevis

slightly modified for spoken word; read out loud

I'm a woodpecker	Tappin Tappy Tap	I bang on the highest place I find
King of the Trees	Listenin' for that Insect Cave	I play my licks
I got padded brains	When I find that hollow sound	I do my tricks
I do as I please	I ax my way in	I whack on my tree drum
Hey Hey! I'm the King of the Woods	And slip in my Sticky sticky tongue	And sometimes I sing Just for fun
I'm a crazy Red hammer	YUM!	Ho da da doh doh, Ho da da doh doh,
I make cavities	Hey Hey, I'm the King of the woods	Wikka Wikka Wikka Wik
Homes for you	I Got Rhythm in my bones	Hey Hey! I'm the King of the Woods.
Homes for me	I'm synchronized	
Hey Hey! I'm the King of the Woods		
I climb up the trees		



Pileated Woodpecker  
photos by Pat Leigh, Winthrop

# May Wild Phlox

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## North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar

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<b>May 2</b>	<b>Nahahum Canyon Field Trip</b>	<b>This field trip has been cancelled</b>
<b>Late May/Early June</b>	<b>Climate Watch Bird Surveys</b>	<b>See last month's Phlox for details</b>
<b>June 6</b>	<b>Four-county Bird Count</b>	<b>See the February Wild Phlox at <a href="http://www.ncwaudubon.org">www.ncwaudubon.org</a> Given the uncertainty of our times, this may also be cancelled.</b>

You can find the Wild Phlox online at our website—[www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org).  
The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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Visit the NCW Audubon Society website for updates on these and other events.  
[www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org)

