



Volume 49 #3 November 2015

Exploring New Guinea's Lost Worlds Elusive Birds of Paradise with Explorer Bruce Beehler

from Wenatchee River Institute
Leavenworth

Wenatchee River Institute and North Central Washington Audubon Society are happy to bring Smithsonian naturalist Bruce Beehler to Leavenworth to give a local audience the chance to experience a field expedition to western New Guinea. In this popular lecture illustrated with still and video images, Beehler will describe his nearly four decades of field study of the birds and rainforests of the great island of New Guinea. The program is on November 6 at the Barn at Barn Beach Reserve. Doors open at 6:30 for refreshments and the program begins at 7 pm.

The presentation will feature a review of the remarkable diversity of the birdlife inhabiting New Guinea, as well as a focused look at the birds of paradise and the amazing plumages and behaviors of the various species in this unique bird family.

In addition, the presentation will take the audience on a field expedition to the Foja Mountains of western New Guinea - perhaps the most isolated and untouched place on planet earth. The scientists on the expedition risked their lives and suffered various hardships but came away with more than a hundred species of plants and animals new to science. This includes some of the most bizarre creatures on earth including a 'lost' bird of paradise, a Golden-maned Bowerbird unique

to this tiny mountain range, a Wattled Honeyeater-bird that blushes when upset, an egg-laying spiny mammal without teeth, and a scary five-pound giant rat.



Bruce Beehler
photo provided

November 6, 6:30 to 8:30 pm
At the Barn at Barn Beach Reserve
347 Division Street, Leavenworth.
Doors open at 6:30 for no host
refreshments including local beer
and wine. Program begins at 7 pm.
Admission at the door by donation.

Bruce Beehler is an ornithologist, conservationist, and naturalist. He is currently a Research Associate in the Division of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and is focused on research and writing about nature and natural history.

Beehler has spent much of his scientific career studying and working to conserve birds and their forest habitats. After conducting doctoral fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Beehler worked for ten years at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, followed by stints at the Wildlife Conservation Society, U.S. Department of State, Counterpart International, Conservation International, and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

Beehler is an elective Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union, and has served on the boards of the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), RARE, and the Livingston-Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy. In addition, Beehler served for three years as Chair of ABC's Policy Council (predecessor to the Bird Conservation Alliance). Beehler has published ten books and authored scores of technical and popular articles about birds and nature. In 2007, Beehler was featured in a 60-Minutes piece highlighting an expedition he led to the Foja

Mountains in the interior of New Guinea in which scores of new species of plants and animals were discovered.

Today, Beehler carries out natural history exploration and field research focused mainly on wildlife and natural places in the USA.

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.

Learn About Corvids This Winter

by Mary Kiesau, Methow Conservancy

The Methow Conservancy's 2016 conservation class is all about Corvids - ravens, crows, jays, magpies, nutcrackers and more. Beginning in late January or early February, the class will meet six Monday evenings and is sure to fill. For more information contact Mary at 996-2870 or mary@methowconservancy.org



Common Raven leaping after finding a cache of meat in the snow.
 photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

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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.

Looking at this issue of the Wild Phlox, it appears that everyone is back at home and back to work organizing and attending interesting events throughout our region.

Editor's Notes

With the chipmunks tucked into their winter hideaways I have put out my seed feeders again and I am amazed at how quickly the finches can empty them. American Goldfinches, House Finches and Pine Siskins seem to be the dominant species at the feeders. So far I haven't seen many woodpeckers taking advantage of the suet but they remain busy in our burned forest. For the first time since the fire (August 1 of last year) I am hearing Red-breasted Nuthatches. There are more chickadees (mostly Mountain) coming around also.

Winter birds are returning and that means winter birding. This year we will get the chance to do monthly winter raptor surveys in Douglas and possibly Okanogan counties! If you want to learn more about raptors, this is an exciting opportunity. Just be sure to dress warm.

And of course, it is time to plan your Christmas Bird Count schedule. Our region hosts at least six CBC's and I have the dates for four of them, so far. Bridgeport is December 18 and Meredith Spencer (merdave@homenetnw.net) will continue as the contact for that count. Leavenworth is December 20 and Gretchen Rohde (design@thedesignranch.com) is the contact. Chelan is December 28 and Steve Easley (easley@nwi.net) is the contact. Omak/Okanogan is January 2 and Heather Findlay (heather@eaglesun.net) is the contact for that count. I am still waiting to hear when Wenatchee and Twisp will hold their Christmas Bird Counts. Most of the counts meet someplace for breakfast and then regroup at the end of the day to compare notes and tell stories about their birding day and to do the compilation. It's a fun time with lots of congenial birding folks. Watch for an article with more details in next month's Phlox.

The Chelan Ridge Hawk Watch site finished up on October 22 with 1383 birds counted and 360 banded. The last day was significant because they did not see any migrating raptors at all. Once the fires settled down it turned into a good year for the counters.

There are not a lot of bird reports on the email list so I will just remind you that the Great Egret continues to be seen at Wenatchee around Walla Walla Park and the Horan Natural Area. Another Great Egret has been reported at the Beaver Ponds south of Twisp and flying above the Methow River in the same general area.

High in the Sky

article and photo
by Patrick Hannigan, Twisp

"Could you put an osprey nesting platform on top of that snag?"

I looked up at the Ponderosa overlooking a bend in the Methow River. Building the platform was the easy part. Installing the 40" x 40" structure atop the 50-foot-tall branchless tree would be tricky.

"Sure," I said.

Building functional nesting habitats is my full-time job. I work with landowners and conservation organizations to create, enhance and preserve breeding habitat for a variety of birds in the Pacific Northwest. But this high-wire job was more challenging than most, so I partnered with Owen Almquist, a professional arborist who lives in Winthrop.

Owen climbed the snag, I used a pulley to haul up the platform (built to Osprey Foundation specifications) and Owen completed the installation. I wrapped the tree trunk with 24" of steel flashing to prevent raccoons from raiding the nest.

Come spring, I am certain a pair of osprey will call this nest home. Watch for updates in a 2016 edition of the Wild Phlox.

Patrick Hannigan lives in Twisp. He builds and installs functional, species-specific nest boxes for birds ranging from chickadees to Northern Saw-whet Owls. To contact him, visit nicenests.com or call 699-0349.



Hauling the Osprey platform to the top of the snag.

Fodder From the Feeder

by Karen Mulcahy, Winthrop

We have had an interesting phenomenon this fall. Our garden has been taken over by Red-breasted Nuthatches. Perhaps this is in part due to the lovely shower, bathing, and drinking fountain my husband crafted out of drip tubing and a spray attachment. Every day, as the garden waters, this ingenious apparatus becomes a refreshing shower for the little guys. And they do love it - coming in groups of twos and threes and often five or six at a time. The chickadees join in, as have all manner of birds - Western Bluebirds, robins, warblers, finches, kinglets, crossbills, Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, and of course their cousins, the Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatches. But the Red-breasted have definitely taken over in terms of sheer numbers. While I still see the pygmies and white-breasted, I mostly see the red-breasted fearlessly continuing their watering hole antics as I pick the cherry tomatoes from the plants growing around the basin. They will come quite close to humans, and have buzzed my head many times this fall.

They rarely use nest boxes, preferring to nest in holes excavated in dead wood or soft trees like aspen, at heights from four to forty feet. They do an odd thing with their nest entrance - they smear it inside and out with pitch, sometimes using a piece of bark like a paintbrush to complete the task. The male smears the outside, the female the inside. They deftly dive straight in without hitting the sides. Presumably, the pitch protects against predators or competitors. They forage for insects and spiders in the bark of

big trees in the summer, even doing some fly catching. Seeds round out their diet. The word nuthatch apparently comes from the expression "nut hack" describing how they wedge seeds into cracks in the tree bark and hack at them till they break open.

How do these small guys survive the winter? Like many other birds, they rely on earlier cached food. They store seeds under loose bark and hide the stash further with more bark or moss. They also frequent suet feeders. I see them all winter, taking their turns with the woodpeckers, sometimes brashly butting in on the other side. And, if food gets scarce, they irrupt south, sometimes as far as the Gulf of Mexico! In fact, they are some of the earliest migrators, often reaching their southernmost destination by September (I guess they are here to stay for the winter). Their species has grown over the years, and at present, it is not threatened. They are survivors. The oldest known Red-breasted Nuthatch was seven and a half years old.



Red-breasted Nuthatches in the garden
photo by Rick Rottman, Winthrop

I have had a chance to watch them a lot this fall but I wish I had watched them closer in the spring. Apparently, the male has a peculiar little courtship dance. He turns his back to the female, lifts his head and tail, drops his wings, and shimmies

side to side. Then, for an added bonus, he will feed her while she excavates and lines the nest. They typically only have one brood a year but I swear these cuties have been breeding like crazy around my place as there are so many of them.

And with this extremely strong El Nino winter predicted, I expect I can enjoy their antics all winter.

Learn About Grasslands Native Plant Society Monthly Program

by Don Schaechtel, Wenatchee

Date: November 12
Topic: Grassland Conservation
Presenter: Dr. Bob Carson, Professor of
Geology and Environmental Studies,
Whitman College
Time: 7:00 to 8:30 pm
Place: Wenatchee Valley Museum and
Cultural Center, 127 South Mission Street

Prairie, grassland, meadow, pasture... What's the difference? What value do these habitats have for native plants and animals? Whitman professor Dr. Bob Carson will help us answer these questions. Learn about conservation problems and restoration of these four grass-dominated landscapes and how they are each influenced by climate, fire and grazing. Dr. Carson will also talk about conservation easements in Washington using an example in Mason County and his family's easements in New Hampshire and old growth forest in Hood Canal. This event is free and open to the public. Invite your friends!

Winter Raptor Surveys

North Central Washington Pilot Project

Over winter in these northern latitudes we are privileged to host numerous Rough-legged Hawks as well as Northern Pygmy Owls, Snowy Owls and even the occasional Northern Hawk Owl. Most birders in this region are familiar with fall raptor migration counts, but this year I am looking for volunteers to begin a pilot winter raptor survey route in North Central Washington. The survey protocol will follow that developed by the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) and data will be entered into their standardized database. HMANA has been conducting winter raptor surveys since 2007, collecting data from across the country from citizen scientists like you. Winter raptor surveys are a fun way to record our over-wintering population, identify concentration areas, record the phenology of raptor activity, and in some cases identify conservation needs early on.

2015 will be a pilot year to initiate a winter raptor survey starting in Douglas County. Initially, one route will be run per month from December to February. We will extend into March

depending on interest and the numbers of raptors observed. If you would like to participate you do not need to be an expert raptor identifier; winter raptor surveys are much easier than the high-flying fall migration studies, as most of our subjects will be perched or flying lower to the ground as they hunt. The slow driving pace of winter raptor surveys provides an excellent opportunity to brush up on your hawks-in-flight ID skills and enjoy other overwintering birds. Volunteers should be able to bring their own binoculars and/or spotting scopes, be willing to drive or be a passenger for up to 8 hours of birding, and be ready to get out in the winter weather (as long as it's safe!).

Anyone who is interested in joining a Douglas County winter raptor survey should contact Devon Comstock at devonc78@gmail.com.

Editor's note – Rick Rottman of Winthrop is exploring the possibility of conducting winter raptor surveys in the Methow Valley. If you are interested in helping to identify a route or doing the surveys, please contact Rick at rottman.rick@gmail.com

Theodore Roosevelt's Wilderness Legacy

Twisp Public Library is hosting Humanities WA speaker Scott Woodward on Thursday, November 5th at 6 pm as he discusses "Theodore Roosevelt: Wilderness Warrior in Washington State".

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt made a seventeen-city whistle stop tour of Washington State, inspiring thousands of Washington residents on both sides of the Cascades. The wilderness legacy that ensued from this visit guarantees our sense of place in Washington today with the formation of national wildlife refuges, national forests and parks, and national monuments. This presentation combines music, anthropology and history. Woodward also discusses Theodore Roosevelt's signature approach to getting things done: combining politics with citizenship that crossed all political lines and built legacies for future generations, as well as establishing the sense of place we have today.



Wintering adult Bald Eagle
photo by Rick Rottman, Winthrop

The Salish Sea: Jewel of the Pacific Northwest

The Methow Conservancy December program and Holiday Social will be held on December 1 at the Winthrop Barn. The holiday party starts at 6 pm with drinks, appetizers and awards. The program runs from 7 – 8:30 pm.

The Salish Sea region is an ecological jewel straddling the western border between Canada and the United States, connected to the Pacific Ocean primarily through the Strait of Juan de Fuca. There, lush and mossy old-growth forests meet waters with dazzlingly-colored anemones and majestic orcas. One of the world's largest inland seas, the Salish Sea contains

6,535 square miles of sea surface area and 4,642 miles of coastline. Fashioned by the violent volcanism of the Pacific Rim of Fire, plate tectonics, and the sculptural magic wrought by Ice Age glaciers, the Salish Sea is a unique ecosystem home to thousands of different species of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and macroinvertebrates. Audrey DeLella Benedict and Joseph K. Gaydos will share breathtaking photography, take a look at the region's geology, fauna, and history, and share why the Salish Sea matters to all of us. For more information contact 996-2870 or info@methowconservancy.org

The Roots of Music: Exploring Earth's Soundscapes

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands

Fall is in the air, and with the cooler weather comes a new indoor Highland Wonders season, offering a diverse array of presentations to deepen the community's understanding of the natural world. The season begins on November 6th with a compelling presentation that weaves together music and ecology, as biologist George Halekas surveys the unique beauty of nature's soundscape, and explores why Earth is considered a 'sonic jewel' and 'singing planet.' The vibrant musical heritage of humanity is a wonderful component of this rich soundscape diversity, and the conversation will begin by looking at the emergence of music in ancient hunter gatherer societies from an ecological perspective. The focus will then shift to exploring Earth's soundscapes from the large planetary scale, to investigating representative habitats like the rainforest and ocean, as well as listening to the fascinating details of individual bird and whale song. Time permitting, we'll come full circle and listen to contemporary music composers who take a more inclusive or interactive approach to making music with nature's orchestra.

George Halekas, a member of the Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau, is a former Wildlife Biologist with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. George is captivated by the power and expressiveness of music and its ability to capture human emotions. A lifelong conservationist, he is drawn to understanding the relationship between living

organisms with their surrounding environment, especially through sound. Since retiring as a biologist, he has served on a multi-year task force that advised the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in developing a balanced Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Playing a role in helping wolves return to Washington's natural heritage and soundscape has special resonance for George. He records nature's sounds and enjoys collaborating with visual artists, music composers, and biologists through his recordings. George currently lives near Deer Park.

This educational event is sponsored by Humanities WA and coordinated by Okanogan Highlands Alliance (OHA). Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state. For more about Humanities Washington, visit www.humanities.org. OHA is a non-profit organization that works to educate the public on watershed issues. The Highland Wonders educational series features the natural history of the Okanogan Highlands and surrounding areas. OHA's Education Program, which is offered free of charge, is designed to

When: November 6th, at 6:30 pm.
(Dinner benefiting the Community Cultural Center at 5:15 pm, followed by the presentation with tea, coffee and desserts.)
Cost: Presentation is free; dinner is \$7.50 for CCC members and \$8.50 for non-members.
Where: Community Cultural Center, 411 S Western Ave, Tonasket

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 or 476-2432.

Help Wanted: Rebuild Bluebird Nest Boxes in the Okanogan

by Todd Thorn, Omak

I hope you're all out and about and enjoying the autumn bluebird show! This is a reminder that it's a beautiful time of year to get out and tend to the bluebird routes we maintain in the Okanogan. It is much more pleasant while temperatures are in the 60's or 70's and the fall colors spectacular, than in winter. Thinking ahead, the birds will vacate soon for the winter but return the beginning of March looking for suitable nesting structures.

A number of boxes burned in the wildfires this summer, especially along the Tunk Creek and Conconully bluebird trails. There is some interest in placing a set of boxes in the Limebelt area just northwest of Riverside, which also burned this summer. If people are interested in assembling boxes to replenish the burned routes, please let me (todd@canyonwren.

us) know. Some wood has been donated for making new boxes. You can also skip the middle man (me) and email Lee Johnson (1grayowl@gmail.com) or John Danielson (3ravens@communitynet.org) directly to offer to help with box making.

And please let me know what you accomplish- which route, how many boxes maintained, how many new boxes placed, and how many folks participate. Any photos you wish to share would be great.

A primer on box cleaning and the bluebird trails project is on line at <http://www.okanoganlandtrust.org/bluebird-trails.html>

While the fires took their toll on the human community and some bird boxes, in a greater fashion they provide opportunities for species like bluebirds by creating natural nesting habitat-snags, and creating more open habitat in which bluebirds thrive.

What's That Bird Attracts the Flocks!

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

How do you count a peripatetic flock? Very quickly, very roughly. Mark Oswood's team counted 358 visitors in seven hours at North Central Washington Audubon's tent at the Wenatchee River Salmon Festival on September 19. That's 51.1 visitors per hour, or .85 visitors per minute. And the competition for attention was stiff: Audubon's tent was pitched next door to a US Fish and Wildlife display featuring stuffed grizzly and black bears that became the backdrop for endless selfies.

Visitors were lured by our pile of binoculars that they borrowed to try to find eight replica birds perched in realistic habitats - the Cedar Waxwing eating the mountain ash berries, the nuthatch posing upside down on a tree trunk, the goldfinch picking at a sock full of thistle seed.

Mark and avian expert Mark Johnston fielded questions like will flickers damage timber and how do you stop a bird from drumming on your metal chimney cap. Susan Blair assisted the youngest birders to look through the correct end of their binoculars, and Susan Sampson was the circus barker, who encouraged shy visitors to step right up and give birding a try.

Visitors left with literature. Most popular was a map of Wenatchee River Watershed birding sites, followed by brochures on feeding birds and selecting bird feeders. The team ended the day tired, but pleased at the turn-out, and hopeful of recruiting a few more volunteers for next year's event.

Fish and Wildlife Commission Approves New Big Bend Wildlife Area in Douglas County

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the purchase of 9,123 acres in Douglas County to protect important shrub-steppe habitat for wildlife and provide public access for outdoor recreation. The commission, a citizen panel appointed by the governor to set policy for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), approved the acquisition during its meeting in Spokane on Sept. 18-19.

The acquisition is the second phase of a multi-year plan to secure the 20,571-acre Grand Coulee Ranch. In last year's first phase, WDFW acquired about 4,200 acres of the ranch property. The phase two purchase includes 14 miles of river frontage and critical habitat for the state endangered Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit and state threatened Greater Sage-grouse and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, and other wildlife. Located on the south side of Rufus Woods Reservoir on the Columbia River, WDFW secured an option to purchase the 9,123-acre property for an assessed value of \$3.9 million with grants from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the federal Dingell-Johnson Act (funds from excise taxes on fishing equipment).

WDFW received support for the acquisition from the Douglas County Commission. Once the sale is finalized, the land will be managed as WDFW's new Big Bend Wildlife Area.

The Great North Central Washington Bird Race Help Support Communities Affected by Recent Wildfires

by Tim O'Brien, Cheney

When: Saturday, January 16, Sunday, January 17, and Monday January 18 of 2016

Where: Omak, WA and surrounding areas

What is the Bird Race?

A team competition to see what birding team can score the highest number of points each day. Points will be awarded based on Washington Birder (www.wabirder.com/) abundance codes in the respective counties. Specific counties in the area will be designated as a target each day. Teams will be limited to four birders or less. So, for example, a code 1 bird in Okanogan county scores one point, however a code 5 bird is worth 5 points and so on. In Okanogan County, a Bald Eagle is a code 1 bird while Ferruginous Hawk is a code 5 bird.

The birding day will be defined as going from midnight to 5:00 pm. The teams will be asked to gather at a

predetermined eatery in Omak by 7 pm, sort of like a Christmas Bird Count. At the gathering, we will tally points and be social - thus contributing to the local economy. Teams will most likely stay in hotels and buy fuel in the area as well. Monday is the exception as most teams will be heading home that day (results will be submitted by mail or electronically for Monday). The birding day for Monday will end at 1:00 pm.

Target counties: Saturday – Okanogan, Sunday – Ferry and Douglas, Monday – Chelan and Stevens.

Prizes will be awarded for the top team each day. Results will also be posted online.

Please email me, kertim7179@yahoo.com with any questions. Teams are forming now and hotels in the area are filling up fast!

November Wild Phlox

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar
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November 5	Teddy Roosevelt Wilderness Legacy	At the Twisp Library. See page 5
November 6	Bruce Beehler at Leavenworth	Explore lost worlds. See page 1
November 6	Roots of Music	In Tonasket with OHA. See page 6
November 12	Learn about Grasslands	With the Native Plant Society. See page 4
December - February	Winter Raptor Surveys	In Douglas and Okanogan Counties. See page 5
December 1	Learn about the Salish Sea	With the Methow Conservancy. See page 5
December 14 - January 5	Christmas Bird Count Season	Be sure and read your Wild Phlox to find a count near you!
January 16 - 18	The Great NCW Bird Race	Support fire survivors and go birding! See page 7
Winter 2016	Corvids	Learn about Corvids with the Methow Conservancy. See page 2



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