



Volume 47 #8 Summer 2014

Lost Lake Loons Beating the Odds

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands Alliance

The Okanogan Highlands provide some of the best Common Loon nesting habitat in Washington, with rich wetlands at the lake's edge providing ideal conditions for floating mat nests. Lost Lake is no exception, producing more loon chicks on record than any other lake in Washington. Unfortunately, this year, a fishing tackle jig became embedded in the tongue of the male loon at Lost Lake. "This may have been caused by ingesting a fish on an active fishing line," says Ginger Poleschook, who has been conducting Common Loon observation and conservation efforts with her husband Dan for 20 years.

At first it was not clear whether the male would be able to survive with this impediment. "This tackle could have impaired the loon's ability to feed and care for the nest and young, but it looks like he is doing pretty well now," says Jeff Heinlen, Wildlife Biologist for the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). He continues, "This situation is a good example of why there is a lead tackle restriction on this lake. Loons can ingest and become poisoned from lead fishing tackle. The lead restriction is in place to prevent that."

On May 10th, Ginger and Dan Poleschook, with the help of Dan Furlong and Jeff Heinlen, attempted to capture the male utilizing a purse seine fishing net and decoys painted by

Ginger. The Lost Lake male loon is not banded because he has evaded capture every summer during the banding effort coordinated by the Loon Lake Loon Association and the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI). The male again avoided capture, so the fishing tackle remained embedded. Beating the odds, the male adult has survived for over eight weeks since the tackle was first observed and possibly longer since it was acquired. Despite the injuries caused by the tackle and line, the pair



The male Lost Lake loon, with a fishing tackle jig embedded in its tongue and fishing line protruding from the beak. Photo by Ginger and Dan Poleschook

has successfully produced two chicks, hatched on June 5th and 6th. The BRI capture crew will attempt to capture the male in July during the annual capture, banding and lab sampling of adults and chicks, and they will assess if there is any action necessary at that time. In the meantime, the male has been observed foraging, vocalizing, and assisting with care and protection of the chicks.

Birders are encouraged to watch the loons from a respectful distance and if a beached or dead loon is found, it is important to contact Jeff Heinlen at 826-7372. According to Dr. Mark Pokras' Common Loon research (Tuft's University, New Hampshire), if loons ingest lead fishing tackle, they will expire in two to three weeks from lead toxicosis. It is prohibited to use lead weights and jigs that measure 1 ½ inches or less along the longest axis at the 13 lakes in Washington where the lead restriction is in place for nesting loons. Heinlen adds, "Please remember that responsible fishing includes collecting all broken fishing line and tackle, and using lead-free tackle."

Loon watchers can learn more about loons by reading public information signs posted at Lost and Bonaparte Lakes. More information can also be found at www.okanoganhighlands.org/restoration/lost-lake. OHA owns and manages the Lost Lake Wetland and Wildlife Preserve, initiated in 2010 to protect 40 acres of wetland and 25 acres of adjacent upland forest at the south end of Lost Lake. The Preserve includes family-friendly hiking trails, which are open to the public and feature full-color interpretive signage. For more information about the Lost Lake Wetland and Wildlife Preserve, contact julie@okanoganhighlands.org or 476-2432.

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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Field Trips - Jenny Graevell - 679-3531 | avijenee@yahoo.com

Dan Stephens | dstephens@wvc.edu

Membership - Heather Findlay | 429-8167 | heather@eaglesun.net

Newsletter - Teri J Pieper | 630-6224 | teripieper@hotmail.com

Programs - Penny Tobiska - ptobiska@nwi.net

Science Officer - Don McIvor | 997-9456 | puma@methownet.com

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At Large: Art Campbell | 996-8168 | rapakivi@methow.com

Richard Scranton | rscran4350@yahoo.com

Ruth Daugherty | 779-4380 | thebirdlady@frontier.com

Website - www.ncwardubon.org

Email - info@ncwardubon.org

Mailing address - PO Box 2934 Wenatchee, WA 98807

North Central Washington Audubon Society is on Facebook too

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



Barrow's Goldeneye at Chopaka Lake
 photo by Teri J Pieper



Common Loon mother and
 babies at Lost Lake
 photo by Teri J Pieper

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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.

This has been a great spring for birding and wildflower watching. All of my walks and rambles with dogs seem to be slowed to a crawl when I see another beautiful bloom or hear another bird song. My dogs are patient with me, mostly, and just happy to be out and about. My friends sometimes think I am dawdling though. And I have to admit that I might have more than enough photos of wild orchids.

We had a fun camping trip to Chopaka and Lost Lake at the beginning of June. The Common Loons at Lost Lake were wonderful to see and hear again. I am always delighted to return to their welcoming sounds. And while we were there we saw the nest with eggs and then we saw the tiny fuzzy black babies too! Now I can only hope that the little ones escape the clutches of Bald Eagles and other predators and that the father loon is able to survive with fishing tackle tangled in his mouth. We saw lots of baby birds including Barrow's Goldeneyes, Killdeer, American Coots, Common Mergansers and American Robins. We were lucky enough to get to watch a pair of Great Gray Owls on a nest! Soras called and Wilson's Snipe winnowed in the mornings and Common Nighthawks buzzed in the evening. At Chopaka Lake, a pair of Barn Swallows attempted to build a nest on our camper's awning. We hated to discourage them but could not let them get too far along with the project since we were there for only two nights.

A few days ago at the Diablo Lake overlook I saw a White-crowned Sparrow singing his little heart out. I am used to seeing these guys in migration, not in full display mode. At the same place I had great looks at a Pine Siskin. These finches have been missing from our feeders for many months now. They used to be regular visitors at the niger seed feeders, keeping me busy and broke filling them up. Now we don't see them at all.

At home we added two new animals in one week to our yard's wildlife list. Admittedly, our yard is nearly fifteen acres; maybe bigger than yours, but still it was a really good week. One morning shortly after returning from our camping trip, I was eating breakfast and a moose trotted through the bitterbrush across the bench of land in front of our house! It was a short view but long enough to get a photo with my cell phone. A couple of days later while Ken was digging up our sidewalk in preparation for replacing it, he came across a spadefoot toad! We are very excited about the diversity of wildlife that lives close to us.

What makes for a good wildflower year? It must be a combination of factors – enough rain in the spring but not too much, winter snowfall, temperature, last year's conditions – what else? This year has been fabulous for wildflower fans with showy displays ever since the snow melted. I have seen orchids in places where I didn't know they grew. The balsamroot display was one of the best ever. Right now the pink wild roses are a delight to the nose and eyes in shady areas close to water.

This is the last Wild Phlox til September. So until then, get outside and enjoy the wonders of the natural world! And be sure to share your stories with the rest of the NCWAS membership. You can post to our Facebook page or submit bird sightings to the ncwabird email list or you can write a story for The Wild Phlox. We love to hear from you and see your pictures too.



Great Gray Owl
photo by Teri J Pieper

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from the ncwabird email list
and Tweepers

This might be the birdiest time of the year. If you're not seeing and hearing birds, it's because you're not outside looking and listening.

A single Pine Grosbeak was reported at Washington Pass. Chipping Sparrows are abundant throughout our region and even being reported in shrub-steppe habitat! A Screech Owl was heard at Klipchuck Campground near Mazama and the first Olive-sided Flycatcher was reported there. Caspian Terns were seen at Jameson Lake in Douglas County. Common Poorwills and Black Swifts were reported in the Rendezvous area above Winthrop late in May and a Flammulated Owl was heard in the upper, upper Rendezvous. The first Common Nighthawk was reported May 30 in Bridgeport. We saw them June 1 at Chopaka

Lake near Loomis and also at Lost Lake later that week. The forests are full of the songs of Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes. On June 8 a Least Flycatcher was reported at Camas Meadow near Blewett Pass. Near Winthrop, a partially leucistic Brewer's Blackbird has been observed. She has white primaries on one of her wings. A few people are seeing Evening Grosbeaks around our region. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks have been reported in Twisp and near the Loup Loup summit. Big Valley Wildlife Area near Winthrop has singing Veerys and Red-eyed Vireos. Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles and White-throated Swifts are being seen in the Pipestone Canyon area between Twisp and Winthrop. A Peregrine Falcon was reported from the Horse Lake Trailhead in the Wenatchee Foothills.

The Vast and Subtle Music

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

We thank donors twice a year, following our once-a-year donation appeal in late summer: fall and early winter donors in the December Phlox and late winter through spring donors in this, the summer Phlox.

I'm almost certain that the donors listed below (and in last December's Phlox) are donors of more than money. I'd bet that nearly all are donors of their time or energy or possessions or knowledge as well. And that these things donated come round, in a kind of dance.

"We clasp the hands of those that go before us, And the hands of those who come after us ... Whose hands are joined in a dance, And the larger circle of all creatures, Passing in and out of life, Who move also in a dance, To a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it Except in fragments" Wendell Berry

Our thanks to all of you for being part of the dance.

Ellen Aagaard **	Ruth Geraghty *	Virginia Palumbo
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Jeanie Garrity	Steve Nelson *	appreciated

The symbols denote donations of special generosity:

* = \$100 ("Great Blue Heron") ** = \$200 ("Greater White-fronted Goose") *** = \$500 ("Magnificent Frigatebird")

Chelan Falls Geology

By Art Campbell, Winthrop

If you're driving on State Route (SR) 150 between Chelan and the Columbia River, you can see spectacular rocks that are the foundation of the North Cascades. A tall road-cut cliff adjacent to SR 150 reveals spectacularly layered and contorted rock called migmatite that is part of the foundation of our North Cascades. The migmatite you see in the road-cut had been granite and similar rocks that first crystallized 230 – 165 million years ago and then had become deeply buried during subsequent regional mountain-building. In the high temperature and pressure conditions at depths of up to 15-20 miles below the earth's surface, minerals in the granitic rocks recrystallized, creating layers of primarily light-colored minerals alternating with layers of primarily dark-colored minerals. The recrystallized granitic rocks partially melted, turned into a plastic mush, and contorted under the extreme temperatures and pressures. The end result of these series of events was the layered, contorted migmatite seen in the road-cut.

Sometime after the events creating the migmatite, new granitic melt intruded the migmatite to form the narrow light-colored dikes that crosscut the contorted layering. Later still, fine-grained dark-colored rock intruded the entire unit, forming the prominent pair of vertical dikes that crosscut the right-hand (north) side of the road-cut. These vertical dikes are the youngest rocks exposed at the road-cut, and like similar rocks

elsewhere in the Chelan Falls area, they are probably between 55-35 million years in age.

The rocks we see in this road-cut are part of the Chelan complex, a geologic unit of diverse rocks that extends from just across the Columbia River to your east, northwestward to and along the southern part of Lake Chelan. Similarly highly recrystallized rocks – the Skagit Gneiss – are found further northwestward along Lake Chelan and extend to north of the Skagit River. These metamorphic rocks – the Chelan complex and the Skagit Gneiss – are the central core of the North Cascades. As you view this road-cut, contemplate the truly immense magnitude of the mountain uplift and erosion that must have occurred to expose these rocks that formed 15-20 miles below the earth's surface.

Driving Directions: From Chelan, drive east on SR 150 (Chelan Falls Road). About 2¼ miles from the east end of town, just before the road takes a big 180° bend, a tall road-cut will be on your right. Park on the wide shoulder on the opposite side of the road. From SR 97 at the west end of the Beebe Bridge, turn onto SR 150. Cross the railroad tracks, travel about a ½ mile farther, and park on the wide shoulder.

Editor's note - there is also excellent birding near along SR 150 and also at the Beebe Springs Natural Area on the Columbia River upstream from the Beebe Bridge.

Okanogan Big Birding Day

June 7 was the annual Okanogan spring birdathon, scheduled to coincide with the 75th anniversary celebration of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. I camped out at Forde Lake to get an early start and was joined by Penny Rose, current president of Washington Ornithological Society, and Gordon Kent, our longstanding Okanogan birding trip leader.

We got a 5 am start and headed along the trail from Sinlahekin headquarters towards Connors Lake. At first it was a little quiet in the cold morning air but soon we heard the songs of warblers and other birds. Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Gray Catbirds, along with Yellow, Nashville and MacGillivray's Warblers soon joined the chorus along the trail. We saw a noisy group of Red-naped Sapsuckers busily drilling into a birch tree, creating sap wells. Black-chinned and Calliope Hummingbirds were also buzzing around this abundant food source.



Red-naped Sapsucker at sap wells
photo by Heather Findlay

In the lakes were Blue-winged Teal, Great Blue Heron, Ruddy Ducks, and Wood Ducks with babies paddling along in family groups. Virginia Rails were heard. Red-winged Blackbirds and Marsh Wrens were busy in the reeds. Western Tanagers, Bullock's Orioles and Lazuli Buntings were among the brightly colored birds we enjoyed. We had a good showing by a Pileated Woodpecker and also sightings of Downy Woodpeckers in the pine trees. Pygmy and Red-breasted Nuthatches made an appearance. Alder and Willow Flycatchers were seen, and we listened for their calls to help differentiate these similar species.

On one of the trails Gordon was accosted by a displaying

Ruffed Grouse. We quickly continued up the trail so as not to bother the protective parent and baby grouse as they rustled around in the trailside brush.

Close to noon we gathered at Sinlahekin headquarters to join Fish and Wildlife dignitaries and staff, political representatives and many local Okanogan people who had come out to celebrate this rich valley and all that it contains. To add to the hunting, fishing and forest interests, Penny said a few words on how abundant the bird life is in this valley, and how it is important to preserve and protect the beautiful habitat.

In the afternoon we were joined by additional Okanogan birders who had been birding in other areas in the morning. We headed both north and south from the Sinlahekin. I joined the group that headed north through Loomis, Palmer Lake and Nighthawk.

We saw various species including Red-necked Grebe and Bobolink. Penny and I encountered a large group of Native American youth running to raise awareness for suicide prevention. Late in the day as we joined some of them for an ice cream cone in the Loomis store, a Golden Eagle soared overhead.

The group heading south also added to our species seen for the day, with Eared Grebe, Lesser Scaup, Cassin's Finch and White-breasted Nuthatch, among others. We had a great time overall, ending up seeing 104 species on our "Big Day" in the beautiful Sinlahekin and Okanogan region.

Birding Pleasures

On the morning of June 8 I drove up to the top of Chelan Butte to do some birding. I first checked the north face just below the summit, remembering that many years ago (when I got home, I checked my log book and found in was May 20, 2001 - pre-9/11!) I had last seen a Lewis's Woodpecker there. However, a forest/range fire had passed over the Butte since then and so many of its woodpecker-friendly trees had been eliminated by fire. I did observe: House Wren, Northern Flicker, Western Meadowlark, Say's Phoebe, American Robin, Spotted Towhee, and Dark-eyed Junco. From there I walked southwards towards where the road splits between the summit access and the hanglider takeoff area. There I found Pygmy Nuthatch and - could I believe my eyes - a pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers! Any chance they could be the progeny of the Lewis's I'd seen 13 years earlier up here on the Butte? I had brought my camera and 300 mm lens, but they were back in the car. Of course, by the time I returned with my camera, the Lewis's could not be found. So I settled in the brush to wait patiently. Meanwhile, a Western Bluebird appeared so I dutifully took photos. Twenty minutes later the Lewis's finally returned so I took a few shots, which included one of them out 'fly-catching'.

Truly an enjoyable morning for me!

photo and article by Steve Easley, Chelan



Okanogan Highlands Alliance Presents: Stream Ecology with Mark Oswood

by Julie Ashmore
Okanogan Highlands Alliance

On July 19, OHA's Summertime Highland Wonders series will bring a unique opportunity to learn about Stream Ecology, hands-on in the highlands. The event will be led by freshwater ecologist and emeritus professor Dr. Mark Oswood. An indoor presentation in Chesaw will cover the basics of stream ecology, followed by a demonstration of books and gear, and a field trip to a local stream. This event aims to increase our community's understanding of stream ecology, and how riparian zones and streams interact to support and affect populations of aquatic insects. Community members will have the opportunity to collect macroinvertebrates and look at and identify specimens with field optics, streamside. Connections will be made between populations of aquatic insects and what their presence indicates about water quality.

Mark lives in the Wenatchee area, retired from the department of Biology and Wildlife and the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, with a research specialty in freshwater ecology. He is also the immediate past president of North Central Washington Audubon Society. Mark focused mainly on running waters (streams and rivers), with an emphasis on aquatic entomology (the scientific study of insects) and trophic structure of stream ecosystems. He has taught

limnology (freshwater science), ecology of streams and rivers, aquatic entomology, as well as introductory biology. Most of his research was on ecology of stream insects, especially biogeography, and decomposition of organic matter.

Throughout his career, Mark has taught a wide variety of "introduction to stream ecology" events in classrooms, Elder Hostels, and for government agencies, fly-fishing groups, and conservation organizations. "Seeing the diversity of invertebrates that live in streams can be analogous to a first experience looking at tide pool organisms," he says. "Plus, aquatic insects are a stream's way of turning green algae and brown leaves into fish food."

Due to the nature of the outdoor event, participation is limited, and priority registration will be offered for OHA members. A waiting list will be generated on a first-come, first-serve basis. To begin or renew your OHA membership and be first in line to register for the summertime events, please visit www.okanoganhighlands.org/support, or contact OHA for more information. To sign up for this event, or the "Geology of the Okanogan Highlands" tour on August 16, email julie@okanoganhighlands.org or call 476-2432.

Forensic Pathology

by Paul Anderman, Wenatchee

A dead bird lies in a residential street, face up if it had a head. Most of its breast is missing, too. But other than that, it's intact: wings, tail, feathers, feet. It has not been run over so far. What's left has not been flattened. It makes you wonder why dead birds aren't falling all the time, given billions of birds. Why don't you come across them every day? A common problem?

This is a bird that has been killed by another bird, and dropped. From the gray feathers and the darker gray patterns, this dead bird is a dove, an invasive species from the south called a Eurasian Collared Dove. Now it's common and one less, killed by perhaps a hawk, policing the world of birds. I want to give this bird an afterlife, by paying attention to its decay. Everything is interesting, isn't it? A week later I look again. Despite being run over through a week, there are still feathers. Feathers are amazing structures, strong and durable. Feathers dipped into ink wrote several great books now called classics. One wing lies where the head was, like a fan dancer, the other lies across the breast. Traffic has shifted both from the spread eagle they were, a dove on its back, now described by an eagle. I picked up a wing. It wasn't stuck to the pavement. It still flexed. I will carefully wash my hands.

Actually looking at it, forensic pathologist that I am, there are still intact feathers and a couple or three are gray, the original color. These are the ones from the upper wing, the one stretched where the head had been. Mostly it's flat, black, a bird shadow left behind by the Peter Pan bird. In the middle of its body,

where it was missing its breast, the shafts of the feathers on its back are showing, silvery lines. Its little pitchfork feet remain intact, but flat. A completely black feather lies across the middle, black from being crushed by traffic into the meat. There were no predators, ants, maggots, none of that. I'm picturing disdainful vultures, who I'm sure can smell this, and as one passes another on their endless circling, one says, "No, I don't think so. Beyond, I would say, eh?" His Canadian accent is a little weird for an American vulture, but perfectly in tune with this moment.

I'm aware of this bird every time I pass by, every day. I try not to run over it myself, but it is becoming harder and harder to tell what it is, was, is, from other dark splotches on gray asphalt. There's one nearby, oil perhaps. A week later, it is mostly just a black spot on the road. It is as flat as a guilty smile. Only 2 or 3 feathers are still visible, where its head was, and they are filthy black. Its feet are little tridents, a molecule thick, if that. The shafts of wing feathers still shine, barely, through the dark meat, but only a couple. There are still no predators, outside of microbes which I can't see. I thought insects might take an interest. Still, it's a good thing there's a clean-up crew, both big and small. Couldn't do this without you guys! Give me a high-five for them! But traffic will make it blend with the road, and then it will be what we will eventually be.

It's what the guy said to the hot dog vendor: Make me one with everything.

Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival 2014

by Richard Scranton, Wenatchee

North Central Washington is home to some of the most amazing species in the northwest, but many people don't know it is also a major pit stop for hawks flying from Alaska to the southwest and Mexico. This September is a great opportunity to learn about this migration, and get face-to-face with raptors of all shapes and sizes. Join the Methow Valley Ranger District, North Central Washington Audubon Society, and HawkWatch International for the fifth annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival! This festival coincides with the peak of southbound raptor migration at Chelan Ridge—the best place in Washington to view this journey.

This family event combines free activities in Pateros with trips to the Chelan Ridge site to learn about and celebrate raptors as they journey to winter territories. Please join us for the 2014 festival!

Activities for the whole family. Free!

- Environmental education and interpretation - learn all about migrating raptors and the ecosystems on which they depend
- See live raptors up close
- Hands-on projects for kids, including owl pellet dissections!
- Shop vendors: arts, books, optics, birding gear, and more
- Catch shuttles for field trips to the spectacular Chelan Ridge raptor migration site. Chelan Ridge sits 5,675 feet above sea level along the flyway for migrating raptors like the Broad-winged Hawk. Biologists who live at the Ridge during the migration season will tell how the birds are studied and tracked. See raptors like Sharp-shinned Hawks as they are banded and released. This is an amazing experience with environmental education and interpretation conducted by an on-site educator and Forest Service

personnel. (Please note: field trips are restricted to people ages 11 and above.)

To reserve a spot on the shuttle to Chelan Ridge, please go to our website www.ncwaudubon.org/events.html.

More Birding Opportunities: A Field Trip led by Jenny Graevell and Meredith Spencer. Bird the Wells Wildlife Area, located between Brewster and Bridgeport. We will walk through managed shrubby uplands and riparian habitat, on dirt roads. Target birds include migrating warblers, thrushes, and waterfowl. Some highlights from last year include Warbling Vireo, Gray Catbird,

Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival
Saturday September 13
Memorial Park, Pateros
8 am - 3 pm

Lazuli Bunting, Orange-crowned Warbler and Palm Warbler! Please meet in Pateros Memorial Park, at 8:00 am for departure at 8:10 am. Return to Pateros at noon. Participants will carpool (about a 15 minute drive) to the Wells Wildlife Area parking lot, where a Discover Pass is required. Bring sunscreen, a hat and insect repellent. Group size limited to 20 people. Sign up by emailing Richard Scranton rscran@aol.com

...and more CELEBRATION.....

- A guest speaker Saturday night, September 13, and field trip the following day at North Cascades Basecamp, Mazama. For more information or to register/RSVP for these events, call the Basecamp at 996-2334, or email info@northcascadesbasecamp.com.

Festival information will also be updated on the NCWAS Facebook page.

Still have questions? Please email rscran@aol.com or call Richard Scranton at 421-3166.

HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE FESTIVAL!



Three young Great-horned Owls
photo by Torre Stockard

Songbird Stamps

The U.S. Postal Service celebrates ten melodic voices with the Songbirds stamps. Each colorful bird is shown perching on a fence post or branch embellished with vines, pinecones, leaves, or flowers. The artwork appears against a plain, white background.

Illustrator Robert Giusti painted the portraits, based on photographs. The stamps can be purchased at a post office or at www.usps.com.



Summer Wild Phlox

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar
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July 19	Stream Ecology with Mark Oswood	Summertime Highland Wonders with the Okanogan Highlands Alliance in Tonasket. See page 6.
August 16	Geology of the Okanogan Highlands	Summertime Highland Wonders with the Okanogan Highlands Alliance in Tonasket. See page 6.
September 2	Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet	Methow Conservancy First Tuesday. See www.methowconservancy.org
September 13	Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival	See raptors and other birds up close and in the air! Learn about Migration! Book your field trips today. See page 7.



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