



## Visiting with Raptors - Sixth Annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival

Volume 48 #9 Summer 2015  
by Jesse McArty, Chelan and  
Richard Scranton, Wenatchee

The city of Pateros is excited to host the sixth annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival on September 12. The US Forest Service, HawkWatch International, North Central Washington Audubon Society and many others will be sharing the joy of raptors, their awesome biology, their migration tales and the on-going research in our back yard.

This free family event combines activities in Pateros, a field trip to the Wells Wildlife Area, and shuttles to the Chelan Ridge HawkWatch site to learn about and celebrate raptors as they journey to winter territories. This all happens at Memorial Park, along the Columbia River in Pateros.

You will get to visit vendors, see raptor demonstrations, and take a shuttle to the spectacular Chelan Ridge Raptor Migration Site. Reservations are required for the shuttles that will run from Pateros to Chelan Ridge. Last year, festival participants saw Broad-

winged Hawks, Northern Goshawks, and a Prairie Falcon along with many more common raptors.

Chelan Ridge sits 5675 feet above sea level along the flyway of migrating raptors. Biologists who live at the Ridge during the migration season will offer insight into what it is like to live and breathe raptors and show how the birds are banded and tracked. This is an amazing experience with environmental education and interpretation conducted by on-site educators, Forest Service personnel, and volunteers.



Kent Woodruff, US Forest Service biologist, shows details of a hawk to one child while another child is ready to release a hawk when Kent gives her the signal.  
photo by Bill Deters

We know the raptors we see at Chelan Ridge fly from as far north as Alaska and travel as far south as Argentina. Public visitations are an important element of the Chelan Ridge project and serve as an opportunity for hundreds of people to “hawk watch” with professionals each year while learning about wildlife and the need for conservation on public lands that are accessible to all. Although the US Forest Service will provide transportation to Chelan Ridge during the festival the hike to the observation point is steep and rocky, and of moderate difficulty. It is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to the observation point, one way. It is a good idea for hikers to be in reasonably fit, have snacks and water, and clothes for the weather which will probably be breezy and cool.

Beginning July 1 you may visit our website ([www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org).) to see the festival schedule and to sign up for the free shuttle.



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.*

Swallows

Sky slicing  
 sweeping, turning  
 Blue rockets  
 chase feathers  
 and bugs

Bright blue  
 brilliance  
 Flying genius  
 chortling in the air

Jewels by  
 the nest box  
 Bring joy  
 to my heart

- Swallows

by Ken Bevis



American Robin nestlings  
 photo by Elaine Clough, Ferry County

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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](http://www.audubon.org) or drop us a note and we will send you a form for a special rate introductory membership.

Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans. That quote pretty well describes my life for this last week/month/year. At some point I'd like it to settle down and not include any more 'big' events. Is that too much to ask? I'm finding it hard to enjoy a quiet morning walk without worrying about everything I 'need' to do. I've read articles about how all of us are too busy – scheduling ourselves to the point of leaving out the free time we need to regroup and renew our energy. One thing I've seen recently says something to the effect that everyone should spend fifteen minutes in nature unless they really don't have the time in which case they should spend one hour in nature. I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling that way.

The Gray Catbird returned to our place last month. What a pleasure it is to hear him chattering away for seemingly hours on end. Catbirds have nested here the last few years and I thought maybe they would not return after the fire. He seems to be using the privet and willows that did not burn near the end of the house. The Lazuli Buntings did not return and most of the Spotted Towhees are gone as well. Violet-green and Tree Swallows are here in large numbers, mainly because of our nest boxes. They bring real joy to us as they swoop and dive in front of our porch. Our chorus frog population is greatly diminished. I've only seen one this year and have not heard any.



Great Gray Owl  
photo by Lee Johnson

Elaine reports that her baby robins on page two survived attacks from an American Kestrel when the robin parents enlisted help from another robin couple to fend off the diminutive falcon.

## NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from Tweets and the  
ncwabird email list by Teri J Pieper

Lots of migrants arrived in our four-county region in early May – Western Tanager, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Lazuli Buntings, Western Wood Peewees, Western Kingbirds, Lewis's Woodpeckers, Chipping Sparrows, Bullock's Orioles and many other songbirds. American White Pelicans were reported in southern Ferry County flying over Lake Roosevelt. They are a new bird to the Ferry County bird list. The Driveway Butte trail near Mazama yielded MacGillivray's Warbler, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Cassin's Vireo and Dusky Grouse, among other species. In Douglas County at the top of Bridgeport Hill, two new birds for the county list were White-faced Ibis and Franklin's Gull. Also spotted at that pond were Least and Western Sandpipers, Wilson's Phalaropes, Northern Shovelers, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Ruddy Ducks, Yellow-headed Blackbird, several swallow species, Redheads and Northern Pintails. The next day Meredith saw a Whimbrel at the same pond! Another birder visited that part of Douglas County later and saw American Avocets, Baird's Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalaropes and Dowitchers. A Spotted Sandpiper visited a small man-made pond high in the Rendezvous area above Winthrop – a new yard bird for a happy birder. A Black-backed Woodpecker was found nesting about six miles north of the Loup Loup summit. On Cameron Lake Road, east of the Okanogan River, Black-necked Stilts were found in five separate locations. A flock of at least thirty Clark's Nutcrackers was seen on the Lyman Lake-Moses Meadow Road between Disautel and Aeneas. That's a big flock of nutcrackers for this time of year. A mountain biking birder had a warbler-palooza near Sun Mountain with Yellow, Orange-crowned, Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, MacGillivray's Nashville, and Wilson's Warblers plus Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting and three Vireo species. And he heard Common Poor-will's in the evening. Another birder counted 103 species between the mouth of the Methow River and Tiffany Mountain in one day. Highlights were a Harlequin Duck on a rock in the Twisp River, a Wilson's Snipe calling at Roger Lake and a Hermit Thrush duet on Tiffany Mountain. American Redstarts, a Northern Waterthrush, White-throated Swifts and Red-eyed Vireos were found along the Sanpoil River in Ferry County. Common Nighthawks seemed to arrive all over the state during the first week of June. And one especially interesting bird was seen and heard along the Big Valley trail in the Methow Wildlife Area – a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

# Sweat Equity in our Communities

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

I like roses, but I'm partial to the smell of tomato sweat – a working-class plant with no deodorant. Donation checks have a whiff of earned sweat: long hospital shifts, early mornings in the orchard, houses made into homes. Your sweat became dollars and, thankfully, you sent some of your dollars to NCWAS (and likely other good causes too). We add our sweat to your dollars (we're all-volunteer) so

that your donation is leveraged. Please know that your donations have always been, and always will be, deeply appreciated.

Our once-a-year donation request comes in late summer. We haven't forgotten folks who made donations last fall and were thanked in the December Phlox. Below, we list donors making donations after about mid-November.

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+ 4 anonymous donors, no less appreciated

The symbols denote donations of special generosity:  
\* = \$100 ("Great Blue Heron")  
\*\* = \$200 ("Greater White-fronted Goose")  
\*\*\* = \$500 ("Magnificent Frigatebird")

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## Can a Computer ID Bird Species in Photos?

from the  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Researchers at Cornell Tech and Caltech have partnered with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to train Merlin Bird Photo ID to recognize 400 of North America's most common bird species based on images.

Sometimes Merlin gets it right, just like magic. Other times, Merlin gets it wrong – sometimes way wrong. What's going on behind the scenes—and how can you help us keep improving Merlin's accuracy?

The challenge: Asking computers to identify bird species is a challenge not only because some species look so alike, but also because their shape varies from moment to moment. On top of that, photographs of birds often include complex backgrounds, and the birds may be far away or blurry.

The solution: Computer vision researchers create "convolutional network" systems that use patterns in data to train the computer and improve its performance. These systems require massive numbers of images as well as accurate image labels such the type of object, and where the object is in the image. Fortunately, bird watchers are renowned for taking lots of photos and for contributing millions of observations in citizen-science projects. Thousands of people have contributed photos and tagged them to teach Merlin to recognize birds.

In the coming months, we'll continue to improve Merlin's accuracy and train it to identify additional species. We'll also push Merlin's capabilities to see how well it can identify birds in poorer quality photos taken with mobile devices so that it might be a useful app some day. Ultimately, we hope that Merlin will be a useful tool to identify birds from around the world – and that its technology will be used to identify other wildlife, plants, and objects too.

We invite you to help us build Merlin Bird Photo ID. Join our email list to receive updates about how you can help – and be the first to hear when we release exciting new features. For more information and to try it out please see <http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/about-merlin-photo-id/>



White-faced Ibis in Douglas County  
photo by Meredith Spencer

# Globally Important Shrub-Steppe Habitat in our Backyard

compiled by Teri J Pieper from the Audubon WA website

Did you know that our region is home to a Globally Important Bird Area? The Leahy Junction/Moses Coulee area is critically important to shrub-steppe birds and also cliff dwelling species. Some of this land is privately owned and some of it is part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and some of it is public land. The Conservation Reserve Program pays a yearly rental payment in exchange for farmers removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting species that will improve environmental quality.

Boundaries for this Important Bird Area (IBA) were drawn to encompass the most critical and most contiguous habitat for shrub-steppe birds. Yet the site remains a quilt of native habitat in various states of quality, restored habitats (also in various conditions), CRP lands critical for Greater Sage-grouse, and actively cultivated lands - both irrigated alfalfa and non-irrigated wheat, and cereal grains.

The Waterville Plateau (of which the IBA is a part) contains some of the last/best remnants of shrub-steppe lands in the state. Other key shrub-steppe systems in Washington lie primarily on government lands to the south, e.g., Hanford and the Yakima Training Grounds. This IBA is essentially a plateau underlain by extensive basalt flows, dissected by coulees carved by glacial floods. It also contains the line of southern extent of glaciation during the last ice age.

The IBA is relatively well studied, including investigations (by WDFW biologists) into use of CRP lands by shrub-steppe birds and mammals. A MAPS bird banding station is also run in McCartney Creek (73 species as of 2003). The Sagebrush Flats Wildlife Area is prime habitat for the Greater Sage-grouse in Washington. It is also critical for

many other species including Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Horned Lark, Mourning Dove, Loggerhead Shrike, White-throated Swift and Western Meadowlark.

The two greatest threats facing this area are conversion of CRP lands back into active cultivation, and wind energy development. Maintenance of CRP lands is linked to Farm Bill funding, but also market forces which are currently seeing the price of grain climb dramatically (making expansion of farming more economically appealing to producers). Wind farms are sprouting across Eastern Washington, and they are essentially unregulated. A farm has been planned, but not implemented, along the eastern border of this IBA, directly over some critical grouse range.

Much of this area is, or has been, under intensive agriculture. The practice in this region is dryland wheat farming, though other crops (some irrigated) are also grown. Native habitat is fragmented to varying degrees. Although of lesser habitat value than native shrub-steppe, CRP lands in this IBA have been demonstrated to be used by grouse, and indeed are critical to their persistence.

Some of this IBA is on public land. For more information and maps see <http://netapp.audubon.org/IBA/Site/3208>.

Other identified IBA's in our four-county region include Douglas Creek (adjacent to the Leahy Junction/Moses Coulee IBA), the Colockum Wildlife Area and, of course, Chelan Ridge. You can learn more about IBA's in Washington at the Audubon Washington website - <http://wa.audubon.org/important-bird-areas-ibas>.

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## If You Missed *The Sagebrush Sea*

From The Birding Community E-bulletin.  
Archives available at  
<http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

Here is a simple recommendation for this month. If you missed the broadcast on Nature (PBS) last month called *The Sagebrush Sea* that was produced by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, you can find it online. It's well worth a 53-minute investment of time.

The show focuses, highlights, and describes not only the sagebrush itself, but also the antelope, badgers, lizards, rabbits, wrens, bluebirds, owls, prairie dogs, raptors, and migrating birds of all descriptions that live in the sagebrush. It is the Greater Sage-Grouse, however, that is the star of the show, front and center.

Watching *The Sagebrush Sea* will give you a new appreciation for the issues at hand, at a time when the fate of sage habitat and the sage-grouse is being decided at federal agencies, state houses, and in courtrooms across the West, as well as in the nation's capital.

Now is a good time to remember that an Endangered Species Act decision about the wisdom of keeping the Greater Sage-Grouse as a "candidate species" under the ESA is due by the end of September.

In the meantime, you can access *The Sagebrush Sea* here: [www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/sagebrush-sea-full-episode/12341/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/sagebrush-sea-full-episode/12341/)

# Study Butterflies in Okanogan County

from the  
Washington Butterfly Association

The Washington Butterfly Association 2015 Annual Conference will be June 26 to 28 in Okanogan County.

For our sixteenth annual conference, we return this June to Okanogan country – the land of shrub-steppe, dry forests, and butterfly diversity. We gather for lectures on Friday and Saturday nights at the Okanogan Grange. Lodging can be found in nearby Omak, and camping is scattered throughout the area. Look for more details on the website. June is a busy season for visitors to Okanogan country, so book your accommodations as soon as possible and join us for a fun and interesting weekend. See the website for more information. <http://wabutterflyassoc.org/annual-conference/overview/>

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## Adventures in Entomophagy

from The Methow Conservancy

Methow Conservancy Monthly Program, July 1  
7:00 – 8:30 pm at the Winthrop Barn.

Have you ever swallowed a bug? More than 80 percent of the world's cultures eat insects - why don't we? According to the United Nations, insects could very well be the food of the future. Raising grasshoppers as a food source could combat world hunger and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 60 percent. Join David Gordon,

the author of the *Eat-a-Bug Cookbook*, for an adventure in entomophagy - eating bugs - and prepare yourself for the next big revolution in food production – using crickets, mealworms, and other eco-friendly alternatives. The program concludes with free samples of edible insect snacks for everyone who attends. Note: this First Tuesday program is on a Wednesday! For more information see [www.methowconservancy.org](http://www.methowconservancy.org) or call 996-2870.

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## Guided Hikes in the Highlands

by Julie Ashmore, Okanogan Highlands

The Okanogan Highlands Alliance is offering Highland Wonders summertime interpretive hikes in the Highlands on Saturday, July 18 with George Thornton and on Sunday, August 16 with Dana Visalli.

Due to the nature of these outdoor events, participation is limited, and priority registration will be offered for OHA members. A wait list is being generated on a first-come, first-serve basis. To begin or renew OHA membership and be first in line to register for the summertime events, community members can visit [www.okanoganhighlands.org/support](http://www.okanoganhighlands.org/support), or contact OHA for more information. To sign up for these events or get on the wait list, email [julie@okanoganhighlands.org](mailto:julie@okanoganhighlands.org) or call 476-2432.

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## Wenatchee River Nature Quest

by Hillary Schwirtlich, Leavenworth

The Chelan Douglas Land Trust, Wenatchee River Institute and NCW Audubon are organizing *The Wenatchee River Nature Quest* at Barn Beach Reserve in Leavenworth on August 15.

Come out for a free, fun day for kids and families to learn about fish, birds, plants and tiny aquatic insects that depend

on our river and help keep it healthy. Families will receive a quest book and a map, and there is a mix of guided and self-guided activities for all ages. August 15, 9 am til 2 pm at Barn Beach Reserve in Leavenworth. For more information contact [info@cdlandtrust.org](mailto:info@cdlandtrust.org) or call 667-9708 or [info@wenatcheeriverinstitute.org](mailto:info@wenatcheeriverinstitute.org) or 548-9362.

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## Ecology and Evolution Field Class

by Dana Visalli, Methow Valley

The Methow Naturalist is hosting a 5-day “Ecology & Evolution” camping field class in the Methow this summer.

Dana Visalli will lead the backpacking trip to Copper Glance Lake August 17-21. The trip will use the natural world to trace the evolutionary story of life on earth, starting with geology and moving through single-celled organisms and macroinvertebrates to the evolution of plants and animals. A three-mile hike is required to get to Copper Glance Lake. Contact Dana at [dana@methownet.com](mailto:dana@methownet.com) or visit the Methow Naturalist webpage for more information, [www.methownaturalist.com](http://www.methownaturalist.com)

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# Northern Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets Continue to Decline in WA

by Trina Bayard, Ph.D.  
Director of Bird Conservation  
Audubon Washington

The US Forest Service recently released a report on the last twenty years of monitoring reports for threatened Northern Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets. Among the findings announced – Washington appears to have the dubious distinction of leading the way in both Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) and Marbled Murrelet (MAMU) declines.

- NSO continue to decline at an annual rate of 3.8% range-wide, with barred owls having strong effects on local extinction range-wide, occupancy declining in all areas, and habitat loss continuing to play a role. Over the study period (varies depending on location), NSO have declined by up to 77% in WA, 64% in OR, and 55% in CA.

- NSO roost/nest habitat availability is fairly stable on federal land (1.5% net loss for 1986-2012 period).
- MAMU appear to be stable in CA and OR but continue to decline at a rate of 4.6%/yr in Washington. Net habitat loss for MAMU has been low on federal lands (2%) (1993-2012) but quite high on non-federal lands (27%), most of which is driven by timber harvest on non-federal lands in Washington.
- MAMU population trends appear to be linked to nest habitat availability; predictive models of habitat-population relationships indicate that terrestrial factors (vs. at-sea) are the best predictors of MAMU distribution and abundance.

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## Grizzly Bear Restoration Comments Now Available Online

from US Fish and Wildlife Service

Sedro Woolley, Wash. – The National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have released the report analyzing public comments received during the first phase of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for grizzly bear restoration in the North Cascades ecosystem.

The EIS is a three-year process to determine a range of actions that could be taken to restore grizzly bears to the North Cascades ecosystem, a 9,800 square-mile area of largely federal lands in north central Washington state.

FWS listed the grizzly bear as a threatened species in the lower 48 United States in 1975. The species was listed as endangered by the state of Washington in 1980. The EIS is being developed jointly by the FWS, which administers the Endangered Species Act, and the NPS. The U.S. Forest Service and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are cooperating agencies in the process.

The NPS and FWS held a series of public open houses from Feb. 13 through March 26 in which they shared information and solicited public input on the range of issues related to grizzly bears and the North Cascades ecosystem. Comments were also accepted by postal mail, online, and in person at North Cascades National Park. The summary of some 3,000 individual comments be used by the agencies to identify key issues during development of a range of alternatives to address grizzly bear recovery.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement containing the proposed alternatives will be released in summer 2016 and another public comment period will follow.

The analysis report and other documents related to the planning process can be found here:  
<http://go.usa.gov/3PZMG>

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## WDFW Post-Fire Weed Survey on the Methow Wildlife Area

by Anna Sample, WDFW

Volunteers are needed to assist with an ongoing weed survey on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Methow Wildlife Area in areas that were affected by the Carlton Complex wildfires.

Much of the residual vegetation burned in these areas, leaving bare ground open to increasing and new dispersals of weeds. Without thick vegetation cover, however, these weeds are more easily seen and identified. WDFW will provide a training on weed identification and how to use a GPS unit to collect coordinates of observed weed locations. Volunteers will be given a map of areas to survey for weeds. This effort will help locate, map and manage weeds on the wildlife area, and monitor sites that are currently not known to have an occurrence of a weed species. Watch for upcoming times and dates from now through the end of June, 2015. If you have questions or are interested in participating please contact Anna Sample, Assistant Wildlife Area Manager, at 429-2624 or [AnnaMarie.Sample@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:AnnaMarie.Sample@dfw.wa.gov).

**Summer Wild Phlox**

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**North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar**  
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June 26-28	Butterfly Conference	In Okanogan County. See page 6.
July 1	Entomophagy - Eat Bugs	In Winthrop. See page 6.
July 18	Highlands Hike with George Thornton	In the Okanogan Highlands. See page 6.
August 15	<b>Wenatchee River Nature Quest</b>	<b>In Leavenworth. See page 6.</b>
August 16	Highlands Hike with Dana Visali	In the Okanogan Highlands. See page 6.
August 17-21	Ecology and Evolution	Field Class high in the mountains above Winthrop. See page 6
September 12	<b>Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival</b>	<b>Celebrate raptors at Pateros and on Chelan Ridge. See article on page 1.</b>



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