

# The Wild Phlox

Published by the North Central Washington Audubon Society  
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Volume 54 #10 October 2021

## Conservation Update: Enloe Dam

by Todd Thorne, Okanogan Highlands

NCWAS's Conservation Committee is monitoring discussions regarding Enloe Dam, a 54-foot high concrete structure spanning the Similkameen River three miles upstream of Oroville. The Okanogan Public Utility District (PUD) has owned the dam since 1942 and ceased operation of power generation in 1958. In 2018, their economic analysis revealed that power produced by the dam would cost eight times the power the PUD obtains elsewhere. Given this finding, PUD discontinued further efforts to re-electrify the dam but does not support its removal. The dam provides neither flood control nor irrigation functions.

Are there benefits to removing Enloe Dam? Yes—dam removal will restore natural flows, river channel and shoreline of the Similkameen River, providing cool water and hundreds of miles of additional habitat for our threatened steelhead, benefiting birds and other species as well. Recreational opportunities for paddle sports, rafting, wildlife viewing, birding, and fishing will be enhanced. This should attract more visitors to an area that depends upon tourism and recreation.

The river and falls just downriver of the dam are deeply important to the region's tribes for cultural and spiritual reasons. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Lower Similkameen Indian Band, and Upper Similkameen Indian Band have all passed resolutions in recent years supporting removal of the dam while opposing construction of artificial fish passage. Meanwhile, fish biologists feel strongly that removal of Enloe Dam is key to the continued survival of Okanogan steelhead runs threatened by ever warmer summers and river water.

There are significant responsibilities and costs to keeping even a derelict dam in place. These are borne by the PUD and its ratepayers, and likely to increase over time. The PUD is presently spending about \$8 million to enable full inspection of the dam for potential safety deficiencies and will be required to make corrections, as required by Washington State.

You may hear the following reasons for keeping the dam in place:

- That Native Americans have a legend that salmon should not pass the falls. It is true that legend exists regarding the falls at the dam, which is relevant and

important to the tribes today. Nonetheless all three Native tribes and bands support removal of the dam.

- That sediment stored upstream of the dam is contaminated from upstream mining and its disposal would cause the cost of dam removal to skyrocket. During 2019, the US Geological Survey initiated sampling the sediment stored behind the dam, results of which are also being reviewed by the Washington Department of Ecology to consider how the sediment would be managed if the dam was removed.
- That the Province of British Columbia opposes removal of the dam. To the contrary, in June the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy for British Columbia sent a letter to the Washington Department of Ecology supporting the removal of Enloe Dam.
- That downstream flooding will result following dam removal. In reality, Enloe Dam has minimal flood control effect. It does however impound nearly 3 million cubic yards of sediment, which will require further study and planning for its management.

Our Conservation Committee supports removal of Enloe Dam. It's provided no beneficial functions for more than 60 years, whereas dam removal will significantly benefit steelhead and numerous other aquatic organisms, birds, riverine habitat, and water quality of the Okanogan/Similkameen watershed. We expect river users and local communities to benefit. We wish also to respect the culture and resolutions of the Colville Tribes and Similkameen Indian Bands.



Similkameen Falls before the Enloe Dam  
photo by Herbert Gregg  
courtesy of Okanogan County Historical Society

The mission of the North Central Washington Audubon Society is to:  
 “Enhance, protect, and restore healthy 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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Juvenile Belted Kingfisher  
 photo by Tim Gallagher

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To join the National Audubon Society which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see our website at [www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org)

As the new editor of the Wild Phlox, I have some big shoes to fill! My predecessor, Teri Pieper, did an outstanding job for 15 years and I can only hope to do half as well. Putting my first issue together has been challenging, but I have enjoyed the process and had excellent help. Teri provided some much-needed advice and encouragement, Bruce McCammon helped me learn our new publishing software program, and I received a lot of interesting and well-written articles. Thanks to all of you!

## Editor's Notes



Gretta and Julie

Following the adage of “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it,” I do not intend to make any major changes to the format or content of the newsletter. However, the Board did approve my request to reduce the number of issues published annually from nine to six. Starting with this issue, the Wild Phlox will be published every other month. So, you will receive one more issue this year in December and the first issue of 2022 in February.

For those of you who don’t know me, I will close by telling you a little bit about myself. I moved to Winthrop in 2016 following a 30-year career as a wildlife biologist in the southeastern US (16 years in Florida and 14 years in South Carolina). My sister and her partner live in Winthrop, and having visited them numerous times, I knew I wanted to move to the Methow when I retired. If asked, I would say I am passionate about two things—birds and dogs! I also like to hike, bike, ski, garden, sew, and read.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Wild Phlox!

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## Audubon’s 122<sup>nd</sup> Christmas Bird Count

by Julie Hovis, Winthrop

The Christmas Bird Count season is right around the corner. Here are the dates and leaders for the counts in our area.

Bridgeport: December 14 - Meredith Spencer, [merdave@homenetnw.net](mailto:merdave@homenetnw.net) or 509-686-7551

Leavenworth: December 14 - Joe Veverka, [joe\\_veverka@yahoo.com](mailto:joe_veverka@yahoo.com)

Chelan: December 20 - Steve Easley, [seasley@nwi.net](mailto:seasley@nwi.net) or 509-682-2318

Wenatchee: December 30 - Dan Stephens, [dstephens@wvc.edu](mailto:dstephens@wvc.edu) or 509-679-4706

Okanogan/Omak: January 2 - Heather Findlay, [heather@eaglesun.net](mailto:heather@eaglesun.net) or 509-429-8167

Twisp: January 2 - Craig Olson, [craig96a@gmail.com](mailto:craig96a@gmail.com)

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## NCW Recent Bird Sightings Reports from our four-county region

Compiled from the ncwabird email list, eBird, and Tweepers by Teri J Pieper

**Chelan:** A Semipalmated Sandpiper, a Stilt Sandpiper, and a Red-necked Phalarope were seen at Walla Walla Park. White-winged Crossbills have been seen on the Blue Lake Trail, at Stevens Pass, Kodak Peak, and Meander Meadows. A Red-necked Phalarope was seen at Fish Lake. A Sabine’s Gull was reported at Manson. A Heermann’s Gull was reported near Lake Wenatchee. A Sagebrush Sparrow was seen at Beebe Springs. An Orange-crowned Warbler and a Broad-winged Hawk were seen at the Chelan Ridge Hawkwatch site.

**Douglas:** A Veery was heard at Ruud Canyon. A California Scrub Jay was seen in East Wenatchee. A flock of Wild Turkeys was spotted on the Big Bend Wildlife Area.

**Ferry:** A Band-tailed Pigeon was reported just west of Curlew. A Clay-colored Sparrow and a White-throated

Sparrow were seen in eastern Ferry County. American Pipits were seen at Mud Lake.

**Okanogan:** A Black Tern and a Forster’s Tern were seen at Cassimer Bar. Seven Red-necked Phalaropes were seen at Little Twin Lake near Winthrop. A feeding flock of Townsend’s and Nashville Warblers was seen at Surprise Lake and at Stiletto Lake. Many Lewis’s Woodpeckers were reported at the end of the summer between Twisp and Winthrop. A Stilt Sandpiper was seen at Duley Lake. Band-tailed Pigeons were seen in the Pasayten Wilderness and along the PCT near Harts Pass. A Eurasian Wigeon was seen from the Starr Boat Launch. A Pacific Loon was seen on Lake Osoyoos.

# Field Notes

by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

With the easing of Covid this past spring and early summer, NCW Audubon was able to once again offer some birding field trips in our region. In late May, outings visited Twisp Hot Spots and the Big Valley near Mazama. Highlights by Twisp were hearing a Western Screech Owl vocalizing at 11am and seeing both a Sora and Virginia Rail and two majestic Golden Eagles. At Big Valley, many songbirds of the forest were heard and the group was treated to a close up view of the colorful beauty of a male Lazuli Bunting.

On June 13th, a trip was held in the Okanogan Highlands. As the group gathered in a parking lot near Tonasket, a Prairie Falcon flew overhead which was the start of a great day of birding. The Highlands offer a rich diversity of habitats and a list of 92 species of birds was recorded for the day! Highlights included seeing Bobolinks, nesting Lewis's Woodpeckers and Golden Eagles, and Eared Grebes in their striking breeding plumage. On June 20th, a small group went birding at Mountain Home near Leavenworth and were treated to seeing both Dusky and

Ruffed Grouse and a wide variety of songbirds in three distinct habitats. On June 28th, a trip visited the Beaver Pond by Sun Mountain outside of Winthrop. This area is rich with nesting birds and the group was able to sit and watch an active Red-naped Sapsucker nest with the parents coming and going with insects for their growing young.

In Wenatchee, the monthly Walla Walla Point Park/Horan Natural Area bird walks were resumed in July. These outings are held on the first Wednesday morning of each month and are a wonderful opportunity to see a nice variety of birds along the Columbia riverfront.

It is hoped that field trips can continue this fall with proper Covid precautions in place. Please refer to our website [www.newaudubon.org](http://www.newaudubon.org) for the latest information on scheduled events. Lastly, I am always looking for field trip leaders. If you have a favorite birding place that you would be willing to share with other birders, please let me know at [jsrbauer@gmail.com](mailto:jsrbauer@gmail.com). Thank you!

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# Merlin Bird ID App

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

They've done it! Just aim your cell phone or tablet at the bird sound, hit record, watch the screen, and a picture of the bird will pop up! You can share the sound, or delete it if you wish. The "Merlin" bird ID app is a release from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If you record a bird sound on your cell phone or tablet, the app checks the sound against the Lab's database of bird sounds and tells you who is singing. It is free and simple to use.

I've seen Merlin used and I've tested it myself. During a walk through the Horan Natural Area in Wenatchee, it picked out the Western Wood Pewee and also caught the call of a Downy Woodpecker I had missed. Trying it at home, it picked out all the usual suspects—House Finch, House Sparrow, and Steller's Jay—but also a Bullock's Oriole that I had seen in the yard on a couple of days in the summer, diving into the shrubbery. It was interesting to know the oriole was still there, hanging out.

Not being the swiftest in the world at using computers, I downloaded the Merlin app myself and it worked! Here are the steps:

- Google "Cornell Lab of Ornithology Merlin ID App" or use this link: <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>
- To download to an Apple device, choose the App Store (requires iOS13 or more recent). For Android choose Google Play (requires Android 5.0 or more recent). Both require at least 500+ MB of free space.
- Click "Install." You also will need to select and install the Bird Pack for our region.

You can't fool Merlin. When my husband tried to whistle the simple notes of a bird song he heard in our backyard, Merlin reported "Human."

A friend who has hearing loss used Merlin in his yard. It told him all the species he could be looking for, even if he couldn't hear them. It's amazing, isn't it, how much life is out there that we don't see or can't hear and appreciate. Merlin offers a step in curing our human limitations.

(Editor's Note: You can also take a photo of a bird, or choose one from your camera roll, and Merlin's Photo ID option will offer a short list of possible matches.)

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# Fish Lake Birding

by Mary and Tim Gallagher, Lake Wenatchee

This summer we assisted the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife with a statewide nesting loon survey. The purpose was to look for Common Loons and evidence of a breeding pair (or pairs) occupying an area. We were asked to survey Fish Lake and Lake Wenatchee. Both lakes have appropriate nesting habitat.

We were to survey at least once a month during May, June, and July. These are months when we have rarely seen Common Loons on either lake. Our experience of living here the last 11 years has been that Common Loons use these lakes more for foraging during fall through early spring. Our surveys, visual and hearing via kayaks, found

non-nesting Common Loons on Lake Wenatchee on four trips and once at Fish Lake.

Going out on these surveys we saw many other interesting birds. Most notably and special to us was seeing a family of five Belted Kingfishers during our last survey at Fish Lake on July 18<sup>th</sup>. We still have no idea where their nest burrow was—perhaps on the cliffs along the Wenatchee River? Seeing them all out together was quite a treat. The parent birds were jumpy as is typical for this species. The recently fledged youngsters were concentrating on their fishing skills, so they didn't seem disturbed by Tim in his kayak photographing them nor by me photographing Tim with my cell phone. (See Tim's Belted Kingfisher photo on Page 2.)

# NPR Interview with Margaret Atwood

by Susan Sampson, Wentatchee

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet and writer who is possibly best known for her dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. She is also an avid birder. In an interview broadcast on Memorial Day 2021, she told NPR's Jen White that she came by birding naturally, joining her father in the field where he worked as a forest entomologist.

By contrast, Atwood's personal partner Graeme Gibson was oblivious of birds until he spotted one he didn't recognize. It was a Red-tailed Hawk, and seeing it was his "Epiphany on the Road to Damascus." After that, he never stopped looking for birds. He haunted museums and gift shops for birds, bird books, and bird images, and in the 1990s he wrote the anthology *The Bedside Book of Birds*. It wasn't a guidebook, Atwood explained. It was a collection of images, poems, and stories from all cultures about birds. All cultures have their bird stories, Atwood speculated, because of human fascination with singing and flying.

At the time, publishers didn't understand Gibson's book and wouldn't print it. However, when it was finally published in 2005, it sold well. The first edition sold out, and as more people took up birding during the Covid-19 pandemic, demand grew for a new edition. However, Gibson had died in 2019. The new edition of his book came out in 2021, and Atwood wrote the forward for it.

As for birding, Atwood says that you must have a guidebook and binoculars, and you have to get help if you need it to learn to focus on a single image. She has learned to help others spot the birds she sees by being specific, starting with choosing a point of reference. "Do you see that plastic bag over there?" You can't just say "Over there" or "On that tree."

The interviewer, Jen White, asked Atwood for any particularly memorable events in her birding career. Atwood told of a boat trip in Trinidad to see Scarlet Ibises at dusk. However, their boat sprung a leak. Passengers tried to bail water out of the boat with soda cans until one plump birder said "I can fix that." She sat on the leak and plugged it effectively. "That's dedication."

White asked Atwood what she looks for now when she goes birding. "Oh, anything," Atwood said. She advised that it's very helpful to go with a local person while birding in any new area. Read up on the birds in the area ahead of time, she said. Be aware of their migratory flight patterns. "Nature is lumpy," she said; birds go to where there is food, and that's not everywhere.

The interviewer asked Atwood how to get into the right "head space" to be a birder. Atwood said that it happens spontaneously. She referred to studies from Japan about "forest bathing," and said that communing with nature increases the cancer-killing T-cells in our immune systems.

Atwood told of her fascination with owls in general for their silent flight, specific vision, and rotating heads that turn more widely than a human head—all of which are adaptations for hunting at night, to hear little rustling noises of voles and other prey.

Atwood concluded the interview by saying she has seen a decrease in the number of bird species she has observed during her lifetime. Climate, pollution, and toxicity crises are affecting both birds and humans. She says we are becoming conscious of such things and will become more so in the future.

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## Book Review: The Bedside Book of Birds An Avian Miscellany by Graeme Gibson

by Susan Sampson, Wentatchee

Highly recommended!

Don't be put off by the title—this is not a Little Golden Book of children's bedtime stories. The late Graeme Gibson (1934-2019) put it together two decades ago but at first couldn't find a publisher. When it finally was published in 2005, it became a best seller, and the short press run went out of print. The book has just been re-released with a new introduction by Gibson's life-partner, Canadian author Margaret Atwood.

Gibson's anthology compiles mostly prose compositions, plus a few poems, unified only by their involving birds, and by their shortness, from one paragraph to five pages. The contributors span centuries and nations, from the tellers of Genesis to the living, from mythology (Norse, Mayan, Oceanian), to Greek (Aeschylus), Italian (Calvino), Columbian (Gabriel Garcia Márquez), Japanese (Haruki Murakami), American (Scientific American) authors, and more—nearly 400 pages worth.

The book is lavishly illustrated with reproductions or photographs of art, including ethnic pieces, folk art, fine-art museum pieces, contemporary illustration, and sketchbook pages. Frankly, the illustrations could have been better quality—but such a book would be wildly expensive to produce and couldn't reach most of our bedside tables.

The book is organized by sections around such themes as birds observed and recorded by scientists, folk tales and parables, bird companions, sinister birds, "birds we use, eat, wear and sell," Hitchcockian attacking birds (a true account being particularly horrifying), and birds as symbols of hope.

The book strikes me as being a great gift for a birder, and the new release costs less than old copies on the used book market. To me, the book seems intended for a reader to keep and dip into from time to time, like a book of poems, and I will.

# A Place Where Beauty Can Always Be Found

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee



"He always awoke a young man . . . His first consciousness was a sense of the light, dry wind blowing in through the windows, with the fragrance of hot sun and sage-brush and sweet clover; a wind that made one's body feel light and one's heart cry "To-day, to-day," like a child's . . . One could breathe that only on the bright edges of the world, on the great grass plains or the sage-brush desert."

Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

For many of us, this summer has been a stretch of too much: burning hot, fires and smoke, the pandemic getting a second wind. But we have earth and water, as well as air and fire. We live in a place where beauty can always be found. And we live connected by purpose, to be stewards of this beauty.

We are now, and always, grateful that you are part of our community. Not just as NCWAS members, but at large, doing things needed, within your powers.

Our once-a-year donation request emerges in early fall. We acknowledge donors twice a year, in the February and October Phloxes. We list below folks who have made donations since mid-January 2021. Donations made from September 2020 to mid-January 2021 were acknowledged in the February 2021 Phlox. Larry and Penny Tobiska are "first responders" for donations received. The list of donors is derived from their data.

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The symbols denote gifts of special generosity:  
\* = \$100 (Great Blue Heron)  
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## A Rustling in the Woods

Did you have a birding moment over the summer that you had never experienced before? It happened to me in July just a few days before the fires filled the Methow Valley with smoke. I was walking up a trail near my home in Winthrop and heard some rustling on some branches off the side of the trail through some trees. I could see that it was a bird and figured it was a grouse by its general size and awkward movements on the branch. I pulled out my binoculars and was quite surprised to see it was a very young hawk that was not quite sure what to make of me. I pulled out my camera and got a few pictures so I'd be able to identify what type of hawk it was once I got back home. All of a sudden as



Juvenile Cooper's Hawk

article and photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

I was putting my camera away, the apparent parent of this fledgling hawk came out of nowhere, flew like a missile inches over my head, and landed on a distant tree. I snapped a picture of it and could see I had an accipiter on my hands. I'd read stories about loggers being bloodily injured when getting too close to nesting Northern Goshawks and knew that I needed to leave soon. I gathered my goods and as I started to slowly step away ... the flying missile zoomed right over my head once again but luckily did not make contact. I made it home safely, looked at my pictures, and saw that my "rustling in the woods" was a recently fledged Cooper's Hawk with a very attentive parent!

# A Hummingbird by Other Names/Colibrí Universal

A poem by Merry Roy

Tiny as a fly, the flower visitor sips from flowers from roses from myrtle, pierces the petals and sips the honey. Zunzún! a flying jewel!	pájaro mosca visitaflor chupaflor chuparrosa chupamirto picaflor chupamiel ¡zunzún! joyas voladores!	as the insect in size in a poem in Mexico and some other areas Mexico only only Mexico especially in South America in a poem Cuba as in this poem
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All hummingbirds are small (most are 3-5 inches long) but a few push the envelope size-wise. The Giant Hummingbird of western South America is 8 inches long. The tiny Bee Hummingbird from Cuba (the zunzún or zunzúncito) measures 2.4 inches and is the smallest bird in the world. In fact, it is often mistaken for a bee.

## Jewels of the New World

by Merry Roy, Wenatchee

Hummingbirds live only in the Americas. I remember being in a hostel in Spain when a woman rushed in saying “Come quick! There’s a hummingbird in the garden!” We hurried to the courtyard, and there was a hummingbird-like moth hovering among the flowers, sucking nectar with its long moth tongue. Not a bird. And the hummingbird-like but unrelated sunbirds of Africa and Asia are tiny, active, nectar drinkers but do not hover when they sip nectar from flowers. They are ecological equivalents of our hummingbirds, occupying similar niches on different continents, examples of convergent evolution, but they are not hummingbirds. Like I said, hummingbirds live only in the Americas. We are lucky!

Of the 330 species of hummingbirds, over half live in a belt 10 degrees north to 10 degrees south of the Equator, and most of the other species stay south of the Mexico-US border. About two dozen species migrate up to the US and Canada to breed and then travel back to winter in Central America or Mexico. Hummingbirds are tropical birds at heart.

Four species of hummingbirds nest in Washington State: Rufous, Black-chinned, Calliope, and Anna’s. The Rufous winters in Mexico, flies up the Pacific Coast to breed in Washington and Canada, and flies back south to Mexico along the Rocky Mountains. The Black-chinned winters in western Mexico, flying up to breed throughout our western states, and returning to Mexico. The little Calliope Hummingbird, only three inches long, migrates from its winter grounds in central Mexico up the Pacific Coast to nest in the Northwest, and then returns along the Rocky Mountains to central Mexico. Anna’s Hummingbirds do



Calliope Hummingbird  
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

not migrate, but as climate and food availability change, they have been moving north, wintering and breeding in the same areas.

If your hummingbird feeder is heated, you have a good chance of seeing an Anna’s this coming winter. Just remember to keep your feeder clean and warm!

# October 2021 Wild Phlox

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October 2	BirdFest & Bluegrass 2021	Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge <a href="https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/">https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/</a>
<b>October 6</b> <b>November 3</b> <b>December 1</b>	<b>Horan Natural Area Bird Walks</b>	<b>See our website for details</b>
BirdCast Website	View predicted and real-time maps of nocturnal bird migration	<a href="https://birdcast.info/">https://birdcast.info/</a>
<b>December 14</b> <b>December 20</b> <b>December 30</b> <b>January 2</b>	<b>Christmas bird count dates for North Central Washington</b>	<b>See page 3 for more information</b>



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The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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