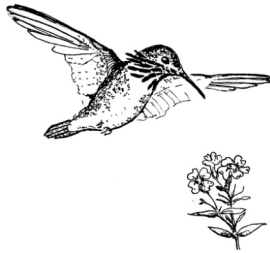


The Wild Phlox

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Connecting People with Nature since 1966



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Volume 55 #2 April 2022

Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest

by Rande Zenger, Wenatchee River Institute

Join the Wenatchee River Institute (WRI) and NCWAS for the 20th annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest May 19-22, 2022! This year marks 20 years of celebrating the connections between people, birds, and the natural world. Come celebrate with us and discover the natural beauty and wonders of North Central Washington as we welcome the return of migratory birds. Enjoy the excitement by joining in on a birding field trip, workshop, or event! This is a family-friendly festival open to all ages, abilities, and experience levels. All of this is happening in beautiful Leavenworth and throughout the Wenatchee Valley.

Bird Fest is back to fully in-person programs with virtual options for some events. We also welcome the return of Family Day—a vendor and exhibitor fair. It's an opportunity to learn about local organizations and businesses, take part in art and nature activities, browse and purchase art from local artists, and chow down on locally made food. Family Day will take place on Saturday, May 21 from 10 am-2 pm.

In celebration of the 20th anniversary, WRI and NCWAS are excited to announce the Founders' Award! It is a newly created award to honor volunteerism and professional support of Bird Fest. This award is inspired by the team of people who came together in 2003 to launch the very first Bird Fest. Starting with 2022, there will be two Founders' Awards presented each year to highlight a volunteer and representative(s) of a business or organization. Nominations are being taken until April 30! Cast your nomination at <https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/bird-fest/founders-award.html>.

We thank our partners, sponsors, and volunteers for helping make this year's Bird Fest soar! Registration for all events will open on April 4. All participants must be vaccinated for COVID-19. All current information and details can be found at www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org.



Winning Entry
2022 Bird Fest Youth Art Contest

New in 2022: Pre-Leavenworth Bird Fest Field Trips

For the first time, low cost (\$10) field trips will be offered during the week leading up to the Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest. These trips are designed for people new to birding, working folks, and students. Morning and late afternoon trips will be offered each day, and free loaner binoculars will be available for all attendees.

Here is the list of trips:

May 17, Tuesday: Intro to Birding Horan, **6:00-7:30 AM** with Merry Roy and Wendy Sharp

May 17, Tuesday: Intro to Birding Horan, **6:00-7:30 PM** with Marilyn and Amanda Sherling

May 18, Wednesday: Birding #2 Canyon, **6:00-7:30 AM** with Susan Ballinger and Elisa Lopez

May 18, Wednesday: Birding Tower Road, **4:30-7:30 PM** with Joe Veverka and Natalie Kahler

May 19, Thursday: Intro to Birding Porter's Pond, **6:00-7:30 AM** with Susan Ballinger and two "younger" guides

May 19, Thursday: Intro to Birding Porter's Pond, **6:00-7:30 PM** with Richard Scranton and Mark Johnston

Registration for these pre-festival trips will be handled by the Wenatchee River Institute during the first part of April. Please visit their website at www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org for registration instructions.

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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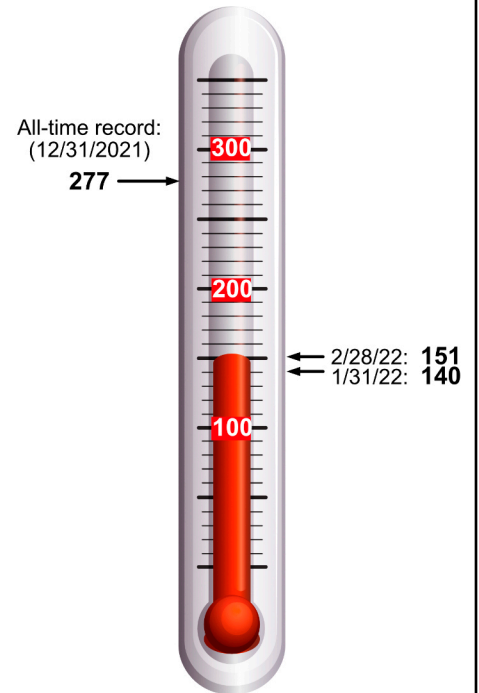
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2022 eBird

Total Number of Bird Species Entered
 NCWAS four-county area End of month counts



Jan-Feb 2022 eBird stats

Total observers: 255

Total checklists: 3,682

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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

Happy Spring! At my house in Winthrop the snow is almost gone, the finches and American Robins are singing like crazy, and the Violet-green Swallows and Tree Swallows are making daily visits to inspect my nest boxes. On my morning walks with Gretta at Pearygin Lake State Park, it seems like there is a Spotted Towhee in every clump of brush, and the background “noise” of Common Flickers, Pine Siskins, and Red-breasted Nuthatches is delightful. I’ve been using the Merlin app to help

Editor’s Notes



Long-billed Curlew
photo by Tim Gallagher,
Lake Wenatchee

improve my birding-by-ear skills and have found it to be mostly accurate, although one day there was supposedly a Mountain Quail in the area. All of the finches sound the same to me, so when Merlin says I’m hearing a Cassin’s Finch, and then I actually see that Cassin’s Finch singing, it’s a good day!

A friend from South Carolina visited recently and we took a trip to Brewster and Bridgeport to birdwatch. There were still quite a few waterfowl on the Columbia River and we got good looks at American Widgeons, Buffleheads (my favorite duck), Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, and Common Loons. The loons were molting into their breeding plumage and looked slightly disheveled. And we were lucky enough to see a loon that had a green and an aluminum band on it’s left leg (we couldn’t see the right leg). I’ve asked a friend to help me try to track down the bander in hopes of finding out where and when the loon was banded. I’ll report back here if I’m successful.

Okanogan Christmas Bird Count Results

by Todd Thorn and Julia O’Connor

(Editor’s Note: This report was inadvertently left out of the February issue of the Wild Phlox. I apologize for the error.)

The Okanogan Christmas Bird Count circle includes varied habitats encompassing Omak and Okanogan, the valley downriver nearly to Malott, much of Pogue Flat, lower Salmon Creek, the northern portion of the Cameron Lake Road, and the northwest tip of Omak Lake.

Our count occurred on January 2, thankfully avoiding the bitter cold of Christmas week. While the weather on count day was relatively mild, the preceding wintery week had frozen more of the Okanogan River than usual and snowdrifts closed several roads we typically bird.

Our crew of seven corralled 57 species and about 8,000 individual birds through the day. Reports from five feeder watchers within the circle raised the final species number to 60. Although our two most numerous species were European Starling and California Quail, memorable sightings included Chukar, Townsend’s Solitaire, Redpoll, and numerous raptors including Bald Eagle (120!), Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, and Merlin. We also observed numerous species of waterfowl including Trumpeter Swan, Common Goldeneye, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, and Horned Grebe.

Next year, come join us!

Bird Trivia!

See if you can match these species with the word used to describe them in a group. Answers on page 7.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------------|
| A: Sandhill Crane | _____ | Development |
| B: Downy Woodpecker | _____ | Stream |
| C: House Wren | _____ | Parliament |
| D: American Crow | _____ | Construction |
| E: Great Horned Owl | _____ | Descent |
| F: Yellow Warbler | _____ | Murder |
| G: House Finch | _____ | Chime |



Hooded Merganser
First Year Male
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

Texas: There and Back Again

Highlights from a Two-month Road Trip

by Mary and Tim Gallagher,
Lake Wenatchee

On October 2, 2021, we ventured out on a 60-day road trip. The intent was to car camp in public parks from Idaho, Montana, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico to Texas, and back home. We managed to visit and camp for multiple days at many units of the National Park Service, including Yellowstone and Big Bend but also historical cultural sites Chaco Canyon and Canyon de Chelly and a National Seashore. We saw Cave Swallows for the first time and then witnessed over 100,000 bats fly out of Carlsbad Caverns. We were impressed with the Texas state parks—many had bird blinds looking out to water features and feeding stations with nearby cover. We went down to sea level along the Texas and Louisiana coasts and up over 10,000 feet at the Sandia Mountains in New Mexico.

Accommodation along the way was our small two-person “Big Agnes” backpacking tent. We did waddle into a hotel while in Texas, choosing to find a walled interior space due to intense thunderstorms, pouring rains, and an ever increasingly green tone to the clouds. Luckily, no tornadoes materialized! Camping weather was an unknown event at each location with several nights of snow, thunderstorms, nighttime temperatures over 100 degrees at Big Bend National Park, and other places where our water bottles froze solid overnight. We wore out our tent’s rainfly zippers. We also learned that the cover might keep out rain, but it certainly does not keep the Texas or New Mexico dust from coating everything inside when the wind kicks up.

Along the Texas coast we saw a great variety of shorebirds, from the largest North American shorebird, the Long-billed Curlew, to the smallest, the Least Sandpiper. Our first camp was at Sea Rim State Park, located near the border with Louisiana and near Beaumont and the Big Thicket National Preserve. (Tim Gallagher did promise not to wander off looking for the grail bird—Ivory-billed Woodpecker). We drove into Louisiana one day and found our first alligators and Vermilion Flycatchers. We moved on to camp at Mustang Island State Park, just east of Padre Island National Seashore. Luckily the Saturday morning we were there was a free “Ranger led” bird walk. We learned that what we had been picking up and discarding as yellow string, was a common type of coral, not trash at all. Good to spend time with the locals. Despite our misgivings, a Park Ranger talked us into driving on the beach: “your car is really just a big blind.” Our drive was short. We decided we saw a greater number and had closer looks of shorebirds on foot.



Green Jay
photo by Tim Gallagher, Lake Wenatchee

Our next stop along the Texas coast was South Padre Island. It was time for a full week of sleeping inside. Unfortunately, the operators of the condo facility thought every week was spring break, and we were treated to a variety of disco/party music from 7am to 10pm daily. The real purpose of the week was to attend the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in Harlingen, Texas. We would be meeting up with friends who were staying in Harlingen for the festival. The day before the festival we spent birding the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center as well as around the Convention Center. Fabulous boardwalks allow great looks at the birds below in the water as well as out on the mudflats. We were enjoying all the “new” birds for us, as the locals were pointing out that “the ospreys are back.” Fun to see our summer bird in their winter home. The Rio Grande Valley is not a valley, lacking any mountains in the flat terrain. Apparently, a local Chamber of Commerce thought it sounded more appealing. The name clearly caught on as the area was commonly referred to as “the valley.” South Texas is one of the top birding destinations in the United States, especially during festival time which coincides with fall migration as breeding birds head back south for the winter. We enjoyed seeing warblers again. There is also always the possibility of birds from Mexico and Central America straying a bit north.

Despite a COVID-reduced size, the festival was exceptional. We strongly recommend attending. Trips were well organized and left on time. Almost all field trips ventured out on commercial buses, with four to five guides on each trip of 15 to 30 participants. All participants were required to wear masks inside buildings and vehicles and complete a daily screening that included a temperature reading. Once the screen was completed, we were able to load a bus or visit the Convention Center where there were speakers, a large trade show, and a silent auction. We did attend a few presentations on “Birding the World.” The guide from Panama was quite engaging and we talked with him at his booth. We did bid for a birding trip to Panama in the silent auction but were outbid. However, we were hooked, and are now planning a trip to Panama with that guide. *Continued on page 6.*

Meet Our Newest Board Member: Tucker Jonas

I have always been intrigued by nature. It began at a young age; my brother and I would spend hours out in the yard catching bugs and playing in the woods as kids. My parents also like to spend most of their free time outside, and I am grateful they were able to take me on adventures while I was young. We spent many weekends camping and hiking in the summer and would sometimes take longer trips to go backpacking or rafting. I grew up in Girdwood, Alaska, about an hour south of Anchorage, with many outdoor recreation opportunities right outside my door. I feel very privileged to have had the childhood I did. And I now work in environmental education where I aim to inspire kids to love the outdoors like I do, even if they do not have the same resources or access to nature that I had.

My interest in birds came a little later, although I was certainly aware of them and would occasionally stop to look closer. My mom is a birder and a naturalist, and she would often point out birds or another observation. It wasn't until the summer before my senior year of high school that I started to actually pay more attention to birds. I started working at a remote lodge out in the middle of Kenai Fjords National Park, and I continued to spend the summers there for the next eight years. I took on multiple roles over those years, but spent a lot of that time guiding lodge guests on daily excursions: sea kayaking, hiking, and canoeing. There was a strong emphasis on natural history interpretation on our trips, and that is what really sparked me to learn more about birds, as well as other features of the environment around me. A few of my coworkers there were avid birders and learning from them helped motivate me to explore birds more on my own.

About two years ago, my partner Catherine landed a job in Wenatchee and we moved here from her hometown of Salt Lake City. I attended Western Washington University from 2012-2016 and we were looking to move back to Washington, although Wenatchee was not quite on our radar until the job posting went up. It has really worked out for us (i.e., we've adopted two dogs), and I am thrilled to be joining the NCWAS Board. My birding has definitely increased since moving and I've really appreciated all the opportunities to join the community that birding has brought me. I began work at the Wenatchee River Institute in Leavenworth in April 2021 and enjoy getting to work outside, spending time in nature. Now I'm really looking forward to working with Audubon and all the fine folks on the Board, as well as others in the community.



June 4 Four-county Bird Count

by Art Campbell, Winthrop

Each spring, from as far away as South America, millions of birds migrate into North Central Washington. The new arrivals, together with the plucky resident birds that have endured our cold and snowy winter, start their breeding activities—courting, building nests, laying eggs, and raising young. For many birdwatchers, the highlight of each year is anticipating and then observing this annual pageant. To celebrate this spectacle, on Saturday, June 4 NCWAS will hold its annual bird count covering the four counties in our chapter—Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, and Okanogan. Teams of birdwatchers will go into the field, each team counting birds within a specific area. Each area will have a lead person to organize counting activities. Our goal is to collect important data on bird life in our region while having an exciting and fun day of birding. If you're a birdwatcher, we welcome your participation. If you're concerned about your ability level, we'll make sure you're teamed with high ability birders. If you watch birds, and want to participate, e-mail either Joe Veverka at joe_veverka@yahoo.com or Art Campbell at rapakivi@methow.com. We look forward to your involvement, and let's have a good time on June 4!

June 6 Field Trip: Nespalem to Goose Lake and Beyond

By early June, all the spring breeding birds should be present in our region. We will spend a full day birding between the Nespalem River and Goose Lake, with the likelihood of continuing on to the Aeneas Valley. We'll have an excellent chance to see several species that are uncommon in our area, such as American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush. Dress for the weather and bring lunch, snacks, water, etc. There will be only limited walking along unpaved roadways. We will meet at 6 am at the Sweet River Bakery in Pateros (203 Lakeshore Drive) and expect to return by 5 pm. This trip is limited to ten birders. To reserve your space, email trip co-leaders Art Campbell at rapakivi@methow.com or DJ Jones at djtrillium@icloud.com.

NOTE: Participants in the June 4 and June 6 events must be fully vaccinated (two shots plus a booster), practice social distancing in the field, and wear a mask (N95 preferred) when carpooling. Thank you for your cooperation!

Book Review

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

***Arctic Wings: Birds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.* Edited by Stephen Brown, Ph.D. (Seattle: The Mountaineer Books, 2006), 192 pages plus a CD of Arctic birdsongs.**

Arctic Wings was prepared as a piece of advocacy, arguing for preservation and against oil drilling in the extreme northeast corner of Alaska, in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The book speaks eloquently.

The people who created the book drew on the best photographers and most prominent spokespeople they could find to assemble this book. It contains photographs by Subhankar Banerjee, among others. His stunning photographs of the American Arctic created such a stir in 2003 that the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History relocated his photos from a prominent place in its lobby to a more obscure area in its lowest floor because the U.S. Congress was debating a bill to preserve the refuge at the time, and Banerjee's works were deemed too political. His captions included quotations from President Jimmy Carter, who advocated for preservation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The book contains a forward by President Carter, an introduction by David Allen Sibley of bird-guide fame, and an essay by Ken Kaufman, also of bird-guide fame. The book is organized by seven types of birds (loons and

waterfowl, hawks and eagles, etc.) and opens each section with an essay by an expert in the field. All are clear writers, some more lyrical and less technical than others. Each has the same message, though: the Arctic is an essential breeding ground for millions of migratory birds, and oil drilling in their habitat would have devastating environmental consequences. Each essay is followed by pages of bird photos.

Comic books used to show kids catching birds by sprinkling salt on their tails. I don't suppose that a lot of birds were caught that way. Luckily, telephoto lenses and digital cameras have obviated our need to catch birds to see them closely. Most of the images in the book have dark backgrounds, but they never miss the catchlight in a bird's eye or the elaborate patterns of its feathers. The loon looks elegant. The Red-breasted Merganser with his red eye and spikey crest looks like he has bad bed hair after a very rough night.

Many of the birds that the book features are familiar to North Central Washington, such as American Robins, Rough-legged Hawks, and White-crowned Sparrows. It also describes species more likely to be found in the Arctic than here, like ptarmigans, and the Wandering Tattler.

The book would make a nice gift for a birder who enjoys bird photos and well-written natural history essays.

Texas: There and Back Again - continued from page 4



Plain Chachalaca
photo by Tim Gallagher,
Lake Wenatchee

Our trips almost all started at zero dark hour, including one which left the Convention Center at 5:00 am. Our decision to stay on South Padre Island, which was 45 minutes away, made for some short nights. The compensation was returning to walk the beach each afternoon with the pelicans, sanderlings, and gulls. We registered too late to get on a trip to the King Ranch. We went to Edinburg and Quinta Mazatlán, the Upper Rio Grande River, took a pontoon boat trip on the Rio Grande River, and the Estero Llano Grande Grand Tour. Estero Llano Grande State Park with its wetlands, woodlands, and miles of boardwalks and trails was exceptional for birding and many groups that were doing Big Days started there. If in the area, this Texas state park is well worth the visit.

On both trips along the Rio Grande River, we counted birds in the United States separate from the Mexico side of the river. This at times was tricky as the birds flew back and forth, so some made it on both lists. We had to have several conversations with our cell-phone provider that we never were in Mexico. Radio frequencies and wings don't seem to recognize borders. We had the Kingfisher Trifecta on both trips as well: the Ringed, Green, and less frequent Belted kingfisher. One guide said it has occurred, though quite rare, for an Amazon Kingfisher to show up. But not this year.

Each trip had one guide assigned to doing an eBird list so we could just focus on watching and photographing the birds. We had sixteen life birds by the end of the second day. The Green Jays are as fantastic in person as they are in photographs. The cryptic Common Pauraque made us realize why birding with a local guide is so important. They know where to look! The Plain Chachalaca is as weird as it sounds: a long-tailed tropical chicken that walks along tree branches. A bird we will never forget seeing or hearing.

We said goodbye to our friends and headed for home. We camped in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. We diverted a few hours in New Mexico to try to see a Blue Mockingbird that had come north from Mexico. Although we heard it, the bird remained hidden in the thicket. We spent a wonderful Thanksgiving with family in California. Our last few nights on the road we stopped at La Pine State Park in Oregon but decided on a cabin rather than our tent. A good choice as there was snow on the ground. Along the Deschutes River we were back to only one kingfisher species, the Belted Kingfisher. No Kingfisher Trifecta here. We arrived home on December 1, just in time to get ready for winter, with wonderful memories, lots of photographs, and a desire to return (but Panama is first).

Field Trip Reports

Compiled by Julie Hovis, Winthrop

Pateros to Bridgeport Loop, reported by Janet Bauer

On Saturday morning February 19, a group of 12 enthusiastic birders gathered in Pateros to spend the day birding with field trip leaders Mark Johnston and Richard Scranton. We first birded along the banks of the Columbia River and were treated to a nice variety of water birds. Close up views of Common Loons, Common Goldeneyes, and Horned Grebes were had by all.

We then drove along the Columbia towards Bridgeport, and at one stop above the river we had great views of a singing Bewick's Wren. The group proceeded to walk through the Bridgeport Bar area where Steller's Jays were calling at the parking lot and a Red-tailed Hawk and Bald Eagle flew above as we walked out to the river. Looking out across the Columbia, Trumpeter Swans and Northern Pintails were seen in our scopes. A Varied Thrush was seen on the return to the parking lot. By the Wells Wildlife Area, we spotted our first Rough-legged Hawk of the day. Other highlights were a bathing Cooper's Hawk and a pair of young Hooded Mergansers.

Our tour finished at Bridgeport State Park where we walked around the snow-covered campsites looking for Northern Saw-whet Owls roosting in the dense conifers. Thanks to Bob, a keen spotter in our group, we were treated to good views of two owls each tucked away in its own tree. Our final highlight was watching a large flock of Bohemian Waxwings flying in and out from tall trees catching insects.

By the end of the trip, we had tallied 46 different species of birds. It was a wonderful way to spend a warm February day. Many thanks to Mark and Richard for leading the trip!

Porter's Pond Field Trip, reported by Joe Veverka

We had 17 birders meet at the 19 Street Trailhead of the Apple Capital Loop Trail (ACLT) at 8 am on March 5 for two (which turned into two and a half) hours of birding at Porter's Pond in East Wenatchee. The weather was gorgeous, sunny, light breeze, and cool. Birding started off fairly slow as we walked north along a dirt path paralleling the ACLT. We had nice looks at four Barrow's Goldeneye and later found several Common Goldeneye for comparison. Mallards were the most abundant identifiable waterfowl. We had good views of a Belted Kingfisher and a Double-crested Cormorant in the scopes. Most of the waterfowl were far across the river, many in the lagoon at Walla Walla Point Park.

Heading south down the ACLT we found a pair of Downy Woodpeckers and refound a gregarious band of a half-dozen Black-capped Chickadees. One of the highlights, as we moved south of the trailhead connector, was seeing our first Violet-green Swallow of the year. We also had nice views of an adult Bald Eagle while trying to get binoculars on a couple of Yellow-rumped Warblers. The southern half of our walk was more productive than the northern half. We had great looks at Common Loons, Horned Grebes, Lesser Scaups, Ring-necked Ducks, and Buffleheads. We managed to pick out a few Canvasbacks among a raft of scaup along the west bank of the river.

Time management while birding has always been an issue for me. Most of us finished a half hour after the scheduled time enjoying the nice weather, sun, and company. By all accounts it was a successful outing! And, we identified 40 species of birds!

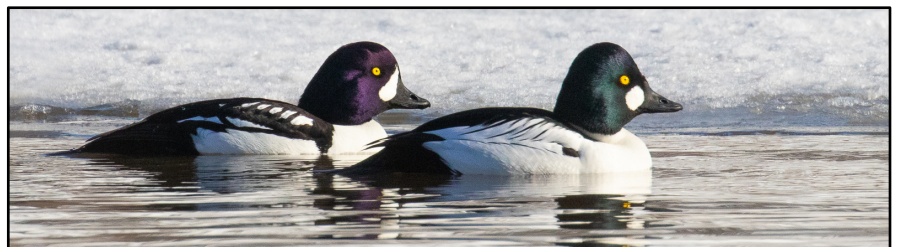
Beebe Springs Survey, reported by Virginia Palumbo

March 16 was opening day at Beebe Springs Natural Area, and Virginia Palumbo and Meredith Spencer had a beautiful blue day for the first Beebe Springs survey for this year. Although the numbers of individual birds were not high, we spotted 31 species. Highlights of the day included seven Trumpeter Swans swimming close by in one of the inlets, and a Virginia Rail that flushed from the side of the trail. We were happy to have a great view of a Bewick's Wren singing, and we heard a Canyon Wren's beautiful descending song. American Robins, Northern Flickers, and Black-capped Chickadees were abundant, and the usual Great Blue Herons and Belted Kingfishers made an appearance. A Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, Downy Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk, and Violet-green Swallows rounded out the day's excitement.

The Beebe Springs surveys will continue on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The survey covers two miles of level gravel paths along the Columbia, crossing over Beebe Creek, and passing along a beaver pond. All levels of birders are welcome. The start time varies according to when the sun comes over the Plateau, so please contact Virginia for start times and to register at 509-682-5969 or vwpalumbo@gmail.com. We'd love to see you at Beebe!

Bird Trivia Answers

Development = G (House Finch)
Stream = F (Yellow Warbler)
Parliament = E (Great Horned Owl)
Construction = A (Sandhill Crane)
Descent = B (Downy Woodpecker)
Murder = D (American Crow)
Chime = C (House Wren)



Barrow's and Common Goldeneye Drakes
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

April 2022 Wild Phlox

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Resources and Calendar

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1st Wednesday of the month	Horan Natural Area Bird Walks	See our website for details
1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month	Beebe Springs Bird Surveys	See page 7
April 7	Paul Bannick - A Year in the Lives of North American Owls	Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center See our website for more information
April 29-May 1	Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival	www.shorebirdfestival.com
May 19-22	Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest	See articles on page 1
April 13, May 18, June 15	Monthly e-Bird Surveys at the Wenatchee River Institute	www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org
June 4	Four-county Bird Count	See article on page 5
June 6	Nespelem to Goose Lake and Beyond Field Trip	See article on page 5



You can find the Wild Phlox online at our website - www.ncwaudubon.org
The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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