

The Wild Phlox

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2022 American Kestrel Nest Box Project Report

by the American Kestrel Nest Box
Project Steering Committee

The 2022 season of installing and monitoring American Kestrel nest boxes around the Waterville Plateau has come to an end. The project's steering committee has compiled data collected by our many hardworking volunteers who visited all of the boxes on numerous occasions. But first, we would like to share some background as to why NCWAS is involved in both implementing and funding this project.

In 1993, Richard Hendrick, a local orchard worker, woodworker, and bird enthusiast joined the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a volunteer working to expand American Kestrel populations on the Waterville Plateau. He constructed new boxes, cleaned out and maintained old boxes, monitored reproduction, and banded young prior to fledging. Eventually, the project became his and remained that way until his passing in December 2020. Having established a network of more than 250 boxes, Richard's last request was that we find a way to keep raising young kestrels.

In September 2020 the Cold Springs and Pearl Hill fires burned over 400,000 acres of habitat surrounding the nest box project and more than half the boxes (and their supporting structures) in the network were destroyed. Many other boxes were unusable due to deterioration over time. We wanted to carry on Richard's legacy so in the spring of 2021 volunteers came together to construct, install, repair, replace, and monitor as many of the boxes that could be found. We continued the work in 2022, recording specific information that can be useful for establishing baseline data on productivity and population trends to aid future American Kestrel conservation work. Here are some interesting data points gleaned from the volunteers' work this year:

Nest Boxes:

Number of nest boxes: 156

Number of nest boxes at the end of 2021: 93

Number of nest boxes added in 2022: 63*

*includes new boxes added and old boxes discovered

Nest Box Inspections:

Number of visits: 712

Average number of visits per nest box: 4.6

Egg Production:

Percentage of boxes with one or more eggs: 34%

Average clutch size: 4.3

Percentage of successful hatching: 96%

Nestling Production:

Number of live nestlings observed: 239

Number of boxes with one or more nestlings: 57

Percentage of boxes with one or more nestlings: 36%

Earliest nestling report: May 22

Latest nestling report: July 29

Number of dead nestlings: 6

Percentage nestling success: 98%



American Kestrel Nestlings
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

We think the most telling statistic we found from our work this year is that we fledged over 230 American Kestrels with an amazingly high nestling success rate. Our plan is to build on this year's success and add many more boxes to our established routes. We would love to bring in more volunteers to help in 2023. If interested, please contact Richard Scranton at rscran4350@yahoo.com.

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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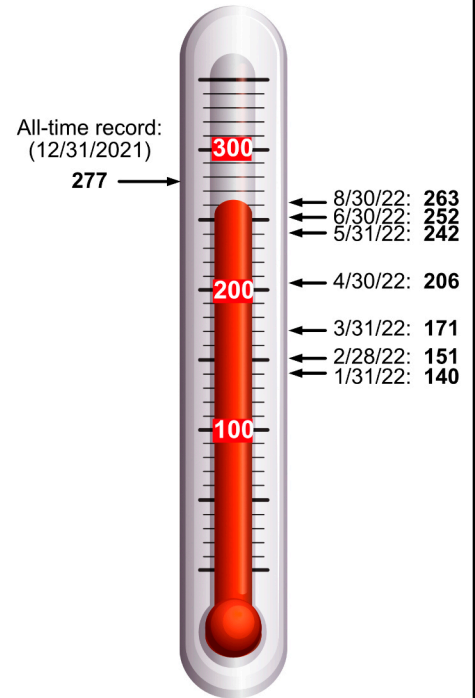
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2022 eBird

Total Number of Bird Species Entered

NCWAS four-county area End of month counts



Jan-Aug 2022 eBird stats

Total observers: 1,031

Total checklists: 13,180

North Central Washington Audubon Society Wild Phlox Subscription Form

Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Six Issues - \$15 Suggested Donation

I prefer to get the Wild Phlox electronically (email address required below)
 Separate subscription to the Phlox NOT needed for NAS members in good standing

Donation: I would like to support NCW Audubon's programs of education and conservation. Enclosed is my additional donation of \$_____

Please do NOT acknowledge my donation in the Wild Phlox

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Please mail check and form to Post Office Box 2934, Wenatchee, WA 98807-2934

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Why do we want your email? We may need to contact you regarding your donation. Also, we occasionally send email notifications about events or opportunities. You can unsubscribe at any time. We will not share your email address with others.

Planned Giving: Please consider giving a planned gift to NCW Audubon to support our education and conservation programs for generations to come. Your charitable gift will be tax deductible. It could go to an endowment fund or to a specific program or as a gift to our general operating fund. Remember, your gift to North Central Washington Audubon will go to fund programs in North Central Washington!

To join the National Audubon Society, which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see our website at www.ncwaudubon.org

I love fall. Although the woods and fields are no longer filled with bird song, the vibrant reds, yellows, and oranges of the changing foliage are a welcome replacement. A few days ago Gretta and I hiked up to Cutthroat Pass, and the fall colors did not disappoint. There wasn't much bird activity, but I did see several Mountain Bluebirds hawking for insects at the top of the pass.

In September, I attended the Western Bird Banding Association meeting in Davis, California. There were only about 35 attendees, but for such a small meeting the quality of the presentations was excellent. Several talks stand out in my mind. For instance, I learned that Black Swifts are airborne more than 99% of the time during their 8-month non-breeding period. This previously unknown discovery was made by researchers in Colorado who tagged Black Swifts with multi-sensor data loggers to record their location, flight activity, and flight altitude. I also learned that swabbing the exterior surface of a raptor's beak and talons for trace DNA can reveal what it has been eating. A project in coastal California used this non-invasive method to study the diet of Sharp-shinned Hawks during fall migration. And I was impressed by the effort biologists made to capture and study Harlequin Ducks on their breeding grounds in Canada. In fast-flowing and deep rivers and streams, it is impossible to safely set up a mist net and extract captured ducks by wading into the water. To solve this problem, a crew of four to six people extended a mist net across the water with modified riggings and a pulley system that allowed above-water retrieval of captured birds without any of the crew having to enter the water. The speaker showed a video of some ducks being captured, and it was amazing (and reassuring) to see how quickly and safely the birds were retrieved. Overall, the meeting was a great experience and worth the long drive.



Female and Male Harlequin Ducks
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

I'll end with an editorial note about hyperlinks. In theory, clicking on a hyperlink in the electronic version of the Phlox should allow a reader to directly connect to a highlighted email address or website. Unfortunately, that does not always work. Bruce McCammon (thank you Bruce!) and I have been troubleshooting the problem for the past year without any success. It appears to be a browser-related issue. I'll keep trying to find a solution, but in the meantime I will include complete email and website addresses in each issue so they can be copied and pasted.

NCWAS Social! Wednesday, November 2nd

7:00 PM at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center

Nolan Campbell will share his summer experience at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine. Since 1936, residential sessions at Hog Island have been led by some of the most respected naturalists and environmental educators in the nation, inspiring scores of scientists and young people. Nolan is one of those young people. His birding skills are phenomenal!

Come, enjoy his presentation and enjoy connecting with others. There also will be information about Audubon and cookies. Invite your friends. This is a good opportunity to introduce others to birds and how we can protect their environments. For more information contact Merry Roy at 2merrybird4@gmail.com.

Audubon's 123rd Christmas Bird Count

compiled 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 or 509-686-7551

Chelan: December 17 - Steve Easley, seasley@nwi.net or 509-682-2318

Okanogan/Omak: December 18 - Matt Danielson, mattie_rubio@hotmail.com

Leavenworth: December 20 - Joe Veverka, joe_everka@yahoo.com

Twisp: Dec 30 - Peter Wimberger, phwimberger@pugetsound.edu or Jen Fischer, jenwalsh1219@msn.com

Wenatchee: December 31 - Dan Stephens, dstephens@wvc.edu or 509-679-4706

The Generosity of Attention

by Mark Oswood, Wenatchee

Birding is an act of generosity. It is attention, appreciation, and aegis. It bands, photographs, and lists birds. It builds boxes, plants habitat, attends meetings. Birds extend our sphere of caring past our own cares. Maybe this explains the generosity of our donors.

Our once-a-year donation request fedges 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 2022. Donations made from September 2021 to early January 2022 were acknowledged in the February 2022 Phlox. Please know that your contributions are much appreciated, now and always. **Thank you.** Larry and Penny Tobiska are “first responders” for donations received. The list of donors is derived from their data.



Cedar Waxwing
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.” Simone Weil (1909-1943)

Philip Archibald (in memory of Kim L Lohse) *
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Nancy and Chuck Warner *

Plus seven anonymous donors, just as appreciated as those named above.

The symbols denote gifts of special generosity:

* = \$100+ (Great Blue Heron)

** = \$200+ (Greater White-fronted Goose)

*** = \$500+ (Magnificent Frigatebird)

We're Baa-aack!

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

After a two-year hiatus due to the Covid pandemic and construction activity at its usual venue at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery, and then a threat from wildfire smoke, the Wenatchee River Salmon Festival returned! This year it convened on September 15 and 16 at the campus of the Rocky Reach Dam. We, NCWAS, were there to present our “What’s That Bird” program to about 250 visitors to our booth. As always, we posted replicas of eight regional birds in the shrubbery and asked kids to find them, with or without using our loaner binoculars. When they spotted a bird, kids would identify it from pictorial field guides and check it off a beginning life list. One class did get distracted by a snake resting in the shrubbery and by an orb-weaving spider in the rose bushes. NCWAS volunteers for this outing included Mark Oswood, who leads the program, Caitlin Newman, Sue Sampson, Ken Smith, Larry Tobiska, and Penny Tobiska.

Meet Our Newest Board Member: Karen Haire



Greetings! My name is Karen Haire, and I'm delighted to be on the NCWAS board. For those who don't know me, here is a bit about myself:

I grew up in Pocatello, Idaho, and moved to Washington in 1980. I earned a BS in zoology from the University of Washington and spent many years working as a lab tech

for an entomologist, managing a rubber stamp store, multi-tasking with retail/conferencing/recreation/naturalist at Sleeping Lady Resort, and helping the Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest get off the ground. (My other job during these years was raising three boys.) When the youngest was in middle school, I attended Wenatchee Valley College and became a medical laboratory scientist in 2006. After six years of working locally, I became a contract worker, similar to a traveling nurse but in the laboratory. This gave me the freedom to work when I wanted and take time off when I wanted, and allowed me to see many different parts of the country. I am fortunate to have a wonderful and patient husband to support and encourage me.

During my years of work, I've always enjoyed learning about this incredible world around us. I've focused on birds, flowers, butterflies, and animal tracks and signs. Like any good subject, the more you learn, the more there is to learn! This fall I'm diving into the Wenatchee Naturalist course and am delighted at the thought of combining some of these puzzle pieces into a more complete picture.

In my spare time I like to hike, bicycle, cross-country ski, and spend time with friends and family. I look forward to meeting other chapter members and helping protect this amazing part of the planet.

A First Family in the Methow Valley

article and photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

For the second year in a row, a pair of state endangered Sandhill Cranes chose the Big Valley Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area for their nesting ground. This is of special significance because cranes had never been known to nest in the Methow Valley before and there are only about 40 breeding pairs in the state.

Last year the cranes successfully hatched two colts but unfortunately neither survived the summer. When the cranes returned this past spring, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists closed off a portion of Big Valley to provide extra protection to the birds from disturbance. The cranes hatched two colts in May, but in

July one of the colts was lost to a predator. The remaining colt survived the summer and took flight with its parents in the later part of August to begin the long journey south to their wintering grounds.

I never caught a glimpse of the cranes while they were at Big Valley. But in late August, I had an unexpected and surprising encounter with the family of three at Little Twin Lake near Winthrop. It was so heart-warming to see them peacefully feeding and preening at the shoreline and then wandering up into the meadow above the lake to rest in the shade. Let's hope they safely find their way south and return next spring to raise a family once again.



Sandhill Crane Family at Little Twin Lake

Book Review

by Mary Gallagher, Lake Wenatchee

***Halcyon Journey: In Search of the Belted Kingfisher.* By Marina Richie (Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, 2022) 235 pages of text, 18 exceptional illustrations by Ram Papish, plus 5 pages of further reading references.**

Halcyon Journey is such a fun, happy book. I have watched and enjoyed Belted Kingfishers for years but learned so much more about them from Marina's inspirational story. Her keen observations, detailed research, and travels bring this amazing bird, the Belted Kingfisher, into your hands.

In a similar vein to *H is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald and *Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet* by Maria Mudd-Ruth, the story follows Marina's passion for the Belted Kingfisher as she weaves her personal story in with her research that takes her to the Smithsonian Museum, the Lower Rio Grande in Texas, South Africa, London, and seven years watching a kingfisher nest along Rattlesnake Creek in Missoula, Montana.

Here is a sample of her often-lyrical language:

“Studying kingfishers in the field is to paddle a twisting river with ears trained on the rattling call and eyes following the flight of wings bearing colors of sky, snow, and stone.”

“Somewhere along this creek, the young kingfishers employed their innate qualities of superior eyesight, muscular and rounded wings, and bill and body shape

ideal for a stealth dive. On their own, they roamed the dimensions of sky, water, and earth.”

Curiosity drives this narrative, as the author pursues why the female Belted Kingfisher is more colorful than the male:



Book Cove Courtesy of the Author

“I saw her. A female kingfisher perched on a fallen tree moored in the center of the river. Her crested head was the blue of washed denim, tousled and sodden. White neck feathers formed a gleaming ring above a slate-blue band that dipped to a point on her snowy chest. Below that, a rusty red belt clasped in mid-belly and draped down both flanks, partly hidden by closed wings of blue-gray hues. Only the female wears the namesake belt, and that could be meaningful. In contrast, a male shows a single bluish upper band, like a prim bandana on his white breast. In the bird world, males are almost always more colorful than females when there's a difference between the two. The rare gender reversal drew me in like the myth. Could I chase clues to this puzzle that scientists had yet to solve?”

She shows how anyone can become a citizen scientist and follows through

with her own advice: *“The act of citizen science is threefold: to observe, record, and then share your findings.”*

This is the first book dedicated solely to the Belted Kingfisher. For those curious about birds and nature, this book needs to be part of your library. Read and share it with others. You will not be disappointed.

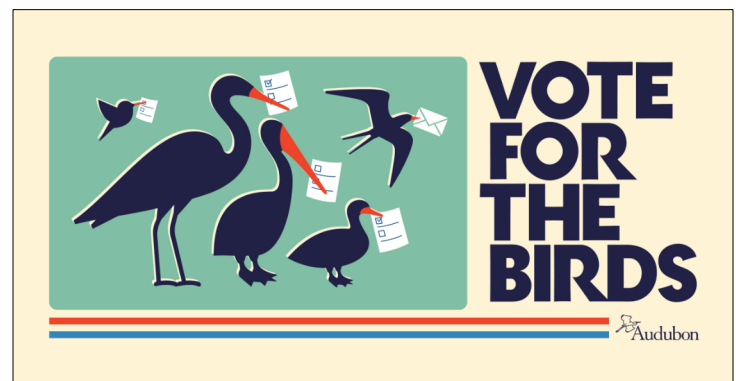
Please Vote: You Are What Hope Looks Like To A Bird!

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8

Birds can't vote, but as one of the millions of Americans who care about them—you can! Elections have a big impact on our communities and the birds we love. The decision makers who take office will have an important influence on the ways laws are written and enacted at every level of government. And you can make a difference.

Be Sure to Register to Vote or Check Your Registration

Registration is an important first step to becoming a voter. You can register or check your registration status at this website: <https://voter.votewa.gov/>. Even if you have voted at your current address before, you should still check your status and make sure you are “Vote Ready.”



Field Trip Report: Chelan Ridge HawkWatch

by Richard Scranton, Wenatchee

On Sunday, September 25, NCWAS led a field trip up to Chelan Ridge where biologists and staff count and band raptors as they migrate south. HawkWatch International, in partnership with the USFS Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, began annual, standardized counts at the site in 1998 monitoring raptors migrating through the East Cascades of Washington within the Pacific Flyway.

Arriving at the Chelan Ridge parking area, we met Janet Millard, a US Forest Service biologist, and Gary Palmer, the HawkWatch crew leader. They helped us learn how to identify airborne raptors and answered all of our questions. Then Janet brought out a recently captured adult male Sharp-shinned Hawk the team had just finished banding. Moments later a Cooper's Hawk was captured, and everyone saw how this bird differed from the Sharp-shinned both in size and plumage. Janet explained the features and biology of the birds before sending them aloft.

We then ventured three quarters of a mile out to the observation deck where the team sets up to scan the skies for migrating raptors. This was a particularly good day for observing. In just over an hour, our group saw around 20 raptors and six species: Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, and Golden Eagle. Several Turkey Vultures flew by as well.

When we returned to the parking area, the crew had just captured two first-year Sharp-shinned Hawks and we witnessed their release. A video of one of the birds flying from the hand of a crew member is posted on our website (<https://ncwaudubon.org/chelan-hawkwatch-09-25-22/>).

Chelan Ridge HawkWatch is open to the public and welcomes people to come by and visit. With an appointment, they host several groups like ours throughout the season. The crew members do a wonderful job working the site and accommodating all visitors.

Barring bad weather, the station will stay open until October 27. Directions to Chelan Ridge can be found at the HawkWatch International website (<https://hawkwatch.org/>). The roads are in good shape, but a sturdy vehicle with good tires is recommended.



A HawkWatch Crew Member Releases a Banded Sharp-shinned Hawk
photo by Pat Leigh, Mazama

Field Trip: Cassimer Bar Wildlife Area and Columbia River Saturday November 26

The Columbia River around Lake Pateros and Brewster is a top-notch birding destination any time of year. In terms of diversity, the crown jewel of Okanogan County birding is the Cassimer Bar Wildlife Area, with over 200 species recorded. Cassimer Bar is one of the few locations in Washington State where it is possible to observe over 60 species of birds in a morning virtually year-round. Excellent for both waterfowl and songbirds, walking this expansive wildlife area will produce lots of birds even in late November! We will focus our efforts at Cassimer, but if the weather cooperates we may also visit Washburn Island and the Bridgeport Bar Wildlife Area, both of which are similarly excellent birding destinations in late fall and winter. Plan to spend most of the day out and about with around five to six miles of walking. Please bring a lunch and fluids as well as some warm layers and footwear you are comfortable in (and ideally can get a little wet). If you are interested in attending, please email the trip leader Eric Heisey at heiseyew@gmail.com. We will meet at the Methow Monument Educational Park on Lakeshore Drive in Pateros at 7:30am. (To locate in Google Maps, search for the park's name or for coordinates 48.0523849, -119.9002733.) Hopefully this trip will present a welcome opportunity to get out at a time of year where we tend to become more sedentary. The field trip will be limited to 12 participants. We look forward to seeing you in the field!

Wenatchee River Institute Beginner Bird Walks

Join the Wenatchee River Institute for a Beginner Bird Walk around the Wenatchee River Institute campus! All birding skills are welcome and loaner binoculars are available. From 8:00-9:30 am you will survey the wild birds in the area and WRI will record your observations in eBird. Upcoming walks are on October 12 and November 9. Visit WRI's events calendar on their website for additional information (<https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/event-calendar.html>).

October 2022 Wild Phlox

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1st Wednesday of the month	Horan Natural Area Bird Walks	See our website for details
1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month thru October	Beebe Springs Bird Surveys	Contact Virginia Palumbo vwpalumbo@gmail.com or 509-682-5969
October 12 November 9	Beginner Bird Walk Wenatchee River Institute	See article on page 7
October 25 November 28	Spiva Butte Bird Surveys	Contact Joe Veverka joe_everka@yahoo.com See article in the Aug 2022 issue of the Phlox
November 2	NCWAS Social in Wenatchee	See article on page 3
November 26	Cassimer Bar and Columbia River Field Trip	See article on page 7
December 14, 17, 18, 20, 30, and 31	Christmas Bird Count Dates for North Central Washington	See page 3 for more information



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The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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