



The Wild Phlox

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U.S Bird Populations Continue Alarming Decline 2025 State of the Birds Report Calls for Urgent Conservation Action

Editor's Note: This March 11, 2025, press release is part of a media kit provided by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. In the report, Evening Grosbeak is listed as an "Orange Alert Tipping Point Species" because it has experienced long-term population losses that have accelerated during the past decade.

ITHACA, NY—The release of the 2025 U.S. State of the Birds report was announced on March 13, 2025, at the 90th annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. The report, produced by a coalition of leading science and conservation organizations, reveals continued widespread declines in American bird populations across all mainland and marine habitats, with 229 species requiring urgent conservation action. The report comes five years after the landmark 2019 study that documented the loss of 3 billion birds in North America over 50 years.

Key findings from the new report show that more than one-third of U.S. bird species are of high or moderate conservation concern, including 112 Tipping Point species that have lost more than 50% of their populations in the last 50 years. That includes 42 red-alert species facing perilously low populations, such as Allen's Hummingbird, Tricolored Blackbird, and Saltmarsh Sparrow—birds that are at risk without immediate intervention.

Proactively working to protect America's birds is not just about the birds. According to the report, supporting bird conservation can boost the U.S. economy. With nearly 100 million Americans engaged in birding activities, their contributions to local and state economies are substantial.

The report highlights findings from the 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, noting that the total economic output related to bird watching activities is \$279 billion, and birding-related activities support 1.4 million jobs.

"Birds tell us that we have a full-on emergency across all habitats," said Marshall Johnson, chief conservation officer at the National Audubon Society.



Evening Grosbeak
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

According to the report, bird populations in almost every habitat are declining. Most notably, duck populations, which have been a bright spot in past State of the Birds reports, have trended downward in recent years.

"The rapid declines in birds signal the intensifying stressors that wildlife and people alike are experiencing around the world because of habitat loss, environmental degradation, and extreme weather events," said Dr. Amanda Rodewald, faculty director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Center for Avian Population Studies. "When we see declines like those outlined in the report, we need to remember that if conditions are not healthy for birds, they're unlikely to be healthy for us."

"There is no doubt that the 2025 State of the Birds report is cause for alarm," said Jeff Walters, the conservation

committee co-chair at the American Ornithological Society, "but it is also cause for hope. Public interest in birds and the economic benefits from birding are at unprecedented levels, as is the information available about the status of each and every one of our bird species."

Continued on page 4.

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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Male Pileated Woodpecker
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

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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.ncwardubon.org



Spring may officially be here, but some days it seems as if winter is having a hard time letting go. As I write this, the weather has gone from partly sunny, to overcast, to misty rain, and then back to partly sunny. Although that has been making it difficult for me to decide when to get out somewhere with my dog Gretta, the birds don't seem to mind at all. House Finches are thinking about building a nest in one of my spruce trees, American Robins are hopping around looking for worms in my (mostly) snow-free yard, and I can hear a Say's Phoebe calling in the distance.

Editor's Notes

With the nesting season right around the corner, this is a good time to think about what items we should or should not set out for birds to use as nesting material. According to the National Audubon Society, it's OK to offer twigs, small sticks, leaves, pieces of straw, or grass clippings (if free of fertilizers, pesticides, or other chemicals), but not human hair, yarn, string, or ribbon because these items can get tangled around adults and nestlings. Dryer lint also should not be offered—it falls apart easily, loses its structure when wet, and typically contains toxic chemicals found in clothing, laundry detergents, and dryer sheets. And although pet fur may seem like the perfect nest material, the chemicals found in pet shampoos, conditioners, and flea and tick control treatments make it unsafe for use in bird nests. Perhaps one of the best things we can do to help our nesting feathered friends is to landscape with as many native plants as possible.



Sara With Her New Binoculars
photo by Karen Haire, Wenatchee

Following up on my notes from the February Phlox, I'm excited to report that Wisdom, the Laysan Albatross and world's oldest-known wild bird, is a mother again! Her egg hatched in late January and she and her mate have been busy taking turns feeding and caring for their chick.

In closing, NCWAS board member Karen Haire sent me this note and asked me to share it with you: *"I had a wonderful opportunity to visit Guatemala this winter. NCWAS generously donated a pair of binoculars for me to give to someone while I was there, and I gave them to a young aspiring birdwatcher named Sara. She was delighted to see the birds in a new way, and to learn more about them! Thank you so much, Audubon!"*

Naturalized Parrots: The Most Colorful Invaders of the United States and the World

Speaker: Steve Pruett-Jones
Thursday, May 15, 4:30-6:00 pm
Winthrop Library Community Room

Steve Pruett-Jones is a retired professor from the University of Chicago and now lives full time in the North Village community of Winthrop. Steve is a field biologist and has spent his career studying ecology and social behavior in birds. His two primary research programs were fairywrens in Australia and introduced and naturalized parrots in the United States and around the world. Although most people think of parrots as either wild birds seen in the tropics or pet birds confined to cages, parrots are now also increasingly common in cities around the world after either escaping or being released from captivity. At least 300 of the 381 recognized parrot species have been transported and traded by humans for the last 2,000+ years, and many of these species have established viable populations in the new areas where they were taken to. The Rose-ringed Parakeet and Monk Parakeet are the most widely distributed and successful of the introduced parrots, being naturalized in 47 and 26 countries or territories, respectively. Far and away, the United States and its territories support the greatest number of



Monk Parakeets
photo by Jon-Mark Davey

naturalized parrots, with 28 different species found in either the continental United States, Hawaii, or Puerto Rico. In the contiguous United States there are now 25 species of parrots breeding in 23 different states. Naturalized parrots highlight the complex interaction between humans and introduced species and provide both important opportunities for research and challenges in terms of their ecological and social impacts. If you are interested in parrots, or in the topics of introduced species or invasion biology, or just want to see some photos of amazing birds, please join us.

The Winthrop Library is located at 112 Norfolk Road. All are welcome and there is no cost to attend. We hope to see you there!

CREATING A NCWAS EMAIL MEMBERSHIP LIST

There are times when it would be advantageous to contact our members about events or opportunities more quickly than posting a notice in the Wild Phlox newsletter or on our website. A good example is the recent Wild Phlox printing error. If we had a comprehensive email list of our members, we could have sent out a quick notification to let you know we were aware of the error and in the process of correcting it. Currently, we only have email addresses for about 40% of our members. We would like to raise that percentage to at least 90%.

We would appreciate it if you would visit <https://ncwaudubon.org/email-gathering/> and provide us with your current email address. We promise that we will never sell or share your information.

Thank you for your assistance and for supporting NCWAS!

The Return of Bird Fest!

The time has finally come! It's time to wander to Leavenworth for the 23rd Annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest from May 15-18, 2025. Hosted by the Wenatchee River Institute and NCWAS, this weekend unites bird enthusiasts, families, and nature aficionados from all over to celebrate the mesmerizing beauty of birds and the diverse ecosystems of North Central Washington.

Experience the festival's highlights, including the Community Fair (previously Family Day) from 10:00 am-3:00 pm on Saturday, May 17. This community gathering offers family-friendly activities, local vendors, and live music for all ages to connect with the natural world and Leavenworth's vibrant community. Later that day, at 7:00 pm, local naturalist David Lukas will take the

by Mason Powers, Wenatchee River Institute

stage to shine a light on the exciting and mysterious adaptations found in bird skeletons.

Throughout the festival, attendees will embark on over 30 birding field trips, engaging workshops, and connect with the natural world through avian appreciation. Be sure to check out our workshops and art displays from our 2025 Artist Spotlight, Heather Murphy. Set against the stunning and diverse geography of the Wenatchee Valley, the Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest offers a unique opportunity to explore the natural wonders of the region.

Registration is now open! Secure your spot and join us for four unforgettable days of exploration, education, and birdwatching. For more information and to register, please visit www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/bird-fest/.

2025 State of the Birds Report - continued from page 1

The report highlights the economic significance and well-being benefits of bird watching as additional reasons to support conservation efforts. It notes that birds and nature are vital for Americans' mental health, citing research indicating that encounters with birds have proven beneficial for human well-being, including reducing stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

Despite the concerning trends, the report emphasizes that conservation efforts can succeed when adequately supported. "Many bird populations are struggling. But a proven blueprint for success is science-based planning and collaborative investment in habitat conservation," said Dr. Steve Adair, Ducks Unlimited chief scientist.

Private lands programs and conservation partnerships such as conservation ranching, coastal restoration, forest renewal, and seabird translocation show how concerted efforts and strategic investments can recover bird populations. "Decades of strategic and aggressive wetland habitat conservation from hunters, landowners, state and federal agencies, and corporations has boosted numerous waterfowl and waterbird species when weather conditions are favorable. We've shown it works. And we must do more," said Adair.

"Fortunately, many of the actions that are good for birds are good for us. When we protect the habitats that birds rely upon, we also protect the ecosystem services that sustain us," said Rodewald.

"We have clear evidence that conservation works in halting declines," said Michael J. Parr, President of American Bird Conservancy. "What we now need more than ever are programs and funding that match the scale of the greatest challenges birds face today. The science is solid on how to reverse the damage done, but to succeed, these issues need to be taken seriously."

"Birds unite us across the hemisphere and across the political spectrum—there should be no hesitation as we move to protect them today and in the future," said Johnson.

The 2025 U.S. State of the Birds report was produced by a consortium of scientific and conservation organizations and entities led by North American Bird Conservation Initiative. To download the complete report visit <https://www.stateofthebirds.org/2025/>.

Conservation Update: Similkameen Enloe Dam Survey

by Todd Thorn, Okanogan Highlands

Those of you reading the Phlox newsletter the last several years will recall that NCWAS and Audubon Washington support the efforts of multiple conservation groups, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Lower and Upper Similkameen Indian Bands that are collaborating to remove the derelict Enloe Dam from the Similkameen River.

Progress continues in the development and advancement of a feasibility study assessing dam removal, with the participation of the dam owner (Okanogan PUD), landowner (Bureau of Land Management), and various regulatory agencies. One very positive development is the determination that considerably less sediment is backed up behind the dam than originally thought. Initial designs for dam removal are currently being completed. Much has been accomplished but implementation is not yet a sure thing. Large hurdles remain, including final design, environmental review and permitting, creation of a dam removal lead entity, and funding to make it all happen. The best-case scenario is that ground breaking for removal could begin in 2028.

Other dam removals have occurred without forethought to tracking resulting bird population changes. Embracing our

opportunity to track these changes, NCWAS Conservation Committee members Michelle Martin and Todd Thorn have proposed a bird survey along the river up and downstream of Enloe Dam. Our proposal has been enthusiastically endorsed by the NCWAS Enloe Working Group, so we're moving forward with it and we'd love your participation!

With your help we'll conduct avian point count surveys beginning one hour before sunrise from May to late July with three surveys per route for the season. The number of routes will depend on capacity and attendance. Come camp and train with us via a kickoff campout event May 31-June 1 at the Similkameen Recreation Site, a few miles upstream from Enloe Dam (8.5 miles from Oroville on the Loomis-Oroville Rd). Birding along the river this spring will be beautiful!

Join us in this excellent opportunity to collect baseline data that will help us determine the significance of the rapid changes in species presence and abundance that will occur if the dam is removed. Please email Michelle at michelle@okanoganlandtrust.org if you have any questions or are interested in participating.

The BirdCast Migration Dashboard

by Mary Gallagher, Lake Wenatchee

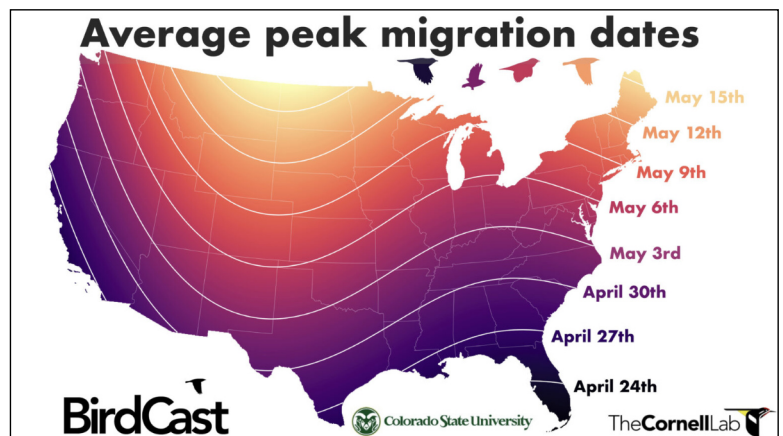
Spring 2025 "officially" started this year on Thursday, March 20, at 2:01am Pacific Time in the Northern Hemisphere. By the time you read this article, the snow that is currently falling outside my window will be long melted. The Varied Thrushes, that just recently returned and are filling my dawn and dusk soundscape with their fluty whistles, will have continued their altitudinal migration higher, as the snowpack continues to melt.

Spring migration is a wonderful time of year for us human birders as new species return to our yards and neighborhoods. Sharing who is "back" is filled with excitement. The last two years I have been learning more about night migration of birds. A tool I now use is the BirdCast Migration Dashboard (<https://birdcast.info/migration-tools/migration-dashboard/>). This tool is a collaboration between Cornell University, Colorado State University, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. They utilize a combination of weather radar and machine learning to track and forecast bird migration.

Opening the BirdCast site, I type in "Chelan County" to get an idea of how many birds will be flying over while I dreamily sleep. No, we are not a major "flyway" but wow, there are a lot of birds traveling our local skies at night. Check out the BirdCast Migration Dashboard online and get an estimate of the number of birds flying over your house tonight.

A great article to learn more about this tool and why it was created can be found on the Cornell Lab's All About Birds website: *How to Use BirdCast Dashboard to See Your Local Migration in Detail*, by Hugh Powell (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/heres-how-to-use-the-new-migration-forecast-tools-from-birdcast/>).

Enjoy spring 2025, keep learning about the birds that stay and pass through your yard, and share what you learn with your family and friends!



Upcoming Field Trips and Other Events

Beebe Springs Wildlife Area will now be open year-round again. Virginia Palumbo will be leading once-monthly bird surveys on the third Wednesday of each month. The data from these surveys are shared with Amy Pavelchek, of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, to help assess how the restoration of this former orchard land is doing. Start times are variable throughout the year, so please contact Virginia at vwpalumbo@gmail.com, or 509-860-2129, if you are interested in participating.

Wednesday, April 16: To the Beat of Their Own Drum—Behavior and Life History of Grouse in Okanogan County, 6:30 pm at the PUD Auditorium in Okanogan

Enjoy an evening with Michelle Martin, Conservation Coordinator for the Okanogan Land Trust, and learn about the surprising uniqueness of grouse—beloved by hunters and begging to be known by others! Michelle completed her Master's Degree in southern Alberta, Canada, studying Ruffed Grouse behavior. She will discuss her research findings and also will broadly discuss the life history of the grouse species that occur in Okanogan County. For more information visit <https://www.okanogalandtrust.org/events/> or call 509-557-6306.

Saturday, May 10: Beaver Pond at Sun Mountain, Winthrop

Come birding with leader Pat Leigh for a morning walk around the beaver pond at Sun Mountain. A nice variety of birds should be present on the pond and in the surrounding riparian habitat. Wear good walking shoes and expect to walk a gentle trail approximately two to three miles around the pond. Bring binoculars, water, and snacks. Meet at 8:00 am at the Chickadee parking lot off of Patterson Lake Road and expect to be out for about three hours. The trip is limited to eight participants. Please email Pat Leigh at patricialeigh1@mac.com to register.

Monday, May 19: Deadhorse Lake, Twisp

Join Julie Hovis for a morning bird walk to Deadhorse Lake. Many birds should be back in the area with a variety of songbirds and waterfowl to be seen. Last year's trip highlights included good looks at Ruddy Ducks, Lewis's Woodpeckers, Tree Swallows, Western Bluebirds, Mountain Bluebirds, and Yellow Warblers. Please wear good walking shoes and expect to walk two to four miles over gently rolling trails and dirt roads. Bring binoculars, water, and snacks as needed. Meet at 8:00 am at the Methow Valley Community Center parking lot in Twisp and expect to be out for roughly three hours. The trip is limited to ten participants. Please email Julie Hovis at jahovis711@gmail.com to register.

Friday, May 30-Monday, June 2: Wenas Audubon Campout: Birds, Bugs, and Blooms

Every spring, Washington State's Audubon Chapters, wildlife lovers, and their friends gather in the Wenas Valley, located on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains between Ellensburg and Yakima. Everyone, whether members of Audubon chapters or not, is welcome to join us for this annual outing at the Wenas Creek Campground. The organizing committee is hard at work planning the field trips, campfire programs, children's activities, live music, and the ever-popular sanitation stations. Information on dispersed camping, activities, and what to expect are on the website, <https://www.wenasaudubon.org>, or follow the group on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/wenasaudubon>) for current information.

Saturday, May 31: The Sinlahekin Valley in Spring

Join Art Campbell and Dj Jones in exploring the beautiful bird paradise of the Sinlahekin Valley. We will spend a full day birding from Conconully to Loomis and Palmer Lake, and continuing along Horse Coulee Road on our way back to Omak. With almost all the spring migrants back in our region by the end of May, we'll have an excellent chance to see many of our region's breeding birds. Dress for the weather and bring lunch, snacks, water, etc. There will be only limited walking along unpaved roadways. We will meet at 7:00 am in the Safeway parking lot in Omak and expect to return by 5:00 pm. This trip is limited to ten birders. To reserve your space, email Art Campbell at rapakivi@methow.com.

Monday, June 9: Nespelem to Goose Lake and the Aeneas Valley with Dj Jones and Art Campbell

By early June, all the spring breeding birds should be present in our region. In a reprise of the last three year's highly successful trips, we will spend a full day birding from the Nespelem River to Goose Lake, and 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 6:00 am at the Sweet River Bakery in Pateros (203 Lakeshore Drive) and expect to return by 5:00 pm. This trip is limited to ten birders. To reserve your space, email Dj Jones at djtrillium.birder@gmail.com.

Sunday, June 15: Okanogan Highlands Field Trip

Come bird the Okanogan Highlands! This day-long adventure will begin in Tonasket, ascending from the Okanogan Valley to roam through the varied habitats of the Highlands and sample its wonderful bird life. We hope to see up to 90 species in the cliffs, wet meadows, shrub steppe, grassland, forest, riparian, wetlands, and open waters of the Highlands. Plan to walk short distances over level to slightly rolling terrain. Please bring lunch, water, sun protection, and anything else you need to enjoy a day in the Highlands with the birds. Meet at 7:30 am in Tonasket with projected end time of 4:30pm. Group size is limited to 10 participants. To reserve your space and for directions on where to meet, contact Todd Thorn at water.thrush@yahoo.com.

Field Trip Report: Pateros to Bridgeport Loop

by Mark Johnston, Leavenworth

This trip is designed to pick up winter birds in and around the fairly compact region lying between Pateros and Bridgeport. The area is not particularly large, but it contains a diversity of habitats ranging from the Columbia River reservoirs, tributary creeks and rivers, riparian areas, and shrub-steppe.

Depending upon recent temperatures, the amount of open water and snow cover can vary substantially from year to year. It had been quite cold over the week prior to this year's trip on February 9, so some sites that we would typically visit, such as the mouth of the Methow River and the lower Okanogan River, were frozen over and devoid of waterfowl. Fortunately, the presence of ice in some places mostly just causes the birds to congregate in areas with remaining open water, resulting in a redistribution rather than reduced numbers of birds.

As is usual for this trip, our group of 12 began the day with a visit to the Sweet River Bakery in Pateros. Then, after taking in a nice mix of species on Lake Pateros, we ventured east to the Cassimer Bar Wildlife Area and the mouth of Chicken Creek where we found 2 Red-tailed Hawks, 7 Bald Eagles, a Belted Kingfisher, and a variety of waterfowl including Canvasbacks, Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, American Wigeons, and Pied-billed Grebes.

Moving on, at Bridgeport State Park we had good views of a Northern Shrike but struck out on finding our target species there—the Northern Saw-whet Owl. We saw lots of sign, but no owls. In Bridgeport, our luck was back, with sustained scope views of a dark-plumaged “black” Merlin preening at the top of a tree.

We then moved back west to the Bridgeport Bar where we found an unusually large number of Hooded and Common Mergansers (90, with Hooded predominating) mixed in with 120 American Wigeons, 25 Greater Scaups, 85 Ring-necked Ducks, 18 Gadwalls, several Canvasbacks, and another Belted Kingfisher in a small slough off the Columbia River. We then walked a short distance through the Wells Wildlife Area to the Columbia River where we found numerous passerines, more raptors including a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and 3 Common Loons.

Leaving Bridgeport Bar, we headed further west, stopping occasionally to scope the south side of Lake Pateros where we added 6 Horned Grebes, 21 Ruddy Ducks, 3 more Common Loons, and a noteworthy Red-necked Grebe to the day's list. Our last stop at Brewster Bay produced 17 Common Goldeneyes, 4 Greater Scaups, 4 Pied-billed Grebes, 2 Common Loons, and the typical gobs of American Coots.

In total, we found 39 species, which was one more than on the same trip last year. The species mix, however, varied a bit. For example, in 2024, we found Northern Saw-whet Owls, Trumpeter Swans, and Cackling Geese. This year's trip missed those, but we instead picked up Merlin, Northern Shrike, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Red-necked Grebe.

With the trip finished, some of us paid a final visit to the bakery. All in all, it was a wonderful way to spend a winter day.

2024 American Kestrel Nest Box Project Report

by the American Kestrel Nest Box Project Steering Committee

The 2024 season of installing and monitoring American Kestrel nest boxes around the Waterville Plateau ended this past September. The NCWAS steering committee has compiled data collected by our volunteers who visited boxes during the breeding season.

Since 2021, NCWAS has funded and implemented this project that was started by Richard Hendrick in 1993 to help expand the kestrel population on the Waterville Plateau. As a volunteer with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Richard established a network of more than 250 boxes, and prior to his passing in 2020, he asked that we continue his work.

Due to fires and other natural events, more than half of Richard's original kestrel boxes were either destroyed or rendered unusable. With the help of Ken Smith, a local woodworker, our Audubon group installs dozens of new boxes each year.

Data gleaned from the volunteers' work in 2024 include:

- The number of boxes monitored increased by 5%, from 187 boxes in 2023 to 196 boxes in 2024.
- We made a total of 1,030 box visits, from March 14 to August 14, averaging 5.3 visits per box.
- 357 young fledged, which was slightly lower than last season's 382 fledglings.
- 43% of the boxes fledged one or more young, which was down slightly from last year's 48%.
- Overall fledgling success was 87%.

One troubling trend was that 20% of the boxes in 2024 had European Starling activity (an uninvited interloper), compared to only 9% of the boxes in 2023.

This continues to be a very successful project due to the excellent work of our volunteers. Our plan is to build on our success over the last few years and add more boxes to our established routes. If you are interested in learning more about the project or volunteering, please contact Richard Scranton at rscr4350@yahoo.com.

April 2025 Wild Phlox

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Resources and Calendar

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3rd Wednesday of the Month	Bebee Springs Bird Surveys	See page 6 for details
May 10	Beaver Pond at Sun Mountain Field Trip	
May 15	Naturalized Parrots Presentation	
May 15-18	Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest	
May 19	Deadhorse Lake Field Trip	
May 31	Sinlahekin Field Trip	
June 9	Nespelem, Goose Lake, & Aeneas Valley Field Trip	
June 15	Okanogan Highlands Field Trip	
April 10, May 8, June 12	Wenatchee Bird Walk, Wenatchee River Institute	www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org
April 10-13	Olympic BirdFest 2025	www.olympicbirdfest.org
April 16	Life History of Grouse Presentation	See page 6 for details
April 24, May 29, June 26	Birding by the River, Wenatchee River Institute	www.wenatcheeriverinstitute.org
May 30-June 2	Wenas Audubon Campout	See page 6 for details



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

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

