



The Wild Phlox

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Deadline Extended to Protect Bonaparte Meadows A new \$150,000 match provides a major boost to the campaign

Editor's Note: As reported in previous issues of the Phlox, the NCWAS board unanimously supports the acquisition and restoration of Bonaparte Meadows. The following 13 July 2026 press release has been updated to reflect the status of the fund-raising campaign at the time this issue of the Phlox went to press.

OKANOGAN, WA—Okanogan Land Trust's "For the Fen!" campaign has entered its final stretch. As of 5 August, \$1,405,702 has been raised toward the \$1.5 million goal to purchase and begin restoration of Bonaparte Meadows, a 745-acre property in the Okanogan Highlands that includes approximately 260 acres of rare peat fen habitat.

With the campaign nearly funded, the Jones family has extended the property purchase deadline from July 31 to August 31. As the current owners of Bonaparte Meadows, their decision gives the campaign an additional boost, extending the fundraising timeline needed to purchase the property and bring it into permanent protection.

The campaign has also received another major vote of support with the announcement of a new \$150,000 matching challenge. Acting on their commitment to see this extraordinary landscape conserved, four anonymous donors have pooled a combined \$150,000 and pledged to match every new donation dollar for dollar. Beginning immediately, every new contribution will be matched until the full \$150,000 challenge is unlocked. If fully met, the challenge will raise \$300,000 and bring the campaign to more than 96% of its \$1.5 million goal.

"This is an incredible moment for Bonaparte Meadows," said Kate Miller, executive director of Okanogan Land Trust. "The generosity behind this matching challenge, combined with the extended timeline from the Jones family, creates a tremendous opportunity to bring this campaign across the finish line and secure permanent protection for one of the region's most unique landscapes. We are grateful to everyone who has helped bring the



Bonaparte Meadows
photo by Mark Noble

campaign this far, and we hope this final push inspires more people to join the effort."

Located below Mount Bonaparte near Bonaparte Lake, Bonaparte Meadows contains Okanogan County's largest peat wetland and one of Washington's rare calcareous fens. This groundwater-fed wetland stores water, supports biodiversity and contributes to watershed resilience as a headwaters wetland within the Okanogan River watershed, helping sustain cold, clean flows important to downstream salmon and steelhead habitat.

To learn more or make a donation, visit okanoganlandtrust.org. For updates on Bonaparte Meadows, follow Okanogan Land Trust on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Okanogan Land Trust is a nationally accredited conservation organization serving Okanogan and Ferry counties. Since 1970, the organization has helped protect 18,878 acres across the region.

(See page 5 of this newsletter for a related article about Bonaparte Meadows.)

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”

North Central Washington Audubon Society

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Western Bluebird
photo by Pat Leigh, Mazama

North Central Washington Audubon Society



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Your commitment to birds and healthy habitats can
continue far into the future through a planned gift to
NCW Audubon. By including our chapter in your will,
trust, retirement plan, or other estate planning
documents, you help ensure that conservation,
education, and community engagement efforts continue
for future generations. We encourage you to discuss
your charitable goals with your professional advisors
and consider making conservation part of your legacy.

As I write this, the air quality indexes throughout our chapter's four-county area are not just bad, they are horrible: 556 in Condonully, 643 in Okanogan, 945 in Entiat, and 867 in Wenatchee to name a few! And although it is tempting to complain about the smoke, staying inside is not much of a hardship compared to being evacuated or losing your home to a wildfire. So many have lost so much, but it is both reassuring and heartwarming to see how our communities always come together in times of need. If you would like to help those affected by the various wildfires in our area, there are numerous online resources to guide you in the right direction.

Editor's Notes



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
photo by Julie Hovis, Winthrop

In early July, I traveled to the North Shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota for a bird-banding "vacation" that did not include sleeping late or lounging on a beach. Instead, I got up at 4:30 am every day to volunteer at a couple of different banding stations. It was exhausting but fun! I learned a lot, met some really nice people, and got to see and band several species typically not found in Washington. One of my favorites was a handsome, male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a close relative to our Red-naped and Red-breasted Sapsuckers. In fact, all three were considered to be the same species until 1983!

A few days after I arrived home, wildfire smoke engulfed northern Minnesota and much of the Midwest and Northeast United States—a sad but important reminder that not all wildfires occur in the West. We are still a couple of months away from the first snowfall, so please be safe and take care of yourselves and each other.

Make Your Giving Go Further! Give Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly

Did you know you can support NCWAS with a recurring credit card donation through the Community Foundation of North Central Washington? Setting up a gift that repeats every month, quarter, or year takes just a few minutes and makes a real difference for birds and habitat across our region.

Why It Matters:

Set it and forget it. Choose an amount and a schedule that works for you, and your giving happens automatically. No need to remember to write a check or wait for the annual donation request.

More volunteer hours for birds, not the mail. Every paper check must be opened, logged, and deposited by a volunteer. A credit card gift skips all of that—freeing up volunteer time for field trips, habitat projects, and conservation work instead.

It's easy to set up: Visit the Community Foundation of North Central Washington's giving page for NCWAS at https://cfncw.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1784, choose your amount, and pick monthly, quarterly, or annual giving. Enter your information and that's it—you're done.

Every gift helps NCWAS keep protecting birds and the places they need to thrive. Thank you for making it easy for us to focus on the work!



White-headed Woodpecker
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

Help Wanted! Seeking Volunteers for Two Key Positions

Treasurer: NCWAS is seeking a volunteer treasurer to provide financial oversight and board leadership. Existing operational systems are already in place, and support/training will be provided. Duties include maintaining the chapter's chart of accounts and entering transactions in QuickBooks Online, preparing and distributing monthly financial reports for board review, depositing donor checks and sending donor information to the Membership lead for entry in Little Green Light, processing expense payments through the bank's bill pay system, and preparing and submitting annual reports to the Secretary of State and the IRS. The Treasurer is a member of the NCWAS board, helps prepare the annual budget, and attends monthly board meetings via Zoom (and occasional in-person meetings). Bookkeeping or accounting experience is required. The outgoing treasurer will provide onboarding support. Director and officer insurance coverage is provided. The estimated time commitment is five to eight hours per month. For more information, please contact Art Campbell at rapakivi@methow.com.

Co-Field Trip Lead: NCWAS is also looking for someone to help plan and organize our field trips in Chelan and Douglas counties. Duties include identifying and contacting potential field trip leaders, scheduling and advertising field trips, and reporting field trip activities to the board. For more information, please contact Dj Jones at djtrillium.birder@gmail.com.

Our New Speaker Series Fledges!

by Mark Johnston, Leavenworth

On July 21st and 22nd, we launched our new Speaker Series which will bring interesting and informative speakers to our area on a regular basis. The primary goal of the series is to provide NCWAS members and the interested public with information central to our chapter's work in the region on behalf of birds and the environment.

Our speaker in July was Dennis Paulson, a widely renowned naturalist who has studied the natural world for decades, with a particular focus on birds and dragonflies. His presentations in Wenatchee and Winthrop were attended by a combined audience of 135 people and featured an overview of shorebird species that occur in Washington, their key identification features, and the many evolved adaptations that underpin their existence.

Many people probably don't consider North Central Washington as being "shorebird country," but depending on the season, it actually is. In addition to the few shorebird species that breed here, many more pass through on migration. Dennis' presentations were particularly timely, as mid- to late summer is an excellent time to visit our area's shorelines and shallow wetlands in search of shorebirds.

Next Up: Jeff Fleisher and the Winter Raptor Survey

NCWAS is proud to sponsor a Zoom presentation by Jeff Fleischer about the Winter Raptor Survey Project (WRSP) on **Wednesday, October 14, at 7:00 pm**. The WRSP was established in November 2004 and is sponsored by the East Cascades Bird Alliance based in Bend, Oregon. Jeff oversees the project which is designed to monitor wintering populations of the various species of birds of prey throughout all of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington and portions of California, Utah, Montana, and British Columbia. Jeff relies on volunteers to do the surveying, and here in North Central Washington over a dozen folks within our chapter's boundaries help with this project.

Jeff will discuss the history of the project and how it has expanded over the years. His presentation will include charts and maps that help display the data that have been collected over the project's 22-year history. It also will include wonderful photographs of the 31 raptor species that have been observed during more than 25,000 project surveys.

For more information visit our website at <https://ncwaudubon.org/ncwas-scheduled-events/>. (We're still working out some details, so please check back periodically if you don't see a link on how to register.)



Other Events

September 17-20: Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) 50th Annual Conference, Ashland, Oregon

WFO's anniversary gathering will bring together passionate birders, naturalists, and ornithologists for four days of exceptional birding, science, and community. In partnership with the Klamath Bird Observatory and Oregon Birding Association, the conference will include scientific presentations, field trips, workshops, panels, a keynote address, the annual membership meeting, and community events. Full program details and registration are available at <https://westernfieldornithologists.org/conference/>.

Travel to Central America

This November, Environment for the Americas (EFTA) is offering two opportunities to experience bird conservation firsthand while exploring some of the most spectacular birding destinations in the Americas. To request more information about either trip, please send an email to info@environmentamericas.org.

Panama: From Coast to Coast is a new 12-day journey through Panama in partnership with AdoptaBosque. A highlight of the trip will be visiting Bocas Ridge to witness one of the world's greatest bird migrations. Millions of raptors soar overhead as they make their way to their nonbreeding grounds farther south. As with all EFTA trips, conservation will be at the heart of the experience. Participants will learn about Panama City's efforts to become a Bird City, including innovative work to reduce light pollution and prevent bird collisions. They also may have a chance to participate in a Bird City designation event, offering a unique opportunity to celebrate local conservation achievements alongside EFTA's partners.

Colombia: Bird-Friendly Communities in Action is a ten-day introduction to the many communities that are creating bird-friendly landscapes while protecting the region's incredible bird diversity. Participants will explore outstanding birding destinations, visit beautiful natural areas, and meet the people leading local conservation efforts. They also will participate in community events, dine with EFTA's partners, and maybe even take a salsa class!

The Birds of Bonaparte Meadows

by Chinook Deveraux, Okanogan Land Trust

Okanogan Land Trust recently finished compiling and verifying the bird records for Bonaparte Meadows, bringing together historical observations and recent field surveys from across the property. The completed inventory documents 141 bird species connected to the open water, peat fen, wet meadows, willow thickets, forest edge, and surrounding uplands. Birds do not experience these habitats as separate pieces. They move between them to feed, nest, rest, and raise their young. That connected landscape is why the central goal of the Bonaparte Meadows campaign is to keep the entire 745-acre parcel intact. Protecting the broader landscape preserves the connections that allow birdlife, and the larger ecosystem, to function as a whole.

Among the 141 bird species recorded at Bonaparte Meadows there are:

- ◆ 13 Washington Species of Greatest Conservation Need including Barrow's Goldeneye, Flammulated Owl, Long-billed Curlew, and Western Screech-Owl.
- ◆ 11 Washington Species of Greatest Information Need including Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Rufous Hummingbird, and Williamson's Sapsucker.
- ◆ 5 Washington State Status Species including Sandhill Crane (Endangered), Common Loon (Sensitive), and White-headed Woodpecker (Candidate for listing).

To explore the full inventory of Bonaparte Meadow's bird species visit <https://okanoganlandtrust.org/birds-of-bonaparte/>.



Williamson's Sapsuckers
(male and female)
photos by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

National Audubon's Climate Watch 10th Anniversary

by Richard Scranton, Wenatchee

Climate Watch is Audubon's innovative community science program for tracking how birds respond to climate change. Since January 2016, it has grown from 11 Audubon chapters into a nationwide network covering the lower 48 states and Alaska. By mobilizing volunteers to monitor target bird species in locations where climate models predict change, the program links climate science with on-the-ground observations.

A decade of data have provided strong evidence that many species are adapting to changing climates as models predicted. The patterns emerging from Climate Watch reinforce the reliability of climate projections and strengthen confidence in using them to guide meaningful conservation action.

The Next Decade of Climate Watch

As Climate Watch enters its second decade, birds and the planet face a critical moment. North America has lost more than three billion birds in recent decades, as they face challenges throughout their annual life cycles.

Still, Climate Watch shows how collective action can make a difference—and how Audubon can expand that impact in the years ahead. Climate Watch is well positioned to support Audubon's conservation goals by helping document and address how climate change impacts birds throughout their annual cycles by:

- Providing critical data to track bird responses to climate change in real time.
- Engaging thousands of volunteers across the lower 48 states and Alaska in meaningful conservation action.
- Validating climate models that guide habitat protection and policy decisions.
- Building a strong constituency for bird-friendly climate solutions.

To read National Audubon's full paper on this topic, *A Decade of Discovery*, visit <https://ncwaudubon.org/conservation/>.

Book Review

by Merry Roy, Wenatchee

***The Feather Wars and the Great Crusade to Save America's Birds.* By James H. McCommons (St. Martin's Press, 2026), 416 pages.**

James McCommons' meticulously researched book published this year is filled with fascinating stories behind the names, laws, and organizations that have worked to protect birds. In addition, he is an excellent writer. And it wasn't just feathers in the war to save America's birds. The history is much more complicated, and it continues in subtler ways today.

At the time of the Civil War, three billion Passenger Pigeons, one quarter of all North American birds, darkened the skies of the United States. In the 1840s they were considered pests, slaughtered and fed to pigs, and used as fertilizer. Market harvest supplied cities with pigeons for restaurants and home dinner tables. The birds were shot for practice and sport. (Clay pigeons later took the place of real pigeons and stool pigeons and trap shooting referred to tying decoys to a stool, luring pigeons to the shooter). Between 1860 and 1890 Passenger Pigeon flocks diminished and then disappeared. People were shocked.

Hunting had a huge impact on the number of Passenger Pigeons, but people thought they were endless. Birds and other animals (like the bison) were seen as a resource to be used until they were gone. But the impact on bird populations wasn't just from hunting. Shotgun ornithology, practiced by John James Audubon and others in a time before binoculars were invented, supplied the studies of naturalists, the collections of universities and museums, and the curiosity cabinets of the gentry. Ornithologists then were self-taught, usually wealthy white men who shot birds, prepared skins, wrote papers, and published books. They called it science. From 1885 until the 1920s, egg and nest collecting added to shotgun ornithology and decimated breeding birds.

In the mid-1860s, European styles and the conspicuous consumption of the Gilded Age plundered North America's beavers, bison, and birds for fashion. The plumes and bird parts on ladies' hats devastated egrets, herons, Roseate Spoonbills, and even hummingbirds throughout the Americas. Wealthy sports hunters in 1879 and the 1880s created shooting clubs with little monitoring. Commodity killing of game moved to the edges of the frontier and in the 1870s western Illinois was "shot out." Then sport hunters with better guns came on trains, and hostility grew between the sport and market hunters for the shrinking numbers of birds.

The bird protection movement also had a dark side—racism and xenophobia. Eastern European immigrants were

viewed as a menace to wildlife, along with poor blacks and Native Americans, who all hunted for food while wealthy white hunters continued hunting for sport and science.

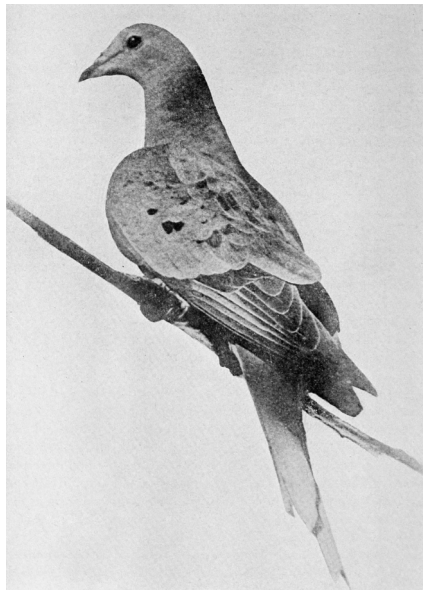
Forest and Stream magazine in 1872 took aim at gentlemen and criticized all things causing bird extermination. They proposed protecting non-game birds, stopping nest and egg collecting and feather fashions, and adopting a model law to stop those practices. John Burroughs in an 1886 essay wrote against plundering nests and killing birds. He said kill only to name the bird and then leave your gun at home.

George Bird Grinnell started the Audubon movement with Jack Audubon, a grandson of John James Audubon. Women birders were influential even though viewed as sentimentalists by male ornithologists. Florence Merriam and her friends at Smith College started an Audubon chapter in 1886, lobbied women to renounce wearing hats decorated with feathers and bird parts, and 100 women (one-third of the student body) pledged to stop. In 1889 at age 26 she published *Birds Through an Opera Glass*, the first true field guide. More Audubon chapters led by women were formed, and in 1905 the National Association of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals formed as a loose federation of local clubs. Still violence and conflict continued. Subsistence hunters and market hunters were at war with sport hunters and game wardens in the Mississippi Delta as habitat was being destroyed. Clashes included KKK-style night riders and the murders of a black family and two lawyers.

In 1903 Theodore Roosevelt, a hunter and a conservationist, created the first bird refuge, Pelican Island in Florida. He went on to create 51 more refuges, 5 national parks, 18 national monuments, and 150 national forests by executive order. Western refuges were motivated by National Geographic photographs in 1906. The camera was an important tool

in the fight to save birds.

Eventually, Americans were forced to face the truth that federal action was needed to save birds. Seasonal and breeding bird protection nationally and then internationally came with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Waterfowl populations surged after the Act was signed in 1918, but then declined again. During World War I the United States drained huge wetland areas for agriculture and struck an attitude of "plow to the fences," which led to the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. At the same time depressed land prices allowed the federal government to purchase land for refuges, national forests, and grasslands. *Continued on page 7.*



Martha, the last Passenger Pigeon
photo by Enno Meyers
USFWS Public Domain

Field Trip Report

Big Valley Trail Sandhill Crane Fly-In, report and photo by Pat Leigh, Mazama

On Saturday, June 20, early birds got a special treat before the start of the Big Valley Trail field trip. Just as our party of six was gathering at 7:30 am, the Big Valley Sandhill Cranes flew into the meadow near the trailhead. We couldn't believe our luck! We had two scopes set up and were able to enjoy viewing them for nearly 15 minutes. The juvenile was not with them and there is concern that it might not have survived. But I'm told by those monitoring the area that our favorite couple is exhibiting some mating behavior so there is hope that they might try again this year. Please continue to honor all restrictions posted in the area.

After that wonderful start we walked the trail for another two hours and enjoyed identifying all the typical players including: Western Wood-Pewees, Tree Swallows, Western Bluebirds, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Northern House Wrens, Say's Phoebes,

Western Tanagers, Lazuli Buntings, Northern Yellow Warblers, Black-capped Chickadees, and a Veery. Some were heard more than seen. Big Valley offers birders easy access to a wide variety of habitats from meadow to forest to riparian that will reward any birder who visits. All in all, it was a good day on the trail.



Sandhill Cranes at Big Valley

What You Can Do to Build Wildfire Resilience

by Shannon Curran, Audubon Washington

Fire is a natural and necessary process in many of Washington's landscapes. In ecosystems such as ponderosa pine forests and the shrubsteppe, periodic fires help recycle nutrients, stimulate new plant growth, and create mosaics of vegetation that support diverse wildlife communities, including many bird species.

However, decades of fire suppression, the spread of invasive annual grasses, expanding development, and climate change have significantly altered these natural fire regimes. In the Columbia Plateau's shrubsteppe, fire intervals have shortened from 30–100 years to just 5–15 years. These more frequent and intense fires now pose increasing challenges for both human communities and native ecosystems.

Firewise USA

Firewise USA, a program of the National Fire Protection Association, helps communities become more wildfire-resilient through education, planning, and on-the-ground projects that reduce hazardous fuels before a wildfire occurs.

Here are five bird-friendly actions you can take today:

- Plant native shrubs
- Replace invasive grasses with native groundcover
- Create defensible space
- Add wildlife-safe water sources

To learn more visit <https://www.nfpa.org/Education-and-Research/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>.

Book Review - continued from page 6

Rosalie Edge felt the Audubon Society was not doing enough to protect birds, especially raptors that were still shot as "vermin." She arranged for the 1938 purchase of Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania and hired dedicated wardens to guard and research migrating raptors.

Along with the movement for conservation there was a parallel revolution in ornithology—the adoption of binoculars and sight recognition rather than shooting specimens for study. Roger Tory Peterson, a young artist, published his field guides *Eastern Birds* in 1934 and *Western Birds* in 1940. Both were immediate successes. His was a new system, simplifying field marks and aimed at ordinary people, not scientists.

Ding Darling, a political cartoonist who worked with Aldo Leopold in wildlife restoration, helped pave the way for

groups like Ducks Unlimited and said he became a conservationist from fright! By 1935 the Civilian Conservation Corps with more than three million men in 400 camps helped plant trees and restore wetlands, creating 22 national forests and 100 bird refuges. Unfortunately, they also cleared riparian vegetation, drained tidal swamps, and diverted water for irrigation.

In his epilogue McCommons skips to the present time and reminds us that protection is a fragile concept. Today with habitat loss, climate change, agriculture intensification, outdoor cats, loss of dark skies, and window collisions (among other dangers) birds still desperately need our help.

The work goes on.

August 2026 Wild Phlox

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North Central Washington Audubon Society Resources and Calendar

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3rd Wednesday of the Month	Beebe Springs Bird Surveys	Contact Virginia Palumbo vwpalumbo@gmail.com or 509-860-2129
September 12	Swifts Night Out in Monroe	www.pilchuckaudubon.org/swifts-night-out
September 17-20	Western Field Ornithologists Annual Conference	See page 4 for more information
October 3	BirdFest & Bluegrass Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge	www.ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass
November	Travel to Central America	See page 4 for more information

NCWAS relies on donations that are generously provided by our many donors. We are grateful for everyone who donates the funds we need to publish the Wild Phlox newsletter and to conduct our conservation and educational programs. **THANK YOU** to all of our donors—regular members and those who contribute anonymously!



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