



Calliope Crier

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society is people dedicated to the enjoyment and preservation of the natural world. Through birding, education and conservation activities in our community,

Volume 36, Number 9

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

AUDUBON CALENDAR

- Oct 25 Chapter Meeting** at the Yakima Area Arboretum at **7:00 pm** .
Nov 13 Board Meeting at Bob and Leslie Wahl's house, 2403 W. Yakima Ave. (452-9183) at **7:00 pm**.

Field Trips

- Oct 21 Fort Simcoe and Medicine Valley** — meet leader Kerry Turley (837-6930) at **8:30 am** at west side of IHOP at the Valley Mall.
Oct 25 Thursday Morning Bird Walk — meet the group at the Valley Mall Blvd. parking lot for the Poppoff Trail at **8:00 am**.
Nov 4 Grand Coulee Waterfowl and Raptors — meet leader Andy Stepniewski (877-6639) at **7:30 am** at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot.
Nov 8 Thursday Morning Bird Walk — meet the group at the Valley Mall Blvd. parking lot for the Poppoff Trail at **8:00 am**.

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2007 Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail Recap

The 26th year of the Vredenburgh Bluebird Trail must be considered a year of rebound. Seven bird species combined to fledge a total of 464 young compared to the 325 fledged last year by the same seven species. Western Bluebirds led this year's charge with 334 fledglings followed by 91 Mountain Bluebird newbies.

It was a good year for second broods; over 300 bluebirds fledged from the 40+ boxes that parents utilized to rear a second family. Box 93, sponsored by Patrick Burke, led the charge with a perfect thirteen Western Bluebirds fledging from thirteen eggs. Close behind was Dotty Armstrong's Box 112, which rolled out twelve Mountain Bluebirds from a dozen eggs.

Hopefully, the coming year will see a surge of returning bluebirds to the Wenas area to satiate the boxes that bluebirds passed over this year. As bluebirds return earlier in the spring to claim territories than most species (including House Wrens), perhaps 2008 will prove to be one of the Vredenburgh's bluest.

Once again, a special thanks is due all the volunteer monitors who gathered data during the year: Gus and Mary Pooler, Alice Nevue, Elizabeth Bohn, Ana Villeda, a three-generation team on Mother's Day of Jean Crawford, Candy Andrews, and Megan Friedenson, Michael, Betsy and Elissa Martin, Larry and Doris Robinson, Vera Backstrom, Linda and Connie McGlothorn, Jean Chott, Pat Stebing, Mary Belzer, Nancy and Hannah Born, Jim and Jackie Hertel, Bob and Leslie Wahl, Susan Sampson & family, Sunny Walter, John Green, Ellen Stevenson, Mark Jager, Patrick & Gail MacDonald, and the Saylor-Potter family. It is heart warming indeed to have so many people involved in caring for YVAS's longest running outreach program.

For the second year in a row, all of the Trail's 132 boxes have sponsors; a tip of the lid to each and every one of you. And special kudos to the gracious lady who has maintained meticulous sponsorship records for so many years, Bettie Soden! We all appreciate your diligence Bettie.

See pages 9 and 10 for the bluebird box summaries.

— Richard Repp —

Visit the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's website at: <http://www.yakimaudubon.org>

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Someone recently asked me this question... why bird? It's hard to give a firm answer but I'll try.

I *BIRD* so I can be mesmerized by the beauty of a lone Western Meadowlark, sitting atop the greasewood bush, singing its heart out for a mate, indifferent to me as I stood only feet from him.

To be thrilled by the eerie flight song of a Wilson's Snipe reaching for the clouds. To be amazed, as I look at a Calliope Hummingbird, the smallest long-distance avian migrant in the world, spending its winters in Mexico.

To wonder who caught all the male Western Tanagers (the bird that hooked me to birding) and dipped their heads in red paint. What else could possibly cause this bird's coloration.

To imagine the life, the struggle of an albatross, a shearwater, a petrel, etc as they fly over the oceans, shying away from land except to breed.

To develop better skills so as to tell a Semipalmated from a Western Sandpiper in basic plumage, to identify Gulls or the Empidonaxes with certainty (don't we all!)

To long to see an Eskimo Curlew, a Smew, a Spectacled Eider, or a better view of a Tennessee Warbler,.....

So can I really answer the question of "Why bird?"? It's hard to give a firm answer. I have many different reasons, but everything about it just gives me satisfaction. Camaraderie (to meet and enjoy the company of other birders who are my kind of people.), learning, teaching, traveling, competition, etc. It's all fun. It's a hobby that can be taken almost anywhere. You can get as deep into it as you want or you can barely skim the surface. There's never a dull or uninteresting excursion. That's why I bird.

— Kerry Turley —

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Birds! From Key West to Kauai with **Joe Meche**

Joe Meche will take us on a virtual birding road trip up and down and across the country and halfway across the Pacific Ocean with his slide-illustrated presentation of, "**Birds! From Key West to Kauai.**" Joe grew up in south Louisiana and has been watching birds for more than 50 years.

Joe has lived in Bellingham for the past 30+ years and is currently the president and newsletter editor of the North Cascades Audubon Society. He also serves the chapter as Birding Programs Coordinator.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Welcome New YVAS Members!

Yakima: Becky L. & Tom Boyd

Thank You for renewing your YVAS Membership!

Wapato: Ruth Kendrick

Yakima: Jeanne Crawford, Dorthy Egg, Phelps Freeborn, Joyce Hernandez, Alvin Larson,

Selah: Mary Vance Strate,

Cowiche: Horst & Mavis Loechelt

Please note that the above membership renewals are for Yakima Valley Audubon membership. Renewals to National Audubon are separate and are not listed here.

— Debie Brown —

**Christmas Banquet is Dec. 6 with the 11th Annual Silent Auction — see articles on page 5
Christmas Bird Counts are Dec. 15 and 16 — see article on page 8**

Writers, Contributors Needed for Crier

After five years of wonderful writing on the bird sightings column, Richard Repp is in need of a vacation. We are hoping to find a replacement writer for that column before Richard takes a hiatus. Richard will be a hard act to follow. His delightful recounting of the birds sightings every month have been a popular part of the Crier.

We are looking for a replacement writer who has a way with words and a good knowledge of birds. If you think you are interested, please contact me at: dgranstrand@charter.net.

The bird sightings column can be done in any form desired:

a recounting of the bird sightings for the previous month (as has been done in the Crier for many years), a "bird-of-the-month" article, the "Top Ten Sightings" as you will see on page 4, or any other style that fits.

We are also looking for people interested in contributing an article as one comes to mind. If you have a fun birding story, a close encounter with a bird that you would like to share, or any other bird or birding related story, please send it to me.

— Denny Granstrand —

CONSERVATION

Shrub Steppe Grazing, Part 2

On September 28, the Washington Native Plant Society sponsored a public forum on “*Livestock Grazing on State Lands: What Are The Consequences?*” in conjunction with an annual conference held this year in Yakima by the Society for Ecological Restoration Northwest and the Society for Wetland Scientists. The forum was well attended by about a hundred people, including a good sampling of Auduboners, members of the Yakamas, members of the Washington Cattlemen’s Association, and a number of conference attendees. Forum panelists included representatives from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), a Wildlife Diversity Division Manager from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), an Area Resource Conservationist from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service), a plant ecologist, and, from Yakima Valley Audubon, Andy Stepniewski and yours truly.

From the general discussion, we learned that DNR manages all of its lands for a return to those the land is held in trust for (mostly for education in Washington), which is a different mission than that of WDFW. Of note is that DNR has adopted WDFW standards in maintaining DNR leases, which suggests a more habitat-sensitive approach. From the Area Resource Conservationist, we learned that, for the first time, scientific tools are available to determine whether or not grazing is being conducted in a way that sustains or degrades shrub steppe. That is, up to now, impacts of grazing could not be and were not accurately measured. What was unclear was whether there was in fact any good grazing monitoring going on currently, or just that it was finally now possible.

In the give and take afterward, and somewhat with prodding from me, the discussion shifted to the specifics of grazing on the Whiskey Dick, an area of 28,000 acres plus of shrub steppe that hasn’t been grazed in 25 years. As part of a trade to gain “local support” of a state grant to acquire the Skookumchuck (the area just to north of Whiskey Dick) WDFW offered up the Whiskey Dick for limited cattle grazing. That grazing proposal has been challenged, and is currently in the State environmental review process (see the June 2007 *Crier* for more on that).

The Fish and Wildlife Department’s website recites that its mission is “sound stewardship of fish and wildlife” and that in pursuit of this mission, one goal is “effective practices partnerships with landowners and land use decision makers to maintain and enhance habitat.” Currently, WDFW has 21 grazing permits on 38,000 acres, which have been acquired from property owners who sought a retention of grazing rights in return for transferring the property to WDFW. Over time, WDFW will hold those lands free and clear of any grazing rights. This is a small portion of the 800,000 acres that WDFW manages.

What’s fundamentally different at the Whiskey Dick and

what WDFW wants to replicate other places is this approach: in order to gain “local support” required to obtain state grants to purchase lands adjacent to WDFW holdings to create large corridors and habitat, WDFW will grant back not only leasing on the land acquired but also leasing on the prior existing WDFW land, even if it hasn’t been grazed for 25+ years. These grazing rights are not restricted to the property owner who is selling his land, but any “local interests”, and are not limited in time, but can be extended over and over again. The notion is that it is better that WDFW holds land that is “managed” grazed rather than lose adjacent land to potential development.

WDFW participants in the grazing forum seemed to sincerely hear our concerns that focusing on elk and cattle alone misses impacts on shrub steppe obligates, especially endangered, threatened and sensitive species of birds. However, there doesn’t seem to be an in-road to protect shrub-steppe as an ecosystem valuable in its own right. I don’t know whether we can persuade WDFW to restrict grazing to protect ground nesting activity, or flowering of ground plants so they can reproduce, or to make total restrictions on lands that represent either the best habitat shrub steppe that can be, or the best so far in natural restoration that we have. This is an open topic.

Yakima County Critical Areas Ordinance

The County Commissioners haven’t taken any action yet on the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), initially adopted ten years ago and mandated to be updated under the Growth Management Act. The County is currently completing its deliberations on mineral resources (gravel mining) before it finalizes the CAO. However, no changes are expected as far as protections of “upland wildlife habitat” goes. “Upland wildlife habitat” is shrub steppe habitat, and specifically in Yakima County, the Upper Wenas area, which encompasses about 100 square miles. The County’s latest draft identifies a paltry total of 577 acres to be protected as critical habitat, all of which are in a DNR-owned Natural Resources Conservation Area or Natural Area Preserve. In contrast, Washington State law, as interpreted by the Growth Management Hearings Board, requires that at a minimum a county must protect state-designated endangered, threatened and sensitive species and their habitat that occurs in a county. Yakima County has totally failed to do this. The Yakima Valley Audubon Society board has approved the filing of an appeal to the Growth Management Hearings Board of Yakima County’s Critical Areas Ordinance for failing to meet the legislature’s requirement. This appeal process will most likely extend into 2008. Stay tuned.

— Michael Martin —
Conservation Chair

LOCAL FIELD TRIPS

Please call the leader before the trip to let him/her know you are interested in going. That way, if plans need to be changed, he/she can call you. Also, if no one calls, the leader will know to cancel the field trip and won't be sitting around at the meeting place all alone! Be sure to wear clothing appropriate for the weather and take lunch, snacks and beverages. Also please make a contribution to the driver for gas when you carpool. Contribution should be 25 cents per mile divided by number of people in car, including the driver.



- Oct 21 Fort Simcoe and Medicine Valley**— Journey out to this marvelous grove of Oregon White Oaks at historic Fort Simcoe where Lewis's Woodpeckers, surely one of the most charismatic of its clan, can be numerous. Look for other birds of oak woodlands such as White-breasted Nuthatch and Western Scrub-Jay. Not far away is Medicine Valley, which can be excellent for birds of prey. Meet leader Kerry Turley (837-6930) at **8:30 am** at the west side of IHOP in the Valley Mall parking lot for this half-day trip.
- Oct 25 Thursday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **8:00 am**.
- Nov 4 Grand Coulee Waterfowl and Raptors** — Late fall finds swarms of waterfowl of many species migrating south through the stupendous Grand Coulee lakes. On the uplands around the coulee are expansive, attractive to numerous raptors. Meet leader Andy Stepniewski (877-6639) at **7:30 am** at the 40th Ave. Bi-Mart parking lot for this full-day trip.
- Nov 8 Thursday Morning Bird Walk** — Meet the group at the parking lot at the east end of Valley Mall Blvd. at **8:00 am**.

Christmas Bird Counts

We will need lots of help for the two Christmas Bird Counts. No matter what your level of birding expertise, you can make a valuable contribution to the count and have lots of fun besides. See article on page 8.

- Dec 15 Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count** — Contact compiler Denny Granstrand (453-2500 or dgranstrand@charter.net) for more information.
- Dec 16 Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count** — Contact compiler Andy Stepniewski (877-6639 or steppie@nwinfo.net) for more information.

Please contribute for gas when you ride on field trips

With high gas prices it is important for all participants to contribute for gas. Based on four people in a car, here are the totals per person: 100 miles driven on the trip — \$6.50 each; 150 miles — \$9.50 each, 200 miles — \$12.50 each; 250 miles — \$15.50 each; 300 miles — \$18.50 each. Please pay your share; if drivers have to pay most of the gas bill, they may quit driving.



TOP TEN September-October Bird Sightings in Yakima County

10. Jeff Kozma, using eyes and ears equally elite among area birders, squeegeed out one of the county's smallest and highest pitched waifs by adding Golden-crowned Kinglet to his yard list on Sep 14.

9. Colors abound along the Greenway, but a gray/white Double-crested Cormorant along the Yakima River drew a double-take from Kelly Kindelspire.

8. A Thursday morning YVAS Poppoff Walk turned magic on Sep 27 as a Merlin, crop crammed, materialized on an open perch. The wily wizard remained skewered as the mystified walkers rotisseried

for full meal views.

7. YTC's Cold Creek Road turned hot for Ken Bevis as ten Greater Sage Grouse flew from the shoulder.

6. Konnowac Pass' Violet-green (as in swallow) sky split for Debie Brown as a soaring Peregrine Falcon admired its shadow from on high.

5. Jan Gano's story of a Great Egret's egress at I-82 Exit 52 left only the why untold on Oct 1.

4. A huge hummingbird, oxymoron or no, hiked Denny Granstrand's yard list to 110 species. An Anna's, si!

3. Wenas Lake's blustery weather proved no blunder on Sep 22 with Scott Downes' wet and wild pairing of a Red-necked Grebe with a Lapland Longspur.

2. George Vlahakis was anything but sheepish when a hike to Sheep Lake pinned a Pine Grosbeak on his camera lens.

1. Great grebes count even when avid listers can't. Dark smudges on the lores, flanks and culmen nudged an apparent Aspen Lake Clark's Grebe into hybrid status. Rabid listers had this tic returned as NSF...Not So Fast!

But then, for me, that is part of what makes birding such a great hobby. Even though I frequently find out I didn't see what I saw, what I saw was worth seeing. Embrace that as your bottom line...even though it is the preceding line here.

— Richard Repp —

Christmas Banquet Dec. 6

Just some reminders about our very festive get-together on December 7 for the Christmas Banquet. Bring your own table service (plates, cups, silverware) and serving utensils for your potluck items. Put names on bowls, serving plates and utensils to ensure return to the proper owner.

The doors will be open at 5:30 pm at the Yakima Arboretum. Dinner will be served at 6:30, so please get your food there before then. Also allow plenty of time to browse through the Silent Auction items.

Potluck food assignments are by the first letter of your last name: **A-G = main dish; H-P = potatoes, vegetables, salads; Q-Z = deserts, bread & butter**. Dishes need to serve about 12-14 people. We will be providing ham and turkey. Coffee, hot water for tea, and punch will also be served. Wine will be available to purchase by the glass or bottle. Our entertainment this year will be Mitch Weary, who is called back for an encore after his stellar performance last year.

If you are a member who hasn't been coming to the monthly meetings, this is a great time to get acquainted with some wonderful people, enjoy a great meal, and maybe pick up a real treasure at the auction.

If you have any questions, please call Alice Nevue (453-7096).

— Alice Nevue —

11th Annual Silent Auction

The 11th Annual Audubon Silent Auction will be held during the Christmas party on December 7th this year. Last year the auction brought in nearly \$2000.00 for Audubon. Thanks to many generous donors and bidders! I hope you have all been picking up some neat items for the auction throughout the year as you visit one place or another; I know I have. I'll be putting together the auction book during Thanksgiving week-end when I have some time off work so I'll need the information below no later than Wednesday, November 22nd:

- Your name and phone number
- The description of your item
- How much you think it should go for, and whether or not you wish to have a minimum bid on it.

You can send me an email to maiakelly@charter.net or call me at home during evening hours at 697-8144 (you can also leave a message at that phone number).

This year I won't be able to accept credit cards so I urge you to bring your checkbooks or cash (lots!) and please bid high and bid often!

— Maia Mittelstaedt —

Notice of Up-coming Election

At the October Chapter meeting, our by-laws require an election for the following offices:

President—no candidate
 Vice-President—no candidate
 Directors—Bill Drenguis
 Jan Gano
 Bob Wahl

As the Chapter was unable to elect a President-elect in October 2006, finding qualified candidates for the offices of President and Vice-president is somewhat essential to ensure that our chapter continues to function at established levels. The Board is endeavoring to solicit candidates for all of the positions due for election. If you, or someone you know, would be able to capably serve YVAS for a two-year term, please contact any member of the Board. All nominees must agree to serve if elected. As it is your Chapter, please reflect on whom you wish to assist in guiding YVAS and then take action.

Call WDFW toll-free line to report dead wild birds

With the annual wild bird migration under way, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) reminds people to report dead wild birds on a toll-free telephone line.

Wild birds are known to carry various strains of avian influenza, often without serious health effects. However, one strain, known as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 (HPAI H5N1), has sickened and killed birds in Asia, Europe and Africa.

No birds in Washington have tested positive for the highly pathogenic avian influenza, Mansfield said. Over the past year, WDFW, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies and organizations have tested more than 4,000 birds in Washington.

Most dead bird reports can be submitted by calling WDFW's toll-free line at 1-800-606-8768. The exceptions are dead crows, ravens, magpies and jays, which should be reported to local city or county health departments that are tracking those species for West Nile virus.

Callers to WDFW's reporting line will be asked to leave their name, telephone number, the date and time of the call, the number of dead birds they are reporting, the specific location of the birds, the species and approximately how long the birds have been dead. Birds that die because they flew into a window or were hit by a car do not warrant reports, she said.

For more information on avian influenza visit WDFW's website at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/avian_flu/index.htm

The Gray Jay and Global Warming

The Gray Jay is 11.5" long with an 18" wingspan and cover. They eat insects and most nuts and large seeds that weigh in at 12.5oz. The adult is uniformly gray on the back, wings and tail, and white on the crown, cheeks and throat. There is a black patch on the nape that extends up to the crown into the eyes.

It is the sole American representative of the Old World Jays. Bold and tame, Gray Jays are frequent campground visitors in far northern regions of North America and the mountainous West. High elevations, boreal and subalpine forests.

Gray Jays breed mainly in coniferous forests, and sometimes in mixed woodlands. Their nest is usually in conifers, the nest hidden in the crown or out towards the end of a branch, sometimes exposed. The nest is a thick-walled cup of twigs and bark strips, grass stems, moss, lichens, or other soft material. The outside has spider webbing and cocoons. Inside, the lining is thickly padded with fine dry grasses, moss, plant down, catkins, hair, feathers and fur. The nest is built by both sexes, taking up to three weeks.

Breeding season begins in March and ends by mid-May. They are single-brooded with 3-4 eggs. Incubation is by the female only, beginning with the first egg--16-18 days. The young are tended by both parents. The first days the female broods, the male brings the food. Fledging occurs in 22-24 days.

The Gray Jay has special glands that produce sticky saliva which is used to fasten feed to tree branches far above any possible snow



Gray Jay at Tipsoo Lake
Photo by George Vlahakis



Gray Jay at Fife's Peak
Photo by George Vlahakis

and any animal they can subdue.

Evidence is mounting that birds remain valuable indicators of our environmental health as they are migrating and laying eggs earlier than before, shifting their distribution and in some cases they are failing to reproduce. Evidence is growing that the avian responses are related to climate change. Climate change is also expected to diminish critical habitats.

Because Gray Jays live at high elevations, they depend on cool autumns and cold winters, which have helped keep their food caches from spoiling, but warmer temperatures may now be causing them to rot. Jays hatch in April because adults rely on the caches not only to survive winter, but to provide for their nestlings.

The Gray Jay population has declined as much as 60% along the southern edge of the species range. "The birds' Achilles heel is the fact they store perishable food" says biologist Dan Strickland of Ohio State University "and the warmer temperatures are getting them in trouble."

Information in this article was obtained from Birders World, two of David Sibley's books, the Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding and Guide to Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of North American Birds.

— Larry Robinson —

Bird Watchers in the Northwest note changes and aid scientists by counting feeder birds

Bird watchers across the northwestern United States can help chart the impact of global climate change and other factors on feeder birds -and have fun at the same time. Participants in Project FeederWatch, a citizen-science project at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, have already documented changes in the distribution and numbers of feeder birds over the 20-year history of the project. Anyone can contribute observations during the winter months.

“Predicted increases in winter temperatures will certainly lead to changes in the distribution of birds. Monitoring birds over time is the only way to understand the impact of climate change, habitat alteration, and other factors influencing bird populations,” said ornithologist and project leader David Bontler.

FeederWatchers help to document changes in the abundance and distribution of birds by simply watching and counting the birds at their own feeders. Each season brings new information about bird populations. For instance, data from volunteer FeederWatchers in the Northwest have revealed increased sightings of Anna’s Hummingbirds along the Pacific Coast and more Northern Flickers throughout the region. Less severe winter weather and an increase in backyard feeders may be helping the hummingbird survive at the northern limits of its winter range.

On the down side, some finches are being reported by fewer participants in the region each year. The Evening Grosbeak, formerly one of the Top 5 species most often reported by FeederWatchers in the region, is experiencing a drastic, mysterious decline. This large finch was #41 on the list of most common feeder birds last winter, with only 13 percent of the 536 FeederWatchers in the region seeing the species. Evening Grosbeak numbers are declining across the continent, with no clear reason for the changes.

What will the coming winter bring to our bird feeders? You can help document changes in bird populations. The 21st season of Project FeederWatch gets underway in November and runs through early April 2008. Anyone in the United States and Canada can participate, and people of all ages and skill levels are welcome. To learn more about Project FeederWatch or to register, visit <<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw>>www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) new participants receive the FeederWatcher’s Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and the publication



Dark-eyed Junco — the number one feeder bird in the Northwest
Photo by George Vlahakis

Winter Bird Highlights, featuring project results.

“FeederWatchers across the northwestern U.S. have helped create the world’s largest database of feeder-bird populations,” says David Bontler. “To understand the effects of global climate change and other factors on birds, we need new and veteran participants let us know what they are seeing in their own yards and neighborhoods.”

Note: The Northwest region for Project FeederWatch includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Photos and local participants for stories are available upon request.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth’s biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab’s web site at:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu>.

Top 10 species reported by FeederWatchers in the Northwest region in 2007:

- 1) Dark-eyed Junco
- 2) House Finch
- 3) Northern Flicker
- 4) Black-capped Chickadee
- 5) American Robin
- 6) Song Sparrow
- 7) Spotted Towhee
- 8) European Starling
- 9) Downy Woodpecker
- 10) Steller’s Jay

White-tailed Ptarmigan found on Mt. Adams

Mountain climbers stumble upon most illusive bird in Yakima County

On September 22 this year, a group of climbers reportedly saw three ptarmigan on Mt. Adams, Washington's second highest mountain. Michael Schroeder, leading expert on Pacific Northwest grouse sent me news of this sighting. He reports it was "near Sunrise Camp" at the 8,400 foot level on Mt. Adam's southeast slopes. Unfortunately no photos were taken but since this camp is high into the alpine zone, the possibility these were Sooty Grouse, a forest and meadow species, is very low. Michael writes, "as Sunrise camp doesn't get the traffic of the main south trail so I guess this is possible."

Yakima Valley Audubon Society has had three overnight trips in quest of ptarmigan in Yakima County, here very near the southern limit of their distribution. We organized a three-day expedition to the Meade Glacier areas in the Goat Rocks in 2005, a weekend trip to the west slopes of Mt. Adams in 2006 and another three-day pack trip north of Chinook Pass into the Norse Peak area this summer. We've seen lots of incredible alpine scenery and plenty of birds and wildlife on all these trips but alas never a ptarmigan. In addition, Denny Granstrand, Ellen and I backpacked into Warm Lake in about 2000, plus Ellen and I have taken a dozen or so day or overnight trips into suitable habitat along the Cascade crest in search of this species with no luck.

Yet, when we visit North Cascade mountaintops we invariably chance upon ptarmigan once we reach suitable habitat. This leads me to conclude this species is rare or very local in the south Washington Cascades. Further, it probably is becoming scarcer as subalpine forest creeps up into the alpine zone, a



White-tailed Ptarmigan, the object of our searches

Photo by Ellen Stepniewski

(this photo was not taken in Yakima County)

result of warmer summers.

Based on this exciting news, I propose we make Sunrise Camp our destination for the 2008 "Annual Ptarmigan Search." Ptarmigan or bust in 2008!

— Andy Stepniewski —

The highlights of the holiday season are the . . . Christmas Bird Counts!

For many of us, there are no greater events in the birding calendar than the Christmas Bird Counts. The excitement of contributing to the data accumulated over the 37 years of the Yakima Valley CBC and the 24 years of the Toppenish NWR CBC has led many of us to participate for year after year.

The Yakima Valley CBC was started in 1970 and has continued without a break since then. Literally hundreds of people have participated, and we have gone through six compilers in the history of the count. In those 36 years, 141 species have been seen on the count.

Andy Stepniewski has spearheaded the Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count since its inception in 1983. The Toppenish CBC teams have identified 143 species (through the 2004 count) in 23 years.

As many of you know, the Christmas Bird Counts were started in 1900 by Frank Chapman, as a way to encourage people to enjoy watching birds instead of killing them. It was a tradition in the last 19th Century to compete with ones friends to see who could kill the most birds on Christmas Day after the holiday festivities were completed. The Christmas Counts have grown year after year, and in 2005 2060 counts were done and 57,156 people participated in those counts. Both of these num-

bers are records.

Everyone is encouraged to join us for the CBCs. Don't worry that you might not be a "good enough birder". We need all of the eyes we can get. You might not be able to identify all of the birds you see but you might be the person who points out the "bird-of-the-count". Experienced birders are the leaders of every route. The CBCs are a great way to learn more about birds and birding.

We not only count the species of birds we see but also count every individual bird. One of the challenges of a CBC is estimating the number of birds in a flock, whether it is 35 Canada Geese or 3500 starlings. Here is a website with an estimating game:

<http://personal.inet.fi/cool/live/birds/index.html>

Every time you play, the number of birds changes, so play often. Get lots of practice and come out for a wonderful day of birding on one or both of our Christmas Bird Counts.

We get together for dinner after the day's birding — Debbie and Ron Brown's house for pizza and potluck items after the Yakima count and at Andy and Ellen Stepniewski's house after the Toppenish count for soup and potluck items. Directions to each house will be given out on the morning of the count.

2007 VREDENBURGH BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT

Box	Sponsor	Species	Eggs	Fl.	Paid thru	Box	Sponsor	Species	Eggs	Fl.	Paid thru
1	Virginia Vredenburg	TRES	6	5	2020	34	Amy McQuade	W	12*	10	2007
2	Nancy Osborn	W	10*	10	2007	35	Joe & Alberta McGuire	wren			2007
3	Alice Nevue	TRES	5	5	2007	36	Larry Robinson	wren			2007
4	Steven & Marcia Shotwell	W	12*	6	2008	37	Cathy LeCompte	WBNU	5	2	2007
5	Alice Nevue	W	12*	10	2007	38	Charlotte Pfeiffer	W	6	4	2007
6	Betty Peterson	wren			2007	39	Maia Mittlestaedt	W	6	6	2007
7	LaVonne Benner	W	11*	11	2007	39A	Joan Gilman	W	6	5	2007
8	L. R. Putman	Chip			2007	40	Gertrude Repp Memorial	W	6	6	2007
9	Bob Wahl	W	8*	8	2007	41	Joan Gilman	wren			2007
10	Joe & Alberta McGuire	TRES	5	0	2007	42	Lavina Doty	wren			2007
11	Steven & Marcia Shotwell	W	9*	9	2008	43	Maia Mittlestaedt	W	5	5	2007
12	Nina Shelden	W	5	5	2007	44	Dorothy Monroe	W	6	6	2007
13	L. R. Putman	W	7	6	2007	45	Jerry & M. A. Ruthruff	W	7*	0	2008
13a	David & Becki Hartwig	W	8*	5	2007	46	Nature Artists Garden Club	wren			2007
14	Megan & Ted Friedenson	wren			2007	47	Joan Gilman	W	9*	6	2007
15	L. R. Putman	wren			2007	48	Janice Ferguson	TRES	5	4	2007
16	Rachel Bold	wren			2007	49	Cathy LeCompte	W	12*	10	2007
17	Mel Crawford	wren			2007	50	Cathy LeCompte	W	10*	9	2007
18	Rosemary James	W	6	0	2007	51	Ron Sell	wren			2009
19	L. R. Putman	wren			2007	52	Linda Knutson	wren			2009
20	Abigail Chipps	W	6	0	2007	53	Megan & Steven Pooler	W	11*	10	2007
21	Pete & Pam Neumann	W	6	0	2007	54	Sharon & Jolene Eakman	TRES	6	6	2007
22	Leslie Wahl	W	5	2	2007	55	Sharon & Jolene Eakman	WBNU	0	0	2007
22a	Robert English	wren			2007	56	Denny Granstrand	wren			2007
23	John Ainsworth	wren			2007	57	William & Kelly Strange	W	11*	11	2008
24	Virginia Gill	wren			2007	58	Janice Ferguson	W	4	0	2007
25	Betty Peterson	wren			2007	59	Denny Granstrand	W	9*	0	2007
26	Arlene Wood	W	6	0	2007	60	Meagan & Steven Pooler	W	10*	7	2007
27	Amy McQuade	W	3	0	2007	61	John Meyer Memorial	wren			2009
28	Cathy LeCompte	MOCH	8	8	2007	62	Martha Anderson	W	2	0	2009
29	Donna Zimmerschied	wren			2007	63	Tom Wilson	W	0	0	2007
30	Betty & Greg Neumann	W	8*	4	2007	64	Mike & Carolyn Wood	W	6	0	2007
31	Donna Zimmerschied	unused			2007	65	Lucky Hall	TRES	5	3	2007
32	Larry Robinson	unused			2007	65	second nesting	W	4	4	2007
33	L. R. Putman	W	6	0	2007	66	Carol Phillips	wren			2007

2007 VREDENBURGH BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT (CONT'D)

Box	Sponsor	Species	Eggs	Fledged	Paid thru	Box	Sponsor	Species	Eggs	Fledged	Paid thru
67	William & Kelly Strange	W	11*	6	2008	101	Amy Sinden	chip			2010
68	Noel Knoke	W	11*	5	2007	102	Jean Chott	M	6	0	2007
69	Janet White	wren			2007	103	Mary Ellen Silvers	W	4	4	2007
70	Joan Gilman	W	9*	0	2007	104	Richard Repp	M	11*	11	2007
71	Bob & Ellen Stuckey	W	6	6	2007	105	Jim Ehret	M	6	6	2007
72	Grover & Louise Eakman	wren			2008	106	Joan Miler	W	6	6	2007
73	Chris Sorenson	W	10*	9	2007	107	Joan Miler	chip			2007
74	Hannah Born	chip			2007	108	Raleigh Watts	unused			2010
75	Grover & Louise Eakman	W	12*	1	2008	109	Andy & Ellen Stepniewski	W	11*	11	2007
76	Margaret Morris	M	8*	5	2007	110	Martha Fleming	chip			2007
77	Shannon O'Malley	W	11*	0	2008	111	Martha Fleming	unused			2007
78	Conner O'Malley	chip			2008	112	Dotty Armstrong	M	12*	12	2007
79	Toppenish Garden Club	W	11*	9	2007	113	Lavina Doty	M	10*	9	2007
80	Adam Newhouse	unused			2007	114	Joan Gillman	M	0	0	2007
81	Hunter Headley	W	10*	10	2007	114 A	Justine Repp-Faith	M	12*	11	2007
82	Apple Blossom Garden Club	W	5	0	2007	115	Vera Backstrom	M	0	0	2007
83	Toppenish Garden Club	W	8*	6	2007	116	Dorothy Munroe	M	6	6	2007
84	Caitlin O'Malley	chip			2008	117	John & Ann Brangwin	unused			2007
85	Julianne Jensen	chip			2007	118	Noel Knoke	unused			2007
86	Paige Jensen	W	6*	4	2007	119	Jack Whitnall	unused			Cont.
87	Jenna Jensen	W	5	5	2007	120	Apple Blossom Garden Club	unused			2007
88	Marie Brangwin	chip			2007	121	Andy & Ellen Stepniewski	M	5	4	2007
88A	Sandra Bowman	W	10*	10	2009	121	second nesting	W	6	6	2007
89	Peter Sorenson	W	5	5	2006	122	Lavina Doty	M	0	0	2007
90	Bill & Edith Ryan	wren			2007	123	Lavina Doty	TRES	6	6	2007
91	Patrick Burke	W	13*	13	2007	123A	Ariana Faith	M	5	4	2007
92	Leslie Burke	unused			2007	124	Mt. Clemen Garden Club	M	6	5	2007
93	Joan Gilman	W	3	1	2007	125	Virginia Vredenburg	M	11*	11	Cont.
94	John & Sally English	M	6	4	2007		TOTAL FLEDGED			464	
95	Rosemary Jones	unused			2008		WESTERN BLUEBIRD			334	
96	Kay Marsh	W	5	5	2007		MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD			91	
96A	Rosemary Jones	M	4	4	2008		OTHER SPECIES			39	
97	Alwin Berger Memorial	W	11*	8	2009	Key: Flg. = Fledged * = multiple nests, same species					
98	P. A. Fitzpatrick	chip			2007	M = Mountain Bluebird W = Western Bluebird					
99	Herb & Lois Roberts Mem.	M	3	3	2007	MOCH = Mountain Chickadee TRES = Tree Swallow					
100	Susie Lattomus	W	6	6	2007	HOPI = House Finch WBNU = White-breasted Nuthatch					
100	second nesting	M	5	5	2007	HOSP = House Sparrow chip = chipmunk					

Use the following form for membership in the Yakima Valley Audubon Society. A separate membership is required for the National Audubon Society. Please use the form sent to you for renewal of your National Audubon Society membership. Current membership will be honored until their expiration date. At the time of the renewal of your National Audubon Society membership you will need to send in a membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society in order to continue to receive the *Calliope Crier* and other local membership benefits.

YVAS MEMBERSHIP

Join or renew your annual membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society to receive ten issues of the *Calliope Crier* and all chapter membership benefits. National Audubon membership and *Audubon Magazine* are not included with your YVAS membership.

Yakima Valley Audubon Membership \$25

Yakima Valley Audubon Senior (62+)/Student Membership\$15

I do not wish to receive any solicitation or communications from NAS (please check if applicable)

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make your check payable to: **Yakima Valley Audubon Society**

First time members can use the following form for an introductory membership that includes membership in **both** the Yakima Valley Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society. You will be assigned to your local chapter when you join National Audubon. Please use this form so that Yakima Valley Audubon will receive the full first year dues. After the first year, a separate membership renewal will be required for the Yakima Valley Audubon Society or for you to continue to receive the *Calliope Crier*. After the first year, you will need to use the renewal form sent to you by the National Audubon Society to renew your membership with the National Audubon Society.

INTRODUCTORY NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

New members receive membership in the National Audubon Society and the Yakima Valley Audubon Society for the first year with a combined introductory membership. You will receive ten issues of the *Calliope Crier* and four issues of *Audubon Magazine*.

Introductory Membership\$20

Introductory Senior (62+)/Student Rate\$15

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make your check payable to: **National Audubon Society**

Y09-7XCH

Send the form and your check to :

YVAS Membership
P.O. Box 2823
Yakima, WA 98907-2823

If you have any questions, please call 248-1963.



**This winter watch for Great Blue Herons along the Yakima River
and around ponds that are not frozen.**

They can also be seen in pastures as they hunt for mice.

Photo by Denny Granstrand

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum, located at 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA. Guests are welcome at these meetings. The Annual Meeting of the Society is held the first Thursday of December at 6 pm. The Board of Directors meets each month **except** December at 7 pm at locations announced in the *Calliope Crier*. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.

2007 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

President	Kerry Turley (kdturley@bentonrea.com)	837-6930	Newsletter	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@charter.net)	453-2500
Vice President	Open		Programs	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639
Secretary	Vera Backstrom (mww_327@msn.com)	653-1174	Special Committees:		
Treasurer	Ellen Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639	Bird Rehabilitator	Connie Hughes (CHbirdlady@msn.com)	457-5661
Directors:	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808	Bird Reports	Richard Repp (Rich712@aolcom)	965-1134
	John Hebert (hejohn1126@msn.com)	965-8235	Bluebird Trail	Bettie Soden (sponsorship records)	453-8185
	Bob Wahl (rewahl@televar.com)	452-9183	Courtesy	vacant	
			Important Bird Areas	John Hebert (jhebert@nwinfo.net)	965-8235
Standing (Voting) Committee Chairs:			Newsletter Mailing	Joyce Lucas (ajbirds@aol.com)	966-8115
Audubon Hoegar Preserve	Leslie Wahl (rewahl@televar.com)	452-9183	Publicity	Bill Drenguis (DRENGUIS@aol.com)	965-5808
Audubon Refuge Keeper	Kerry Turley (kdturley@bentonrea.com)	837-6930	Social	LaVonne Benner Alice Nevue (alicenevue@charter.net)	453-1096 453-7096
Bluebird Trail	Richard Repp (Rich712@aol.com)	965-1134	Volunteer Recognition	vacant	
Conservation	Michael Martin (SelahLibraryGuy@gmail.com)	698-4430	Webmaster	Mac Knight (mac_knight@charter.net)	457-6410
Education	open		Website	www.yakimaaudubon.org	
Field Trips	Larry Robinson (laris430@yahoo.com)	658-2918	Toppenish NWR CBC	Andy Stepniewski (steppie@nwinfo.net)	877-6639
Fund Raising	Dan Kinney (insur3@charter.net)	452-3260	Yakima Valley CBC	Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@charter.net)	453-2500
Membership	Debie Brown Sturnella@aol.com	248-3878	Yakima Valley Audubon Voice Mail		248-1963