

THE PRAIRIE OWL



PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

---- www.palouseudubon.org -----

Volume 34, Issue 2, November 2005

NAME THAT BIRD

There used to be a British television game show called "Name that Tune". The show, which first aired in the 1950s, was hosted first by Irish comedian Tom O'Connor then later by the flamboyant singer and dancer Lionel Blair (no relation to the current Prime Minister). The contestants would have to bid on how many notes it would take them to name a particular tune. The bids were typically "I'll name that tune in 3" or "I'll name that tune in 2".

My interest in birds is well known among my friends and colleagues at work. And a certain expectation has developed (probably very much unjustified) that I can identify a wide variety of birds on the smallest pieces of information. It is not unusual for someone to say to me something like: "I saw a bird in my yard. It was smaller than a robin. What do you think it is?" My response is usually to see if the observer had noted any particular field marks, such as color or visible stripes or spots. Maybe they could remember what the bird was doing when they saw it. Was it on the ground or in a tree? Then I try to piece together a possible identification. Sometimes I turn out to be right and sometimes not.

Earlier this year a former graduate student in the department (who now works in New Mexico) was back visiting some friends in Pullman and they decided to go for a walk in the Rose Creek Preserve. On the walk he saw a bird that he didn't recognize. Being a keen photographer he always carries a camera. He quickly took a series of pictures of the bird, e-mailed them to me when he got home and asked if I could identify the bird. The bird was a very pale immature ring-necked pheasant. This species is very common in this area but I had never seen such pale plumage.

The first attempt to establish the ring-necked pheasant in America was made by Richard Bache (Benjamin Franklin's son-in-law) in 1760. The experiment was

unsuccessful. In 1881 Judge Owen Denny, the US consul general in Shanghai, shipped back 30 birds from China to his home in the Willamette Valley, Oregon. The birds flourished and within the next ten years populations had also been established on the east coast. Now these exotic game birds are abundant throughout much of the US.

Henry VIII began the practice of raising pheasants for hunting in 1532. The invention of gunpowder in the 14th century and the perfection of the matchlock rifle in the 15th century drastically changed hunting methods. The pheasant is often too large to be taken by a falcon, a common hunting method during the Middle Ages. When guns replaced falcons, pheasants became a popular meal.

Grant Norton

Photo by A. Wilson



Adult Male Ring-Necked Pheasant
(Credit: U.S. Geological Survey/Photo by A. Wilson)

If you would like to write an article for inclusion in the *Prairie Owl*, or if you have an interesting bird story, or a field trip report please send it to me at norton@mme.wsu.edu.

**** note:** The next *Prairie Owl* will come out later in January to allow time for inclusion of the CBC results.

Palouse Audubon Society Calendar

November, 2005 - January, 2006

(see www.palouseaudubon.org for calendar updates and additional information)

- November 16 - Program:** Status and Conservation of the Common Loon in WA by Daniel Poleschook & Ginger Gumm
December 14 - Program: Bats of the Palouse by Harry Jageman
December 17 – Moscow-Pullman Christmas Bird Count - contact Dave Holick (ID) or Tom Weber (WA)
December 31 – Lewiston – Clarkston Christmas Bird Count - contact Charles Swift
January 18 Program: The Zumwalt Prairie by Rob Taylor

Contact Information: Charles Swift, (208) 883-0553, charless@uidaho.edu; Terry Gray, (208) 285-1639, clgtlg@genesee-id.com; Dave Holick, (208)-882-5556, dholick@moscow.com; Tom Weber, (509) 334-3817, tweber@wsu.edu

PROGRAMS

November 16 – STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF THE COMMON LOON IN WASHINGTON - Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Ginger Gumm

Dan and Ginger will relate the trials, tribulations and successes associated with nesting Common Loons in western and northeastern Washington State . Ferry Lake , Swan Lake , and all other Washington State lakes used for nesting by Common Loons, are highly important as locations where Common Loon young are produced each year. Washington State (out of all the states with Common Loon nesting territories) is the closest to having its population of loons extirpated. Loon observations and conservation efforts of the Common Loons at Ferry and Swan Lakes have helped bring attention to the common loon and the abundance of wildlife in this region. This area has now been designated as a “Watchable Wildlife” location by the Washington Depart. of Fish and Wildlife.

Dan and Ginger are both professional photographers and have previously presented other beautiful programs to the chapter. You will not want to miss their presentation.

December 14 – BATS OF THE PALOUSE - Harry Jageman, retired USFS Biologist

Harry Jageman is a recently retired USFS biologist and has been studying bats in Idaho for the past several years. He will present a program on the nine species of bats found in the Palouse region and methods used for monitoring them. These include new audio technologies like SONABAT and ANABAT along with more traditional methods. Harry will also discuss efforts by the Forest Service to allow bat access to abandoned mines.

Programs are at 7:30 PM at the 1912 Building, 3rd & Adams in Moscow. They are free and open to the public.

January 18 - THE ZUMWALT PRAIRIE: Rob Taylor, Nature Conservancy

The Zumwalt Prairie is North America's largest remaining grassland of its type, and the largest Conservancy acquisition ever in Oregon . It is home to remarkable numbers of hawks, eagles and other wildlife. Two at-risk plant species are found here, Indian ricegrass and Spalding's campion, the latter of which is federally listed as a threatened species. Abundant ground squirrels and other prey support one of the highest known concentrations of breeding hawks and eagles in North America . Ferruginous and Swainson's hawks, on the decline throughout the West, thrive here, along with golden eagles, red-tails, rough-legged hawks and prairie falcons. Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, once extirpated from Oregon, are being reintroduced at Zumwalt Prairie by state wildlife officials in partnership with private landowners.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Christmas Bird Count is a fun day for both the birding enthusiast and the novice alike. Held between December 14 and January 5 each year, the CBC is an opportunity to see wintering birds such as waterfowl and raptors. All count data are incorporated into a national database. This will be the 106th annual Christmas Bird Count and the Palouse Audubon Chapter's 35th annual year of participation. More information including recent years count results available at

<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/CBC.html>.

Count day for the **Moscow-Pullman** Circle is **Saturday, December 17**. Contact Dave Holick at 208-882-5556 or daveholick@moscow.com

Count day for the **Lewiston-Clarkston** Circle is **Saturday, December 31**. Contact Charles Swift at 208-883-0553 or charless@uidaho.edu

PAS Notes

FROM THE CO-PRESIDENT

My interest in birds began when I was about 14 in my home town of Baltimore, Maryland. I was fortunate to have many adult birder friends to mentor me and jhaul me around until I had my driver's license. There were many field trips available, including some just for us "juniors", and we were welcomed and encouraged at all events (the annual conference at Ocean City, MD was a favorite of mine). This early experience solidified my interest in birds which has continued for 30 years now.

These days it seems like there are fewer young birders around. This may be partly due to demographic factors and clearly there are some

talented young naturalists around. The trend, however, according to an American Birding Association survey, is an increasing average age among active birders and delayed interest among teens. Whatever the cause, we need to make a better effort to interest and encourage the younger generations in birds, birding, and nature study.

These are our future club leaders, wildlife professionals, and conservationists. And besides that, it's a lot of fun to have enthusiastic young birders around. I know as I was one once!

Palouse Audubon wants to do its part but we need your ideas and help. We'd be interested in hearing from and working with school educators or anyone else who has an interest. Please contact one of the co-presidents with your thoughts. *Charles Swift*

Local Member Recognition

We'd like to thank the following individuals who have renewed or become new local Palouse Audubon Society members in the last few months. Over 100 new and renewing members so far - we appreciate your support!

Barbara Adair
Barbara Andersen
Joan Beedy
Thomas Besser
Katherine Buss
Jack & Mary Carloye
Keith Carlson
Cordell Caudron
John Cobb
Tom Collier
Jack & Joan Cooper
Phillip Crawford
Diane Dickinson
Valerie Drown
Jan Eck
Sid & Renee Eder
Eleanore Evenson
Mary Fauci
Scott Fedale
Susan Firor
Janet Fiske
Joan Folwell
Wayne & Linda Fox
Bruce & Lavon Frazier
Laura Girardeau
Terry & Christine Gray

Heidi Gudgell
William Hall
Sharon Hatch
D Hardesty
Robert Hanson
George Hatley
Karen Haugen
Patricia Heekin
Mark Heinlein
Judith Hendrix
Walter Hesford
Ray & Bettie Hoff
Jane Holman
Sue Hovey
Yvonne Howard
Ervin Irish
Brenda Johnson
Helen King
Jane & Pete Klaiber
Megan Klemesrud
Alice & John Kramer
Juergen Lang
John & Nancy Larsen
Daniel & Joyce Leonard
Margaret Littlejohn
Christopher Lupke

Gloria Martin
D S Matteson
James Mauney
Doyle McClure
Jeffry Mccoskey
Mary Mcpherson
Daniela Monk
Bill Moore
C W Mosier
Janet & George Mount
Barbara Nakata
Lynne Nelson
Marty O'Malley
Nancy & Reid Miller
Steve & Linda Norton
M I Pett
David Pierce
Zoltan Porga
Diane Prorak
Lawrence & Emilie
Pulley
Carol & Malcolm
Renfrew
Bob & Sue Ritter
David Rupp
Lindy Seip

David Skinner
Meade Snoddy
Nancy Spink
Nancy Sprague
Deb Stenkamp
Jim & MaryAnn Storms
Robert & Sylva Staab
Marylee Strub
Charles Swift
Ellen Thiem
Dot & Stan Thomas
Diane Walker
Sarah Walker
Diane & Tom Weber
Dorothy Weems
Richard & Barbara Wells
David Wherry
Janet Wiebold
Wm Willard
Henry & Cathy Willmes
Clare & Sharon Wiser
Daniel Worsham
Joan Wykoff
Elli Ziegler

Volunteer Opportunities

Field Trip leaders – we are always looking for a few more field trip leaders. Knowledge of the area is all that is required, we can provide experienced birders to help lead.

Audubon Adventures coordinator – administer the Audubon Adventures program in our region by recruiting area classrooms, interfacing with National Audubon, communicating with participating teachers, etc.

Nestbox program coordinator – communicate with area residents who maintain bird next boxes (primarily bluebird nextboxes), encourage participants to submit data to Cornell's Nextbox program through Palouse Audubon, organize volunteers to help survey and maintain area next box trails

Attend PAS Board meetings – board meetings are open to all members. Come and share your ideas - we are always looking for input from members. Contact a board member for up to date meeting information.

MANN LAKE FIELD TRIPS SUMMER 2005

Mann Lake is an irrigation reservoir approximately 2 miles east of the Lewiston Orchards. The reservoir was developed to provide water to the Lewiston Orchards. The lake is approximately 134 acres at full pool. It is a popular fishing spot for a variety of

recreational activities including fishing, model airplane flying, and bird watching. As the water is drawn down for summer irrigation the exposed mud becomes a magnet for migratory shorebirds as they move south during the late summer months.

This summer Palouse Audubon and Canyon Birders sponsored bird walks each Saturday from August 6th through October 29th. These walks focused on the fall migration of waterfowl and shorebirds as they pass through our region. This is the first year that the walks started in August; in 2003 and 2004 they started in September. As a result of the earlier starting time we observed at least 28 more species of birds.

In addition to birds, the groups also observed a frog and toad hatch, long-tailed voles, cottontail rabbits, a lone coyote, a lone white-tailed deer, and at least 5 species of butterflies.

A total of 56 people attended these walks and 136 species of birds were observed. Notes about the trips are posted on the Palouse Audubon website at:

<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/highlights.html>

And see

<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/MannLake.pfd> for a complete list of species seen.

Terry Gray

PALOUSE AUDUBON Officers and Board of Directors

Co-President: Charles Swift, (208) 883-0553, charless@uidaho.edu

Co-President: Terry Gray, (208) 285-1639, clgtlg@genesee-id.com

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Treasurer: Henry Willmes, (208) 882-2649, willmes@adelphia.net

Webmaster: Thomas L. Weber

Secretary: Deborah Stenkamp

At Large Board Members: Doyle McClure, Will Boyd

Conservation: Position Open

Education: Position Open

BIRD OF THE MONTH

California Quail



California Quail
(Photo Credit Grant Norton)

California quail seem to be everywhere at the moment. The adult male can be clearly identified by his black plume and scaled belly pattern. The female shows quite similar markings but her plume is less pronounced. Incipient plumes are visible even in very small chicks. Adult quails reach sizes of about 10" and are quite slender with long tails.

California quail are very active during daylight and are constantly on the move. Large groups can be seen walking along the edge of streets and across backyards. Even when they are perched they remain alert, keeping a watchful eye open for predators. When disturbed they utter a sharp alarm *pit-pit*.

The female lays between 12 and 16 buff or white eggs with brown markings. The incubation period is 21 to 23 days. When the eggs hatch the baby quail are born ready to go. Their eyes are open and they are able to run. By two weeks they can fly. After four weeks they begin to roost in trees with adults. The mortality rate of California quail is high and the average lifespan is only about 1 year. However, birds older than 6 years have been recorded.

California quail are found year round in the western states of Washington, Oregon, California and parts of Idaho and Nevada.

Grant Norton

Thanksgiving Bird Count

By John G. Hewston, Count Compiler

The annual Thanksgiving Bird Count is coming up again, and I would like to ask for your help in publicizing it. This count is not as well known as the Christmas Count or Breeding Bird Survey. In some years editors have helped by including a write-up in their newsletters, or by publishing the enclosed Field Form. Any assistance will be greatly appreciated. Since a number of counters drop out each year, I must continue to recruit new participants.

Thanksgiving Bird Counts are to take place on Thanksgiving Day. The counter chooses the time that best fits his/her holiday schedule. The Count lasts for only ONE HOUR, and is made in a count circle only 15 FEET in diameter. The location of the circle is determined by the counter. Actually, the circle can be considered a cylinder, since all birds seen on the ground (or water), in vegetation or flying over or through the circle can be counted. Individual birds are to be counted only once during the hour, even if they continue to pay visits. Flocks should be estimated or counted and just the highest number at any one time used. Count circles are usually located around whatever attracts birds--feeders, baths, cover, etc. Most participants establish a count area visible from a comfortable spot near a window. Some participants select water areas or choose a favorite birding area and make an outdoor count. The same count circles should be used each year.

Count form available at site below:

<http://www.utahbirds.org/cbc/ThanksgBCForm.htm>

MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606 University Station, Moscow ID 83843, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The mission of Audubon is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

General membership meetings are held at the 1912 Building, 3rd and Adams St, Moscow ID, at 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month, September through May. The board of directors meets at member homes at 7:30 p.m. in the first week of each month.

The Prairie Owl is published every other month, September through May. Material for the *Owl* should be sent to the editor, Grant Norton, 1225 NW Clifford St, Pullman WA 99163, or email norton@mme.wsu.edu by the 20th of the month.

A TRIP TO GRAND CANYON



California Condor soaring with head and feet dangling. South Rim, Grand Canyon National Park.
(Photo Credit Sarah Walker)

Sarah and Dick Walker floated the Colorado River in Grand Canyon, September 16 – October 3, from Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek.

It was very hot down in the canyon, hot all night even. Once, a lone turkey stood panting on a beach where we tied up to visit an archeological site. Someone said they can't fly back out of the canyon and are trapped there. This one seemed lonely, and jumped into one of the boats... We were very surprised to see it. We saw one other turkey.

Birds we saw every day:

Great blue heron – posing, then taking off with a rusty squawk as our rafts and dories approached.

Canyon wrens – nosy and busy, darting into a crevice when stared at.

Rock wrens – heard - tinkling note on open hillsides among shrubs – warier than the Canyon wrens.

Ravens – we saw them, most days, and sometimes they got into our stuff, in camp.

Big excitement: I was hoping to see some of the California Condors in the canyon. At Lee's Ferry the Park Service said floaters have been seeing condors in their camps, looking for handouts. We were warned not to approach them because they bite. We never saw them in our camps, but we saw one the first day on the river, soaring above the high cliffs. We could see the wide white triangle under the huge wings. Later Dick saw what looked like one, perched on a

rock near shore; and one other time we watched a very large soaring dark bird, and wondered...

After the trip Dick and I visited the South Rim in the park to see what the river and its rapids looked like, from above. Condors circled the overlook, and we watched them for quite a while. Two landed on nearby cliffs. Otherwise, they never flapped a wing, and sometimes hung head and feet down. We could read their numbers – they have circular tags on their wrists. We saw number 23, mostly.

Peregrines! Saw these only a few times, once close enough to see facial pattern. At one camp the patch of sky between towering cliffs of Redwall Limestone filled with darting, hunting swallows—until a pair of Peregrines appeared and began circling rapidly.

Some other birds:

Osprey - frequently

Ducks – a small flock of teal (?) energetically practicing maneuvers and precise landings. 2 Common merganser drakes. A mallard.

Spotted sandpipers – occasionally, but then they're small and hard to see unless they get noisy or skitter around-

Flycatchers - Say's phoebe – pretty common, strikingly orange, not subtly buffy like at home

Kingfishers – not that many

Hawks – were they Swainson's, migrating? Saw some redtails. At Deer Creek, a soaking wet Cooper's hawk sat on a branch. We were surprised to see so few raptors.

Vultures –common

Lark sparrow?

Hairy woodpecker, twice, right in camp! Not exactly forest habitat... Just mesquite, and cat-claw acacia.

White-faced ibis – 3 posed on a sand beach near Lee's Ferry one day, with their long dark curved bills.

Green-tailed towhee – hopping, pecking and chasing bugs under a tamarisk on a sandy beach.

On our way to Grand Canyon we camped in Great Basin National Park. Wheeler Peak Campground is at 9,000 feet, there are bristlecone pines. In a grassy opening by our campsite there were odd-looking juncos that turned out to be the Gray-headed form, of the Great Basin. These did not have the black hood we are familiar with, but have a noticeable rusty patch on the back, and are gray below.

Sarah Walker

Getting the Lead Out of Fishing

Ginger Gumm and Daniel Poleschook, Jr.

**** editors note:** this article is abridged from the original which can be found on the PAS web site: <http://www.palouseaudubon.org/GetLoadOut.pfd>

Ingestion of lead fishing gear is the single largest cause of mortality for adult common loons in New England. Veterinarians at Tufts University-School of Veterinary Medicine examined over 180 dead adult loons from fresh water over the past 10 years and determined that more than half of those birds died as the result of lead poisoning from the ingestion of lead fishing gear. Their ongoing research has documented that ingestion of lead sinkers (including split shot) accounted for approximately 70% of the dead adult loons from fresh water.

Every year, loons, swans, and other waterbirds die needlessly of lead poisoning after swallowing lead sinkers and jigs. Dabbling ducks, loons and grebes, sea ducks, cranes, herons, swans, geese, birds of prey and scavengers die of lead toxicosis because of the food they eat or the way they get their food. Duck species, swans and geese that use aquatic plants as a primary food source, will also eat large amounts of marshland sediment and are exposed to both lead shot and lead sinkers in the process. They also search the lake bottom to ingest gravel that is used in the gizzard to help grind food for digestion and can mistakenly ingest lead at that time. The species that are most commonly documented (Canadian Wildlife Service, 2005) to be poisoned by lead shot and sinkers are mallards, black ducks, northern pintails, canvasbacks, Canada geese, snow geese, tundra and trumpeter swans, and the common loon.

Lead in fishing is placing Washington's population of common loons at risk. There were 8-10 territorial/breeding pairs of common loons in Washington State in 2004. From this low population, four established territorial/breeding loons were involved in life-threatening situations involving fishing tackle and lead. They had either swallowed jigs, fish with broken and trailing fishing line with lead sinkers attached, or ingested lead sinkers from lake bottoms. The three lakes (Ferry, Swan, and Lost) that these loons use for their breeding territories are highly used by fishermen; and there is much discarded fishing tackle and line, including lead sinkers, seen along the shoreline and in the water.

The territorial male loon from Lost Lake expired from suspected lead toxicosis, although his carcass was most likely taken by predators and no autopsy was performed. His behavior, described by an individual during the last

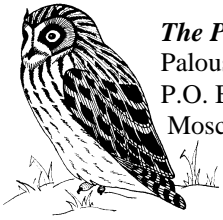
stages of his life, indicates symptoms of lead toxicosis. The bird had beached itself on the shoreline, was unable to hold up its head which had flopped over onto its back, and had great difficulty with balance and movement. Since this was the male and the defender of the territory, the newly hatched chick was easily taken after the male's death by a bald eagle. The chick's death could be considered a secondary death contributed to lead toxicosis and demise of the adult male. A second healthy-appearing adult common loon was found beached and expired at Omak Lake during the spring migration of 2004. It was autopsied by Darwin Long, IV, assistant biologist, BRI, and found to have one triangular-shaped lead sinker in its gizzard. Lead toxicosis was the diagnosis.

In the spring of 2003, two common loons were found beached and one had expired at Chelan Lake near a popular fishing area. The other was retrieved and expired shortly afterwards. It was autopsied by BRI and it was found to have two large lead sinkers and two smaller-sized rounded and eroded sinkers in the gizzard. The diagnosis was due to lead toxicosis.

In 2005, another Common Loon was found beached and expired in the Puget Sound area of La Conner, WA. The loon appeared to be healthy and have adequate stores of fat over the keel, although it showed some predation in areas of the neck and legs. Lead toxicosis is suspect due to the position of the head and posturing of the expired loon. An autopsy is currently being done on this loon, who was color-marked and banded by BioDiversity Research Institute in Gorham, Maine and the Montana Loon Society in 2004. It was the female territorial loon from the platform on the Lower Stillwater Reservoir

In the U.S., concern over the effect lead fishing tackle is having on the common loon led Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont to regulate its use. New York, Wisconsin, and Minnesota are also discussing similar actions or have begun educational campaigns regarding lead tackle. In 2000, the U.S. F&WS banned the use of lead tackle in three national refuges, in Montana, Wyoming, and Michigan. Overseas, Great Britain in 1987, and Denmark have banned the use of lead in fishing tackle. Canada banned the use of lead fishing sinkers and jigs weighing less than 50 grams in National Wildlife areas and parks in 1997 (Ellis, 2005).

For the sake of waterfowl, shouldn't Idaho and Washington enact similar bans on lead fishing tackle?



The Prairie Owl
 Palouse Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 3606 University Station
 Moscow , ID 83844

November 16 - Status and Conservation of the Common Loon in Washington
 by Dan Poleschook & Ginger Gumm, 7:30 PM 1912 Center, 3rd & Adams, Moscow..

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY – ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Financially supports the programs and activities of the Palouse Audubon Society and includes an annual subscription to *THE PRAIRIE OWL* newsletter. Send your **\$15.00** check payable to **Palouse Audubon Society** to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, University Station, Moscow, ID 83844. Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 635-1272

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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY – NEW MEMBERSHIP ONLY

Includes *National Audubon Society* and *Palouse Audubon Society* membership and subscriptions to *AUDUBON MAGAZINE* and *THE PRAIRIE OWL* newsletter. Send your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, University Station, Moscow, ID 83844.

Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 635-1272

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