

The Magpiper

September, 2008

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Meetings

Membership Meeting: September, 18, 7:30 p.m.
Gaiser Auditorium, Hall of Science, Whitman College

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

In May of this year, several Blue Mountain Audubon members went to Malheur NWR in Central Oregon. Malheur is a fabulous place, and is a spring magnet for a wide variety of bird species. The trip to Malheur can be as productive as the refuge itself since many different mountain species are seen along the way. Members of the trip will give a presentation describing their trip, combining images of the birds they saw with a narrative outlining their experiences. Come hear their story about this remarkable place and see the images of the wonderful birds they found.

Board of Directors Meeting: September 11, 2008

7:00 p.m. at the Muse home, 219 Newell Street.
All members are welcome.

Fall ACOW Conference: October 10-12, 2008

The conference will be held at the Chautauqua Lodge located on the shoreline of Long Beach Washington. Enjoy relaxing accommodations, beach access, field outings and an enticing array of educational activities, meetings and speeches outlining the heart of Audubon's mission in Washington State. For more information and to download a registration form go to:

<http://www.discoverycoastaudubon.com>.

The mission of the National Audubon Society 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.

Field Trips

September 6 – 8:00 a.m. ALL DAY **FALL MIGRATION**

Fall migration is underway for songbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl and gulls. This is a great time to find birds that aren't normally seen in the Walla Walla Valley. Mike and MerryLynn Denny will lead this all-day trip to the west side of the county (bring a lunch). In past years, some of the species seen on this trip were **parasitic jaeger, Forster's tern, solitary sandpiper, long-billed dowitcher, red-necked phalarope, MacGillivray's warbler, American pipit and Lincoln's sparrow.** What birds will be seen this year? Join the Dennys and find out. Dennys 529-0080

October 4, 2008 – 9:00 a.m. ALL DAY **BLUE MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE OPEN HOUSE**

The purpose of the raptor rehabilitation center that Lynn and Bob Tompkins run in Pendleton is to aid orphaned, sick or injured wildlife, primarily birds of prey, providing the treatment and care necessary to return them to their natural habitat. They also present educational programs on birds of prey to schools and civic organizations in an effort to increase public awareness of raptors and their role in the environment. Some of the birds you will see at the center are **golden eagle, bald eagle, great gray owl, flamulated owl, short-eared owl, peregrine falcon, and a newly acquired Aplomado falcon.** The open house is from 12-4, so we will do a little birding on the way down. Don't forget to pack a lunch and join Rodger and Ginger Shoemake for the day Shoemakes– 525-2963

General Information for Field Trips:

- Trips depart from Harper Joy parking lot on the Whitman College campus.
- Bring plenty of food and water.
- Plan to carpool whenever possible.
- Contact the trip leader if you plan to attend.
- Changes, cancellations and trip results will be posted at www.blumtn.org
- For questions, contact Ginger Shoemake at 525-2963 or housewren@blumtn.org

Spotlight on Nature

ORCHIDS IN THE BLUES

The wet, cold weather in the Blue Mountains this past spring resulted in an unusual number of orchids. We found lady slippers, phantom orchids, calypso orchids and coralroot on trips up Jasper Mountain and Biscuit Ridge in early summer. All orchids need the association of soil fungi and should never be disturbed. Next summer when you are out in the mountains, look on the ground for one of these treasures of nature.

Mountain Lady Slipper: *Cypripedium montanum*



Found in moist, well drained slopes, along roads and woods, usually in June. Lower white flower pouch with red or purple inside veins and a bright yellow column. 1-3 one inch flowers with elongated

twisted sepals attached above leaves.

Calypso Orchid (fairy slipper): *Calypso bulbosa*



Found in moist woods with a layer of decayed wood, early summer. Three purplish pink sepals and 2 petals above a inflated petal that forms a slipper. Purple stripes inside slipper with

bright yellow hairs and purple spots on top. Single stem 2-8 inches tall.

Phantom Orchid: *Eburophyton austinae*



Found in well-drained medium dense forest. Erect plant 8-20 inches tall. White leaf-like sepals 1-2 inches in length along stem. Flower petals longer than lip with small yellow patch on lip.

Spotted Coralroot: *Corallorhiza maculate*



Found in deep forest, relying on decayed organic matter for sustenance. Numerous brownish stems 8-18 inches tall with redish petals along stem. White lower petal is larger with red spots.

Bird of the Month

SWAINSON'S HAWK

Raptors are one of the most visible families of birds we encounter. They are diurnal flesh eaters. Most take live prey but some are scavengers. All have a heavy, sharp, hooked bill and toes with strong curved talons. Most raptors are very aerial and soar for long distances in



search of food. Within this large family of birds is the genus *Buteo*. The most common buteo in our area is the **red-tailed hawk**, which lives here year round. Two buteos are here seasonally – **rough legged hawks** and **Swainson's hawks**. Rough-legged hawks winter here, but nest in northern Canada and Alaska.

Swainson's hawks spend the summer here. They arrive in early April from as far away as Argentina. Nest building begins soon after their arrival. Both sexes help build the nest which is made of bulky sticks high in the crowns of large trees. There are usually two eggs in a clutch, with incubation lasting approximately 28 days. Most of the incubation duties are done by the female. Young birds remain in the nest for almost a month before they fledge.

Like other buteos, Swainson's hawks can be hard to identify. A typical adult has dark outer feathers on the underside of the wing, and a dark upper chest. When flying, they glide with wings slightly uptilted. They are relatively easy to approach and will remain perched on a pole when you drive by (unlike the red-tailed hawk that almost always flies when approached by a vehicle). George Jameson has put a variety of photos of Swainson's hawks on the website www.blumtn.org showing the various plumages by age.

Many Swainson's hawks can be seen around Walla Walla, especially in September when they congregate in large numbers before leaving for the long trip south for the winter months. A good place to view these beautiful raptors (before they depart for their 7,000 mile journey to Argentina) is the Lowden/Touchet area, especially near alfalfa fields.

Conservation

CARRYING CAPACITY AND HUMAN POPULATIONS

By Mike Denny, Conservation Chair BMAS

Well folks it is 100 degrees outside as I write this and I am thinking about cool life sustaining water and how very important it is to our survival here in the Walla Walla valley. I am also thinking about an old biological principal known as "Carrying Capacity". Carrying capacity is a law by which the entire natural world lives and survives by or dies out. When carrying capacity is reached, be it in populations, resource utilization or territories then the entire living system changes. One has only to look at the mouth of the Colorado River, the Ariel Sea or Beijing to see how this law applies to mankind. We create artificial demands that push us and the living systems we depend on for life towards the limit of Carrying Capacity. We demand more water in a system that only has a finite amount of this precious life sustaining liquid. Any African living along the advancing edge of the Sahara can tell you that finding and protecting water is the single most important thing in their life. Yet many of us consider it a right to have cold water in our homes 24/7. We misuse and waste our water right here in this valley. So in an effort to cause you to reconsider your treatment and use of our precious cool waters here are some things you can do to conserve water right in Walla Walla.

Measures that count towards saving water

- a. Water your yard at night and only once a week in the summer. Also deep soak your trees once a week in the summer.
 - b. Eliminate 2/3rds of your yard by planting native grasses and woody shrubs. Contact your local Conservation District for ideas on plants.
 - c. Cut down on your in house water use by 3% a month until you have reduced your water use by 25% in a year.
 - d. Be proactive in your neighborhoods, city and county about the conservation of water.
 - e. learn where your water comes from and how many others also depend on that same water for life.
- This is just a start. Discover what you can do towards helping out in protecting and conserving the water in this valley.

SPOTLIGHT ON BIOFUELS

from *Washington Wildlands*, Spring/Summer 2008

Biofuels are getting a lot of attention as the world looks for alternatives to oil, but new research by the Nature Conservancy and others shows that biofuels are no panacea. Research by Conservancy scientists that appeared in *Science* magazine earlier this year shows that most biofuels actually contribute to global warming and loss of biodiversity as land is converted to production crops. Elizabeth Gray, the Conservancy's director of science in Washington State, has co-authored another study that points the way toward better biofuels – she's answering the question of how to create and certify biofuels that are biodiversity-friendly. She and lead author, Martha Groom, a University of Washington professor, analyzed the environmental footprint caused by farming many biofuel stocks. Corn, which makes up 90 percent of the biofuels used in the world currently, is the worst offender. Gray and Groom are urging aggressive pursuit of alternatives to corn for biofuels.

They recommend principles to certify biofuels and biodiversity-friendly. First, biofuel feedstocks should be grown using agricultural practices that are environmentally safe and don't adversely affect biodiversity. Second, the ecological footprint, in terms of land area needed to grow enough of the feedstock should be minimized. Fuels derived from microalgae hold a lot of promise. Third, biofuels that can store carbon, or have a zero-carbon or negative carbon balance of the entire production life cycle, should be given high priority.

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes 1.5 million barrels of oil; enough to run 100,000 cars for a whole year, to make the **22 billion plastic water bottles** Americans throw away every year. And since only 10 to 12 percent of water bottles are recycled, the rest end up in landfills, along roadsides or bobbing in rivers and lakes where they could take thousands of years to decompose. The solution? A reusable bottle.

Diane MacEachern, *National Wildlife*
August/September 2008

GLOBAL WARMING

National Audubon website, July 2008

All of us use fossil fuels every day – for heating and cooling our homes, driving our cars, generating the electricity to power our lights and appliances, etc. In the process we produce the greenhouse gases that are primarily responsible for global warming. Fortunately, each of us also has the power to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. Here are some of the most important ways we can all make a difference.

Driving: Consider driving less by taking public transportation, walking, bicycling, or carpooling. Drive a more energy-efficient vehicle. When you drive, follow the speed limit and drive at a consistent speed. Take your car in for regular tune-ups and keep your tires properly inflated. Take off any rooftop carriers when not in use.

Water: Use less hot water. Run your dishwasher only when full, and wash clothes in cold or warm water.

Shade: Plant leafy trees around your house to provide wind breaks and summer shade. Each year, the average yard tree cleans 330 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. An average tree absorbs 10 pounds of pollutants from the air each year, including 4 pounds of ground level ozone and 3 pounds of particulates.

Go Organic: Whenever possible, grow or buy organic produce. The pesticides used to kill pests also kill the organisms that help keep carbon dioxide in the soil.

Think Globally, Eat Locally: As much as possible, buy local produce and other goods. The fewer miles your produce has traveled, the less energy used for refrigeration and transportation.

Consume Less: Almost everything you buy requires the consumption of fossil fuels. Manufacturing, packing, transporting, and selling goods all use huge amounts of energy, releasing excessive amounts of greenhouse gases. When shopping, ask, “Do I really need this? Does the Earth really need this?”

Energy Audit: Try an energy audit for your home, school, or office. It’s a great way of assessing where and how you use energy and how you can cut back.

Calculate Your Carbon Footprint: You can calculate your household’s greenhouse gas emissions by using a carbon calculator (<http://www.safeclimate.net/calculator>) Once you’ve calculated your impact, consider how you can cut back on your overall emissions. You’ll be amazed how small steps add up to huge differences in our cumulative impact.

Be An Active Citizen: While each individual’s commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions is important, we won’t curb global warming without major

changes in the kinds of energy we use and an economic system that depends on a high rate of wasteful consumption. Support the work of local, state and national governments to curb global warming. Stay informed, write letters to your leaders, and support those candidates who promise to take the aggressive and farsighted actions necessary to curb global warming.

SAVE OCEAN ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SEABIRDS!

Audubon Action Alert, August, 2008

The White House has recently proposed a new rule for oversight of marine fisheries. The new rule would **gut the protections that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has long provided ocean ecosystems and the seabirds and other wildlife that depend on them.** Under the new rule, the ability of the public to have input into the future of our oceans would be severely limited and oversight of marine fisheries would be largely given over to regional fishery management councils — the equivalent of having the fox guard the hen house.

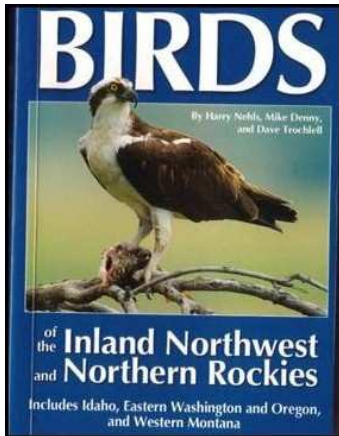
Tell the National Marine Fisheries Service that you oppose the new rule and want to keep the National Environmental Policy Act and citizen input strong.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires government agencies to analyze the likely environmental effects of their actions and to seek public input into their decisions. The proposed rule would exempt certain categories of fisheries from environmental review altogether and weaken the requirements for environmental reviews of fisheries across the board. The proposed new rule would also severely limit the ability of the public to give input into any decisions made.

NEPA’s review process has successfully protected ocean ecosystems in the past. By mandating that impacts to birds and other ocean wildlife be considered when fishing regulations are made, **NEPA can help birds and other wildlife while creating a more sustainable ocean system.** Nineteen of the twenty-two species of albatross are already threatened with extinction due to long-line fishing techniques that accidentally catch and drown the birds. On the East Coast of the United States, the *rufa* Red Knot is threatened by overfishing of its main food source, horseshoe crabs. It is vital for our seabirds that we do not weaken environmental oversight of the fishing industry.

ARTHUR G. REMPEL SCHOLARSHIP

Blue Mountain Audubon Society has established a scholarship at Whitman College to honor Dr. Arthur G. Rempel, Emeritus Professor of Biology. Dr. Rempel was a Life Member of National Audubon Society. The scholarship will award \$500 each year to a Whitman College Junior, majoring in biology—the money to be applied toward that student's senior year tuition. In order to fund the scholarship, Blue Mountain Audubon Society will need to raise \$10,000. If you would like to contribute to the Rempel Scholarship, please send your check, payable to BMAS, to P.O. Box 1106, Walla Walla, WA 99362. *Please indicate on your check that it is for the Rempel Scholarship Fund.*



There is a new Northwest bird guide hot off the presses entitled "*Birds of the Inland Northwest and Northern Rockies*" that was written to help identify the birds of Eastern Oregon & Washington, Idaho and Western Montana. This book is a handy pocket size field guide that was written by three long

time Northwest birders, Harry Nehls of Portland Oregon, Dave Trochlell of LaGrande, Oregon and **Mike Denny** of College Place, Washington. It was published by the R.W.Morse Company, Olympia, Washington. There are 260 of the most common species in the region featured, and it contains outstanding photographs by many gifted western bird photographers. It is a great field guide that can be taken everywhere there are birds in the great Interior Pacific Northwest. It will be available at Earthlight Book Store, Walla Walla University Bookstore and the Whitman Mission Bookstore.

GREAT WASHINGTON STATE BIRDING TRAIL

Excerpts from Audubon Washington website

Audubon's Great Washington State Birding Trail prepares to create new loops from Ellensburg through **Walla Walla** to the Palouse and northward. Additional sponsors of the Audubon birding trail workshops include Watchable Wildlife partners Washington State Parks, the

Washington departments of Transportation, and Fish & Wildlife; and the state Office of Tourism and Economic Development.

Birding trails, now found in more than 30 states, are self-guided trips with stops at places where birds are likely to be seen. The trails attract nature tourists to rural locations, which spurs sustainable economic development and helps protect natural areas.

Bird watching is the fastest-growing outdoor recreation in the U.S.; 46 million Americans say they watch birds. Washington State is home to 365 species of birds, an exceptionally high number. And birds are good for business: America's bird watchers spend \$30 billion a year on their hobby, including \$10 billion on travel. Research shows that every 100 new bird watchers create a new full-time job, generate \$2,500 in revenue and return \$2,600 in taxes.

Books: Priscilla's Picks

Education Chair, Priscilla Dauble is an avid reader. Her interests are all encompassing and include both non-fiction and fiction. Here are her picks of a "good read" for September.

Narrative of a Journey: by John Kirk Townsend

The book chronicles a journey of discovery by the first trained naturalist to cross the American continent. As a member of Captain Nathaniel Wyeth's 1834 expedition to the Oregon country, John Kirk Townsend's account of his travels is an engaging, personal record of the first trans-continental trek along the route that would become the Oregon Trail.

Tall Grass: by Sandra Dallas

A strong provocative novel that is a moving examination of prejudice and fear. Although the book's setting is a Japanese internment camp in a small Colorado town during World War II, the parallels of country at war then and now give this story a layer of poignancy.

WALLA WALLA COUNTY CHECKLIST

The Walla Walla County Pocket Field Checklist to Area Birds by Mike and MerryLynn Denny was revised May, 2008. It will be available at the September meeting.

In the Field

By Ginger Shoemake

Some birds that are rare to the Pacific Northwest visited Walla Walla County during the summer. The first week of June the Washington Ornithological Society held their meeting in Walla Walla. There were birders from all over the state scouring the area for birds. There was great excitement for everyone when an **indigo bunting** was discovered on North Fork Coppei Creek Road. One group also found a **rose breasted grosbeak** in the same area. They found **black-backed woodpeckers** on Jasper Mountain in the area that was recently burned.

The next week MerryLynn Denny found a **brown thrasher** in the Natural Area. It remained for over a week; but although it was fairly easy to hear, it was only seen by a few people.

Mike and MerryLynn led a field trip up into the mountains on June 14. Everyone got to see a **green-tailed towhee** on Lewis Peak Road and several in the



group saw the **indigo bunting**. Other interesting birds seen were **Lewis' woodpeckers, least flycatchers, red-naped sapsuckers, pygmy nuthatch, northern goshawk** and six species of **warblers**.

In mid-June Mike and MerryLynn found **grasshopper sparrows** north of Walla Walla while they were watching a family of **ferruginous hawks**. The Bennington Lake walkers found a **red-eyed vireo** at the lake the same week.

The Corvinos and the Shoemakes camped at Target Meadows near Tollgate the second week of July. The birding was great and we were very excited to have two **boreal owls** calling just beyond our campsite. We only heard them so we returned a couple nights later to try to see if we could find them. We heard them again, but only got a glimpse of one flying through the trees.

We found a family of **red-naped sapsuckers** at Bennington Lake on July 8. This is very early for them to come down from higher elevations where they nest.

On July 11, MerryLynn spotted a **peregrine falcon** on a utility pole in the Sunset Mobile Home Park.

The **tree swallows** nested successfully at Bennington Lake in the boxes Audubon made for the Corp to install around the lake. By the end of July the swallows began to head south – first the **cliff swallows** left and then the **rough-winged swallows**. **Barn swallows** didn't nest there, but they showed up in late July as well as hundreds of **bank swallows**.



It was a successful nesting season for the summer migrants at Bennington Lake. By August young birds were everywhere – **lazuli buntings, Bullock's orioles, yellow breasted chats, western wood peewees, house wrens, yellow warblers, spotted sandpipers**. There were also many year-round species with young – **Bewick's wrens, black-capped chickadees, cedar waxwings, song sparrows, goldfinches, house finches, flickers, killdeer, great horned owls**.

On July 28, a **hooded oriole** was seen by John and Dorothy Knowles with several **Bullock's orioles** at their feeder. What a find! Another new bird for Walla Walla County – our total Walla Walla County list now stands at 337 and our 2008 list is 238.

Common mergansers are back on Mill Creek. Melissa Webster saw 6 of them during her walk on August 14. She also saw an **osprey**, 6 **greater yellowlegs**, a **lesser yellowlegs**, a **spotted sandpiper** and two playful **mink**.

There were still **yellow-breasted chats, black-headed grosbeaks** and **western wood peewees** in the Natural Area when Mike and MerryLynn went there on August 15 to pick blackberries. MerryLynn also saw a **yellowthroat** and a **Nashville warbler** at Wal-Mart Ponds.

Migration was in full swing by August 16 at the Walla Walla River Delta. Mike and MerryLynn saw 9 species of shorebirds including a **marbled godwit**, 4 **long-billed dowitchers** 2 **semi-palmated sandpipers** and two **Virginia rail chicks**.

The Corp has planted two sunflower patches on the east side of Bennington Lake. When we walked on August 19 we saw hundreds of house finches and goldfinches enjoying the seeds. The patches will be magnets for other seed eating birds as they come back in the fall, including pine siskins and white-crowned sparrows, so be sure to look for them if you are walking the trail.

I walked Mill Creek on August 20. There were several lesser and greater yellowlegs, a solitary sandpiper, spotted sandpipers, common mergansers, kingfishers, great blue herons, and a female hooded merganser in with the mallards. In the water along the creek behind K-Mart there were lots of cedar waxwings eating insects off the tops of the weeds. Mill Creek is a good place to watch for migrating shorebirds in the fall such as dowitchers, sandpipers and phalaropes.

Rodger and I joined George and Deanna Jameson on August 22 for a trip west of town to look for raptors. On Frog Hollow and McDonald roads we hit pay dirt – over 150 red-tailed hawks and Swainson's hawks within a one mile radius. The skies were full of raptors, they were also on the ground and on power poles. What fun to see every phase of these two species. There were also several northern harriers and American kestrels.



Juvenile Swainson's hawk

Mike and MerryLynn camped at Ayer's boat basin on August 22. There were tons of birds including a common poorwill, common nighthawks, a sage thrasher, lark sparrows, black-crowned night herons, Wilson's, yellow, Nashville and MacGillivray's warblers, olive-sided, dusky, Hammond's and least flycatchers, Say's phoebes – the list goes on!

Summer is almost over. Soon all of the summer migrants that came here to nest will fly south to warmer climes for the winter. During September many birds will pass through our area on their way south. Please call me 525-2963 or email housewren@blumtn.org to let me know what you are seeing in your yards and beyond.



Vaux's Swifts

If you see vaux's swifts going to roost in a chimney this fall, please contact the Dennys (529-0080) with the location. There is a study being done on their locations.

A Note From Your New Magpiper Editor

As you all know, Shirley Muse has "retired" from her job as editor of the *Magpiper*. She spent many, many years making Blue Mountain Audubon's newsletter the environmental voice of the Walla Walla Valley. Her efforts have left us all better informed about the world around us – from our grass roots to the world beyond. Very big shoes for anyone to fill!

I welcome your ideas on how to continue to make the *Magpiper* the thought provoking newsletter Shirley created for us. Email me at housewren@blumtn.org with your suggestions, comments, etc. Thank you.

Ginger Shoemake, Editor

Board of Directors

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BLUE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON SOCIETY
Ginger Shoemake, Editor, **The Magpiper**
PO Box 1106-0022
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Mission Statement:

Blue Mountain Audubon Society (BMAS) was organized in 1971 and chartered by National Audubon Society in 1972. The Chapter's objectives are to serve its membership and the larger communities of Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon with the goals to appreciate, preserve and enjoy birds, wildlife, and the natural environment of the area. Education is a primary objective of Chapter activities. Through volunteer efforts BMAS provides educational opportunities, conservation activities and enjoyment of wildlife and wildlife habitat opportunities to members and to the public. The Chapter meets the third Thursday, (September through May) at 7:30 in Gaiser Auditorium, Whitman College Science Building. A newsletter, **The Magpiper** is published September through May and is free to members. Non-member subscription fees are \$20 annually. BMAS is a non-profit 501c(3) organization. Find us on the internet at www.blumtn.org

Join Blue Mountain Audubon Society – Complete the following information and mail along with a check in the amount of \$20 for your first year's membership to: Blue Mountain Audubon Society, PO Box 1106, Walla Walla, WA 99362

Name: _____
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