

Blue Mountain Audubon Society

The Magpiper

September, 2014

Monthly Calendar

Thursday, Sept. 11

Board Meeting
7:00 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 18

Membership Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Whitman College

Saturday, Sept. 20

Field Trip
8:00 a.m.
Harper Joy Theatre Parking lot

President: Mike Denny

Vice President: Jim Parrish

Secretary: Paul and Judy Treman

Treasurer: Jonathan Webster

Conservation: Chris Howard

Education:

Membership: Melissa Webster and
Holly Howard

Programs: Nancy Mitchell

Publicity: Jonathan Webster

Natural Area:

Bluebird Trails: Tom Scribner

Adopt a Highway:

Webmaster: George Jameson

Facebook Admin: Judy Treman

Field Trips: Paul Treman

Magpiper Editor: Ginger Shoemake

Members at Large: Shirley Muse
Priscilla Dauble

Bird Sightings: Ginger Shoemake

Website:

<http://www.blumtn.org>

Bird sightings:

housewren084@gmail.com

Contact BMAS:

housewren084@gmail.com

PO Box 1106

Walla Walla, WA 99362

Meeting

Membership Meeting: September 18, 7:00 p.m.

Room 151 Hall of Science, Whitman College

PROGRAM: THE ALBATROSS LATITUDES



photo by K. Ovsyanikova South of New Zealand and Australia lie the islands known as Sub-Antarctic Islands. This area hosts the highest species diversity of breeding albatrosses in the world. They are packed onto these rocks in the Southern Ocean with penguins, cormorants, and petrels. The islands are also home to seals, whales, and endemic land-birds, including flightless teal. Former wildlife biologist, Laurie Ness, recently visited the region. She will share photos (and enthusiasm) for this remote wildlife packed area. Including some of the success stories of preservation and the rediscovery of several species once thought to be extinct. Join us for a warm, dry visit to this cool, wet place that few ever get to see. Don't forget your Dramamine!

Laurie Ness is an Audubon chapter neighbor and avid birder living in Richland, WA. She worked as a Wildlife Biologist for 15 years focusing when possible, on birds. When she's asked about the high points of her field work, she tends to use the words ...Remote, Islands, Guiding & Seabirds. She has lived and worked on several seabird breeding islands like Laysan Atoll in the Hawaiian Chain and the Pribilof Islands in Alaska. Her love and reverence of pelagic seabirds began in these places. She is drawn to the mystery of those birds that live on the extremes and the places where weather and wildlife rule. She and her "sporting" husband, now try to vacation... adventurously.

Field Trip

HAWK WATCH ON BALD MOUNTAIN

Saturday, September 20 – 8:00 a.m.

Mike and MerryLynn Denny will lead our first field trip this fall to Bald Mountain north of Tollgate on the Jubilee Lake road. We will sit in our lawn chairs and watch Cooper's Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, Turkey Vultures and other raptors as they ride the thermals overhead and in the valley below. We will also look for mountain birds and will try to see more than the highs of 39 raptors and 36 total species seen on previous Hawk Watch field trips.

Meet at the Harper Joy Theater parking lot and we will car pool. Bring your lawn chair, binoculars, water, a lunch, a jacket (as it could get cold at elevation 4100 feet), and a friend or two. We will return to Walla Walla around 2:00. You do not have to be a member of Blue Mountain Audubon to attend. Please let Mike and MerryLynn know if you plan to attend. m.denny@charter.net or 529-0080.



Tom's Tales by Tom Scribner

NOT IN OUR HOUSE

The reference to "house" in the title is taken from contemporary sports argot. Athletes often refer to their home stadium or arena as their "house." As in: a football player saying, of the visiting team, that they will not come into "our house" and disrespect the home guys. Or something like that. All part of the bravado of young guys on steroids.

Except the idea of being the macho studs of "our house" is not limited to sports. Sometimes a similar bring-it-on attitude is found among birders. It happened in Walla Walla to BMAS this past summer. And the fall-out of being disrespected in "our house" is still to be felt. If I let you in on a little secret you have to promise not to tell anyone. Here is what is going to "go down."

You remember the front page article in the UB in June about the northern parula found in Fort Walla Walla by an out-of-town birder, right? A first-in-the-county sighting by an out-of-towner! Sure, Mike and MerryLynn were both quoted in the article, but they weren't the first to find the bird. Oh, no. A guy from California, of all places, claims he heard the bird singing, recognized the song, and then found the bird. Just like that.

Yeah, right! A bird not found in this area, a rarity, is heard by a guy who just happened to be here, found the bird and reported it? I have my doubts. Here is what I think really happened.

Mike and MerryLynn, as you know, are crack birders who have been the first to find some pretty rare and interesting birds in our county and in other counties, including on the west side. And, if you will excuse the pun, they have ruffled some feathers with their finds. Big shot birders from the west side have not always taken well to being beaten to the punch (keep those sports analogies coming) by some JV team bench warmers from Walla Walla. Time, they figured, to get even and put those Denny characters in their place. But how to do it? Enter the parula.

What they did, I have decided, was capture a parula on its usual home turf, in Oklahoma perhaps, and bring it to Walla Walla. They then released it at Fort Walla Walla. Then their plant, who claimed to have been in town for some legitimate reason, just happened to hear, then find, the bird. In "our house," our backyard, they find a rare bird, a first for this area. And the disrespect does not end there. Nope. As a follow-up to being one-upped by

the parula, we get an email from somebody in Portland complaining that our Natural Area is, well, too natural. Not all the trails lead somewhere, he said. Some of them just end, he said. And the trails are weed choked, he said. And on and on. It's a natural area, folks, not a *@!! golf course. Still, it hurts to be put down, beaten to the punch, and one-upped, by out-of-towners. And it is doubly bad when the whole thing, manufactured for this purpose, gets reported on the first page of the UB. How to respond?

Here is where the secret comes in. And ya can't tell anyone - - ever. The BMAS board has taken action. Turnabout, dear reader, whether or not it is fair play, is going to happen. And it will be sweet.

I know a person who lives in Texas. He has a friend who has a brother who lives across the street from a guy who is "into birds." The BMAS board has contacted this "guy" and hired him to capture a painted bunting. (The check has already been sent.) The guy will send the bird to us. (And don't worry. They will punch holes in the box for air and total delivery time is only three days. A plump male painted bunting can go three days without food, easy.)

On arrival, Mike and MerryLynn will take the bird (after feeding it whatever buntings like to eat) to Portland. The plan is to let the bird out of the box on Sauvie Island, a well known birding hotspot not far from downtown Portland. They will then contact whomever in the Portland birding community and report their find. After which, trust me on this, word will spread and birders will gather. Assuming the little bugger hangs around long enough for some other birders to see it, Mike and MerryLynn's reputation will be restored and we will have put all those varsity jock birders on the west side in their place regarding who the real rare bird finders are.

Oh, and after the "Oregonian" runs an article about this rare bird being found by some out-of-town birders, members of BMAS, we will send an email to the Portland Audubon complaining about the poor trails and all of the weeds on Sauvie Island.

Nobody, as in nobody, comes into "our house" and disrespects us.

Editor's Note:

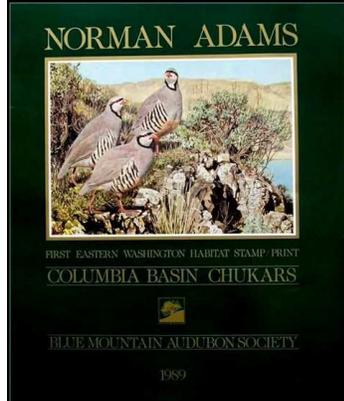
Tom told me this will be his last "tale" for the Magpiper. His stories have been thoroughly enjoyed and we will miss his unique wit.

Announcements

Norman Adams

It is with great sadness that I write this short note. This last July we in the Walla Walla Valley and the west lost a very gifted friend and artist. I am speaking of Norman Adams. Norman was a very skilled artist that produced some of the most eye catching wildlife art I have ever seen. His subjects looked as though they were about to move off the page and out of the frame. I had the great privilege of meeting Norman Adams several times over the years. He was enjoyable to visit with and always greeted you with a smile. His illustrations for the late Dr. Corey and Shirley Muse's outstanding book on the birds of Samoa are superb. Norman's great skill in creating habitat in which to place his wildlife subjects was very important to the overall work. This is very obvious in the amazing poster that Norman painted and produced for the Blue Mountain Audubon Society in 1989 of three Chukars over looking the Columbia River. This outstanding poster can on occasion be located and when found should be treasured. So it is with great sympathy to his family and friends that we at the Blue Mountain Audubon bid them peace, hope and courage in the passing of this great man.

Sincerely,
Mike Denny, President



ON THE ROAD

Look for a new column in the *Magpiper* by George Jameson starting with the October issue. George and Deanna have traveled around the United States in an RV and spent several years volunteering at National Wildlife Refuges throughout the country.

In his column, we will get a glimpse of the land and the people through the eyes of a wandering traveler.

Bird of the Month

RED-EYED VIREO *Vireo olivaceus*



Size: 6 inches

Description: Stocky body with uniform olive-green upperparts, pale below with distinct white eyebrow, dark eye line running through red eye. Juvenile's eyes are black.

Photo from All About Birds

Red-eyed vireos forage in deciduous canopies where they can be difficult to find among the green leaves. They move slowly and methodically, carefully scanning leaves above and below for food. However, their near-incessant singing in summer helps draw attention to them.

They eat invertebrates as well as seeds and fruits. However, their diet changes substantially throughout the year. In the summer caterpillars can account for 50% of their diet. Other times of the year they eat a variety of insects as well as small fruits and leaf buds. During migration they eat both insects and fruit but are almost entirely fruit-eaters on their over-wintering grounds in South America.

The female builds an open cup nest 10-15 up on a branch fork of an understory shrub or tree. The nest consists of bark strips, grasses, pine needs, and plant fibers that hang below the branch. She glues the materials together and to the fork with spider-web adhesive and sticky plant fibers. She also incubates the nest and broods the young. The male offers nest materials and feeds the female, especially during incubation. Clutch size is 1-5 eggs with 1-2 broods.

Red-eyed vireos are fairly common in north-eastern Washington and east from the Blue Mountains to the Rockies. They are very common in the eastern part of the country. On a recent camping trip on the Lochsa River in Idaho, they were the most common bird I heard. However, they are not common here in the Walla Walla Valley, so having them at Rooks Park this summer was a special treat. They are similar to the warbling vireo, which is very common here in the summer. The warbling vireo's eye stripe is not as distinct and it has gray, not green upperparts. And, of course it does not have a red eye.

The World Around Us

BMAS COMMENTS ON FOREST PLAN REVISION

Blue Mountain Audubon Society (BMAS) has submitted comments on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the revision of the forest plans for the Umatilla, Malheur and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.

It had been over 20 years since the last revision of these plans which dictate regulations and policies for the management of the forests and in that time there have been economic, social and ecological changes.

The new plans are being designed to address the following areas:

1. More adequately protect and restore plant and animal species and their habitats
2. Address management of fuels and fire risk
3. More adequately protect and restore watersheds and aquatic habitats
4. Address climate change
5. Recognition of the interdependency of social and economic concerns with national forest management.

Interested parties were invited to provide comments on the draft plans which will be considered in crafting the final management plans for all three forests.

The DEIS offered 6 different alternative approaches to forest management including one which would maintain the current approach. Due to BMAS's strong concern for the protection and preservation of the natural environment, comments were submitted to stress the need for the new plans to ensure environmental protection and restoration.

Comments were submitted to limit the effects of motor vehicle access, especially in the backcountry. Recommendations were made to take a more natural/passive approach to management of the forest with less mechanical interventions (logging) and more use of naturally occurring fires and carefully prescribed burns to address the issue of accumulation of fuels due to many years of fire suppression.

BMAS made recommendations regarding the inclusion of wildlife corridors to prevent genetic inbreeding from populations being isolated.

BMAS expressed concern that grazing not be allowed on lands that were classified as unsuitable for grazing. It

was recommended that the alternative which provided the highest level of riparian protection and restoration as well as the highest level of protection for bird and other forest inhabitants be selected. There was also a recommendation made for additions of a few selected wilderness areas that were contiguous with already existing areas.

Now that BMAS has submitted meaningful comments to the DEIS it will have legal standing to protest any unacceptable management directions included in the final forest management plans.

Chris Howard
Conservation Chair

BATS CALL DIBS ON BUGS

National Wildlife, Aug/Sept 2014

Bats are famed for using echolocation to locate the flying insects on which they feed. Now scientists have documented for the first time that big brown bats emit another call that lays claim to potential prey by warning rivals to back off. Genevieve Spanjer Wright, a University of Maryland biology research associate, and her colleagues reported recently in *Current Biology* that this special, ultrasonic warning sound is produced exclusively by foraging male big brown bats. The call identifies the bat emitting it and causes other bats to increase their distance from the caller and the prey. "Despite decades of study, many things about common bat behavior such as foraging remain mysterious," Wright says. "We were able to study a social call that is likely occurring thousands of times a night all over North America during the summer months, yet had not been described or studied before now."

OLD HUMMINGBIRD

Carl Rudeen of Mountain Home, Idaho was helping band hummingbirds this summer and had a fabulous discovery about their longevity and site fidelity. Rudeen reported if there was any question about site fidelity for hummingbirds, one of the black-chinned hummingbirds proved that they know where home is. "We've captured N-57688 6 times since 2004! This Black-chinned male was first captured 4-Aug-04 in Power County. Since then we've recaptured him in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2013 and now in 2014! It was thrilling to catch him last year as a 10 year old, catching him again as an 11 year old is tremendous."

Events

2014 AUDUBON COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON September 20, 2014

The Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) is an annual state-wide meeting where members from all Audubon Chapters in Washington gather together for a day information sharing, knowledge gathering, and fellowship.



For more information: wa.audubon.org

FIFTH ANNUAL CHELAN RIDGE HAWK MIGRATION FESTIVAL September 13th, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Join the Methow Valley Ranger District, North Central Washington Audubon Society, and HawkWatch International this fall for the fifth annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival! This free family event combines activities in Pateros with a field trip to the Wells Wildlife Area and trips to the Chelan Ridge HawkWatch site to learn about and celebrate raptors as they journey to winter territories. This all happens at Memorial Park in Pateros, Washington.

You will get to visit vendors, see raptor demonstrations, listen to live music, and take a trip to the spectacular Chelan Ridge Raptor Migration Site. During the day, shuttles will run from Pateros to Chelan Ridge where visitors will be able to see raptors such as Cooper's Hawk up close when they are banded and released. Also included is a field trip from 8am to noon to the Wells Wildlife Refuge.

To sign up for any of the activities or to learn more about the festival please visit our website: ncwaudubon.org. or contact the director: Richard Scranton at rscran4350@yahoo.com.

Musings by Chris Howard

Animal Encounters

Having spent a fair amount of time in the outdoors observing birds, mammals, insects in many types of environments, I recently found myself wondering what all those animals were thinking about me. A few days ago I was slowly walking through the pine woods on the side of the "hog-back" ridge I was living on for the summer, wearing a deep blue colored fleece. Moving through the woods had sparked the interest of the resident family of Steller's Jays who were squawking and chattering from the branches over my head. I began loudly squawking back in my best Jay impersonation which especially caught the attention of one of the Jays who bounced down through the branches coming closer with each squawk trying to see if I was some kind of distant relative. After getting a closer look at me, he backed away a bit up in the branches. A few steps later I looked up to see a large blue Jay feather floating down to me. I spotted the Jay scooting from branch to branch overhead with a definite missing tail feather. I had to stop and ponder the significance of this interaction. Was it pure coincidence that the feather had fallen in front of me...was it an invitation to join the Jay clan...or was the Jay offering to trade a feather for a swatch of my blue fleece jacket to keep him warm in the cold Colorado winter? What would a shaman think?

On the way down from climbing a 13,000 ft Colorado mountain, I was walking across the tundra keeping an eye on my footing due to the uneven terrain, when I



looked up to see a full grown male Rocky Mt. Bighorn Sheep standing about 40 feet in front of me. He was looking directly at me seemingly wondering how close I intended to approach him. I immediately changed my

direction to avoid a confrontation. A little ways away I stopped for a few moments to appreciate the beauty of this magnificent creature. I wonder what he was thinking? Was he viewing me as a two legged trespasser in his mountain hide away? a possible adversary deserving a head butt from those massive curled horns? My mother always said I had a hard head. But not that hard.

In the Field...by Ginger Shoemake

I hope you all enjoyed your summer and were able to get out and see some of the birds that nested here in our Valley. Summer began with our last field trip of the 2013-2014 year—a trip to the Blue Mountains with Priscilla Dauble to look at wildflowers. We saw many beautiful flowers including a variety of orchids at Jeff Fredson's place on Weston Mountain.



Judy Treman and others have posted many photos on our Facebook page. Here are a few of them for those of you who don't follow Facebook.



Northern parula
Photo by Tom Mansfield



Gray catbird
Photo by Rodger Shoemake



Great horned owl chicks at Bennington Lake
Photo by Judy Treman



Swainson's thrush
Photo by Jim Parrish



Belted kingfisher
Photo by Richard Smith



Loggerhead shrike
Photo by Merrylynn Denny

Besides the rare visit to Fort Walla Walla Park of the **northern parula**, there were also three **Lewis's woodpeckers** there for several days this summer. **Great gray owls** nested on Biscuit Ridge Road as well as **green-tailed towhees**. The millet ponds on Northshore Road brought **white-faced ibis**, **long-billed dowitchers**, **great egrets**, **black-crowned night herons**, **soras**, **Virginia rails** and more. A **black and white warbler** was spotted there as well as young **western screech owls**. There were **tri-colored blackbirds** on the road into Tyson Ponds. In mid-July MerryLynn found three **red-eyed vireos** at Rooks Park where they remained for several weeks. MerryLynn went out several times a week all summer so she was our major source of information. Thank you MerryLynn!

Jonathan and Melissa Webster enjoyed watching a **Cooper's hawk** in their yard in early August. It was very interested in the birds at their feeders.

On August 18, MerryLynn had a **Nashville warbler** visit her birdbath. A good sign that migration has begun.

We had a pair of **great horned owls** calling in the trees behind our yard on the 18th. On the same day we were out at our son's place on Stateline Road. While feeding the horse, Rodger scared up a **sora** along Mud Creek. It called several times as it flew and then hid along the stream. On the way out their driveway we saw a **Say's phoebe**.

Nesting season is winding down at Bennington Lake. On our Tuesday morning walk on August 19, we noticed a definite decline in summer birds—both species and numbers. There were still some families of **house wrens**, **black-chinned hummingbirds** and **western wood peewees**, but we saw more families of resident birds such as **robins**, **house finches** and **California quail**. Judy Treman captured this photo of a male quail watching over his family.



By the middle of July, **hummingbird activity** picked up considerably as newly fledged birds zipped in and out of backyard feeders. They will be around until the first part of September. Keep those feeders up though, because fall is when the **Anna's hummingbirds** have been seen at feeders in the past few years.

We drove up Jasper Mountain Road with George and Deanna Jameson on August 21 and were surprised at the

number of birds we found. Sparrows were all over the wheat fields— mostly **Savannah**, **chipping** and at least one **vesper**. **Cedar waxwings**, **western tanagers**, **red-breasted nuthatches** and **kestrels** were numerous and we saw a few **western bluebirds**.

MerryLynn found a nice variety of migrating shorebirds on August 22. **Lesser** and **greater yellowlegs**, **Baird's**, **western**, **least** and **solitary sandpipers**, **semi-palmated plovers**, **avocets**, **black-necked stilts** and **red-necked** and **Wilson' phalaropes**. Most of them were found at Tyson Ponds or Dodd Road blood pond. The next day she found a **ruddy turnstone** at the blood pond. It's only the 4th record of one in the county. On August 26 a **buff breasted sandpiper** showed up there.

Brooke Davey got a glimpse of fall migration in her yard on August 23, as a **Wilson's warbler** and a **warbling vireo** paid her a visit.



For years MerryLynn has been looking for a **northern waterthrush** in Walla Walla County. Anytime I went out birding with her and we were in habitat near water, she would say that “this would be a great place for a northern waterthrush”. Well, she finally found one on August 23—at Walker HMU along the Snake River. It was the second record of the species in Walla Walla County and a county life bird for her and Mike. And she got this photo!!

Sue and Jim Parrish saw a **solitary sandpiper** on Mill Creek at Rooks Park on August 23.

On August 24, Pam fisher reported the **Vaux's swifts** have started coming to the chimney on 8th Street in College Place. There were about 300 that evening.

Migration is in full swing. Let me know what you are seeing in your neighborhood and out in the field. Email: housewren084@gmail.com

BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED

The following position are currently open on the Board of Directors. Here is your chance to learn more about the Chapter and how it works. For more information contact Mike Denny m.denny@charter.net

- EDUCATION
- NATURAL AREA
- ADOPT A HIGHWAY

BLUE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON
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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 7:00 p.m. in the Whitman College Science Building. A newsletter, **The Magpiper** is published September through May and is free to members. Non-member subscription fees are \$25 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 \$25 for your first year's membership to: Blue Mountain Audubon PO Box 1106, Walla Walla, WA 99362

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____