

The Magpiper

October, 2014

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Monthly Calendar

Thursday, October 9

Board Meeting
7:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 11

Field Trip
11:00 a.m.
Harper Joy Theatre Parking lot

Thursday, October 16

Membership Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Whitman College

President: Mike Denny
Vice President: open
Secretary: Paul and Judy Treman
Treasurer: Jonathan Webster
Conservation: Chris Howard
Education: open
Membership: Melissa Webster and Holly Howard
Programs: Nancy Mitchell
Publicity: Jonathan Webster
Natural Area: open
Bluebird Trails: Tom Scribner
Adopt a Highway: open
Webmaster: George Jameson
Facebook Admin: Judy Treman
Field Trips: Paul Treman
Magpiper Editor: Ginger Shoemake
Bird Sightings: Ginger Shoemake
Members at Large: Shirley Muse
Priscilla Dauble

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: October 16—7:00 p.m.

Room 151 Hall of Science, Whitman College

PROGRAM: WATERFOWL AND WINTER BIRDS



Hooded merganser

The October Blue Mountain Audubon Society Program will be presented by George Jameson, a member of Blue Mountain Audubon, and will review the waterfowl and other birds that come into and through our area during the winter months. Emphasis will be on **Ducks**, both dabblers and divers, but there will also be information on the **Geese** that are found here, the **Eagles** that follow the waterfowl, the **Swans** that are seen in the various ponds, and the **Sandhill Cranes** that pass through our area.

The presentation will be a fun filled event consisting of still images, video, and informational slides covering many of the species found in this area. Additionally he will utilize maps to discuss locations where you can look for these birds of the water.

George has traveled extensively throughout the United States volunteering his time at different national wildlife refuges. He has an extensive collection of images and will share both these images and his knowledge of waterfowl and the other winter birds during the presentation.

Field Trip

BLUE MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, October 11 - 11:00 a.m.

Blue Mountain Wildlife is a volunteer nonprofit organization in Pendleton, Oregon. They provide treatment and care of orphaned, sick and injured wildlife (primarily birds of prey) with the objective of returning them to their natural habitat. Each year they hold an open house so people can learn more about the birds being rehabilitated and the center. Blue Mountain Audubon is a financial supporter of this worthy organization.

Join Paul and Judy Treman on this visit to the center. You will see rescued hawks, eagles, owls and other birds that are currently being rehabilitated and meet the educational birds (ones that cannot be released because their injuries were too severe). We will bird on our way to Pendleton looking for late migrants and wintering birds. Bring your binoculars, food, water, and a friend or two on this fun outing. We will car pool and return about 4:00. Please e-mail or call the Tremans if you plan to attend: pjtreman@charter.net or **509-527-0722**.



On the Road by George Jameson

WHERE MY FOOTSTEPS HAVE BEEN

One summer my wife and I volunteered at the National Bison Range about 90 miles north of Missoula, Montana. There were a large number of Forest fires burning nearby and throughout the state.

Here are some thoughts I jotted down at the time, they still seem relevant.

The forest fires that are burning everywhere are troubling me as they are many folks. So far we are safe and have not been directly impacted to any great degree. The choking smoke and bad visibility are of little consequence compared to what many people have lost. I wanted to jot some thoughts down and maybe try to express my feelings. I have seen and walked in many of these places that have been changed by the fires, they are the places where my footsteps have been.

Where my footsteps have been
There are now only ashes
Charred skeletons of trees dot the landscape
Once they made oxygen, provided beauty
Now they are only silhouettes, surrealistic images

They seem as visions from another place
Perhaps far away but sadly they are not
The ground beneath my feet
Scorched from the heat of a firestorm
Cannot provide sanctuary for the wildlife
That once thrived here

Where my footsteps have been
There is little life and great sadness
I am told this is nature's way
And in time all will return to the beauty that once was
The trees and ground cover will grow back
The elk and deer will return
And the bird songs will once again fill the air

In time this will happen
But I have so few years left
And I may not have long enough to wait
To see the beauty that once was
Where my footsteps have been

Dear almighty
Bring the rains and snows of winter early
Bring them soon
Cool the earth
Calm the fires
So the pain can stop and the healing can start
And the beauty can return

Where my footsteps have been

Post Wildfire Recovery

While many lands sustaining wildfire are naturally stimulated and recover to healthy conditions, some catastrophic fire can damage the land, causing threats to human life, property, and biological and cultural resources downstream. In these situations, land managers may decide to apply "first-aid" immediately after the wildfire to help stabilize and repair the landscape.

The USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior (DOI) agencies use Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) to manage post-fire response actions within a year of a wildfire being contained. These efforts, also known as Emergency Stabilization, prevent further degradation of natural and cultural resources, and protect life and property.

In some cases, DOI may provide additional funding to improve burned areas and achieve desired conditions for up to three years after containment. "Burned Area Rehabilitation" (BAR) supports the healing process and provides a "bridge" to long-term recovery. Allocation of BAR funds involves a rigorous and competitive process to evaluate projects. This ensures the needs of greatest concern on DOI lands are addressed first.

Further rehabilitation and maintenance of healthy conditions are the responsibility of local land managers through agency natural resources programs.

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

While many wildfires cause little damage to the land and pose few threats to fish, wildlife and people downstream, some fires create situations that require special efforts to prevent further catastrophic damage after the fire. Loss of vegetation exposes soil to erosion; runoff may increase and cause flash flooding; sediments may move downstream and damage houses or fill reservoirs; and put endangered species and community water supplies may be at risk. The BAER program addresses these situations with the goal of protecting life, property, water quality, and deteriorated ecosystems from further damage after the fire is out. Concern for possible post-fire effects on fish, wildlife, archeological sites and endangered species is often a primary consideration in the development of a BAER plan.

Tidbits

UNDERSTANDING BIRD FACTS

In the latest issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, Hank Weber suggested some interesting ways to present common bird facts. Here are a few of his examples that make these facts easier to understand:

- A bald eagle's wingspan is eight feet. That is as long as an ironing board.
- A peregrine falcon has been timed at more than 200 miles per hour. A typical city block is about 1/10 of a mile long. A peregrine would be just a blur as it travels the complete block in less than two seconds.
- A chickadee weighs about 0.4 ounces. That is about the same as the weight of a dozen paperclips.
- An ostrich egg weighs about three pounds. There is enough material in a single ostrich egg to cook the equivalent of 24 fried chicken eggs.
- Arctic terns migrate 24,000 miles round trip annually from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back. By the time a tern is 10 years old, it has flown enough miles to reach the moon.

Help! I Found An Animal That Needs Care!

- Put a towel in a box or crate with air holes.
- Using another towel, carefully put the animal in the box & secure the lid.
- Keep the animal in a dark, quiet place.
- **Call Blue Mountain Wildlife right away at 541-278-0215!**
- Never feed the animal!

WHY THE CROW IS BLACK

Out of the 810 species of North American birds, only two are completely black: the American Crow and the Common Raven. Here's a story that explains why the crow is black, according to Native American tradition.

When Crow came into the world, he wore all the colors of the rainbow, but the other animals and birds were black. To look more like them, Crow shook himself until all the colors flew out and landed on all the other birds and animals. The only color left on Crow was black, and he has stayed black to this day.

Bird of the Month

AMERICAN DIPPER *Cinclus mexicanus*



Size: 7.5 inches

Description: Sooty gray in color with a chunky body, thin dark bill, short wings and long legs. White eyelid obvious when it blinks. Constantly bobs up and down

Photo by George Jameson

The American dipper is North America's only truly aquatic songbird. It catches its food underwater in swiftly flowing streams by swimming and walking on the stream bottom. Its food consists of aquatic insects and their larvae. It also eats dragonflies, worms, small fish, fish eggs and flying insects. When looking for aquatic prey, it ducks its head into the water up to 60 times a minute, a movement that gives this bird its name.

It can be found in mountain, coastal, or even desert streams of the West. It doesn't migrate south, but it may move to larger, unfrozen rivers in winter or follow insect hatches in spring or summer. To be able to survive in cold waters during the winter, it has a low metabolic rate, extra oxygen-carrying capacity in its blood, and thick coat of feathers. Unlike most other songbirds, but similar to ducks, it molts its wing and tail feathers all at once in the late summer and is flightless during this time.

The female dipper builds a domed, ball-like nest. She dips the materials into water before weaving them into two layers—an outer shell made of moss, and an inner chamber with a small woven cup made of grass, leaves and bark. Once the nest is finished, the mossy shell absorbs moisture and the coarse grass keeps the inside dry. The nest is built on ledges, behind waterfalls, on boulders, and often under bridges, but always above or close to a fast stream. The nest is 6-20 feet above deep water so that it will not be in danger of predators or flooding. Availability of suitable nest sites appears to limit its populations.

American dippers are a fascinating bird to watch. They can be found along Mill Creek Road, especially near a bridge. Look for the their tale-tell signs of white splatter on boulders in the creek.

The World Around Us

National Audubon released their findings on Climate Change on September 8. It is a culmination of seven years of research into the effect of climate change on birds and it is supported by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that was awarded in 2010. Following are excerpts from two editorials on the findings.

CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T FOR THE BIRDS

Politico

By Andrew Restuccia/ 9/8/14

Climate change is the greatest threat facing birds in the United States, and it could drive the bald eagle from its nests in most of the country. That warning about America's national bird comes from a National Audubon Society study due out Tuesday that predicts climate change could put about half of North America's bird species at risk by the end of the century. And if greenhouse gas emissions aren't curbed, many species could go extinct, the group said.

"This is a wake-up call," National Audubon Society President David Yarnold said in an interview, calling the study the "most important science Audubon has ever done." Audubon scientists say the warming planet could put a number of beloved birds in the hot seat, including the bald eagle and the Baltimore oriole, as well as state birds from Louisiana, Utah, Vermont, Nevada, Idaho, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Washington, D.C.

The study is the latest in a series of dire warnings about the impending damage from climate change, and it comes just weeks after a leaked draft of a United Nations report warned that ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions raise the likelihood of "severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems."

Studies have raised the alarm about rising sea levels, droughts and more devastating storms as global concentrations of greenhouse gases rise. Curbing those emissions will be the topic of a U.N. summit later this month in New York, where Obama will push for progress toward a comprehensive international pact at next year's climate change talks among world leaders in Paris.

Analyzing climate change data and historical bird records, Audubon scientists sought to project how global warming will affect the hundreds of bird species that are common in the United States and Canada. The study forecast that 314 of the 588 species Audubon examined will be at risk of severe population declines because they'll lose more than half of their livable geographical range by 2080.

Among the study's most eye-popping findings: The bald eagle's current summer range, which now stretches as far south as Mexico, could shrink by nearly 75 percent; the Baltimore oriole might no longer be able to breed in the mid-Atlantic, and could instead shift north; and the wood thrush, the official bird of Washington, D.C., could disappear from the nation's capital and the surrounding region.

WATCHING AS BIRDS FALL AWAY

Everett Daily Herald Editorial

September 10, 2014

Language matters. "Global warming" sounds oddly appealing on a wet-cold November morning. Scientists re-noodled the terminology and came up with the unalarming but freighted-with-God-knows-what "climate change."

Today climate change is no longer a worst-case abstraction peddled by eco-downers. It's a real-time phenomenon, with nasty, often unpredictable effects. Say, for example, on birds.

On September 8, the National Audubon Society issued its "*Birds and Climate*" report. The takeaway: More than half of the 588 North American bird species Audubon studied (yes, it includes the bald eagle) will lose "50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080." Lose your climate range and lose your birds. Silent spring, summer and fall.

Extreme weather, along with increased precipitation in the Pacific Northwest, is consistent with the UW's Climate Impacts Group's climate modeling. A rise in sea levels, ocean acidification, a doubling of wildfires, the loss of cold-water salmon habitat. It's a crisis that merits a two-pronged response: Aligning local infrastructure to accommodate changing conditions (read: preparing for rising sea levels and replacing combined-sewer overflows in cities such as Everett as extreme rainstorms become commonplace) as well as reducing greenhouse emissions.

Earlier this year the Center for Naval Analyses issued a sobering report, "*National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*," which documents the socio-political fallout. "Climate change can act as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world, and it presents significant national security challenges for the United States," it reads.

For cities, preparations need to begin now. That means incorporating the crush from climate change into their comprehensive plans.

Ultimately, humans own this. As last year's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states, "It is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century."

Back to language and all-thing tangible: Most of us begin to snooze with talk of "infrastructure" improvements and climate modeling. But birds? From Coast Salish cultures to retired couples in Edmonds, birds are venerated, a force greater than themselves. Beware messing with the transcendent. People pay attention, get mad and act.

Events

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. Feeder Watch data help scientists track broad scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

Anyone interested in birds can participate. Feeder Watch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. Participants watch their feeders as much or as little as they want over two consecutive days as often as every week (less often is fine). They count birds that appear in their count site because of something that they provided (plantings, food, or water).

Why are FeederWatch data important? With each season, FeederWatch increases in importance as a unique monitoring tool for bird species that winter in North America.

What sets FeederWatch apart from other monitoring programs is the detailed picture that FeederWatch data provide about weekly changes in bird distribution and abundance across the United States and Canada. Importantly, FeederWatch data tell us where birds **are** as well as where they **are not**. This crucial information enables scientists to piece together the most accurate population maps.

Because FeederWatchers count the number of individuals of each species they see several times throughout the winter, FeederWatch data are extremely powerful for detecting and explaining gradual changes in the wintering ranges of many species. In short, FeederWatch data are important because they provide information about bird population biology that cannot be detected by any other available method.

There is a \$18 annual participation fee for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members). Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

For more information see the FeederWatch website feederwatch@cornell.edu

Musings by Chris Howard

Going Batty

At the height of this summer, I was standing on a rock outcropping at top of a hog-backed ridge looking out at the high Rocky Mountain peaks. All of the snow had melted away except for a few crescent shaped drifts hidden from the sun on north facing slopes. Turning around I began to inspect this jumble of rocks around me that jutted up ten to twenty feet. There were many cracks and crevices as the ancient rocks leaned against one another. Some of the more level tops of rocks contained bowl shaped indentions holding rain water which served as drinking stations for neighborhood chipmunks and passing birds. As I inspected the cracks a little more closely I saw a slight movement out of the corner of my vision. I knew it was some kind of small animal but I didn't get a good enough look to be able to identify it. I figured it was either a tarantula or a bat hanging out in the crack. I came closer and looked up into the crevasse but couldn't see anything in the darkness. Intent on seeing what was hiding from me, I went around the back of the rocks and did some climbing which allowed me to be on top of the rock where the hiding animal had disappeared. Getting into position above the small crack, I peered down into the darkness. It took a few seconds for my eyes to adjust and then I saw that I was staring into the beady eyes and pointed nose of a small bat that was clinging with clawed wings to the inside of the crack only a few inches from my face. Even though the bat was not moving, I felt sure that it saw my big beady eyes looking down at it. Having solved the mystery and not wanted to disturb the bat any further, I moved away from its hiding place feeling happy to have had the gift of an animal encounter.

Later that evening, when it was dark enough for the stars to shine with their full magnitude on this moon less night, my wife and I laid on our backs gazing up at the milky way, picking out familiar constellations. Suddenly I saw an even darker shape swoop down out of the shimmering, starry background and pass just above my uplifted face.

I knew in an instant that it was my bat friend, coming down to repay the visit...only this time it was he who was moving, not me.

In the Field...by Ginger Shoemake

The change in the season could be seen at Bennington Lake on September 2. Most of the summer nesting birds were gone with the exception of the western wood peewees and black-chinned hummingbirds. There were a large number of Vaux's swifts and barn swallows over the water, and several western sandpipers on the mud. Warblers that nest in the Blues were in evidence, including orange-crowned, Townsend's, yellow-rumped, Nashville and Wilson's. Western tanagers were seen as well.

Yellow-rumped warblers numbers were high at Bennington Lake on September 9. The Tuesday walkers counted 27 of them, and there were probably more than that. Migration in full swing! We didn't see any hummingbirds at the feeder this week but people are still seeing them in their yards. Sue Parrish saw a Anna's hummingbird at Priscilla Dauble's feeder the first week of September.

Both a western screech owl and a great horned owl were calling from the trees in our back yard the night of September 9.

On September 10, Mike and MerryLynn found a large flock of white-fronted geese at Casey Pond. Also on the island that can be seen from the parking lot, they saw an American golden plover. When they returned home there was a Lewis's woodpecker in their yard.

Pam Fisher reported hundreds of Vaux's swifts going into the chimney on 8th Street in College Place on the evening of September 13.

Also on the 13th, Linda Hanson saw 13 American Avocets on the spit along the canal at Bennington Lake.



I went birding with Paul and Judy on September 13. We found many Swainson's hawks along Langdon Road and Frog Hollow Road. We also saw yellow-rumped warblers everywhere we stopped. Along Humorist Road on the McNary NWR we saw at least two dozen pie-billed grebes and a lesser yellowlegs trying to balance on an algae bloom on one of the ponds. Judy took this nice photo

Rodger and I saw a large flock of Savannah sparrows on Stateline Road on September 14. We saw Swainson's hawks everywhere there were recently cut alfalfa fields along Frog Hollow, Stateline and all the connecting roads.



*Immature Swainson's hawk
Photo by Rodger Shoemake*

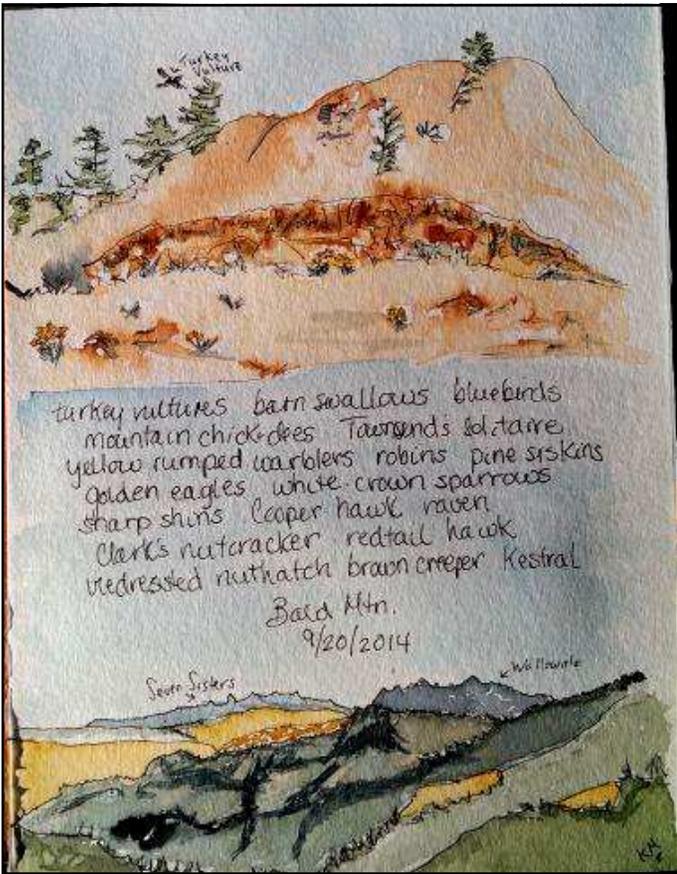
On September 17, MerryLynn and I birded along Mill Creek Road. Flocks of cedar waxwings and yellow-rumped warblers were taking advantage of the warm weather to catch insects. We saw a large flock of pine siskins—a common winter bird that was mostly absent last winter in the Pacific Northwest. At one stop we saw four woodpeckers—red-naped sapsucker, flicker, downy and hairy. We watched an American dipper bobbing along getting insects from under the rocks in the creek. There were several Steller's jays along the road and we saw wild turkeys in several places.

MerryLynn found a white-faced ibis, a Sabine's gull and an American golden plover at the blood ponds on September 18.

September 20 was the Hawk Watch on Bald Mountain led by Mike and MerryLynn Denny. It was a beautiful day and 37 people enjoyed watching hawks and a variety of other birds. Raptors seen were red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, golden eagle, turkey vulture, American kestrel and prairie falcon.



Here is a photo Judy Treman took at the field trip of people looking for raptors in all directions.



Kathy McConnell's art work pretty much sums up the day on Bald Mountain. Thank you Kathy for sharing.



Here is a photo she took of a dusky grouse as it stood in the road in front of her car.

On September 21, Pam Fisher enjoyed watching yellow-rumped warblers in her yard.

We had three turkey vultures fly over the house on September 21 heading south. That evening a lone night hawk flew over and a Say's phoebe called to me from the neighbor's yard.

On September 22 this beautiful monarch butterfly visited our yard. Where was it? Of course, in the butterfly bush! Rodger took many photos.



Donna Johannson watched three white-crowned sparrows in her yard on September 22.

Pam Fisher walked the Mill Creek/Rooks Park area. There were MANY canada geese on the creek along with American wigeons, mallards, killdeer and a greater yellowlegs. In Rooks Park she saw a MacGillivray's warbler.

The Tuesday Walkers found Bennington Lake very quiet on September 23. There were a few canada geese, mallards and green-winged teal on the water, but most of the songbirds were no where to be seen. We did finally see a few black-capped chickadees, robins and



house finches. Always on the lookout for great horned owls, we found one on the east side of the canal.

Photo by Rich Smith

On September 25 we had two Nashville warblers working the golden current shrub in our front yard.

I've been able to add junco and white-crowned sparrow to my yard list for September. What winter birds are you finding in your yards? Let me know! housewren084@gmail.com

**LOOK FOR BLUE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON
ON
FACEBOOK**

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

Non-Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Permit 44
College Place, WA 99324

Address Service Requested

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: _____