



# The Magpiper

April, 2016

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## Monthly Calendar

### Thursday, April 14

Board Meeting  
7:00 p.m.

### Thursday, April 21

Membership Meeting  
7:00 p.m.  
Whitman College

### Saturday, April 23

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

**President:** George Jameson

**Vice President:** Jeff Fredson

**Secretary:** Paul and Judy Treman

**Treasurer:** Jonathan Webster

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**Education:** Kathy McConnell

**Membership:** Melissa Webster and  
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**Publicity:** Jonathan Webster

**Natural Area:** Tom Land

**Bluebird Trails:** Tom Scribner

**Adopt a Highway:** Mike James,  
Joanne Hesser-James,  
Jill Hesser-Gardiner

**Webmaster:** George Jameson

**Facebook Admin:** Judy Treman

**Field Trips:** Paul Treman

**Magpiper Editor:** Ginger Shoemake

**Members at Large:** Mike Denny,  
Shirley Muse, Priscilla Dauble

**Bird Sightings:** Ginger Shoemake

## Website:

<http://www.blumtn.org>

## Bird sightings:

[housewren084@gmail.com](mailto:housewren084@gmail.com)

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## Meeting

### Membership Meeting: April 21—7:00 p.m.

Room 157 Olin Hall, Whitman College

### PROGRAM: FISH EATING BIRDS AND SAND ISLAND



East Sand Island is at the mouth of the Columbia River and has been recently in the news because of the Corps of Engineers' project to shoot Double-crested Cormorants to preserve migrating salmon fingerlings. However, cormorants are not the only predators that salmon have to face. Speaker Dennis Dauble describe other fish-eating birds in the region (including 19th century naturalist accounts), in addition to other predator control measures in effect. His presentation will discuss the overall implications of predation to salmon recovery efforts, and update us on the recent controversial "bird removal" program.

Dennis received his PHD in Fisheries from Oregon State University, and retired from a 35-year career as a fisheries scientist and manager with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland. Currently, he teaches courses on Fish Ecology and the Biology and Management of Fishes at the Tri-Cities branch campus of WSU. Among other diversions, he is a member of Washington Humanities Speakers Bureau, and is on the Monitoring Panel for the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for the State of Washington. His interest in avian issues is constantly fueled by his mother, Priscilla, who has over 700 birds on her life list.

## Field Trip

### BLUEBIRDS IN THE BLUES

Saturday, April 23 – 8:00 a.m.



Join Tom Scribner, "Mr. Bluebird", as we travel south on Payne Hollow and Jasper Mountain Road into the Blue Mountains southwest of Dayton. The gravel road presents wonderful vistas to the north and west in an area of forest woodlands with open grasslands, a superb habitat for both Western and Mountain Bluebirds. We will look for bluebird boxes needing repair or replacement and will install several new boxes to add to the over 500 that Tom and his father have placed in the Blue Mountains. We could easily see over 30 species of birds on the trip.

Bring a lunch, your binoculars and layered clothing in case of inclement mountain weather. Meet at the Harper Joy Theater parking lot and we will carpool. You do not have to be a member of Blue Mountain Audubon to attend. Please call or e-mail Tom if you have any questions 529-8628 or [tom@minnickhayner.com](mailto:tom@minnickhayner.com)



## Migration Continues

How many of the migrants listed in the March *Magpiper* did you see? Don't worry, most of them will be round all summer with the exception of Sandhill cranes, and you will still have a chance to see them in April. Here is a list some of the species that will be returning in April.

Cinnamon teal  
Osprey  
Swainson's hawk  
Greater yellowlegs  
Spotted sandpiper  
Vaux's swift  
Calliope hummingbird  
Barn swallow  
Bank swallow  
Orange-crowned warbler  
Brewer's sparrow  
Black-chinned hummingbird  
Rufous hummingbird  
Calliope hummingbird  
House wren  
Hammond's flycatcher  
Western kingbird  
Nashville warbler  
Yellow warbler  
Townsend's warbler  
Grasshopper sparrow

As you can see from the list above, it's time for the hummingbirds to return. Do you have your feeder out? Remember, 4 parts water to 1 part sugar. No red food color!!



Rufous hummingbird



Black-chinned hummingbird



Calliope hummingbird

*Photos by Rodger Shoemake*

## News from the Board

### Barn Owl Box Update.

George reported that 34 boxes have been constructed to date and spoken for. Most of those have been installed. Donations to date have covered about half the cost of having them built, but contributions continue to come in to cover the cost. There are 8 more requests for boxes, so the Board voted to have them built since they will be paid for by the property owners who have asked for them. The Board also voted to stop at 42 boxes until October to see how many of them will be used by barn owls.

### Natural Area

The Board voted to contact the prison inmate work program to clean up the Natural Area trails. After the initial clean-up, Blue Mountain Audubon will have periodic work parties to keep the trails clear. Tom Hand is working with the City to get bark for the trails when they are clear.

### Adopt a Highway

Joanne reminded the Board that there will be a highway pick-up on April 3.

### **ADOPT A HIGHWAY PICK-UP**

**April 3—1:00 p.m.**

It's time for the Spring cleanup of the one mile stretch of Highway 12 that Blue Mountain Audubon has adopted. It only takes about an hour and is a great way to exercise and do good for the environment. The reward is a clean highway for visitors to see when they are driving to Walla Walla.

***Meet at the Spaulding Road Exit off Highway 12 west of Walla Walla.***

Put on your gardening clothes and work boots, grab your gardening gloves and a water bottle and join the fun!

## Meet the Board

**CHRIS HOWARD: CONSERVATION CHAIR**



While I cannot claim to be a founding member of Blue Mountain Audubon, my wife, Kathy, and I joined the organization shortly after our arrival in Walla Walla in 1981. In those early years we were often accompanied by our two young daughters who we wanted to have an

early exposure to birds and nature. It has been a surprise to call Walla Walla home for over 35 years when we initially expected to be there for only a short time.

A career in social work which spanned the entire age range from babies to end of life, has kept me busy until recent retirement.

I have held the position of Conservation Chair on the Blue Mountain Audubon Board many times for numerous years working on a wide variety of environmental issues. I recall working on the revision of the comprehensive forest plan back in the 1990's and now it is back for another revision 20 years later.

My favorite pastimes are baseball, nature and traveling. Kathy and I spent one and a half years traveling around the world in the 1970's and have continued to visit foreign lands whenever time and money allowed. There is no better way to expand ones birding life list, than traveling to new locations.

*For more than a century Audubon has protected birds and their habitat for the benefit of humanity as well as the earth's biodiversity. Our legacy is built on science, education, advocacy, and on-the-ground conservation. We bring all of this together through our unparalleled network. This combination of expertise and on-the-ground engagement makes Audubon a truly unique and trusted force for conservation.*

## Bird of the Month

**CINNAMON TEAL *Anas cyanoptera***



Size: 16 inches

Description: Male has a bright cinnamon head and body, red eye and black undertail. Female is mottled brown.

*Photo by George Jameson*

The cinnamon teal is a small duck that can be found during breeding season in freshwater semi-permanent wetlands including large marshes, reservoirs, sluggish streams, ditches and stock ponds. The ones we see here winter in Mexico, but migrate north to breed all over the West. Cinnamon teal are the only duck with separate breeding populations in North America and South America. Also, unlike most dabbling ducks, they rarely breed in the midcontinent prairie-parkland region.

They feed on seeds and aquatic vegetation, aquatic insects, snails and zooplankton. There are two types of ducks—dabblers and divers. Cinnamon teal are dabblers. They feed mainly on the surface of the water, dabbling with just their bill in the water or tip up with their entire head underwater.

Nest placement is a depression on the ground near water. The nest is lined with grasses and down. The female often places her nest below matted, dead stems of vegetation so it is completely concealed on all sides and from above. She then approaches the nest through tunnels in the vegetation.

The male cinnamon teal's beautiful cinnamon color and bold red eye make them a striking addition to our summer ducks. They can occasionally be found at Bennington Lake, but you will find them more readily at the Millet Pond on Northshore Road, on the overlook pond at Wallula Junction and in flooded fields along Detour and Barney Roads.

Although their conservation status is considered to be a bird of "least concern", National Audubon has listed the cinnamon teal as a **common bird in steep decline** because of loss of habitat.

## *The World Around Us*

### MALHEUR UPDATE

*The following message was sent out on March 20 concerning Malheur Field Station and Malheur NWR.*

Greetings!

It is with pleasure we announce that Malheur Field Station is again open for business and eager to enhance your Great Basin experience! Center Patrol Road and Krumbo Reservoir are open, so you can enjoy the Refuge, even though HQ is still closed.

During the turbulence of the past months, many have asked how they can support MFS. We have some suggestions:

1. Utilize the MFS lodging and dining facilities when you visit Harney County.
2. Participate in our educational programs and take advantage of available Naturalist Services ([www.malheurfieldstation.com](http://www.malheurfieldstation.com))
3. Monetary contributions from individuals are the “life blood” of MFS. The support that MFS receives continues to amaze us. However, the Board is particularly concerned about funding for support staff so that our Co-Directors can function more effectively in their roles. We ask for your continuing support as we strive to find solutions to fund staff on a more permanent basis.
4. Volunteering at the Station is always appreciated but please be patient as the staff regroup this spring.

Thank you for your concern, notes, calls and financial support. It is deeply appreciated.

The Great Basin Society Board of Directors



Center Patrol Road with the Steens in background

### MIGRATION COOL FACTS

*From National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

1. Most migratory birds travel at night, relying on starlight for navigational cues—they recognize constellations and get critical directional information from the position of the stars in the sky.
2. Bright lights in buildings lure countless migratory birds into collisions; but “lights out” programs in cities along the flyways can have a profound impact. Bird deaths declined by 80% when lights were turned off at night at Chicago’s McCormick Place—and that’s just one building.
3. Tiny songbirds can migrate hundreds of miles a day, rocketing through their spring route up to three times faster than researchers used to believe.
4. The beams of New York’s annual 9/11 “Tribute in Light” are bright enough to throw millions of birds off their migratory course. So New York City Audubon members and volunteers work on site to have the lights turned off at intervals, letting birds regain their bearing and resume their flights unharmed.
5. Almost all migratory birds are threatened somewhere along their ranges, with only 9% of all migratory species protected year-round in all of their habitats.
6. Many of the best places for witnessing migration are along coastlines and bluffs. Watch for hawks and other birds that ride on thermal air currents. Warblers, thrushes, and other songbirds that cover long distances by night are more likely to be down in the vegetation feeding and resting during the day. You can often find them by listening for chickadees because when warblers and vireos are passing through an unfamiliar area anywhere in North America, chickadees allow them to join their feeding flocks. Chickadees know where the best food is and where predators and most likely to be lurking.

## Events

### GRAYS HARBOR SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL May 6-8, 2016

EACH SPRING, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed in Grays Harbor estuary on their migration northward. Coming from as far south as Argentina, these Arctic-bound shorebirds are among the world's greatest migrants. Some birds travel over 15,000 miles round trip! Tens of thousands of shorebirds feed on the open mudflats in the estuary. This concentration of birds offers people a great chance to view a number of shorebird species, and with luck, to see the birds fly together in beautiful formations while trying to escape the fastest creature on earth, the Peregrine Falcon.

**Keynote Speaker** on Friday Night. The 2015 keynote speaker will be Alan Rammer, Marine Educator. The keynote includes a dessert reception prior to the talk.

**Field Trips** with expert birders to birding hotspots in Grays Harbor County

**Lectures** on shorebird identification.

**The Birding Marketplace** with numerous vendors and exhibitors.

**Saturday Annual Night Dinner and Speaker** at the Elks Lodge in Hoquiam. This year's speaker is Jim Danzanbaker.

**Nature Fun Fair** with lots of hands on activities is great for kids and families.

**Shorebird viewing** is of course why most people participate in the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival. Shorebird migration in Grays Harbor County begins around April 21 and continues for about 3 weeks. Each year, field trip leaders and observers at the Refuge post their bird sightings.

#### *Shorebird Avoidance Behavior*



## Musings by Chris Howard

### Full Moon Magic

There is no better opportunity for nature exploration than early evening on a clear, full moon night. I think the full moon has a magnetic pull on me. When the clouds dissipated and the huge golden disc began slowly rising in the East, I was soon on my way to Bennington Lake to check in on the night dwelling inhabitants. Heading off on the trail leading below the dam around the lake, I was soon mesmerized by the soft golden glow of the moon on the trees and bushes. No need for a head lamp on such a radiant night. Listening to the sounds of the ducks quacking and the geese honking on the lake, I was soon standing on the cliff overlooking the beaver lodges. In previous years, there had only been one large lodge with the winter food supply of cut willow and cottonwood scattered out in the shallow water in front. This year a smaller lodge appeared just down the shore... perhaps the home of last year's brood. I peered over the edge and spotted four black spots moving around in the water close to shore with a fifth spot nearby. I could hear the sound of gnawing on the branches. Soon one of the beavers spotted my silhouette against the moon and slapped the water with its big flat tail. They all dove down but were soon up cruising around again.

I continued on the trail around the lake hoping to hear the hoots of a Great Horned Owl or the never ending peep, peep, peep of the Northern Saw-Whet Owl.

On the other side of the lake, I ventured off the trail to the shore of the lake to see the reflection of the moon. I was surprised when the slap of a beaver tail right in front of me punctuated the stillness. I had expected all the beavers to be over by their lodges. I stood motionless for 20 minutes as the beaver swam back and forth in front of me passing through the moon's reflection. The beaver was naturally curious and trying to figure out what this motionless figure was.

"It surely couldn't be a human standing still for that long....especially at night. Is it a log sticking up in the mud?"

Finally the beaver slowly paddled off...probably to share the news of this full moon oddity with its friends.

## *In the Field...by Ginger Shoemake*



On February 25, MerryLynn found and photographed a **northern mockingbird** at Peninsula HMU on one of the last remaining patches of big sage. This species is rare in Walla Walla County and the first she had seen here in 10 years.

On February 26 Mike and MerryLynn found two **rusty blackbirds** at the blood pond on Dodd Road.



*Female rusty blackbird—photo by MerryLynn Denny*

They also saw **tree swallows** and a few **violet-green swallows** on Iverson Road the same day.

Mike and MerryLynn took Rodger and me over to the blood ponds on February 28. We found 3 **rusty blackbirds**—more than ever reported at one time in Walla Walla County.

On March 4, Mike and MerryLynn cleaned out all 9 bluebird boxes on Lewis Peak Road. There were 2 pair of **western bluebirds** at two of the boxes, and they saw a total of 9 western bluebirds.

Mike and MerryLynn drove up Klicker Mountain Road on March 5 to check on the burned areas. There were many signs of flaking from **black-backed woodpeckers** on the burned trees but they didn't see any. They did see **flickers**, **hairy woodpeckers** and a **pileated woodpecker**.

Pam Fisher reported **tree swallows** on Mill Creek on March 7.

Mike and MerryLynn led the "Curlews and Shooting Stars" Field Trip on March 13. The weather didn't cooperate, but we all had a great time despite the rain and wind. We didn't see any **long-billed curlews**, but there were many more interesting birds seen including a **peregrine falcon** and the **rusty blackbirds** on Dodd

Road, a **Wilson's snipe** on the Lowden/Gardena Road and a **common loon** on the Columbia River. A total of 64 species were seen by 18 hearty souls.



The hillsides on Hatch Grade were covered with **prairie stars**. A few **desert shooting stars** were beginning to bloom and a lone **yellow bell** brightened up the rainy day.



*Photos by Judy Treman*



My yard list at our new home is beginning to grow. By March 18 we had 22 species including 7 or 8 of these beautiful **lesser goldfinches** that spend most of the day at the thistle feeder.

*Photo by Rodger Shoemake*

On March 15, the Bennington Lake Tuesday walkers were greeted by returning swallows. Both **violet-green** and **tree swallows** were flying over the lake. It was

pretty quiet for the rest of the walk until we heard a **northern saw-whet owl** calling from the canal. We searched by could not find it. However, we did find many **juncos** and a **brown creeper**. The **beavers** have been very busy harvesting trees all around the lake.

Wally Tomlinson walked Rooks Park and Mill Creek on March 18. He found several **great blue herons** by the nests near the creek and was able to get this great photo of one of them.



Martine Purcell reported some nice birds at her feeders on March 18 including a hungry **lesser goldfinch**. She also had **American goldfinches**, **house finches**, **juncos**, **pine siskins**, a **chestnut-backed chickadee**, a **downy woodpecker**, a **red-breasted nuthatch** and a **varied thrush**.

Rodger and I watched **long-billed curlews** displaying on Lambdin Road on March 19. On the way home we saw many **red-tailed hawks** on Byrnes Road and Dry Creek Road. Several of them were already on nests.

Jim and Sue Parrish took some out-of-town friends up Jasper Mountain Road on March 21. They saw a **great gray owl** and two **turkey vultures**.

MerryLynn found a **northern rough-winged swallow** on Detour Road on March 21. She also saw **white-throated swifts** in Wallula Gap.



Many of us drove to the Othello area to see the **sandhill cranes** in mid-March. They didn't disappoint with their wonderful call and beautiful flight. There

were also other birds to look for in the area. We saw several **long-billed curlews** while Jim and Sue Parrish found **burrowing owls** and Jim took this photo.

The **osprey** was back at Bennington Lake on March 22. There were many **violet-green swallows** and **tree swallows** over the water. **Gadwall**, **American wigeons**, **mallards** and a **green-winged teal** were on the water. The **red-tailed hawk** was adding sticks to its nest along the canal and a pair of **northern harriers** were swooping over the open fields.

MerryLynn was out looking for migrants on March 23. She found **cliff swallows** on Byrnes Road. She noted that there were still about 50 **snow geese** and over 450 **greater white-fronted geese** near Casey Pond. Back home she watched a pair of courting **Cooper's hawks**.

There were 49 **evening grosbeaks** in the Denny's yard on March 25.

**Caspian terns** were seen by Mike and MerryLynn at the Walla Walla River delta on March 26. They were also noted by another birder at McNary NWR Headquarters the same day.

One of the prettiest songs of early spring is that of the **western meadowlark**. I have been hearing one singing just across Yellowhawk Creek from our yard since we moved in March 1. Listen for it when you are out in open areas—I know it will make you smile.



MerryLynn captured this photo of a western meadowlark on top of a sage recently at Wallula HMU.

We've been teased by a few early returning summer birds. April will bring hummingbirds, early warblers and much more. Keep your eyes and ears alert for arrivals. Also, great horned owls will have young and will be fun to watch in their nests or cavities. Let me know what you are seeing: [housewren084@gmail.com](mailto:housewren084@gmail.com)

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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](http://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

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