



Blue Mountain Audubon Society

# The Magpiper

October 2018

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## An Evening of Owls

### BMAS Meeting

October 18<sup>th</sup> @7p.m.  
Olin Hall, Room 129



Ever been watched by an owl? Seen their large eyes study you from their high perch? What exactly do they see? Audubon's October Meeting will give you hands-on experience in seeing like an owl. The

experience will be accompanied by an overview of owl anatomy presented by Kathy McConnell, Audubon's Education Chairman, and Mike Denny, Walla Walla's well-loved naturalist. Mike will show photos and share more information about owls. The highlight of the evening will be a visit by Lynn Tompkins of Blue Mountain Wildlife with live owls. Give a hoot about owls? Join us for an engaging evening of owl talk.

## Field Trip

### Fort Walla Walla Natural Area

Saturday, October 20, 9:00 a.m.

Leaders: Chris Howard and Tom Land

Bring your families and friends for a leisurely walk exploring and learning about wildlife and their habitat; all within the Walla Walla City limits.

The 65-acre Fort Walla Walla Natural Area contains over 2 miles of trails maintained by the Blue Mountain Audubon Society and the City of Walla Walla. The trails take you through heavily vegetated areas with large trees, open areas, across a small stream, and beside spring-fed ponds and marshy areas. The area abounds with birds and other wildlife.

Meet in the Natural Area parking area located along the road to the Fort Walla Walla Museum main entrance off Myra Road. The walk will last approximately 1 1/2 hours. Most of the trails are covered with wood chips. There are several steps and two bridges. For a map of the trails visit Blue Mountain Audubon's web site at [blumtn.org](http://blumtn.org).

You do not have to be a member of Blue Mountain Audubon to attend and all ages are encouraged to attend. There is no sign-up required and is free.

If you have any questions, call or e-mail Chris Howard 509-386-5827 [chrish.734@gmail.com](mailto:chrish.734@gmail.com) or Tom Land 206-795-4620 [twland19@gmail.com](mailto:twland19@gmail.com)



**Blue Mountain Audubon Facebook Page**—For information regarding Blue Mountain Audubon programs, field trips, events, beautiful bird sightings and more . . . Check out Blue Mountain Audubon Facebook page at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/BlueMountainAudubonWallaWallaWa/>

Our Facebook page currently has 987 likes. Facebook Administrator Judy Treman thanks all for the support and urges you to be the one to push the number to 1000.

## Monthly Calendar

### Board Meeting

October 15, at 7:00 P.M.

### Membership Meeting

October 18, at 7:00 p.m.  
Olin Hall, Room 129

### Field Trips

October 20, 9:00 a.m.  
October 22, 6:30 p.m.

## Board of Directors

**President:** Chris Howard

**Vice President:** Jeff Fredson

**Secretary:** Paul and Judy Treman

**Treasurer:** Jonathan Webster

**Conservation:** Mike Denny

**Education:** Kathy McConnell

**Membership:** Melissa Webster and  
Holly Howard

**Programs:** Nancy Mitchell

**Publicity:** Jonathan Webster

**Natural Area:** Tom Land

**Bluebird Trails:** Tom Scribner

**Adopt a Highway:** Larry Boe

**Webmaster:** Kathy Howard

**Facebook Admin:** Judy Treman

**Field Trips:** Paul Treman

**Magpiper Layout:** Wendy Foster

**Community Outreach:** Mike Denny

**Member at Large:** Priscilla Dauble

**Bird Sightings:** Ginger Shoemake

## Website:

<http://www.blumtn.org>

## Bird sightings:

housewren084@gmail.com

## Contact BMAS:

Email: [chrish.734@gmail.com](mailto:chrish.734@gmail.com)

Mail: PO Box 1106

Walla Walla, WA 99362



Blue Mountain Audubon  
Society

## Field Trip Full Moon at Bennington Lake

Monday, October 22,  
6:30 p.m. to approximately 8:00  
p.m.

Leader: Chris Howard

Join Chris as he leads the group in a leisurely walk around the end of Bennington Lake. See the lake and surrounding areas immersed in shimmering golden moonlight as the full moon creeps higher in the sky.

The moonlight should be bright enough that the trail will be easily visible without a flashlight. Listen and look for geese and ducks on the lake, and Great-horned Owls as they hoot to each other from distant perches with deep, vibrating hoots that echo across the lake. On the far side of the lake we may see and hear beavers as they slap the water with their tail warning others of our presence. There will be other sights and sounds, as well, that are unique to clear, cool night air which are enhanced in full moonlight.

All ages are encouraged to attend and you do not need to be a member of Blue Mountain Audubon to attend. We will meet at the Bennington Lake parking lot near the boat launch. Dress for the evening night air and bring a flashlight, which you hopefully won't need.

If the sky is overcast hiding the full moon, the walk will be postponed to another full moon evening. If you have any questions, call or e-mail Chris at 509-386-5827 and [chrish.734@gmail.com](mailto:chrish.734@gmail.com)

## Audubon News

With the fall colors emerging all around us, we begin our second month of the 2018 – 2019 Blue Mountain Audubon calendar. For our first program we were very fortunate to have Elena Fox with her very entertaining Crow and Raven. Even with a new venue and no Magpiper we had a great turn out for the program.

With a new year beginning we have some new faces and re-shuffling of old faces on our Blue Mountain board of directors. Ginger Shoemake, after many years of dedicated and talented service as editor of the Magpiper has retired and turned the reigns of running

the Magpiper over to Wendy Foster who as our newsletter designer will compile all the various news items in our information filled newsletter. George Jameson, our long standing Web-master, is leaving town for life on the road with his wife Deana. George is shepherding Kathy Howard, into the important job of maintaining our BMAS website. Mike Denny, hardly a new face, has taken over as Conservation Chair. Chris Howard will take over the role of president. All of the other board positions are filled with the same noble volunteers as last year.

In generating goals for the coming year, the board of directors emphasized the following goals:

- Increase family friendly field trips
- Introduce children to nature with the family friendly field trips and nature education events
- Focus attention on the Arthur J. Rempel Fort Walla Walla natural area as a close to home nature venue
- Remain sustainable as an organization by attracting new and younger members

We are making a special effort to gather the email addresses of anyone wishing to receive the Magpiper. With the beginning of the new year in January 2019 we plan for the Magpiper to be issued in digital form only. Please let us know your email address if you would like to receive the Magpiper. Send your email address to Nancy Mitchell at: mitchenl@whitman.edu.

We are hoping to see everyone at the upcoming field trips and monthly programs. We would love to have more volunteer energy on the board to share in all the different projects and events we plan to take on. Please contact a board member if you are looking to make a meaningful contribution.

## Highway Pickup

It was lonely at the Fall BMAS Highway-Pickup this morning, but three people filled a lot of bags in 1 1/2 hours. Thanks to Larry Boe, Coordinator and Chris Howard and Paul Treman. Be on the watch for the Spring Pickup announcement and mark it on your calendar!

## In the News Local

### Owls in Schools

Blue Mountain Audubon Society is joining Whitman College's Science Outreach Program for the fourth year in a row to offer bird-related activities during Family Science Nights. These are conducted at local elementary schools in Walla Walla, College Place, Milton-Freewater and Athena. The students at the Dixie School are invited to one of the evenings in Walla Walla.

This year's activities center around learning about the eyesight of owls and the reason for owl's having incredibly-flexible necks. Hands-on activities allow children to experience the challenges and adaptations by which owls spot prey. Our area is fortunate in having a number of owl species. Many children have heard owls in their own neighborhood and having read the Harry Potter books are fascinated by owls.

The educational arm of our local chapter also continues to sponsor the Free Little Library box located in the Aviary of Pioneer Park. Do visit, take a book and leave a book!

### Silver Falls State Park

#### Sparred Owl?



*Female Sparred Owl Photo contributed by Janice Reid, US Forest Service.*

For those looking for a beautiful fall trip without leaving the Northwest, Silver Falls State Park is a spectacular combination of fall colors and dramatic water falls. Located a short distance to the East of Salem, Oregon in the foothills of the mountains, it is Oregon's largest state park. It is a wonderful place to either hike, mountain bike or just be dazzled by the fall colors.

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### **Silver Falls** *continued from p. 3*

It offers the hike of 10 Falls, 5 of which are over 100 feet high. For a few of them the trail goes behind the cascading waters.

There are plenty of riparian areas as well as old growth forest providing habitat for a myriad of birds including 9 different types of owls. One of these species of owls is the Spurred Owl which is the hybrid of the Spotted and Barred Owls. When you visit the park go to the small natural history museum and ask to see the Spurred Owl that was mounted after it died from collision with a park truck. The park offers both camping areas and cabins that can be rented.

## **Musings—In the Balance**

There is no better time for a hike in the mountains than on the Equinox, either Spring or Fall. For this Autumnal Equinox, my wife, Kathy, and I, along with our aged dog, Rascal, went for a nature hike into the Blue Mountains. Kathy and I make great hiking partners. She has phenomenal hearing and I have great eyesight. We took the turn off on MacDougal road and drove to the end of the road for a majestic over look of the head waters of the Umatilla River valley and the trailhead for the Lick Creek and Grouse Mountain trails. This was a great day to represent the natural balance of the equinox. It was a cloudy day but the sun would peek through occasionally...a perfect balance of the dark and the light. The temperature was not too hot but not too cool either. The view of the mountains in their

beginning of fall colors was truly awe inspiring. Each little drainage was lined in deciduous bushes shining with bright red, orange, yellow and green hues. Bright red stripes of foliage overlaid the basalt ridges across the canyon. The Western Larch, or Tamarack were just beginning to turn a lighter shade of green.

As we walked through the woods and across the open, golden grass covered mountainsides, we noticed all the seed pods of what once were brightly colored flowers when we walked this trail in the early summer. I became aware of a sense of peace and calmness coming over me as we slowly meandered along the ups and downs of the mountain trail. The stillness was palatable. Occasionally, a flock of Chickadees would chirp from the bushes or a Steller's Jay would give a loud series of squawks to warn the forest dwellers of two-leggeds walking in their midst. Otherwise there was only the whisper of the breeze in the trees.

I have come to believe that immersion in nature is the best way for me to shed the tension of living in a mechanized, media driven daily life. As I climbed up a steep section of trail to its highest point, I was surprised to see that Rascal had scampered up after me. I had left him down below with Kathy but he refused to stay. I think both Rascal and I are unwilling to let age limit our activities for as long as we can. To end our hike we picked a high prominence with a magnificent view and sat quietly side by side to absorb the beauty of our natural surroundings... noticing the balance of our in-breath and out-breath...a perfect way to join with the earth in its day of celestial balance.



*Blue Mountain Audubon Society—Birding the Great River Bend field trip Sept. 29, 2018. Photo by Paul Treman*

**Thirty-five eager birders** joined Mike and MerryLynn Denny for a field trip exploring the Columbia River down to McNary Dam. Our caravan of 12 cars stopped at several spots along the way, walking trails and searching out birds, plants, bugs and other wildlife. It was a beautiful Indian

summer day enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Mike and MerryLynn for showing us wonderful birds and sights, including **California Scrub-Jays**, three **Cooper's Hawks**, a **Common Loon**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Black-crowned Night-herons**, many gulls, and the colorful Locust Borer Beetle!

# In the Field

by Ginger Shoemake

Photos by Judy Treman



Probably the rarest sighting was on August 26 when Mike and MerryLynn Denny found a **black phoebe** at the millet ponds.

This was the first record of the species in Walla Walla County. The Dennys reported it on eBird and on the Blue Mountain Facebook page, so several people had a chance to see it before it left.

Shorebird migration began in August and continued on through September. Again, the millet pond seemed to be the best place to find these birds. **Greater and lesser yellowlegs, solitary sandpipers, western sandpipers, pectoral sandpipers, long-billed dowitchers, Baird's sandpipers, semi-palmated sandpipers** and even a **marbled godwit** visited during their trip south for the winter. Some shorebirds can still be found into October so if you missed them earlier you may still see a few. **White-faced ibis** were seen at the millet ponds and also at the Wallula junction pond for several days in September.

Most of the summer breeding migrants have left, although Linda Hanson found a **yellow-breasted chat** at Bennington Lake on September 20. She also saw a **red-naped sapsucker** there the same day. There were a few lingering **western wood peewees** and **house wrens** at Bennington Lake in late September. **Wilson's warblers** were abundant there

most of September and **yellow-rumped warblers** began to show up later in the month. Several **olive-sided flycatchers** were seen at the lake including this one that Judy Treman photographed on August 28

We still had a **rufous hummingbird** and a **calliope hummingbird** in our yard on September 23. Don't put those hummingbird feeders away yet because **Anna's hummingbirds** have been spotted and they will stay around until it gets really cold in the winter months

Nine of us walked Bennington Lake on September 25. There was a nice variety of waterfowl on the lake including a **wood duck, canvasbacks, a horned grebe, wigeons, coots, green-winged teal, cinnamon teal** and a **gadwall**. A flock of **canada geese** flew over and there was a **cackling goose** with them. Four **turkey vultures** flew over and a **northern harrier** harassed the ducks on the water. A **great egret** and a **great blue heron** were in the canal along with several **killdeer**, a **long-billed dowitcher** and two **pectoral sandpipers**. A **kingfisher** was patrolling the area while we watched the shorebirds. Several **American pipits** were foraging in the mud on the east side and there was a **great horned owl** in the pine trees. **Ruby crowned kinglets, yellow-rumped warblers** and **black-capped chickadees** flitted around in the trees all around the lake. The leaves are just beginning to turn on the cottonwoods and by next week the colors should be more dramatic.

**White-crowned sparrows** are back and vocal. Also a few **juncos** and a couple **Townsend's solitaires** have been seen in the past couple weeks. Most of the **Swainson's hawks** have left to winter in South America, but **Sharp-shinned hawks** are beginning to show up and it won't be long before **rough-legged hawks** and **northern shrikes** return.

Email me [housewren084@gmail.com](mailto:housewren084@gmail.com) and let me know what you are seeing during the month of October.

# BLUE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON

The Magpiper  
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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](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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_