Join us for a 12-day wilderness birding adventure along the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Called “America’s Serengeti” for its tremendous biological productivity and diversity, the coastal plain is one of the most intact and untouched ecosystems in America. The refuge is home to 42 mammal species, including more than 120,000 head of caribou; 36 species of fish, and over 160 species of birds. Many of these birds migrate to and from all fifty states and from six continents to feed and reproduce, taking full advantage of the burst of biological growth which blossoms here in the long days of the Arctic summer.

Beginning on the scenic Marsh Fork, we descend northeast to the confluence with the main stem of the Canning River. Wildlife photographer Dan Streiffert lets you experience this trip through his camera with photos of the journey. Our guide, “Burly” Bob Dittrick (www.wildernessbirding.com) has led trips for President Jimmy Carter and photographer Art Wolfe.
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Website:
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Bird sightings:
housewren084@gmail.com

Contact BMAS:
Email: BlueMtnAudubon@gmail.com
Mail: PO Box 1106
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Field Trip
Bennington Lake in the Moonlight
Friday, Oct 11, 6:30 pm

Bennington Lake Parking Lot
Leader: Chris Howard

If a moonlit trek around Bennington Lake sounds like fun to you, then join Chris Howard on Friday, October 11th for this early evening adventure. When we meet in the parking lot at 6:30 to start the walk, the moon will already have risen over the Blues and will be shining on the lake. Besides the beautiful scenery, there’s an excellent chance that with Chris’s expertise we’ll find several Great Horned Owls, as well as beavers out and about and hard at work bringing branches back to their lodge. Bring kids, a flashlight, warm clothing, and a sense of adventure. Whooo knows what else we’ll find?

Come spend the afternoon with the birds!
Blue Mountain Wildlife’s OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, October 19 from 1-4pm.

Blue Mountain Wildlife, located in Pendleton, Oregon, is a wildlife rehabilitation and education center that specializes in raptor care. Nearly a thousand birds visit the center each year. Most of the animals have had negative encounters with humans, such as collisions with vehicles, gunshot wounds or poisoning. Learn how they are cared for, rehabilitated, and released back to the wild. Blue Mountain Wildlife is the only center to serve southeastern Washington and eastern Oregon. On October 19, you can tour the grounds, watch a falconry demonstration, enjoy live bluegrass music, and construct and paint a birdhouse. You’ll see eagles, hawks, owls, vultures, ravens and many other birds up close. This is a family friendly event. Blue Mountain Wildlife is located at 71046 Appaloosa Lane, Pendleton, Oregon
Cold Springs Reservoir
Field Trip Review

By Sue Parrish

What better way to spend a gorgeous Sunday than heading to Umatilla County to search for migrants and shore birds with Mike Denny? So, on Sept 15th, 12 of us headed “out west” to see what we could find. Our first stops were Sand Station, Warehouse Beach and then Hat Rock State Park. The highlights were Wilson’s Snipe, Pied-Billed and Eared Grebes, Marsh Wrens, a young Black Crowned Night Heron fishing, a Cackling Goose, and a Mulberry tree chuck full of Cedar Waxwings. Next was McNary dam for lunch, followed by a careful, but futile, search for Sabine’s gull and Parasitic Jaeger. The final stop was Cold Springs Reservoir, which was a new spot for most of us. By trucking out across the smartweed flats, we found Pectoral and Baird’s Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, Green winged teal, numerous pelicans and many gulls “miles” away. A herd of Elk with five big bulls was a treat, as well as a giant locust, which is unusual for the area. All told, 40 bird species were seen; I was able to add five to my year list. Many thanks to Mike for his expert and enthusiastic guidance, as to all who came along to enjoy the day.
BMAS Highway Pickup
Saturday, Oct 26, 9:00 am
Blue Mountain Audubon maintains the cleanup on a mile long stretch of Highway 12 north of town. Volunteers pick up highway litter along this stretch two times a year. This Fall pickup event is scheduled for Saturday, October 26th at 9:00 am. We meet at the Spaulding Road exit off of Highway 12. Please join us for this opportunity to provide service to the environment and the community. Many hands make light work of this project. It usually takes about an hour or so. See you there!

Washington State Wolf Post-Recovery
Comments Invited
If you are a person who believes we are better with an intact, balanced environment including the keystone predators, now is your chance to advocate for that viewpoint. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is taking comments from the public as part of the scoping process in developing a statewide wolf management plan for after the wolves are taken off the federal endangered species act. You can go to the WDFW website: http://wdfw.wa.gov and find out more information about wolves and their population in Washington State. To make a comment regarding the future management plan, submit your comment to: wdfw.wa.gov/wolves-post-recovery . Comments can also be mailed to: Lisa Wood/ SEPA/NEPA Coordinator/ WDFW Habitat Program/ P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA/99850-3200. Your comment needs to be submitted before 5 p.m. November 1st. Please take this opportunity to make your views known. There will definitely be people commenting who would prefer to have wolves eliminated from our environment as they were not long ago. The wolves thank you for your support.

President’s Corner
Birds in Crisis
By Chris Howard
A recent publication of the world’s leading scientific journal, Science, reported the loss of 2.9 billion birds from the United States and Canada since 1970. This is a loss of a quarter of our worldwide bird population in less than a single human life span. The bird loss is across all ecosystems and includes familiar birds such as the Dark-eyed Junco, Meadowlark and other warblers and sparrows. Juncos have lost a startling 173 million individuals from its population.

Scientists have identified habitat loss as the biggest cause of species decline. Other causes are habitat degradation, collision with glass and other industrial infrastructure like buildings or wind turbines, cats and exposure to pesticides and other toxics.

What can we do as individuals in the face of these staggering losses? We can let congress know that they need to restore the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act and other important conservation acts. We can keep cats indoors, make our windows safer and avoid the use of pesticides for starters. View this short video from American Bird Conservancy https://youtu.be/cdzU84AyCdI and check out their website for more information.

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/
You do not need to sign up with Facebook to look at our page.
Some History of the
Arthur Rempel Natural Area
Fort Walla Walla Park

By Mike Denny

This 52 acre Natural Area is a representative site of the Walla Walla river valley as it once looked before the arrival of Western Europeans to the valley in the 19th century.

This entire area was part of Fort Walla Walla in the early 1880’s, and was used as an area to keep the fort’s horses, target practice with rifles and to grow a few fruit trees. It has three perennial springs that keep the area moist and loaded with plenty of surface water. After WWI this land remained Federal land as the towns of College Place and Walla Walla began to grow up around it. During the 1920’s and 30’s, it was still part of the US Army’s horse pastures and was also used by the new Veteran’s Hospital as a place to keep some horses and mules. Starting in 1918, just at the end of WWI, these federal lands were also used by the brand new US Forest Service to keep its riding and pack animals.

After 1941 and America’s involvement in WWII, the construction of the McCaw General Hospital and several of its out buildings occurred near by on parts of what is now the Arthur G. Rempel Natural Area. By the end of WWII in 1945, the US Army no longer maintained riding horses in the Natural Area. Instead the entire area was turned over to the US Forest Service where all their horses and mules were kept and grazed. This remained the situation until 1967. In 1954, the McCaw General Hospital burned down and the only remaining structures from that huge facility were on the grounds of the current Natural Area.

From 1967 this 52 acre site was donated to the City of Walla Walla and its Parks Department. In 1979, Blue Mountain Audubon met with the City of Walla Walla and proposed creating a nature trail system in the area. Mike Peterson, the then City Parks director, agreed that the BMAS should establish a trail system. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed and the construction of an outstanding trail system was started. Dr. Art Rempel, Biology Professor Emeritus, spent many afternoons hauling wood chips and raking them out on the trail. By the end of 1981, the trails were completed and chip covered. BMAS members Shirley Muse, Priscilla Dauble and Art Rempel spent many hours working there. Tom Scribner, Mike Denny, Jeb and Gloria Baldi, Chris Howard and groups of Whitman and Walla Walla College Students worked to maintain this new BMAS managed Natural Area that was then named in honor of Art Rempel. The caretakers from BMAS over the years have been Dr. Robson Newbold, Jan Gisler, Tom Land, Chris Howard and many other volunteers.

Natural Area
Trail Stewards

By Tom Land
Natural Area Coordinator

Last Thursday, seven of the trail stewards spent the morning sprucing up the trails. Thank you Chris Howard, Jonathan Webster, Doug Morton, Woody Simmons, Roger Muat, Aaron Randall and Tom Land.

The Blue Mountain Audubon Society would like to express it’s appreciation to the Blue Mountain Community Fund and the Donald and Ruth Roff Fund for awarding a grant to BMAS of $1000 to be used for improvements to the Rempel Natural Area. We are always looking for more trail stewards. Contact Tom Land if you would like to volunteer.
Musings

Magical Morning
By Chris Howard

In the middle of April this year, the beaver home at Bennington Lake was completely inundated by the diversion of water into the lake by the Corps of Engineers due to the threat of Mill Creek waters flooding Walla Walla. Since that time, I had not been completely certain whether the beaver family had returned to their established neighborhood or picked up sticks and moved to new digs. I wanted to find out.

I arrived at the lake at 5:15 a.m. on a mid-September morning. It was a perfectly clear early morning with the almost-full moon shining brightly in the western sky. The stars were still shining and Orion led my way as I crossed the bottom of the dam and scurried through the cottonwood glen. I wanted to get to the cliff overlooking the ancestral beaver home before they disappeared into their den. I could hear the numerous geese honking and ducks quacking as they cruised over the moonlit lake. I quietly crept up to the cliff on the south side of the lake and peered down through the trees to the old beaver den below. KWACK! Went a beaver tail letting me know that they were aware of my presence. Orion looked over my shoulder as I silently watched the beavers moving through the golden circle of moon light reflected on the lake. Slowly the sunlight grew brighter in the Eastern sky preparing to take over for the fading moon. A Kingfisher chittered loudly, dashing along the lake shore. As the beavers continued their work, the deep rhythmic hooting of a Great Horned Owl emanated from the woods to the north. As the dawn light became brighter I could clearly see a beaver ferrying a load of cut willow branches down the shore and tucking it into the food storage area in front of the den. I was surprised that they were still working in the clear morning light at 6:30. One beaver stopped on its ferrying of branches and ate its winter food supply for breakfast. Finally the last beaver made a couple of circles in front of the lodge assuring that all the doors were locked before diving into the underwater entrance.

A Great Blue Heron squawked loudly as it flew slowly across the lake. A pair of Ospreys circled overhead. The Canada Geese had their loud preflight briefings before lifting off into the dawn sky one flock at a time. Slowly walking back, I stopped to watch a spider weaving its web between forked branches, reminding me that this is all part of the web of life. All in all, a magical morning.

In the Field
By Ginger Shoemake

Sitting on my back patio that overlooks Yellowhawk Creek with my cup of coffee by my side and my binoculars in my hand, I eagerly watched for bird movement the first week of September. I wasn’t disappointed! I saw a pine siskin, a warbling vireo, a Nashville warbler, an Anna’s hummingbird, and a white-crowoned sparrow along with my regular yard birds. My best sighting however, was an osprey that flew over with a fish in its mouth. It was coming from Bennington Lake.

Pam Fisher watched western tanagers at the water features in her yard on September 2. She noted that they come through every fall about this time. She posted a photo on the Blue Mountain Audubon Facebook page—check it out!

Seven of us walked Bennington Lake on September 3. The lake was full of brown ducks (all in eclipse plumage). This is a very hard time of year to identify ducks at a distance; but a good time to try to learn to identify them by size and shape. We were able to recognize American wigeons, northern shoveler, mallards, cinnamon teal and green-winged teal. There was only one shorebird along the shore – a spotted sandpiper. MerryLynn was there the next day and had better luck – she photographed a least sandpiper and put a photo on eBird. She also saw 3 Lewis’s woodpeckers, also with photos on eBird. It just proves that birds may
be at a spot one day, and not on another day. This is particularly true during migration.

Linda Hanson reported an Anna’s hummingbird at her feeder on September 6. This was a new yard bird for her.

MerryLynn found a parasitic jaeger harassing the gulls on the Columbia River while she was birding at Peninsula HMU on September 9.

We saw scores of white-crowned sparrows along the canal on our Bennington Lake walk on September 10. We also saw many house finches, lesser goldfinches and black-capped chickadees. Two osprey flew over the lake looking for a quick meal (which they didn’t get while we were watching) and Vaux’s swifts swirled around. Of course we were looking for vagrant birds (rare warblers, etc.) but didn’t find any.

Rodger and I took a drive up Jasper Mountain and down Paine Hollow on September 15. There were still a few western bluebirds around and lots of black-capped chickadees and red-breasted nuthatches. Juncos were along the side of the roads on the way down, so it won’t be long before they are back in our yards. We saw a soaring turkey vulture just west of Dayton on the way home.

Melissa Cummins sent me a couple photos from the Field Trip to Cold Springs NWR, Hat Rock State Park and other locales on September 15. The greater yellowlegs was at Cold Springs and the immature black-crowned night heron was at Hat Rock.

MerryLynn found a burrowing owl north of Prescott on September 18. She tried to get a photo, but it flushed and flew off before she could get her camera focused. It’s rare to find this species in the county, although in past years they were seen occasionally in remote areas.

Evening grosbeaks have been coming into the feeders at the Denny yard in College Place for over a week. On September 19, MerryLynn reported 9 of them.

Bruce Toews found 2 Clark’s grebes and 16 common terns at McNary NRS Peninsula HMU on September 21.

MerryLynn had some nice birds on Donnelly Road on September 21, including a long eared owl, a loggerhead shrike, several vesper sparrows and a rock wren. Look for her complete list of this and other locations on eBird. She has been looking for a sage thrasher for a couple weeks, and finally found on Nine Mile Canyon Road the same day.

We were sitting in our son’s yard on Stateline on September 22 and noticed that the trees were full of yellow-rumped warblers. There were at least a dozen of them.

Where have all the raptors gone? Usually in mid-September the Swainson’s hawks gather south of the Lowden/Toucheet area before heading south for the winter. There have been a few of them around, but the large numbers are not here this year. We drove by an alfalfa field being cut and I didn’t see a single bird. Usually the hawks follow the tractor picking up tasty tidbits, but not this year. It’s looking like this is one of those years where the rodent population is low. It will be interesting to see how many red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, rough-legged hawks and American kestrels are around this winter.

There is still time to catch the tail end of fall migration, so get out there and see what you can find. Also, let me know what raptors you are seeing. Email your sightings to me at housewren084@gmail.com.
Blue Mountain Audubon Society Mission Statement:

Blue Mountain Audubon Society (BMAS) objectives are to serve its membership and the larger communities of Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon with goals to appreciate, conserve and enjoy birds, wildlife and the natural environment of the area. Education is a primary objective of our chapter activities. Through volunteer efforts BMAS provides educational opportunities, conservation activities and enjoyment of wildlife and wildlife habitat opportunities to members and the public.

Blue Mountain Audubon Society was organized in 1971 and chartered by National Audubon Society in 1972. BMAS is a non-profit 501c(3) organization. Find us on the internet at www.blumtn.org or on Facebook.

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:____________________________________________

Bird of the Month

White-crowned Sparrow
Zonotrichia leucophrys

by Ginger Shoemake

Fall is upon us and our winter birds are returning. One of the first to make an appearance is the white-crowned sparrow, which was first seen early in September. It is one of the most common winter birds in our area and the adult is easily identified by its black and white striped crown, plain gray throat and breast, wing bars and a pinkish bill. Immature birds have a brown and tan striped crown. Both sexes look the same in both the adult and immature birds.

White-crowned sparrows are found in brushy habitat. They are seed eaters and are a common visitor under backyard feeders and in backyard brush piles. They arrive early in the morning and feed until dark. Although they do not nest here, they spend almost nine months here serenading us with their beautiful song and cheeky attitude.

There are three other Zonotrichia sparrows: golden-crowned sparrow, white-throated sparrow and Harris’s sparrow. They can all be found here in the winter but are uncommon to rare. The golden-crowned sparrow has a large black stripe on its crown with a yellow fore crown and a bicolor bill. The white-throated sparrow has a very sharp dark border on a white throat, and a gray bill. These two species look similar to the white-crowned sparrow at a glance, so you need to take a closer look. The Harris’s sparrow is the largest of the four and the lightest in color with a white belly, black breast stripe, light brown head and a pink bill. All three relatives of the white-crowned sparrow can be found in similar habitats.