Most of us have heard the sickening “THUD” of a bird hitting our window. Collisions with glass cause the death of up to a billion birds per year in North America. Collisions are preventable; with new options to prevent bird crashes ranging from simple to ingenious. Find out what you can do about this problem!

Blue Mountain Audubon Society
March Membership Meeting

Bird Collisions with Glass
Thursday, March 17 at 7:00 p.m. PST
This presentation will be via Zoom. You will find the Zoom link on our website at www.blumtn.org or on the Blue Mountain Audubon Facebook page.

Rare Bird at the Walla Walla River Delta
By MerryLynn Denny

On February 12 I was birding the Columbia River and after spending an hour scopeing the waterfowl at the Port of Wallula, I hiked up to the bluff at the WWRDelta and scopeed for birds there. It was a sunny day with a chilly breeze, and the water level was low making acres of shallow water and mudflats for the waterfowl to loaf and feed on. After counting the numerous swans and ducks I hiked to the north and started scopeing there—many Canvasback, Ring-necked Ducks and scaup covering the river on out. Suddenly I spotted a bird that I knew instantly was a long-looked-for TUFTED DUCK. This bird was Ring-necked Duck sized with gleaming white sides, black back, blue-gray bill and dark head with a long tuft sticking out the back.

This is the 3rd record for Walla Walla County. These birds may be more common than we know but often are hard to pick out in huge rafts of scaup out on the river.

Tufted Duck belongs to the Pochard family and has a huge range covering Europe, Asia clear to the Aleutian Islands. Population estimated at well over a million birds. They are regular vagrants on both coasts of North America in winter but more rare inland.

Bruce Barga started birding in high school, inspired by ornithology teacher, Mr. Jim Fielder. Obtained degree in Wildlife Biology and Masters degree in Veterinary Microbiology, studying duck herpesviruses. Faced with the prospect of 4 years of Vet school versus 4 years of Med school, he chose the later, and practiced as a general internist in Walla Walla for 30+ years. Now retired, he finds more time for birds!
Monthly Calendar

Board Meeting
March 10, 7:00 p.m.

Membership Zoom Meeting
March 17, 7:00 p.m.

Board of Directors
President: Chris Howard
Vice President: Tim Parker
Secretary: Kay Barga
Treasurer: Jonathan Webster
Conservation: Mike Denny
Education: Kay Barga and Sue Parrish
Membership: Melissa Webster and Holly Howard
Programs and Publicity: Nancy Mitchell
Natural Area: Tom Land
Bluebird Trails: Tom Scribner
Adopt a Highway: Larry Boe
Webmaster: Kathy Howard
Facebook Admin: Judy Treman
Field Trips: Sue Parrish
Mappiper Layout: Wendy Foster
Community Outreach: Mike Denny
Bird Sightings: Ginger Shoemake
Bird Safety Advocate: Bruce Barga

Website:
http://www.blumtn.org

Bird sightings:
BlueMtnAudubon@gmail.com

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

President’s Corner
By Chris Howard

As I write this, I am looking out into a backyard covered with snow and large mix of birds clamoring for their turn at the bird feeders. Even with this late February snow shower, I am sure that spring is just around the corner. Blue Mountain Audubon continues chapter activities regardless of weather. The trails at the Fort Walla Walla Natural Area are wide open. Walking after a snow fall reveals the tracks of the wild residents of the area. Yesterday there were lots of Bewick’s Wrens, Song Sparrows, Chickadees and Magpies. Tuesday morning is a great time to join other birders for a bird walk around Bennington Lake. This week we spotted Great Horned Owls and other hardy winter birds despite the below freezing temperatures. Our March monthly membership meeting presentation will focus on bird safety lessons offered by Bruce Barga, our board bird safety advocate. For our March field trip, Sue and Jim Parrish will guide participants to view Sand Hill Cranes near the Tri-Cities. Join us for any of these activities which are all listed on our website www.blumtn.org

March Arrivals By Ginger Shoemake

It’s time to start watching for our spring and summer birds to return. Some are just passing through, but most of them nest here. It’s always exciting to see new birds. Here are some of the birds you may encounter.

Turkey vulture — pass through on their way to the mountains

Sandhill crane — pass through on their way to nesting grounds in the far northern parts of Canada and Alaska. The Othello area is the best place to see them in big numbers.

Long-billed curlew — look for them on Riggs Road south of Touchet.

Caspian tern — look for them at the Walla Walla River Delta and McNary NWR Headquarters

White-throated swift — look for them over the cliffs in Wallula Gap and at Palouse Falls State Park

Say’s phoebe — a few have been spotted this winter, but most show up in March or later

Tree Swallow — Usually the first of the swallows to arrive

Violet-green swallow and Cliff swallow — Bennington Lake is always a good place to find all of the swallows

Mountain and western bluebird — Look for them around the boxes on Jasper Mountain and Lewis Peak roads.

Yellow-rumped warbler — a few wintered here, but more will be coming through this month

Fox sparrow — you might hear their beautiful song if you walk along South Fork Coppei Creek
Blue Mountain Audubon Society
Field Trips
By Sue Parrish; Photos by Jim Parrish

Recap of February Field Trip
Over 30 lucky people joined Mike Denny and Chris Howard on a beautiful day as they led a trip through the McNary Dam Natural area. Within the many ponds, over 40 species of birds were seen; Some of the highlights included 14 roosting Black Crowned Night Herons, several beautiful Wood Ducks, two White Throated Sparrows, and a Golden Crowned Sparrow. Several families with young children attended, and the kids enthusiasm and bird spotting ability certainly added to the fun.

March Field Trip: Sandhill Cranes
On Saturday March 12, join Jim and Sue Parrish as they lead a trip to Snively Road in West Richland to see Sandhill Cranes up close and personal. At this location, the cranes are usually within a hundred yards of the road, offering great opportunities to view and photograph them as they land, dance and call. Meet at Whitman at 8am, bring cameras and binoculars and some snacks. We'll caravan in our own cars and return to WW by 1:00 pm. Prepare to be amazed by these beautiful prehistoric looking birds.

Directions to Snively Rd: (just in case)
Take Hwy 12 to Tri-Cities. After Crossing the Columbia River, stay in the R lane and take exit 4, Hwy 240W. Stay on 240 W (it makes a L hand turn at signal after airport) and continue past Horn Rapids Golf course to Twin Bridges Rd. Take a L on Twin Bridges and then a R onto N Snively. After a few hundred yards, pull over, roll down the windows and enjoy the cranes.

Blue Mountain Audubon Society
Education Outreach
By Kay Barga and Sue Parrish

Audubon’s education outreach continues to grow and gather enthusiasm in our schools. In February, Kay spent two days in Mrs. Locati’s first grade class. She introduced the Great Backyard Bird Count to the kids with a video, and after brainstorming the kids decided they needed binoculars, bird ID books, bird food and a notebook. Then the kids made and decorated binoculars. On day two, the students made pine cone bird feeders and received a record sheet with pictures of common birds they may see. After the count, Kay collected the record sheets and the kids will be given bird books for participating. In April, Kay has been invited back to the classroom to do egg explorations around Easter.

Sue shared the Backyard Bird Count info with kids at Garrison, including links to the Cornell website, directions for participation and a digital document listing common birds and their photos. A similar document on owls and their calls was shared, as this is their nesting period. Students were encouraged to see how many owls they can find and hear in their neighborhood. In March Sue will be visiting Shannon Harvey’s third grade class, giving a presentation on owls found in our area. The following week, she’ll lead a field trip to Bennington hoping to find Great Horned and Barn Owls as well as other common species.

Kids are getting excited about birds. Yeah!
In Memory of Priscilla Dauble

Long time members of Blue Mountain Audubon Society have fond memories of Priscilla Dauble who passed away peacefully in her home on January 30th. Priscilla was a founding member who shared her wisdom and knowledge of birds, wildlife and native plants on field trips and bird walks throughout years of Audubon membership. Priscilla loved to be outdoors. She helped me guide junior high students on a rainy overnight campout in the North Fork of the Toucanan River. She walked with us on the Bennington Bird Walks as long as she could physically manage it. Below are memories of Priscilla from her friends and fellow Auduboners. —Chris Howard

Blue Mountain Audubon Society is saddened by the passing of founding member Priscilla Dauble yesterday at age 97. Priscilla was a much loved and stalwart member of Audubon, a passionate birder and a champion of the environment. She loved the mountains and was a wildflower expert. No matter what the weather, she always looked for a patch of blue in the sky! —Judy Treman

I have so many memories of this amazing woman! Our many birding trips to Malheur and the Oregon Coast, huckleberry picking at her secret place in the Blues, Bennington Lake walks, talking about books politics and the environment just to name a few. It was a privilege to have her as a friend. —Ginger Shoemake

I don’t remember what year it was but Priscilla, Kim Hallatt-Jones and I were assigned the northern section of the region for the Christmas Bird Count. It had snowed recently and two feet of snow covered the valley. That day it was 14 degrees. Priscilla was driving her trusty Subaru.

We had a fabulous day of birding and on the last leg of the trip, Priscilla took a right turn on to Middle Waitsburg Road but she turned a little too sharply and the car slid into the ditch. Easy problem to solve, right? Call or a tow truck... BUT, we couldn’t get any reception.

What to do? Sit in the car and hope someone will come along? We did that for a while but the sun was getting low in the sky and the temperature was dropping. We remembered that we had seen a farmhouse not far back along the road and talked about what to do if no one was there. Would we break into the house so we wouldn’t freeze to death and hope they had a phone we could use?

We decided to start walking toward the house and in my mind I was thinking -- I’m with an 80+ year old woman, and another woman in her 70s, what was I going to do to get us out of this pickle!! Well, lucky for us along came a car with a young man and woman who had been up the road at a farm feeding the animals; they kindly drove us to my car that was parked in the HJT parking lot and Kim took her car and went home; I dropped Priscilla off at her home where she called a tow truck; when she learned from them what time they would be there, I picked her up and took her back to her car and followed her home. All ended well. This is my “short but fabulous take” on Priscilla Winget Dauble. —Nancy Mitchell
into the tall overhead trees and was auditorily assaulted by the barking of two other dogs in the window of the next house. The barking of those dogs caused the dogs across the street to start barking even though they didn’t even know why they were barking. As a background to the barking dogs, I became aware of the constant roar of cars speeding up and down nearby Isaacs Avenue, trying to prove who has the loudest muffler with no interest at all in finding owls.

Just before the little girls at the corner house started squealing in a game of chase, as only little girls can squeal, I heard the soft woooo woooo wooo of a Western Screech Owl rising above the din. This call was answered by another owl somewhere across the street. These calls invigorated my endeavor to find these elusive little owls. I looked overhead to the outstretched limb of an ancient Maple tree. I knew there was hole in the elbow of the limb which I suspected might be an owl hideaway. I pulled up my binoculars to check out what appeared to be a face looking down at me. Yes, it was a face! A face of a squirrel that I am sure was laughing at me. Hearing the hooting again, I looked to the top of a neighboring Maple where there was a dark figure silhouetted against the night sky. It was moving! Surely it was the long-sought after owl...nope, it was another squirrel getting an evening snack. Following the hoots to a large evergreen tree I looked up and spotted the little owl on a limb preening itself. Next another Screech Owl swooped on to the limb and then they both took off for a romantic interlude. Hooray! It’s great to witness the wonders of nature in one’s own neighborhood. Slowly I turned and walked under the still smiling squirrel and headed home for dinner.

So don’t be too concerned if you see someone with binoculars standing under the moonlight in front of your house. It’s only the urban birder looking for that elusive little owl.
In the Field

By Ginger Shoemake

Four brave souls braved the cold and fog on January 25 to walk Bennington Lake. A large flock of snow geese flew over but didn’t land. However, they did find 18 hooded mergansers, 40 common mergansers, 6 ring-necked ducks and three mallards on the water. They also saw a bald eagle and five great horned owls along with the usual passerines.

Melissa Cummins and Diana Elder enjoyed a good day of birding east of Walla Walla on January 28. Highlights from the day were rough-legged hawk, hermit thrush and Townsend’s solitaire on Scenic Loop, bald eagle and dippers on Mill Creek, a flock of Bohemian waxwings on South Fork Coppei Creek, and both Cooper’s and sharp-shinned hawks on Blue Creek.

On January 29, George and Deanna Jameson, Rodger and I birded the Snake River up to and around Little Goose Dam. There were Canada geese and common mergansers galore and a spattering of other waterfowl. Between Texas Rapids and the dam, we saw 12 bald eagles – all of them adults. At Texas Rapids we found a pair of great horned owls. It was an enjoyable sunny drive along a beautiful stretch of the Snake River.

Nine-year-old Nico Banderas spotted this white-throated sparrow and took this photo in his front yard under a feeder.

Chris and Kathy Howard were very surprised to see three sandhill cranes at the Wallula Junction Pond on January 30.

A northern mockingbird was seen by several people the first week of February at Madame Dorian Park after being spotted there by Joe and Bonnie Roemer on January 22.

Chris Howard found a western screech owl in his neighborhood the evening of February 10. The next morning very early he went out to Bennington Lake to see what had spent the night on the lake. He wasn’t disappointed because he saw 57 tundra swans on the lake along with 28 cackling geese, 285 Canada geese, a ring-necked duck, a hooded merganser and 5 common mergansers. Always on the lookout for owls, he found three great horned owls on his walk.

MerryLynn found a tufted duck at the Walla Walla River Delta on February 12. (See front page.) Photo by Nancy LaFramboise.

The western bluebirds are back on Jasper Mountain! On February 13 MerryLynn found a pair of them at a nest box and then two more males further up. She also found two white-breasted nuthatches while walking up past the snow-covered road at the “S” curves. Sounds like it might be a few weeks before driving is possible on the upper part of the road.

The ferruginous hawks are returning to their nesting sites. On February 7 Rodger and I saw one fly off the nest platform on Nine Mile Canyon Road. On February 17 we saw one standing on the platform on North Touchet Road and the other one close-by on the ground.

I put the heater back in the hummingbird feeder when the temperature dipped on February 21. A little Anna’s hummingbird was there first thing in the morning to get some energy food so help it make it through the cold.
On February 23 I glanced out the window and saw two varied thrushes using their beaks to poke through the debris under the trees in the back yard looking for something to eat. They spent the afternoon working the area and I was able to get a photo with my phone through the window. Evidently they found a good source of food because they were around every day for the rest of the week.

Several people on ebird reported seeing a loggerhead shrike on Nine Mile Canyon Road. They nested along this road last year, so hopefully they are returning to nest there again.

March is an exciting time here in the Walla Walla Valley. The birds are beginning to return, the weather will begin to warm up and wildflowers will start to pop out of the ground. Get out there and enjoy Spring!

Report your sightings in March to BlueMtnAudubon@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 Sites
By Sue Weiler
Educational and entertaining articles gleaned from scientific research on the internet.

Feather Atlas
Check out the FEATHER ATLAS — an image database dedicated to the identification and study of the flight feathers of North American birds. The feathers illustrated are from the curated collection of the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory. This is a great resource for identifying feathers of up to 438 species!

Altruism in Birds?
Magpies have outwitted scientists by helping each other remove tracking devices. —The Scientist Magazine

Variegated eagle feather. Dreamstime stock photo

Australian magpie

Varied Thrush

Photo by Ginger Shewmake