



KITITTAS AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE HOOTER

Hooter

EDITOR CRICKET WEBB

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This year will mark the 105th annual Christmas Bird Count. In light of that I will review the history for those who are aware that this single action has such a long history and important purpose. Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt": They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition-a "Christmas Bird Census"-that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Frank M. Chapman and the enthusiasm of twenty-seven dedicated birders, twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied a total of 90 species on all the counts combined.

To be included in the Christmas Bird Count

Call Phil 962-2191 or Jeb 933-1558

Contact the other members of your team to arrange meeting place. Be prepared to meet your team before the sun comes up and spend all day birding. Bring Binoculars and field guides.

Each team has a piece of the pie to count. Most bring lunch but check with your team.

If you have limited experience you will be teamed with a more experienced birder or two. Remember all this has to be recorded so if you want to participate but do not think you can help by identifying or verifying the bird species, you can count how many there are and record the number.

Last year, in Kittitas county alone, 30 individuals counted 19,432 total birds from 81 species. I wonder what the total will be this year. Join the fun and find out.

All of the counts over time have helped us understand the migratory ranges of birds and how many there are now. Have the declined or expanded their range?

How this works

Each count area is a 15 mile wide circle. The circle is divided up into pie wedges. Teams try to count all the birds in their area without counting the same bird twice. This requires a minimum of 2 people (all sightings and ID’s need to be verified) but more the more eyes the better. When your area is done, bring your list and come to the potluck



Christmas Bird Count Potluck

DATE SATURDAY December 17th **TIME** When ever you get done birding
PLACE Steve Hall’s house **4030 Look Road, Ellensburg **
What to bring The list of birds and a potluck dish

Come and find out what other birds were found.

Field Trips

December 3rd: First Saturday BirdWalk at Irene Rinehart River Front Park. Meet at 8:00AM at the bridge parking lot. Winter is the season for seeing more waterfowl on the ponds, so join us wearing warm clothes and binoculars in hand.

December 17th: Kittitas Audubon's 27th Christmas Bird Count. See details elsewhere in the Hooter.

January 7th, 2006: Start the New Year with a First Saturday BirdWalk at Irene Rinehart Park in the brisk cool weather. Meet at 8:00AM at the bridge parking lot, wear lots of warm clothes and we will see what we can spot.

January 14th, 2006: A Saturday morning at the CWU bird preservation archives with Phil Mattocks. You must register for this field trip as space is limited to twelve. Call Jeb to sign up at 933-1558

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

October 15, 2005 Sportsman's State Park in Yakima

Because this was the opening day of the general hunting season, the selection of a field trip was challenging. Where does one go to not be a problem for hunters--or they for us? We decided on Sportsman's State Park on the east side of the Yakima River across from the Yakima Greenway. The approach was from Keys Road parking lot (north end). A beautiful fall morning with no wind warmed to 'shirt-sleeve temperatures' before the day was done. Yellow-rumped Warblers (both Myrtle and Audubon's) were in abundance. More un-

usual sightings included Prairie Falcon, Western Grebe, Ruddy Duck, and Bewick's Wren, with great looks at Wood Ducks. The strange find of the day was a white-headed House Finch which took us a while to identify, even while it lingered in our view before skitting off. We ended the day of beautiful fall colors with a total of forty species with the addition of a muskrat and a number of colorful mushrooms. We are so fortunate to live in such a diverse environment with so much beauty.

Jeb Baldi

November 17, 2005 Upper county

Sixteen KAS members ventured out into the FOG Saturday morning the 17th for a birding trip into the Upper County with Ed Malais and Judy Reed. Thirty-nine species were recorded.

What a beginning! Sixteen juvenile Trumpeter Swans on the small pond at the intersection of Airport and Masterson Roads. From there to the Northern Pacific Ponds along the Yakima River off of Charter Rd in Cle Elum where the group got good looks at Buffleheads, American Widgeons, Green-winged Teals and Ringnecked Ducks. Yes there is a resident Great Blue Heron. On the way to the Easton Ponds, a mature Bald Eagle was seen and the ponds held Common Mergansers Western Grebes, Hooded Mergansers and passerines (Pine Siskins, Goldfinches, Black-capped chickadees, & Song Sparrows)

Lake Easton produced Common Canada Geese and some Cackling Geese, Green-winged Teal,

Common Goldeneyes, Gadwalls, Lesser Scaup and a Winter Wren. Last Stop was at the pond on McDonald's Street off Lower Peoh Pt. Rd where the group recorded more of the previously seen waterfowl but also Chipping Sparrows, Oregon Juncos a White-crowned Sparrow, a Killdeer and a Cooper's Hawk.

Jeb's comment that the next Upper County field trip would be even more appreciated if the weather were warmer (at least above 35 degrees) was well taken since some of the group were so chilled that their binoculars were shivering.

In addition to the birds previously mentioned, the following birds were seen:

Black-billed Magpies, Mallards, Common Ravens, Rock Pigeons, Steller's Jays Mourning Doves, House Sparrows House Finches, California Quail, American Crows Starlings and American Kestrel.

Judy Reed

When the fog settles over Kittitas Valley for days on end like last month, Jeb and I soon can feel our spirits 'need a lift'. It is at this time that winter birding and wildlife viewing can be especially rewarding. One can 'spot' from the warmth of a car overlooking a lake or pond, or take short jaunts to places inaccessible by auto. Either can take your mind off the weather as you pursue that hunt for whatever feathered treasure is to be found. Because birds must maintain their energy with food, they are out there foraging. And because leaves have dropped from the trees, and ponds are undisturbed, birds can often be seen more clearly.

Some places we have found close to home for car viewing are the Woodhouse Ponds south off Canyon Road (turn east onto Woodhouse Loop searching **all** six ponds including the one on the short road east), then continuing across Canyon Road along the Ringer Loop Road into the WDFW access to the Yakima River. Continue down the Yakima Canyon stopping at the 'pullouts' where the River is visible, and look for Bald Eagles in the snags, and if the clouds are high enough, you may see Bighorn Sheep on the hills. On the way home swing east on Thrall Road, north on No.6 Road and into Fiorito Lake searching the brush on the right and the creek next to the I-82 in addition to the lake. And for a walk, Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park yields birds.

Northeast of Ellensburg drive the Naneum Road to the end, or cross east on the Rader or Thomas Road and explore the Fairview to Colockum Roads where raptors are always present. If you want to take a longer trip, travel east on the Old Vantage Highway and bird from the Gingko Museum deck, or travel south on the Huntzinger Road where waterfowl settle on the Columbia River.

West of Ellensburg, drive up the Manastash Canyon, the Taneum Canyon (elk often at the

(Continued on page 5)

Some years ago I asked a co-worker, "How do you tell an elephant from a bluebird?" Answer: Elephants are gray. He pulled the question on his daughter that evening. The next day he was driving her to school when a flock of gray birds flew across the road in front of them. "Hey, look" she said "there goes a flock of elephants!" -- from *Vernon Andrews*

Web site of the month
www.pbase.com

A search will net 447 galleries of bird photographs. Or try some of these
www.pbase.com/godwit www.pbase.com/photon180 www.pbase.com/idiot4cricket

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RAPTOR STUDY

The project is looking at abundance, distribution and habitat associations of raptors wintering in Kittitas County. Tara Chestnut, Fish & Wildlife Biologist will be conducting roadside surveys once a week (on the weekend.) Volunteers will be riding along to assist in with spotting and identifying raptors. Survey will be conducted for 6 to 8 weeks in December

& January. It will take only 2 or 3 hours each. Experience with raptor identification would be nice but enthusiasm is preferred.

If you are interested call Tara Chestnut (360) 357-8758 or better yet, if you can, email her at tarachestnut@zhonks.net.





Spilogale gracilis
Jim Briggs

You are wondering how in the world we ended up with a mammal for Bird of the Month--and a skunk at that. Well after seeing the photo that accompanies this article, how could we refuse? Also, the Editor, Crickett Webb is out of state.

The spotted skunk is not generally thought to be a resident of Kittitas County but the photo taken by the Lindstroms of the critter under the porch is definitely spotted, not striped, which would of course be the much more common Striped Skunk.

There are two species of spotted skunk, the Eastern (*Spilogale putorius*) and the Western (*Spilogale gracilis*). How could the species names for what is essentially the same animal be so different? The only answer I can think of is that the person who named the Eastern Spotted Skunk had a "traditional" skunk experience while the person who named the Western didn't get sprayed and blessed it with an attractive name.

The range of the Western Spotted Skunk is from British Columbia to Costa Rica and according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) it ranges along the western slope of the Cascades. There is one small population in the Blue Mountains in eastern Washington. The WDFW map does not show any in Kittitas County but they obviously are here and we are richer for it.

Like all skunks, the spotted uses its anal glands to spray potential predators. This works pretty well and the only serious threat is the Great Horned Owl and perhaps the bobcat. Like other skunks it is omnivorous, eating rodents, insects and other animal food when available and fruit and other vegetation when it's available. They climb trees more than other skunks and often utilize cavities.

Spotted skunks mate in October and give birth in April or May to up to 6 pups. They reach full size in four months. After weaning the mother forages for the pups and teaches them to do likewise. The father does not take part in raising the pups.

Western Spotted Skunks are rather abundant in their range and are not showing signs of decline. In fact if they are moving into Kittitas County, it appears that they are increasing their range.

Unless we have an experience like the guy who named the Eastern Spotted Skunk, we should welcome this beautiful little predator.

**Both of these wonderful pictures were taken by
Gloria Lindstrom**



(Continued from page 3)

mouth of the canyon, or the Robinson Canyon. The ponds are fewer but look for small birds in the brush, or raptors on poles and trees. For ponds on the westside, park across from KOA (not on park property) and walk west on the short trail to the I-90 ponds where Trumpeter Swans have recently been seen. Nearly always there is some waterfowl on the first pond. Going west to upper Kittitas County, check Judy Reed's article in this month's Hooter about October's field trip for good birding spots.

One caution, on sparsely traveled roads, be sure to pull as far right as possible and set your emergency lights. On more traveled roads, stop only on pull-off spots. We want 'birders' to have a good reputation for safety and courtesy.

Not only will you find birds and rid yourself of the 'blahs' from the fog, but exploring new areas of the county yields more information about what's going on around us. **So 'happy birding' and have a delightful, peaceful holiday season.** Gloria Baldi

HUNTING AT THE FEEDERS

BY JAN CARLSON

When asked by a non-birder co-worker why geese fly in a V formation, I replied, "to break wind". -- from David A. Brinkman

On November 17th, I had just stepped up to the kitchen window and looked out at the bird feeder. There was a flurry of wings, a flash of white tail and tan feathers - a Cooper's Hawk (I think) came swooping in, scattering all the birds, doing the stall-in-mid-air thing with tail fanned out and wings spread to break. It landed in the lower branches of the maple nearby about 10 feet off the ground, and perched, peering at the ground for a couple of minutes, then hopped down lower. I ran to get my binocs and, as I came back to the window, it flew up from the ground with a small grey body clutched in its talons and flew off across the street and into distant trees.

Pretty cool.

I'm thinking that it swooped in with talons extended and whacked one of the little birds, which fell to the ground, then came in to recover it. Nice technique. I'll bet it comes back regularly I certainly don't begrudge it that meal. There are lots of little birds and those accipiters need to eat!

Fine dining at Steve & Jan's Passerine Cafe.....

GOOD NEWS FROM THE CASCADE CHECKERBOARD PROJECT

The Department of Natural Resources received a grant of \$2,950,745 to purchase 297 forested acres near Swamp Lake about 10 miles southeast of Snoqualmie Pass. Acquisition of these important habitat lands will prevent the disruptions of wildlife. This will help protect a valley bottom wildlife corridor, which will ensure the effectiveness of the a set of wildlife crossing structures proposed for nearby I-90.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT – CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH

Experimental Populations

The California condors that paid an unexpected visit to Colorado's Land's End Visitor Center were part of a small population released two years earlier in the Grand Canyon. Their release was done under authority of a provision added to ESA in 1982. That provision, codified in Section 10(j), authorized the establishment of experimental populations of endangered species under rules less restrictive than those normally applicable to endangered species. For the condor, the gray wolf in Yellowstone, the red wolf in coastal North Carolina, and others species, these experiments appear to be headed for stunning success.

Section 10(j) was a response to a practical problem. Many endangered species have been so diminished that the only hope for their recovery is to reestablish them where populations formerly occurred. Yet because the restrictions imposed by ESA are so significant, both for federal agencies under Section 7 and for private landowners and others under other provisions, endangered species reintroduction proposals have often generated intense controversy. Controversy itself is not an insurmountable barrier but as a practical matter, many reintroduction efforts are unlikely to succeed without at least a measure of cooperation from local landowners, public officials, and others.

To win that cooperation, Section 10(j) authorized the government to relax the rules for certain reintroduced populations, allowing, for example, reintroduced wolves to be shot when they attack livestock or assuring that certain land uses will not be restricted as a result of nearby condors. This flexibility has never eliminated opposition to experimental reintroductions, but it has usually dampened it. The condor again provides an illustration. The first release of condors near the Grand Canyon in 1996 was opposed by many local ranching interests, notwithstanding efforts made to accommodate their concerns. Two years later, however, as plans to carry out another release proceed, there is no visible opposition to it, due apparently to the success of the earlier releases and the lack of problems they generated.(16)

To date, the authority to establish experimental populations has not been extensively used. It remains a cumbersome bureaucratic process, although that may be inherent in the fact that it is used only when reintroduction is highly contentious and controversial. The results, however, have been among ESA's more conspicuous successes because the species that have been reintroduced have been some of the best known and most "charismatic" of endangered species. The unexpected sight of condors in Colorado and the opportunity that thousands of visitors have had to see wolves in Yellowstone National Park for the first time in 60 years are testimony to the provision's success. But they also carry a larger lesson: The path to recovery will not necessarily require the same restrictions, applied in the same way, for every species. Experimentation is essential.

Private Lands: The Act's Achilles Heel

The lesson that experimentation is essential is only beginning to be learned for endangered species that depend heavily on privately owned lands. As it turns out, most of them do.(17) To date, on privately owned lands ESA has had only modest beneficial impact and some unintended negative consequences, including antagonizing many of the landowners whose actions will ultimately determine the fate of many species. Improving the effectiveness of conservation efforts on private lands is ESA's most pressing need.

President – Gloria Baldi	933-1558	Membership – Keith Johnson	674-7552
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DONATIONS are appreciated and give you the opportunity to further support and fund KAS Chapter activities. If you have a National Audubon membership, donations are especially important since KAS no longer receives a portion of your National Membership dues to defray costs for the Hooter.

_____ \$15.00 American Goldfinch _____ \$100.00 Great Blue Heron

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KITTITAS COUNTY BUSINESSES SUPPORTING KAS

Old Mill Country Store, Ellensburg, provides a discount on bird seed to KAS members and prints our county bird lists.

Inland Internet, Roslyn, Donates internet service for our Website: <<http://www.kittitasaudubon.org/>>

WISE OWL TRIVIA

1. What is a Side Hunt?
2. Why do Geese fly in a V formation?
3. How many ponds are there on Woodhouse Loop Road?
4. What the primary predator of the Spotted Skunk?
5. What group protested the first release of California Condors at the Grand Canyon?



Answer to last months Bonus Trivia Question. Yes Penguins **DO** have knees

In spite or maybe because of the huge controversy when they were placed on the endangered species act it is the Spotted Owl that does not have a recovery plan

The mission of Kittitas Audubon Society is to develop an appreciation of nature through education and conservation, with a focus on birds. The goal for KAS is a vibrant active organization recognized in Kittitas county.

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[Http://www.kittitasaudubon.org](http://www.kittitasaudubon.org)

