



KITITTAS AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE HOOTER

Hooter

EDITOR CRICKET WEBB

Inside this issue:

Great Backyard Bird Count

Field Trips	2
CBC Results	2
Presidents message	3
How to get started feeding birds	3
Bird of the Month	4
Population Irruptions	5
Editorial	5
ESA - Serial article	6
Board members	7
Membership forms	7

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

February 17-20, 2006 is the 9th annual GBBC. This year there is an element of a contest involved. Awards will be given to localities that submit the most checklists, record the greatest number species, or count the highest number of birds.

We should not get involved for the awards, but if they give an award for most increase, lets go for that one. Last year Kittitas county had 19 reporters. A 25% increase would mean only 5 more people would have to count. Wonder how I know how we did? You can view the results at the web site.

Everyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to seasoned experts. During the count, bird watchers tally up birds for as little as 15 minutes, or for as long as they like, keeping track of the highest number of each bird species they see together at one time. People are encouraged to report birds from public lands and local parks, as well as from their backyards. Participants enter their numbers online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc and can explore sightings maps, lists, and charts as the count progresses.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Craig Johnson was the initial force in beginning a website for Kittitas Audubon. He also contacted **Inland Internet** who so graciously donated their services. This took time and effort in Craig's extremely busy schedule, and we can't thank him enough for giving us this start. We will still have our website, as a professional designer has agreed to expand the information for us, but we would have been 'left in the dark' if Craig had not taken the lead.

Again, thank you, Craig!!!

NEXT MEETING BLUEBIRD ALLEY. KITTITAS VALLEY Jan Carlson

DATE THURSDAY October 20th **TIME** 7:00 PM
PLACE ELLENSBURG HIGH SCHOOL ROOM - 102 The Choir Room



Our idea a year ago was to maintain & monitor a bluebird trail on foot. The activity and exercise so captivated us that from April to August we watched and kept bi-weekly notes on 70 nesting boxes. We

walked two Elk Fence trails at the south end of the valley and, curious about other habitats, maintained roadside boxes on Hayward Hill and Bettas Road. Charts and photos show what happened during one season's nesting, hatching and fledging in these areas.

KAS Field Trips

January 7th, 2006: Start the New Year with a First Saturday BirdWalk at Irene Rinehart Park in the brisk cool weather. Meet at 8:00 AM at the bridge parking lot, wear lots of warm clothes and we will see what we can spot. There were some good sightings on the Christmas Bird Count day, and they may be still in the area.

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.

February 4th, 2006: First Saturday BirdWalk at Irene Rinehart Park. Meet at 8:00 AM at the bridge parking lot, wear lots of warm clothes, and bring binoculars!

Field Trip report

Dec 3rd - First Saturday Birdwalk

I truly would love to say we (a hardy group of 11) set out on a crisp fall morning for this birdwalk but it was far too cold to be described as crisp, about 18°.

At first it appeared that even the birds thought it was too cold, with just the Stellar's Jays and Magpies but about half way down the road to the park, the woods came alive. Juncos, Chickadees (Black Capped) Downy Woodpeckers (both male and female), Song Sparrows and as always the Starlings. A Red tail was seen flying overhead. Shortly after this we saw the first Golden Crown Kinglet, the first of many that traveled with us all the way to the second pond.

First pond had a good sized flock of Canada Geese and with the use of Jeb's scope we found Wigeon and Mallards mixed in. Quail were spotted on the way to the second pond which held Ring Neck ducks and a very illusive Pied Bill Grebe. The walk back through the woods along the river gave us some fantatic views of a couple of Great Blue Heron, one in a tree and one on the river. The Kingfisher buzzed by and then landed in the tree with GB Heron. The last bird of the day was a Dipper, seen only by a couple of us. The little guy was traveling fast up river at about 6 inches above the water. We heard but did not see any Flickers
Cricket

RESULTS OF THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Cle Elum Christmas Bird Count.

Yes Virginia—there was a CLE ELUM CBC. The first ever Cle Elum Christmas Bird Count was held on Thursday Dec 15 2005. Michael Hobbs of the Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) organized a "trial" CBC. It was a success so next year we will officially have a 2 Christmas Bird Counts in Kittitas County

Results of the counts

A total of 98 species with 20941 total birds in both counts. ECBC had 71 species with 17581 birds and CECBC had 66 species with 3360 total birds.

The high counts from ECBC

Pied Billed Grebe - 3

Lesser Scuap - 23

California Quail - 2840

Black Billed Magpie - 659

Townsend Solitare - 4

Dark Eyed Junco - 1071

Surprises - Who knew we had over 200 Wild Turkeys. Where were the Starlings, only 3794 were counted. We only got 2 Pine Siskins. That population seems to have crashed state wide, but Pine Siskins are an irruptive species. See article elsewhere in the Hooter.

Thank you to all the people who spent the day counting — I had a great time. Cricket

Historian/author Stephen Ambrose remarked, "In the 19th century we devoted our best minds to exploring nature. In the 20th Century we devoted ourselves to controlling and harnessing it. In the 21st Century, the best minds are working on how to restore nature."

As I read this quote, I thought about the truth of such a statement. I am no learned student in natural history but names entered my mind, such as John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, John James Audubon, and Thomas Moran, individuals who lived mainly in the 1800's and documented nature as they explored and immersed themselves in it.

Then came the 20th century, the industrial age, where the extracting of natural resources (some temporarily, but most permanently) took place for the comforts they produced and the profits they derived. A few individuals such as Rachel Carson, Jacques Cousteau, and Paul Ehrlich realized the price we were paying, but their messages have not been heeded by those regulating resources.

Near the end of the 20th century the importance of biodiversity (a term so recent it does not even appear in my 1980 Webster's New World Second Edition College Dictionary) was realized. Biological diversity is the total of **all** habitats, **all** needing to be preserved and protected to allow **all** species to survive. In the 21st century the best minds in the scientific fields are/will be working to **replace** the destruction that has been wrought.

Can it even be done? Can we preserve large enough tracts of habitat to make a difference? It remains to be seen. It has been determined that the fastest disappearing habitats are the steppe areas, those natural areas with no trees. Our own shrub steppe of sage, bunch grasses, bitterbrush, lupine, balsamroot, etc., falls in this category--all of which brings me to the point of this message.

Kittitas Audubon has the opportunity to reconstruct approximately seventeen acres near the West Ellensburg Park, an area that was farmed in the past but has been neglected for many years. This is our chance to reconstruct a small area of biological habitat. Reconstruction will involve expertise in the areas of noxious weed removal, native plantings, natural landscape designing, wetland enhancement, as well as, equipment usage and just plain hard physical work. A brainstorm meeting will be held in the month of February to bring all Kittitas Audubon's best minds together for the initial planning meeting. Watch for the date, and we hope you will attend.

Gloria Baldi

How to attract a flock of your favorite birds By Mary Beth Breckenridge -Akron Beacon Journal

Birds remind us that nature goes on, even on those winter days when we less-hardy humans are stuck indoors.

Making your yard hospitable to birds increases the chances they'll make regular stops at your house. That can be as simple as keeping a feeder filled or as involved as landscaping to improve the habitat. But it's best to start small, choose a feeder that will attract the kind of birds that interest you. Common types include thistle feeders, which attracts finches, sparrows and other small birds; tray, platform or hopper feeders, which can hold a seed mix that attracts bigger birds; and suet feeders, which attract woodpeckers, chickadees,

jays and starlings. Then choose a type of food that fits your feeder and appeals to the birds you like most.

Location is important, place the feeder where it's easy to see and refill. Make sure it's close to natural shelter, such as trees or shrubs. Offering food at different levels accommodates the various birds' eating habits. Some, such as dark-eyed juncos, like to pick things up off the ground; others, such as chickadees, eschew ground feeding. To accommodate them all, provide food at ground level, at knee level, at a higher level from a hanging or pole-mounted feeder and from a tree trunk.

(Continued on page 4)

BIRD OF THE MONTH - SNOWY OWL

There are Snowy Owls almost everywhere except my yard. There is the Accessible Snowy on the Wheelchair route through Discovery Park. There was one on the church roof at 16th and University in Downtown Seattle and not to be outdone, Bellevue had one on the window sill of contracting company. Walla Walla (Frog Hollow rd), 2 on Fir Island in Skagit county, 4 on Ediz Hook and 2 in Poulsbo on the Olympic Peninsula and 8 on Damon Point in Ocean Shores, 3 in Nisqually NWR, plus 1 each in Edmonds, Davenport and Moses Lake.

I don't have enough room to list them all. Call me for updated list if you want to go looking for one. I warn you, in our house the phrase "a wild goose chase" is no longer used, it is now "a Snowy Owl search." I am still looking for my first Snowy.

A large, mostly, white owl with some black barring. Young male Snowy Owls are barred with dark brown and get whiter as they get older. Females keep some dark markings throughout

their lives. Young males tend to have a white bib, a white back of the head, and fewer rows of bars on the tail than females. Although the darkest males and the palest females are nearly alike in color, the whitest birds are always males and the most heavily barred ones are always females. Some old males can be nearly pure white.

Their nesting area is almost exclusively within the Artic Circle. The nest is a very shallow grass lined depression on the ground. Snowy Owl pairs fiercely defend their nests against predators, even wolves.

The diet of Snowy Owls are predominantly Lemmings, when available. They will also eat rabbits, rodents, waterfowl, other birds, and fish. An adult Snowy Owl may eat three to five lemmings per day, or as many as 1,600 per year.

Images of the Snowy Owl can be found in cave paintings in Europe.

Cricket



This photo by Bob and Bernie Meyer of Renton was taken at Carnation. The Department of Fish and Wildlife officer holding the bird captured it when it was reported to have injuries. The right eye had an old injury but that was not all that was wrong. It may have suffered some current wing damage. He was taken to Skip Nelson, a local bird vet. I have an update on the bird condition on page 5.

(Continued from page 3)

Don't forget water, which can come from a natural source, such as a pond, or from a bird bath. To keep the water open in freezing weather, dump out the ice regularly and refill with hot water, or use an electric birdbath heater.

Providing cover gives birds a place to hide and makes them feel more comfortable in your yard. Shrubs and trees make good cover, as long as they're not so close that a predator can use them to sneak up. The types of seeds that birds

prefer, according to the Humane Society of the United States are; Black oil sunflower seed for birds that perch while they're feeding, such as chickadees, finches, blue jays and woodpeckers; White proso millet appeals to ground-feeding birds such as juncos, sparrows and towhees; Niger seed, also called thistle, attracts a wide variety of finches; Suet is favored by woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees; Peanuts are popular with blue jays, nuthatches and woodpeckers; Dried fruits such as raisins, prunes and currants

appeal to cedar waxwings, mockingbirds and Eastern bluebirds. The fruit should be soaked in warm water first and cut into small pieces. Bargain seed blends sold in many grocery and hardware stores often contain filler seed, the society says. It recommends buying seed in bulk from feed stores instead. Kittitas Audubon Society does have a feed store as a sponsor, The Old Mill Country Store. Since they also give a discount for Audubon members, that would be a good place to start.

IRRUPTION POPULATIONS

Why this year are there so many Snowy Owls? It is an irruption (not eruption.) A rapid and irregular increase in the population of a bird species. The birds most commonly associated with irruptions are the winter finches (Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak.) the most excitement is usually over one of the Owl irruptions, the Snowy and Great Grey.

All of this is known, the cause however is another issue. There seem to be a couple of predominant theories, food and weather. I will try to summarize the 42 pages of discussion I have gleaned from just the local sources on the Snowy Owl.

The favorite food of the Snowy is the Lemming. An irruption may be caused by a shortage of Lemmings forcing the younger, less experienced and less dominant Snowy Owls south to hunt for food. Another theory is that an abundance of Lemmings the previous year caused an overly successful breeding year. Last food theory—a bumper crop of microtines (the family of rodents that include voles, lemmings, and muskrats) lures the Owls south for the good hunting. I have a problem with the last theory. How do the Owls know about the microtines? Was it reported in Vole Hunting Illustrated??

The weather theories imply that the increase in popu-

lation is not irruptive but cyclical (happening at regular intervals) and the numbers, at least in the northwest, do support that to a certain extent. There is noticeable increase every 4 years with the biggest peaks occurring every 9—12 years. If you would like more information I will be happy to supply my notes and you can further research the subject.
Cricket



Yellow Crossbill on Dogwood.

Photo by cricket



Update from Bob & Bernie— the only injury was above the eye & is healing well. However the eye injury compounded the fact that it is a young bird with limited hunting skills. It was in the processes of starving to death.

He is gaining weight rapidly and is up to whole rats now instead of just mice. He will probably stay at the vet for another 10 days to 2 weeks and then be transferred to a rehab facility. The goal is to get him up and running on his own by mid February so he can begin his north migration with all of his buddies.

** ED note: I had planned to put a joke in here but this made me happier.

B&B -Thanks for the update & the photos.**

Thank you Maria Cantwell. The congress once again denied Senator Stevens request to open the Artic National Wildlife Refuge to Oil drilling. This will continue to be an issue until we break our addiction to petroleum.

Would someone like to do a one page or series of one page article on other fuel sources? I am hoping a few people will step up and write articles about biodiesel, hydrogen fuel cells and solar as replacements for dinosaur fuel.

I also need a clipping service. If you read the Daily Record everyday and would be willing to cut out all the conservation and birding/wildlife article and mail them to me each week, I can quit recycling trees without having the time to read them. I will buy the stamps and the envelopes

I will stop now. This edition does not have enough picture or jokes in it already without me babbling along.

Private Lands: The Act's Achilles Heel - CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH

As stated above, one of the major changes wrought by Congress in 1973 was the prohibition against taking endangered wildlife. Congress defined "take" to include not only hunting, shooting, and trapping but also actions that harm an endangered animal. What Congress intended was never clearly articulated. As early as 1975, however, FWS promulgated regulations defining harm to include some forms of habitat modification. Thus, a forest landowner harvesting timber, a farmer plowing new ground, or a developer clearing land for a shopping center potentially stood in the same position as a poacher taking aim at a whooping crane. It was not until 1995, however, that the Supreme Court resolved whether FWS's broad definition was within its legal authority. The definition, the court said, was lawful.⁽¹⁸⁾ As to what the definition actually meant, however, the court was silent.

At the very least, major land clearing activities that destroy habitat and kill endangered animals in the process constitute a prohibited taking. Nonetheless, prior to 1982 this extraordinarily broad prohibition had no discernible impact on private landowners, who developed, farmed, logged, and otherwise behaved pretty much as they always had. The government was reluctant to enforce such a rigid prohibition and landowners had no reason to seek approval that the government could not give. Ironically, it was a 1982 amendment relaxing this absolute prohibition that gave the government its first practical tool for influencing private land use. The amendment authorized permits allowing the taking of endangered species incidental to otherwise lawful activities. To get a permit, a landowner had to develop a habitat conservation plan that mitigated the impacts of the authorized taking.

For major development projects and nonfederal timber management, habitat conservation plans have become the primary tool for addressing conflicts between private land use and endangered species conservation. (See the box on page 37 for an outline of habitat conservation plans.) Their use has been spurred in part by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's willingness to offer landowners who prepare satisfactory plans an assurance that the government will not unilaterally impose new requirements for the conservation of species covered by the plan because of unforeseen future circumstances.⁽¹⁹⁾

Though this "no surprises" policy has been sharply criticized, it is hard to dispute Babbitt's belief that offering some form of certainty is essential to securing major conservation commitments from landowners. Many habitat conservation plans have in fact secured major conservation commitments, including actions that the taking prohibition could never have compelled, such as the restoration of degraded habitats, the control of exotic species on protected habitats, and the conservation of sites currently unoccupied by an endangered species but suitable for future occupation. Other plans, however, have yielded more questionable results.

Though habitat conservation plans have often done significant good, unintended, negative consequences have sometimes been produced on other lands where such plans have not been prepared. Fearing that no good deed will go unpunished, some landowners have actively eliminated habitats that could eventually support rare species or refrained from beneficial management practices that could increase the number of those already present. To overcome those fears, safe harbor agreements have met with noteworthy success. Under these, a landowner creates, restores, or enhances habitat or otherwise cooperates in a species conservation effort but does not incur added liabilities as a result of his or her beneficial practices.⁽²⁰⁾ These agreements represent a small but significant breakthrough in designing an endangered species program that makes landowners allies, not adversaries. A telling example is the safe harbor program for the Attwater's prairie chicken in coastal Texas. In a state where landowner hostility to the federal endangered species program has often been intense, several ranchers and an oil company are restoring tens of thousands of acres of coastal prairie habitat upon which this critically imperiled species depends.

If landowners are going to become full partners in the endangered species conservation effort, genuine incentives will need to be offered to cover some of the costs of habitat restoration and management. Even if all of the best habitat for endangered species is eventually brought into public ownership, other lands will still have to be managed to contribute to conservation. At present, most landowners have no financial incentive to practice beneficial management, and most have a strong regulatory disincentive for doing so. Safe harbor agreements address the disincentive but unless Congress seriously tackles the job of providing positive incentives for conservation by private landowners, many rare species will surely be lost.

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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 occurred in Cle Elum for this first time this year?
2. What is biodiversity?
3. Wild Goose Chase has been replaced by what phrase?
4. Name one member of the Microtines?
5. What cave painting images are invading Washington?



Question:

Why do hummingbirds hum? Answer: Because they don't know the words. -- from Carl Mowery, 9/2/1996

What do you get when a Rooster mates with a vegetable? CHICK PEAS -- from RYAN, 9/22/1996

What do you get when you cross pigeons with gangsters? GOODFEATHERS. -- from Ryan, 9/22/1996

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.

Kittitas Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1443
Ellensburg WA 98926
[Http://www.kittitasaudubon.org](http://www.kittitasaudubon.org)

