



THE HOOTER

EDITOR — CRICKET WEBB

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WEST NILE VIRUS AND BIRD FLU—Not much of a threat

The number of people in the United States who are killed by West Nile Virus each year is only marginally larger than the number of people who are killed each year by lightning. Compare that to the number that die of heart disease, almost 2 per minute and the idea of going out on a bird walk begins to sound like a very healthy alternative. Avian Influenza, Bird Flu, has a higher rate of death per case, but so far, no one in the US has contracted the disease, let alone died from it. The disease is very hard to catch. Almost all cases have been proved to be contracted from domestic birds.

The possibility exists that Wild birds MIGHT be moving the disease around the world but the movement of the disease is not following migration

routes. Wild birds have tested positive for the disease but there has not been a single wild bird to human transmission. Even without any proof the hysteria is giving rise to calls for culling of wild birds and draining wetlands near human habitation. If you are still in fear for your life—take some advice from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology BirdsScope magazine.

“here is what you should do: (1) cancel any upcoming tours you have booked to visit poultry farms in the Old World; (2) if you insist on visiting the poultry farms, don’t sleep with the chickens; (3) do not purchase wild birds that were illegally smuggled from foreign countries; (4) wash your hands and bird feeders often.”

Cricket Webb

HUMMINGBIRD BANDING

This past month there have been 4 banding sessions in Kittitas County. Two sites at Snoqualmie Pass and 2 in Cle Elum. This is the second time I have been lucky enough to witness this process. This time we actually caught enough for me to really get a good look at what was going on. I got some pictures and even got to release a few of the birds. What amazing tiny little creatures these birds are.



I thought I had seen an Anna’s here again this year but was reluctant to mention it. I did not want to jinx it. Boy was pleased that the first bird captured was an Anna’s. I was also surprised that we caught more Calliope’s than Rufous. It seems like I have a lot more Rufous but that is not how the count appears from the banding.

Here is the result of our most recent banding sessions (you will need to know AHY is After Hatch Year & HY is Hatch Year – the only measure of age the bander can accurately judge.):

Snoqualmie Pass on July 19,2006
Chris’s: Total banded: 114
New Bands:
Males AHY 2 - HY 21
Females AHY 81 - HY 8
Recaptures:
Females 1 5/20/06 as AHY
1 7/18/01 as AHY
Sally’s: Total Banded: 27
New Bands:
Males AHY 1 - HY 1
Females AHY 22 - HY 3

CLE ELUM on 7/22/2006

Cricket’s:
Rufous
Total banded: 4 - AHY female 1 HY males 3
Calliope
Total banded: 10 AHY female 1— HY female 1
HY males 8
Anna’s -- Total banded: 1 HY male 1
Shirley’s:
Rufous – Total banded: 3 – HY males 3
Cricket Webb

Ecotourism: Responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.

The saying goes money talks and . . . well everything else walks. Where a person stays, the activities they participate in when they travel directly affects the economy and the value a community places on the land and resources around them.

Las Vegas puts up more and more lights because those casinos get more business. Costa Rica, Guatemala and Belize are creating parks and bio-reserves because that is the tourist dollar wants.

The next time you travel, whether you are going to Brazil or Yakima, wear your binoculars into the restaurant and ask the clerk at the gas station where the best birding is. That simple act preformed day after day will change the attitude about birding and preserving the habitat for the birds that bring them the bucks. Cynical? Yes. True? I think so.

Cricket.

PS. Stay in local hotels that are environmentally managed and encourage them to live up to the promises. When they do, thank them for it.

KAS FIELD TRIPS

August 5th: First Saturday BirdWalk: 8:00 AM at Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park at the bridge parking lot. Gerry Sorenson will be the leader on this trip. Bring optics, field guides, and clothes for the weather. We will walk for about 2 to 3 hours on uneven ground. It seems this time of year always gives us some surprise sightings.

September 2nd: First Saturday BirdWalk: Cricket Webb will be the leader on this Fair/Rodeo weekend.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

July First Saturday BirdWalk Hot as a Fire Cracker describes the First Saturday BirdWalk on July 1st as it was already 65 degrees at 8:00AM. Nine attendees started the sightings right at the parking lot with good looks at the Bullock's Orioles' nest, both adults feeding the chicks. (Beth Rogers had told us of the discovery earlier in the week.) Also at the parking lot was a brand new hybrid car with Cricket inside and a smile on her face knowing she will get at least fifty miles on a gallon of gas--a nice thought as gas prices increase.

Twenty-three species were seen with only one

raptor, an Osprey flying up river. The Tree Swallows are still in their condo tree, probably on their second clutch. A cute little cottontail rabbit interacted with



California Quail on the road, and a very cooperative Spotted Sandpiper on a log over the river gave us good views. Four species of Swallows were present. Throughout the morning we noticed a profusion of the graceful and beautiful Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*) butterflies, a new experience for a BirdWalk. Not a lot of human activity which provided a pleasant walk in Ellensburg's little jungle. Plan to join August's First Saturday walk when Gerry Sorenson will be the leader.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT.

Last month was a fun story to write. This month takes a far more serious note.

Initiative 933 (I-933), recently filed by the Washington Farm Bureau to be on November's ballot, is a costly scheme that will require community governments to either waive important land-use regulations, or compensate the developer monetarily for the difference if regulations affect the development value of their property. The damage can be claimed retroactively to 1996. Under the guise of 'property rights', this is a special interest initiative.

The Initiative is based on Measure 37 which barely passed in Oregon. To date nearly 3000 claims for compensation have been filed in Oregon, and in this time of government funding shortages, the only solution is to waive the regulation and let development proceed unchecked. Washington's I-933 is even more extreme than the Oregon measure in that it mandates that taxpayers pay the attorney's fees for all claims, even if those claims are denied. (Ironically, 15 county farm bureaus in Oregon have denounced Measure 37 as a threat to the livelihood of family farms.)

Any regulation that protects a wetland, a water source, or manages flooding, would be at risk of being jeopardized. The effect on birds and other wildlife with the habitat loss will be overwhelming. Large portions of farmland will be opened for development. Irresponsible developers would be allowed to build regardless of a community's concerns because I-933 will take away neighbors' rights to protect themselves from inappropriate development. Basically, I-933 will threaten our quality of life in Washington State. While developers do as they please, we ordinary citizens not only receive lower quality of living, but also 'foot the bill' for any environmental damage.

What can each of us do? First, vote **No on I-933** and tell all your friends to do the same. Visit www.protectcommunities.org to read the latest news coverage and learn more about the impact on communities. Editorials have been written against the initiative by Tacoma News Tribune, Seattle Post Intelligencer, and the Walla Walla Union Bulletin. You can write a letter to the editor of our local papers. This is an important fight to preserve our communities. Gloria Baldi

Life bird in my yard

There is a adage among bird watchers that goes something like, the longer distance you go to find a specific bird, the greater the likelihood you will find it sitting on your car when you get back.

Oh boy, did I get taught that lesson. The weekend before the Hummingbird banding, we went in search of the Williamson Sapsucker reported to be in the nest tree just to the left of the dome rock across the river from the campground at the junction of the West and Middle fork of the Teanaway river. Found the right tree after crashing through the brush and other peoples campsites for over an hour. No Bird.

The following weekend during a lull in the hummingbird banding, Mark, one of the banders, calm as can be, isn't that a Williamson Sapsucker. Sure enough, there was the elusive woodpecker inspecting one of my pine trees.

There are 2 other Woodpeckers I want in my yard soon so I am going to check out the Acorn Woodpecker at Fort Simcoe and I'm going to try again to find the Black Backed Woodpecker family that is hanging out at the Elk Heights burn. If I send at least an hour or 2 on each, not counting drive time. I should see them this season. Cricket



T&D Gauron

There are Magpies all over the world. In California, there is a Yellow Billed Magpie. Asia and Europe have the Eurasian Magpie with a different voice and behavior. In the Yucatan there is a Magpie Jay called an Aruca pronounced A Ruckus. Since they woke me most mornings—that

name works for me.

Our local Magpie is the Black Billed Magpie. They spend up to 40 days building very elaborate cup shaped nests with domed roofs. They jointly raise 5—7 young born naked and helpless (altricial.) The short tailed Magpies you are seeing at this time of year are HY fledglings. The tail is all grown out when the young leave the nest.

The diet of a Magpie is quite varied. Bugs, grain, nuts, carrion, small mammals and eggs from other birds nests. A study in England however showed that rather than decreasing the

population of song birds, an increase in Magpie population actually increased the songbird population.

There are few areas in Kittitas County not suitable habitat, riparian, grasslands, sagebrush, and around populations. Those of us up in the pines are the only ones that might have to travel to see one, although that is not always the case. I have not had them in my yard but I have heard of Magpie in very small meadows.

Magpies are common and populations are stable.

Cricket

** IN DEFENSE OF MAGPIES ** (A LOVE STORY) **

The magpie did not endear itself to early westerners that invaded its domain mainly because of its omnivorous habit. Nor was that inveterate boatman known as Noah enamored by them as he kicked them off the Ark for their constant chattering. Ancient Proverbs noted that people that talked too much were often called Margaret. Somewhere they acquired that combination of Mag plus pie; pie being a devious derivation from pingere to picus to pica to pie in reference to its gaudy attire. The scientific handle for our species being *Pica pica*, perhaps meaning a pied pie.

However, early civilizations looked kindly upon the dozen species that inhabit the Northern Hemisphere. Asian mythology records the yearly flight on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month of all terrestrial magpies to that great milky river in the sky to form a bridge with their wings to enable two starry lovers to cross and be reunited for a single day each year. Thus the birth of the Asian equivalent of Saint Valentines day bringing about good news and reunion.

What a romance this: It appears that a celestial princess named Zhi-nu whose Father had put her in charge of weaving beautiful cloud tapestries for mortals to enjoy, journeyed down to earth in company with several other maidens, found an

inviting pool whereupon they disrobed to take a dip. The mortal cowherd Niu-lang, herding nearby, was struck by the dazzling beauty of Zhi-nu. On a dare from his favorite ox, Nui-lang sequestered her golden robe exacting a marriage pledge for its return.

Zhi-nu, smitten by the handsome cowherd, acquiesced, resulting in a passionate, beautiful marriage that resulted in both neglecting their celestial and mortal duties. For various reasons this angered the Jade Emperor and the Empress of the Heavens who turned Zhi-nu into the star we know as Vega in the constellation Lyra. Nui-lang got his comeuppance by being turned into Altair in the constellation Aquila. To add insult to injury the Empress created the broad Milky Way between, separating them forever.

The magpies, birds of good fortune and happiness took pity on such a union ripped asunder, so on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month they create a magpie bridge over the Milky Way to enable the lovers to reunite for one precious day each year.

Joe Meuchel

It does not seem possible that migration is beginning already but the male Rufous Hummingbirds have gone already. One of the messages in the movie *Winged Migration* was the constant ebb and flow of birds, north and south, like the tides in constant motion. Trying to figure out where the birds are and how many of them there are is an enormous undertaking.

We, Kittitas Audubon, participate in a few of the activities. Some of our members are part of the Citizen Science arm of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The project Cornell is working on are the Bird House Network, the Birds in Forested Landscape, Great Backyard Bird Count, House Finch Disease Survey, Project FeederWatch, Project PigeonWatch and Urban Bird Studies. They also have some educational projects like BirdSlueth and some projects that are just a service to the birding community like eBird. Each of these activities vary in the amount of time and birding expertise required to participate.

Then there are the big national counts like the Thanksgiving Bird count and the Christmas Bird Count. There are now 2 Christmas Bird Counts in Kittitas County. The one in Ellensburg and the new one in Cle Elum.

During migration there are monitoring stations in various places catching counting and banding a wide variety of birds. Raptors are studied each year at a couple of places in our area. Hawk Watch International and The Falcon Research Group both have sites along the ridgeline facing the Columbia Basin. Next months Hooter will have more on The Falcon Research Group.

There are also specialized bird studies done by a variety of people and organizations. WA State Fish and Wildlife biologist, Terra Chestnut was studying Raptors in our valley

The biggy is the Breeding Bird survey. Done each year The BBS is a long-term, large-scale, international avian monitoring program initiated in 1966 to track the status and trends of North American bird populations. The USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and the Canadian Wildlife Service jointly coordinate the survey. The survey came into being in the middle of the last century to monitor bird populations over most of the continent in an effort to learn if DDT and other pesticides were have a negative affect on Bird Populations. The BBS outgrown it's original charter but has continued to provide a vast amount of information. BBS data were instrumental in focusing research and management action on neotropical migrant species in the late 1980s, and on grassland species in the mid-1990s.

As a result of all of this data, field guides now have accurate seasonal maps. Decisions about the best (and worst) times and places to do some activity that will help or hurt the bird populations.

Wondering where your favorite bird goes each year, that data is available on line and in hundreds of publications. If you would like to be a part of the process, give me a call or catch me at either one of the birdwalks or the meetings. I will help you find one that fits your skill level and time constraints.

Cricket Webb



Gloria Lindstrom

In acknowledgement of Seafair and the Blue Angles

Two crows are sitting on a fence, when a jet-fighter doing training maneuvers roars overhead. 1st crow says wistfully "Man, I sure wish I could fly that fast!" 2nd crow remarks "If you had two tails, and both of them on fire, you could!" -- from Leslie K Koller, 8/2/2000

The future for all of us

Don Wooldridge, B.Sc.; M.Sc

Hydrogen, biodiesel, hybrids, ethanol. The best bets for the development of the vast infrastructure rest with advanced diesel and biodiesel engines, ethanol powerplants in hybrids, and further improvements in gasoline engine fuel economy. Direct – injection engines, using most liquid fuels as well as CNG or Propane, offer immediate economy- and power-improvement and efficiency improvements. One can speculate that a hybrid engine running on biodiesel or ethanol, and not limited to micro-tight and uncomfortable cars (like the Honda Insight or Prius), but sized like a small crossover SUV, for example, and which would easily seat 4 – 5 people in upright comfort (important to us aging baby boomers, yes?) would generate realistic fuel economies in the 30 mpg town, 40 mpg highway ranges. And be renewable. Goodbye to the Iraq/Iran/Saudi cabals that hold us all hostage!

Final notes from Roger Beardsley

The US consumes 25% of all energy consumed on earth, while serving only 5% of the earth's population. Europe, with 6.5% of the earth's population, uses 16% of the total energy consumed. The US is dependent on foreign oil for about 60% of petroleum use; Europe is closer to 85% dependent. For a similar standard of living Europe consumes about half the energy per capita as the US. A gallon of gasoline there costs easily twice as much as it does in the US, and has for decades due largely to tax policy. Though past experience with scarce commodities demonstrates that petroleum will not simply disappear, it seems likely that we are approaching a transition from an economy based on cheap petroleum energy to whatever comes next. Alternative energy is only an alternative because petroleum is cheaper. As the price of petroleum rises, more of the alternative sources will become economically feasible. Developing renewable energy is only part of the solution. If all of the potential vegetable oil was made into biodiesel, we would only be able to meet 5% of current diesel fuel demand in the US. There is not enough acreage available to make enough ethanol from biomass to meet our gasoline demand. Though worldwide petroleum production may be nearing its peak, there are still significant domestic resources of coal and natural gas to be developed.

Significant energy efficiency improvements and a change in use patterns will probably be required before the economy transitions into a renewable energy base. Hybrid SUVs, with their typical 10% efficiency gain, are tentative baby steps. If the US vehicle fleet was transformed from the typical 15 mpg trucks & SUVs to 40 mpg sedans, demand could be reduced by 62% and we might not be dependent on foreign oil today. With future development of energy efficiencies, renewable technology and more efficient use patterns, a renewable energy based future is within our grasp.

Cricket's comments at the end of a chapter in our energy discussion

As I read back through what these 2 men wrote for me last December, overwhelmed by a foresight of their comments. The history of the events in the Middle East may be religious but our interest in them is all about the oil. As the price of gasoline continues to rise, \$3 per gallon will soon sound like a really good deal, more and more people from Janea Homquist to Willie Nelson are jumping on the alternative fuels band wagon.

Those jumping on the band wagon would include me. As noted in the Field Trip Report—I am the new owner of Toyota Prius. It is not as uncomfortable as Don thinks. I had 4 reasons for buying it. The environment, the politics, the economy and if I am going to preach this stuff—I better live it.

We will continue our discussion next month with electricity. Is there a "green" way to generate electricity? Please send me any documents, arguments or comments you would like me to use This is your newsletter I just edit it. Cricket.

HOOTER

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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/>>

Unanswered questions about I-933

1. How much will I-933 cost taxpayers?
2. How much farmland in Kittitas County will be threatened by irresponsible development?
3. How would I-933 affect endangered species?
4. How much will taxpayers in Ellensburg pay in attorney's fees?
5. Who really benefits from I-933's loopholes?
6. How will I-933 affect tax money that is used to pay for roads, schools, and public safety in Cle Elum?

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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