



# THE HOOTER

Hooter

EDITOR CRICKET WEBB

## Get ready to "Count for the Record!" Join the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 16-19, 2007.

What is the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes. It's free, fun, and easy and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their

*(Continued on page 5)*

### NEXT MEETING BIRDS OF BHUTAN Andy and Ellen Stepniewski

<b>DATE</b>	THURSDAY February 15	<b>TIME</b>	7:00 PM
<b>PLACE</b>	ELLENSBURG HIGH SCHOOL ROOM - 232		



The February program features Bhutan, a small Buddhist kingdom in the Himalaya Mountains, sandwiched between India and Tibet. Andy and Ellen Q. Stepniewski spent several weeks in Bhutan in April 2005 on a Sunbird Tour, a birding company based in England. They will share their natural and cultural experiences of Bhutan with slides. Andy and Ellen are longtime residents of Yakima and members of the Yakima Audubon.

Bhutan is truly paradise. Untouched forests, with thousands of plant and animal species, extend as far as the eye can see, containing a hugely varied birdlife. It boasts a tremendous array of natural environments, from the subtropical plains bordering India upwards to the icy summits of the Himalayas, the highest mountains on earth. In this rugged country, only the size of Switzerland, the people of this kingdom have been able to protect their rich natural heritage, indeed, the most biodiverse area remaining in the Himalayas.

For some years now, scientists and naturalists have been aware that the further east one travels in the Himalayas, the richer the forests become in birds and

other wildlife. Our journey introduced us to some of that diversity. We sampled, in stages, many of the various vegetation zones, each with their unique assortment of birds, from the super-rich subtropical forests, then up to the temperate deciduous and evergreen woodlands, and finally a cold pass at elevation of 13,000 feet. Some of the 300 species of birds we encountered included many strikingly beautiful species, like the butterfly-like Wallcreeper and the globally endangered Rufous-necked Hornbill. Many, many others, however, were "skulkers," which required lots of patience and luck to see in the dense vegetation. In this category were numerous babblers, a mostly Asian family which contains the appropriately-named laughing thrushes and pygmy wren-babblers.

The Bhutanese people form one of the most fascinating and least disturbed cultures in the world. Theirs is a rich culture which respects all forms of life, resulting in an avifauna that is not only marvelously diverse, but remarkably visible and approachable.

All Audubon meetings and field trips are open to the public, so feel free to come and meet with us. Stay after the meeting for juice, treats and conversation.

Several people have volunteered to share their special places to find birds, therefore we have an extended schedule to June 16th. If you would like to share **your** place to find birds or lead a trip, I would be most appreciative. Your suggestions are welcome. (Call Jeb at 933-1558) The schedule through June follows and details will be provided each month.

**February 3rd: First Saturday BirdWalk** at 8:00 at **Irene Rinehart River Front Park.**

Meet at the bridge parking lot, wear clothes/shoes for the weather and bring optics. It usually takes two to three hours of walking on uneven ground and a walking stick may be helpful. We have been doing this for over four years. Come help us find some new wild things! The general public is always welcome, so bring a friend along.

**February 10th:** (Saturday)

**Fairview** area of the county for raptors and the **Vantage** overlook with scopes searching for what is on the **Columbia River**. If we have time we will do the **Lower Crab Creek**. Bring optics as most viewing will be long range. Wear warm clothes, good shoes or boots, and bring lunch and liquid. The Great Horned Owl should be on the nest and we will check. Meet at 8:00 AM west end of Super One parking lot to car pool (.20 cents/mile divided by all in the car).

**March 3rd: First Saturday BirdWalk** at Irene Riverfront Park.

**March 24th** (Saturday): **Confluence Park** were the

Wenatchee River meets Columbia River. Cricket Webb is leader.

**March 23th, 24th & 25th:** (Friday through Sunday) the **Othello Sandhill Crane Festival**. For info (509) 488-2802 ext. 100.

**April 7th: First Saturday BirdWalk** at Irene Riverfront Park.

**April 28th** (Saturday): **Lower Crab Creek and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge**. Marianne Gordon is leader.

**May 5th: First Saturday BirdWalk** at Irene Riverfront Park.

**May 19 & 20th** (Saturday & Sunday) **Goldendale/Bickleton/Klickitat River** Campout. Steve Moore and Jan Demorest will be the leaders.

**June 2nd: First Saturday BirdWalk** at Irene Riverfront Park.

**June 16th:** (Saturday) Location to be announced. Steve Hall is the leader.

## January BirdWalk

Remember January 6th? With much packed snow and below freezing temperatures, any uncleared walkway was a sheet of ice--and Irene Rinehart Trail was proof. Certainly no one would venture a walk on the slippery trail---except twelve hardy 'birders'. As we gathered in the parking lot to decide how best to maneuver, two beautiful Bald Eagles, a mature and an immature, flew north over the Yakima. That signaled the start of the hunt and so we shared ski poles for extra support, as well as, Yaktrax for our feet. (Yaktrax are a wonderful coil invention of rubber and steel that one slips over his/her boots to act as feet with chains--like tires with chains. They work!) Forced to travel a little slower we did find **twenty-two species**, including several more sightings of Bald Eagles. We identified four different individuals by their markings, but there may have been more. The Belted Kingfishers were active over the river where we also found two Common Mergansers hunting for their meal. Many Black-capped Chickadees and several Downy Woodpeckers were skittering in the trees. The waterfowl was not plentiful as the lakes were still mostly frozen, but in a small unfrozen area the Pied-billed Grebe and a female Bufflehead were on the upper lake with the regulars of American Widgeon and Ring-necked Ducks. The sun came out making the morning a beautiful time to be outdoors. Come join us next month. Gloria Baldi



## January 20th Field Trip Report

Our Januarys are usually below freezing, day & night, and the birds are more scarce. In an effort to give us and the birds a break, seventeen KAS members had a trip to the **NEW** Central Washington Bio-Diesel plant in Ellensburg. Two ex-professors from Central Washington University are doing what they can to give society an alternative to U.S. dependence on fossil fuel. They have developed and built their own Bio-Diesel plant and are making diesel from canola oil grown and processed in Washington State. During the summer months they will recycle cooking oil from local restaurants and convert it to bio-diesel fuel.

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How many of us are bird watchers? Strange question----and why should I care about whether we enjoy birds or not? Because to care about birds eventually leads to caring about the habitat birds and other wildlife need to survive. And caring about habitat leads to active conservation involvement!!

Washington State has approximately 365 species of birds that live or migrate through the State. A recent extensive report found 93 of those species, or approximately one-fourth of the total, are found to be at risk--meaning their numbers are in serious decline. Although several factors are the cause, loss of habitat is the major factor.

Presently we have a local issue, part of a larger state issue, that has the potential to preserve large areas of land for habitat. That is the *Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Land Exchange*. There are five exchanges throughout several areas in Washington, and the premise behind the exchanges is to eliminate checkerboard ownership of sections by 'blocking-up' areas. (You may remember from your history books that the federal government gave the railroad companies every other section of land to encourage the companies to expand west. Throughout the years sales of the sections have created management problems because of the segregated small size of the parcels.)

The following information pertains only to the Central Cascades exchange in Kittitas County, which involves exchanges with two entities, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Western Pacific Timber (WPT), which was formerly Boise-Cascade. Exchanging lands with Western Pacific Timber is especially crucial as there is a short time-line and the opportunity is a one-time offer by the Timber Company.

Local areas involved that many of you may be familiar are the Naneum Basin (WPT), and the Colockum-Quilomene and the L.T. Murray Wildlife (WDFW). Kittitas Audubon has written a letter of support to the DNR in favor of the exchanges--and many letters from individuals supporting the blocking along with concerns/suggestions are needed. No matter how short the letter, please consider sending one. Following are some speaking points.

\*Although you may support the total premise of blocking lands, be sure to state your remarks are for the Central Cascade Exchange.

\*Emphasize the importance of the Naneum Basin exchange. This area has often received mumblings of development of a destination resort with a tram over the top to Mission Ridge. Formerly, the Naneum was Ellensburg's water supply and is a relatively undeveloped area where winter range and migratory corridors for thousands of elk, mule deer, and other species occurs. It is also a Bald Eagle roost. Insist that the exchange keep the Naneum Basin as a working forest and not ever be converted in the future.

\*Ask that the WFWS own or manage the wildlife corridors in the Naneum from the Naneum to the Columbia River to insure they are maintained for that purpose.

\*Ask the DNR for the preservation of some mature stands of Ponderosa Pine--trees that are 300 to 500 years old, that once logged can never be replaced.

\*The Colockum/Quilomene/Whiskey Dick Wildlife areas, which are mainly shrub-steppe habitat, should be owned and managed by the WFWS. They have the expertise to manage this disappearing habitat.

\*The L.T. Murray and Wenas Wildlife areas can have the same two principals above applied, i.e., wildlife migration routes owned or managed by WFWS, and some areas of mature trees left for habitat and future generations.

This plan is not perfect, but the blocking of large areas is the only way to manage the resource of Washington's public lands for the future. If the lands can be blocked-up, 72,000 acres of additional public land will be available for wildlife and recreation. For more information go to the website: <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/hdocs/amp/transactions/exchanges.html> ..

I do hope you will take the time to write a short letter of support. It can be e-mailed to: [exchanges@wadnr.gov](mailto:exchanges@wadnr.gov) -or- mailed to: Dept.of Natural Resources, Asset Management & Protection Division, Attn: Land Exchange Program, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA 98504-7014  
Gloria Baldi

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A demonstration was provided on how efficiently the fuel burns, and guess what? The tail pipe does not smell like French Fries, or diesel. It barely smells of anything, certainly much cleaner than fossil diesel. Bio-Diesel dramatically reduces pollution - especially particulates, the most carcinogenic part of the exhaust brew from diesel engines. Diesel soot may be the most carcinogenic thing most of us are exposed to on a day-to-day basis. Need more information? Check CWBIODIESEL.COM or stop by and fill your diesel burning vehicle at the west-end of Prospect Avenue off Dollar Way in west Ellensburg.

We did not find any birds but became informed of an option that just may help save our birds---and ourselves.

Jeb Baldi

**Imagine the Future with \$100 million for Wildlife, Birds and People!**

By: Nina Carter, Executive Director Audubon Washington and Washington Wildlife Recreation Coalition Member

Remember when the local Audubon members and their land conservancy partners saved the small wetlands near Spokane --Reardon Ponds -- from development? You and your chapter met the challenge and raised part of the money to buy the property. Audubon Washington contributed its lobbying expertise to get more money into the state budget for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) to complete the Reardon Pond transaction. We all celebrated the day when the property became permanent birding site near Spokane! It is a great tourism draw and the local governments love the added tax revenue.

Imagine what we can accomplish with \$100 million for habitat for birds and wildlife! Every month I get calls from Audubon members asking how they can save a small wetland or a forest or a farm in their neighborhood. Those places are home to their favorite Ruby-crowned Kinglet or Cedar Waxwing flocks. I'd like to tell them that \$100 million is available from the WWRP so they can save those special places.

Now, you have a chance to save birds and their habitat by asking for more funding in the WWRP. Governor Gregoire's budget allocated \$70 million for the WWRP. But, there are over \$100 million in projects waiting to be funded. We think the state Legislature should approve \$100 million for WWRP to save farms, forests, wetland, and special places, like Reardon Ponds. Call your legislators today and ask for \$100 million in WWRP.

For more information and to see what projects are funded in your area go to:

[www.wildliferecreation.org](http://www.wildliferecreation.org).

**Wenas Friends**

We are feeling pretty secure in thinking that the Land Swaps will put the **Hazel Wolf Wenas Bird Sanctuary** into public lands protection. Here's the latest from Michael Martin, Conservation Committee Chair for Yakima Valley AS, who has attended the public meetings on the Land Swap subject:

**Wenas Land Swap**, by Michael Martin, <thirdeye@mindspring.com>

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources has proposed major land swaps with Western Pacific Timber (aka Blixseth aka former Boise Cascade land) and with the Fish & Wildlife Department. The net result of these swaps in Yakima County is that the current checkerboard public/private ownership in the upper Wenas would all become publicly owned and managed. Overall, this is an important and positive plan, and should be supported. Care should be taken looking at the publicly owned parcels proposed to be traded in other areas of Washington. Still, this is a one-time opportunity to consolidate public holdings, preserve public access, and provide preservation from development of a large, important ecosystem in Yakima County. Please examine the maps and information provided at:

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/amp/transactions/exchanges.html> <<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/amp/transactions/exchanges.html>>

Mark your calendar for the Wenas Campout May 26-28 . We may have something to celebrate!

We're working on the Campfire Program which we're hoping will include Storyteller Rebecca Hom; a couple of Falconers with their birds; a historic overview of how the First Nations used the Upper Wenas Valley.

Tell your friends about the Wenas Campout. Let's have a great turnout.

More details later,  
Helen Engle





Tundra Swanson the 1st hiway pond west of exit 106 Ellensburg last March.

Cricket Webb

We are lucky enough to have the occasional flock of Tundra swans wintering on any open water here in Kittitas County. They are an all white swan, with black feet and a black bill that has a small yellow spot at the base of the upper mandible.

This swan holds its neck straight up, unlike the Mute Swan which bends its neck in a graceful curve. They have a mellow, rich bugling call. The voice of the Tundra Swan is soft and melodious. As flocks pass overhead, the leader often utters a high note like "who-who-who," which is immediately repeated by flock after flock, producing a high-pitched whistling sound. The call is pitched lower than a whistle and more closely resembles a blowing or tearing sound and can be heard for up to six kilometers. The Tundra Swan breeds in the Canadian North in the tundra areas of Hudson's Bay west to Alaska and winters in the Chesapeake Bay marshes of

the United States.

Length: 36 inches Wingspan: 85 inches.

Large, long-necked waterbird with short legs and a short duck-like bill.

Long neck held straight up with a kink at base.

**Adult:**

Black bill with variably-sized yellow spot at base.

Culmen (the top of the bill) somewhat concave.

Black of bill extends up to eye but does not encircle it.

Straight demarcation on forehead between black bill and white feathering.

Black legs and feet.

Entirely white plumage, when it is feeding in iron-rich areas, the feathers on its head and neck may take on a reddish tinge.

Sexes similar; The male weighs on average 7.5 kg and can measure 1.3 m from bill to tail. The adult female is about the same size as the male but weighs slightly less, about 6.3 kg.



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counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site.

**Why Count Birds?**

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Your counts can help us answer many questions:

- \* How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations?
- \* Where are winter finches and other irruptive species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- \* How will the timing of birds migrations compare with past years?
- \* How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- \* What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?
- \* Are any birds undergoing worrisome declines that point to the need for conservation attention?

Scientists use the counts, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more meaningful and allows scientists to investigate far-reaching questions.

We need your help. Make sure the birds from your community are well represented in the count. It doesn't matter whether you report the 5 species coming to your backyard feeder or the 75 species you see during a day's outing to a wildlife refuge.

It's fun, it's free, it takes as little as 15 minutes--and it helps the birds.

**Immature:**

The young of the year are smaller than the adults and have gray plumage, pinkish beaks with black tips, and pink legs and feet. It takes at least two years for adult plumage to grow in.

This swan is slightly smaller than the Trumpeter Swan and usually has a small yellow or orange spot at the base of the upper mandible. When at rest, it holds its neck straight up, rather than curved backwards.

**Similar species:**

The very large Tundra Swan is unlikely to be confused with anything but other swans. White Pelicans, Whooping Cranes, Wood Storks, and Snow Geese are all white birds that from a great distance could look like swans but all have black primaries. The adult Mute Swan can be told from the adult Tundra Swan by its orange and black knobby bill. The adult Trumpeter Swan is very similar to the adult Tundra Swan but it is slightly larger, has a straight culmen, the bill has no yellow spot, the eye is enclosed by black, and the white feathering on the head extends in a v shape into the dark bill. In the far northwest, a subspecies of the Tundra Swan shows more yellow at the base of the bill and could be confused with the Alaskan Whooper Swan. The Whooper Swan has yellow in the bill that goes beyond the nostril.

**Related species:**

There are seven species of swans in the world. Two of these, the Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* and the Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), are native to North America; their respective populations comprise 140,000 and 16,000 individuals. The Trumpeter Swan is a native of the interior portions of North America, historically nesting and wintering from the upper Mississippi Valley west and north to central Alaska. One nonnative species is found in North America, the Mute Swan. The Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) is an exotic species introduced from Europe and now found in parts of eastern U.S.; it has an orange bill with a black base and knob in front of the eyes. People brought Mute Swans from Europe and Asia for ornamental display in parks and zoos, and now this species is found in the wild in certain parts of the continent.

The most distinctive difference is the voice. The Trumpeter Swan has a deep, resonant, brassy, trumpet-like voice; the voice of the Tundra Swan is softer and more melodious. The species' former name "whistling swan" referred to the sound made by the

slow, powerful beating of the wings in flight, and not to the voice of the bird. The call is pitched lower than a whistle and more closely resembles a blowing or tearing sound.

Tundra Swans are the largest and one of the most inspiring birds of the Arctic. Visitors flying over the swan's tundra nesting grounds readily spot them, as they appear as miniature icebergs adrift on the numerous lakes and ponds dotting the landscape. Seeing a flock of swans migrating on a cold, clear night looking like graceful ghosts with translucent wings against a full moon is a truly memorable sight. Few birds stir the imagination more than these. The swans on the Arctic coastal plain of Alaska are part of the Eastern Wintering Population of the Tundra Swan, which winters around the Chesapeake Bay south to the Carolinas. The swans fly 3,500-4,200 miles from Alaska to the East Coast.

**Distribution:**

The Tundra Swan is composed of two subspecies: Bewick's Swan of the Old World and the Whistling Swan of the New World. Both nest on the Arctic and subarctic tundra, with the latter nesting from SW Alaska around the Arctic coast, east to Baffin Island and south to Hudson Bay. Both subspecies winter in the North Temperate Zone (this is usually only as far south as needed to find open water.)

**Conservation.****Degradation of habitat**

Oil/gas drilling and related activities pose the greatest potential threats to arctic breeding habitats of the Tundra Swan. Loss of wetlands at migratory stopover sites, particularly in the Prairie Pothole region, is also a concern.

**Shooting**

The most direct human impact on Tundra Swans has been in the form of an annual hunting season since 1962 on the western wintering population and 1984 on the eastern wintering population. Hunting is authorized during fall migration in Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North and South Dakota, and Utah, and on the wintering grounds in New Jersey, N. Carolina, and Virginia

**Pesticides and other contaminants/toxics**

Mortality during migration or on the wintering grounds from lead poisoning caused by the ingestion of spent lead shot or lead fishing sinkers has long been a problem. The spent shot and/or sinkers are ingested by the birds for use as grit or because they are similar in size and shape to plant



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**NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP**

\_\_\_\_\_ National Audubon Membership includes membership in Kittitas Audubon and subscription to both the monthly Hooter and Audubon Magazine (published 6 time a year). Membership is \$20.00 for new members. Renewals are \$35.00 per year.

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National Audubon Society Chapter Code Y22  
 Chapter Membership Data Center 7XBP  
 P.O. Box 51001  
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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 cost for the Hooter.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 American Goldfinch \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Great Blue Heron  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00 Red-tailed Hawk \_\_\_\_\_ Other - Donations in any amount are appreciated

Make check payable to Kittitas Audubon Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Clip coupon and send with your check to:

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Membership forms are also available on our Web site [Kittitasaudubon.org](http://Kittitasaudubon.org).  
 Webmaster – Mark Whitesell Email [markwhitesell@hotmail.com](mailto:markwhitesell@hotmail.com)

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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.

### **A LITTLE REMINDER**

Remember Old Mill Country Store gives a ten percent (10%) discount on all bird seed to Audubon members. Be sure to tell them you are a member.

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

### **DISCOVERY TRAIL**

Last month in the *Hooter* you read Keith Johnson's account of keeping the Discovery Trail in good shape. Kittitas Audubon gives a huge thanks to Keith and Leroy Kalmbach for this public service. For those who do not know the trail, it is on Blewett Pass, well marked with signs. A trail for snowshoeing and hiking, it has great scenic views. Do enjoy!

**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)**

