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The Hooter

Kittitas Audubon Society

May 2009

MAY PROGRAM

"Great Observations: A history of ornithology as revealed by bird paintings"

Presented by **Vanessa Hunt**

THURSDAY, May 21st @ 7:00 PM ~ ELLENSBURG HIGH SCHOOL ~ ROOM 232

This presentation describes how bird paintings tell the story of ornithology from classical times to the present day. The story begins with a little known ornithologist and painter from 12th century Sicily, and concludes with the work of some contemporary bird illustrators and ornithologists in the U.S. with whom the presenter has worked. This talk has been given several times in the last two years in Natural History museums across the United States.

Vanessa Hunt is a native of England, who emigrated to the United States after high school, eventually obtaining a Ph.D. in biology education from Louisiana State University. Her doctoral research concerned how the work of bird painters through the ages has informed and supported ornithology and public interest in birds. She has worked as a marine biologist in Florida, the Caribbean, the Republic of Ireland, and on the Gulf Coast, and as a biology educator at the LSU Museum of Natural History. She is currently a professor of science education at Central Washington University, and lives in Seattle.



All Audubon meetings, held on the 3rd Thursday of each month, September through May (except December), are open to the public, so feel free to come and meet with us. A brief business session precedes the program. Stay afterwards for juice, treats and conversation.

This is our last program/meeting until the fall, so we hope to see you there! In April we had a record turnout of over 60 people!

Put on your bird-brain thinking caps! Quiz: "Birds in Our Pockets"

The U.S. Mint's release from 1999 through 2008 of new designs to celebrate the 50 states on 25-cent pieces was a milestone for coin collectors and admirers. Featured in the artwork, besides animals, fish, grand scenery, plants, famous people, and iconic images from U.S. history and geography, are birds, on the quarters from **9 states**. Can you list any - which states and what birds? (Here's a surprise - our national bird, the Bald Eagle, isn't among them). Answers on page 5.

(The answers form only part of the story: This year the designs continue with Washington, D.C. and five U.S. Territories - more birds on the way! And - for each state, up to 20 or more preliminary designs, many by school kids, feature more of our states' symbols. See them all at www.quarterdesigns.com/.)

Thanks to Steve Moore for this quiz!

First Saturday BirdWalk 4/4/09

It was a great morning for a bird walk with sun, no wind, and a temperature in mid-30's. You knew it was spring when 19 people gathered for the walk, maybe for the exercise as well as the bird search. Other signs of spring were the return of the Tree Swallows, and wonderful melodic notes from the Song Sparrows filled the air. Probably the most uncommon finds of the morning were an extremely busy Brown Creeper, a Merlin (also seen last month), and a Green-winged Teal. Not a lot of waterfowl on the lakes. We had a total of 25 species. Join us May 2nd for the next walk at Riverfront Park.

Yakima Training Center - Sage Grouse Lek Viewing - April 5th

After getting up at the ungodly hour of 2:45 am, meeting the Audubon folks for the drive to the Yakima military range, clearing all security, we settled in to wait for daybreak to get a chance to see the Sage Grouse in its mating dance. We did see 7 males but they were at quite a distance so my binoculars only viewed them as black globs. Luckily a few folks had high powered scopes and we could see the puffed up white chests and fanned tails as the males strutted their stuff. Then, unexpectedly, a female took off almost under our feet! We only had permission to be on base from 5-9 am, so afterwards we went to a few other hot spots around Yakima.

This proved to be the best choice as we saw Wood Ducks up close and a family of Great Horned Owls - momma and 2 downy chicks and papa about 3 trees away. We were actually right under the nest and I picked up a pellet. From there we drove up Yakima Canyon and saw a Bald Eagle on its nest, a Golden Eagle on a pole and 5 other species of raptors. We were also treated to a herd of 7 male Big-horned Sheep on an open slope. We watched them for quite awhile as they bedded down and all faced north. What a photo show of those huge spiral horns!

Altogether, we saw 51 species today!! It was a beautiful day too - warm, once the sun came up, little wind, Mt Rainier and Mt Adams and the Stuart Range in full glory!! Pinch me and tell me it's true that I am living in such a fabulous place!!!! It was worth getting up in the dark for such a day.

Judy Hallisey



Cricket Webb photo

Third Saturday Field Trip - Bettas Road/Hayward Hill - April 18th

The birds were there in full force for the seven birders who made it out for this short but productive route. It was chilly but fortunately no wind. We saw a total of thirty species.

Raptors sighted were Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Turkey Vulture and Cooper's Hawk.

Great mobs of Brewers' Blackbirds at the junction of the two roads were crossing every which way - by far the most numerous which I estimated at more than eighty. The bluebirds we saw weren't hanging around the boxes. Maybe we were too early for homesteading. Of course, there were the usual robins, starlings, and meadowlarks.

A new farm on the Bettas Road has put in a farm pond. Imagine our surprise to find waterfowl on this trip - 3 Mallards and 2 Hooded Mergansers.

We saw six types of sparrows but better birds were a Say's Phoebe and a Townsend's Solitaire. Audubon (Yellow-rumped) Warblers were migrating through. We saw many in bushes all along the way, usually close enough to see all their color without binocs. What a treat! They were my personal highlight of the day. So pretty. Most of the time it seems they are high in the trees where you have to look hard to see any color.

Along the way we spotted two little animals with bushy tails and short ears. When we drove up the steep driveway to get a better look we spooked them. What a bummer - just two cats disappearing into the brush!

Marianne Gordon

COLUMBIA BASIN WETLANDS - April 26, 2009

The trip to the Columbia Basin Wetlands scheduled for Saturday, April 25, had to be postponed until Sunday but we really lucked out on the weather. It was a beautiful day with no wind.

Five birders found a total of 65 species.

To start with, at Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park overlook was an Eared Grebe in full color. Other good birds from the overlook were a Common Loon and a Pied-billed Grebe. The Say's Phoebe is nesting under the eaves of the visitor's center again. Last year the ranger made a point of knocking down their nest. I guess the understaffed park has better things to do with their time this year.

Across the river we took the Silica Road exit to see what was in the pond on the south side of the freeway. Ruddy Ducks were the brightest of the birds there.

Instead of getting back on the freeway we took the frontage road until it turned south and eventually became Frenchman Hills Road. This took us through an intensively farmed area, but all the usual farm country

(Continued on page 5)

Continued from April... **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Windfarm 2009 Guidelines Committee**

Mike Robertson has been Kittitas Audubon's representative to this group which has been helping to revise the 2003 guidelines. The work of the group is almost over. Though there are many improvements for wildlife, thanks to all the environmental groups represented, as well as WDFW (WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife) representatives, we were hoping for still stronger guidelines. These will never be mandatory, unfortunately, so they rely on the TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) of the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) for each project, the good faith of the wind farm developers, and, of course, input from organizations such as ours and Friends of Windpower and Wildlife who keep our sights (binoculars?) on *compliance*, and comment when appropriate. We did send in a comment letter on the final guidelines which was accepted, though nothing came of it.

BUT, in a surprising turn of events, a last minute informal email to Herb Curl, another Auduboner on the group from the coast, and Nina Carter of WA Audubon, about the outrageous language in the section on Operational Monitoring was forwarded by Herb to Travis Nelson of the WDFW and leader of the committee. It resulted in the wording being changed from: "mortality to birds and bats is expected to result from wind power projects. **HOWEVER IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS TO WILDLIFE CAN BE AVOIDED OR LESSENE** SUCH THAT THEY ARE ECOLOGICALLY NEGLIGIBLE AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL SCALES AND DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AT MOST WIND PROJECTS IF THESE GUIDELINES ARE EMPLOYED" (original wording),

to: "HOWEVER, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS TO WILDLIFE CAN BE AVOIDED OR MINIMIZED IF THESE GUIDELINES ARE EMPLOYED."

Gone are references to ecological impact at local and regional scales, and cumulative impacts. It is close to what was in the 2003 guidelines. The new Oregon Windpower Guidelines focus on Cumulative Impact Studies. In our state they are being largely ignored.

Mike is retiring from the committee. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his involvement on this committee on behalf of KAS and his years of involvement in wind power issues that affect wildlife.

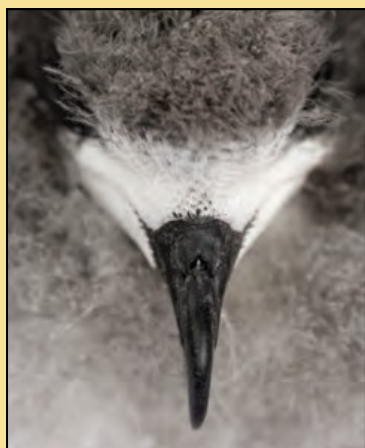
Janet Nelson

Washington State Audubon Campout at Wenas Creek Campground Memorial Day Weekend, May 22-25, 2009

EVERY Memorial Day Weekend, members of Washington State's Audubon Chapters and their friends gather in the Wenas Valley, located off Umptanum Road between Ellensburg and Yakima. The Wenas Valley is a beautiful area of open pine, meadow and river glades seen at its best in the spring, with lush wildflowers in bloom and many birds nesting and in migration.

Everyone, whether members of Audubon chapters or not, is welcome to join us for this outing, which is attended each year by around 200 people. Information on camping, field trips, directions to the site, and persons to contact are at: <http://www.wenasaudubon.org/index.html> or call Tom Gauron, KAS president.

Remember: KAS members are close enough to attend daily events without camping!



"Birds in Focus" Audubon magazine Photography awards

Call for entries: Parlay your passion for birds into a dream trip to Peru, Australia, or Honduras, or win professional photo gear, in Audubon's first photography awards. Each participant can submit up to 10 bird images, so you have 10 chances to win. Your winning entry will appear in the January-February issue of Audubon and in Nature's Best Photography. Here's your chance to see your images soar to the top. **Enter now!**

Enter: May 15 to July 15, 2009 **Deadline:** July 15, 2009

Categories: Professional, Amateur, Youth (ages 13-17)

Details: www.audubonmagazinephotoawards.org

In association with Nature's Best Photography

Columbia Basin Wetlands field trip (Continued from page 3)

birds were there - swallows, meadowlarks, magpies, pigeons, and both Red-tailed and Swainson’s Hawks.

Frenchman Hills Wasteway never fails us. Black-necked Stilts were fussing and fighting all over the pond, presumably vying for nesting territory, which appeared to be in short supply, due to the high water. Cinnamon Teal, American Avocet, Great Egret, Lesser Yellowlegs, Dunlin, and Northern Shoveler rounded out the group.

Driving as slowly as the traffic allowed on Dodson Road, we found a Great-horned Owl giving us the “eye” from her nest tucked in a thicket of tree branches.

The wetland on Highway 26 going toward Othello had a White Pelican, but we were disappointed not to find “our” phalarope, seen in previous years. Interesting bird: the male is dull-colored for camouflage, while the female sports the brighter feathers.

Rounding out the day, driving down Crab Creek and returning to Vantage, we saw a Northern Flicker, Ring-billed Gull, Cedar Waxwing, and finally a Turkey Vulture. We thought we’d missed that one. What we did miss seeing was a Great Blue Heron. They must be all on their nests somewhere else. We’ve made this April trip so many times that we know what birds *should* be there!

Marianne Gordon

FIELD TRIP! DO YOU WANT TO BE A PIONEER?

We have a site on our map that has hardly been birded at all. Join a party to see what you can find. Warblers? Tanagers? Woodpeckers? Nuthatches? Certainly a different assortment of birds from ponds or sage steppe.

On Saturday, May 16th, we plan to bird the Roslyn “Urban Forest”, a name that makes one wonder what can be there. This site takes more walking than others have thus far, so load up your binocs, bird books, and walking shoes. Call Cricket 1-509-674-4035 or Marianne 1-509-964-2320 for more details.



BirdSleuth www.birdsleuth.net

Spring has sprung—we’re on a countdown to summer, and students are squirming in their seats. It’s time to burn off that restless energy and move your class outside.

Channel students’ spring fever into inquiry, observation, and fun with BirdSleuth modules:

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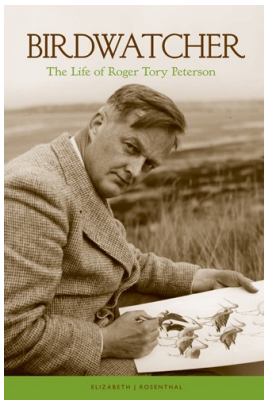
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www.birds.cornell.edu

Answers to the Quiz:

| | | |
|----------------|------|---------------------------|
| South Carolina | 2000 | Carolina Wren |
| Louisiana | 2002 | (Brown) Pelican |
| Maine | 2003 | sea birds (gulls?) |
| Arkansas | 2003 | Mallard |
| California | 2005 | California Condor |
| Minnesota | 2005 | Common Loon |
| South Dakota | 2006 | Ring-necked pheasant |
| Idaho | 2007 | Peregrine Falcon |
| Oklahoma | 2008 | Scissor-tailed Flycatcher |





Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson

by Elizabeth J. Rosenthal

This is a thoroughly researched book on every facet of The Great Birder's life.

Peterson got an early start with a love for wildlife in his boyhood home in Western New York. His interest in birds was nurtured by a sympathetic teacher who encouraged him to join a Junior

Audubon club. He got a job delivering papers so he could buy his first camera. Though school was not one of his priorities he managed to graduate from high school at age sixteen.

Roger's attempt to identify species was limited because there were no bird books at that time that gave enough information. Illustrations were poor and narratives were long and cluttered with unnecessary commentary.

After graduating from high school he amassed enough money to go to New York City for a meeting of the American Ornithological Union where he was just a youngster in awe of all the experts of the time. He met some other young men who eventually became lifelong friends. While Roger was attending art school in New York the group made many forays into the surrounding countryside.

A summer job at a camp gave Roger an opportunity to develop his identification skills; this later led to his first bird guide, published in 1934. From there on it was only upward for his career. He eventually become not only known for his field guides but also as an international voice for conservation. He had the talent and motivation but he also met a lot of people who were able to help him along in his career. Otherwise he may have had to struggle along for many years during the Depression and World War II until the public had money and time to devote to recreational interests.

This biography doesn't leave out anyone he came in contact with during his long career. What I missed personally were more details of his artwork and book production. Otherwise a very thoroughly written biography.

As a lifelong westerner, I wasn't familiar with all the "Big Names" Peterson ran with and as a consequence the book didn't hold my attention here. The sequence of events skips back and forth, causing some confusion. I'd prefer biographies that follow the subject's life chronologically. That being said, I found the book very informative and well worth the "read".

Thanks to Marianne Gordon for this review. The author sent KAS a complimentary copy of the book for review. It will be in the KAS library for loan.

UP FROM THE EGG: THE CONFESSIONS OF A NUTHATCH AVOIDER

Bird watchers top my honors list.

I aimed to be one, but I missed.

Since I'm both myopic and astigmatic,

My aim turned out to be erratic,

And I, bespectacled and binocular,

Exposed myself to comment jocular.

We don't need too much birdlore, do we,

To tell a flamingo from a towhee;

Yet I cannot, and never will,

Unless the silly birds stand still.

And there's no enlightenment so obscure

As ornithological literature.

Is yon strange creature a common chickadee,

Or a migrant alouette from Picardy?

You rush to consult your Nature guide

And inspect the gallery inside,

But a bird in the open never looks

Like its picture in the birdie books —

Or if it once did, it has changed its plumage,

And plunges you back into ignorant
gloomage.

That is why I sit here growing old by inches,

Watching the clock instead of finches,

But I sometimes visualize in my gin

The Audubon that I audubin.

Ogden Nash, 1957

Mountain Bluebirds Back in Our Sagelands!

In March, ten new boxes were placed at the edge of the ponderosa habitat in **Cooke Canyon**. Trail monitors Reilly, Dick, and Katy Ambrose report at least one bluebird nest in progress by late April. Either Mountain or Western bluebirds could show up here.



Steve Moore photo



Jan Demorest photo

At the lower and warmer elevations on the **Vantage Highway**, Mountain Bluebirds began nest-building in KAS boxes in mid-April. Of 37 boxes checked by late April, 17 have clutches of bluebird eggs, with nest building in progress in many more. Sparrow-infested boxes were removed and 15 new boxes placed in prime sage habitat – we’ll hope the bluebirds will find some of these this season and move in as neighbors to the currently very vocal Brewer’s and Vesper Sparrows, Sage Thrashers, and meadowlarks.

Mountain Bluebirds are nest-building on the **Hayward Hill** and **Bettas Road** uplands in about half the boxes checked by late April – still waiting for eggs at this chillier elevation! Here we have one Tree Swallow in a box and one Western Bluebird sighted - this area still taking shape for the new season.

Steve Moore & Jan Demorest

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- ____ Join as a National Audubon member \$20 (renewals \$35)
(includes local membership & monthly newsletter)
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Mail to: Kittitas Audubon, PO Box 1443, Ellensburg, WA 98926
Checks payable to Kittitas Audubon

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Membership forms are also available on our Web site: Kittitasaudubon.org.

Webmaster – Mark Whitesell

Email markwhitesell@hotmail.com

Check out our website ~ see The Hooter in color at Kittitasaudubon.org

Upcoming KAS Field Trips

May 2nd First Saturday Bird Walk at Irene Rinehart River Front Park. Meet at 8:00 AM at the bridge parking lot off Umtanum Rd. Dress for valley spring weather, bring binoculars and a friend--or two. Spring birds have returned, the time of year that yields the most species. **This is also the date of Get Intimate with the Sage Steppe!!!**

May 9th Work day at West Ellensburg Park Ponds (see Page 2 for details)

May 16th Birding by Map (Site #8 & 9 Coal Mine Trail) – Marianne Gordon (509-964-2320) & Cricket Webb (509-674-4035)

May 16 & 17th (Sat & Sun) – Pot Holes Reservoir Islands - A birding campout via canoe/kayak: Call Jud Weaver (509-925-9297)

May 30th Winegar Canyon – 3-hour walk to semi-riparian thickets cutting the margin of the ponderosa pine near Joe Watt Canyon. Expect warblers, vireos, wrens, and bluebirds, buntings and orioles during the peak of the breeding season. Meet at 8:00 at Super One parking lot. Steve Moore, 509-933-1179.

June 6th First Saturday BirdWalk – Irene Rinehart Park (see above)

June 10th (Wednesday) Lake Wenatchee and Tall Timbers – Marilyn & Gerry Sorenson (509-968-4857)

June 20th Birding by Map (Site #20 Robinson Canyon) – Marianne Gordon (509-964-2320) & Cricket Webb (509-674-4035) See page 5 for details!

THANKS TO KITTITAS COUNTY BUSINESSES SUPPORTING KAS!

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

Old Mill Country Store, Ellensburg ~ Provides a discount on bird seed to KAS members and prints our county bird lists. Get your bird seed here! (Best price in town for BIG bags of Niger thistle!)

Kittitas Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1443
Ellensburg WA 98926



Painting of Common Nighthawks
by John James Audubon

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.