

THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society
www.cdaudubon.org

February 2008

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 6

BOARD MEETING

DATE: February 18, Monday
TIME: 4:30 p.m.
PLACE: Mt. West Bank
125 Ironwood Dr.

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

DATE: February 18, Monday
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: First Presbyterian Church, 521 E. Lakeside, Coeur d'Alene
SPEAKERS: Ginger Gumm and Daniel Poleschook, Jr, from Loon Lake, Wash.
PROGRAM: "Common Loons: Their Life and Habitat " A slide presentation.

YARD LISTS

Turn your yard list into Lisa Hardy this week if you want it included in the March Newsletter.

Visit our Website:

www.cdaudubon.org

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT IS GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

In February, volunteers throughout the U.S. and Canada are invited to "Count for Fun, Count for the Future!"



Bohemian Waxwing
Photographed by Joanne Bovee, AB

News Release from Audubon/Cornell

New York, NY & Ithaca, NY, 23 October 2007—Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15–18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

"These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future," said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. "It's fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North America birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment.

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count website www.birdcount.org.

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GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

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The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

"Literally, there has never been a more detailed snapshot of a continental bird-distribution profile in history," said John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Imagine scientists 250 years from now being able to compare these data with their own!"

Already, the count results show how the numbers of some birds species have changed in recent years, such as a decline in Northern Pintails and an increase in Hooded Mergansers, consistent with trends from the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey.

"People who take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count see the results of their efforts in the news and in bird conservation work taking place across the country," said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Whether the counts occur at home, at schools or nature centers, they're more than engaging and educational science activities for young people and adults. They're a way to contribute to the conservation of birds and habitat nationwide."

Lt. Daniel Britt, who served in Iraq 16 months, is glad to be back home in Zimmerman, MN, where he and his sons plan to join the GBBC. "We get a bunch of birds in our backyard," Britt said, "but my oldest son, Daniel, and I may cross country ski into the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge to count birds there."

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on over 500 bird species, visit www.birdcount.org.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited.

Comments from last year's participants

"I was thrilled to be part of something that would help shed light on the environment and the impact that humans have on this earth. It was a chance to use my hobby for a greater good."

—Lauren, North Carolina

"My 4 1/2 year old grandson is very excited about it; he can already identify Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, and woodpeckers in general. We're working on identifying Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers. It's very rewarding for me, and it makes him very proud of himself."

—John, Maryland

"I am eight years old and have loved birds since I was a baby. Birds are very beautiful and the backyard bird count is a lot of fun."

—Breanna, Ohio

"I had great fun participating. It is a quiet and peaceful project. In today's busy and exhausting lifestyle, everyone should sit still and observe birds."

—Helen, Massachusetts

"I always feel honored that we citizens can contribute to science with our home observations."

—Linda, Alaska

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.
www.birds.cornell.edu

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation.
www.audubon.org



MYSTERY OF THE CANYON WREN

Kris Buchler

Having a singing Canyon Wren inhabit a barn at Christmas time seemed like a big mystery to local Auduboners. This was a very new and strange occurrence, even though one had been observed a couple of years ago on the Coeur d'Alene Christmas Bird Count. That bird was in its customary habitat, rocky canyons in Q'emlin Park in Post Falls.

Our bird, observed on December 15, 2007, was singing up a storm in the barn of Peg and Don White, owners of the Carrousel Tree Farm in Cougar Gulch. Peg reported that the more visitors and noise in the barn, the more the mystery bird sang. Roland Craft and I were able to identify the bird as a wren from a very quick glance. We knew the species immediately when we heard its spectacular loud series of down slurred whistles sounding like "tew, tew, tew, tew, followed by a harsh call of "jeet." It didn't sing just once, but at least four times while we were in the barn. Peg showed us its nest, located in a gap between boards forming the floor of a loft.

Some of us returned in January to find the bird again after Peg reported seeing it in a maple tree outside the house. Don had seen it often in the garage and had been aware of the bird for the last couple of months. It did not respond to our playbacks in the barn or garage for the first 10 minutes. As we were giving up our search, it began to sing from a large conifer next to the barn. This was exciting because it allowed Shirley Sturts to add it to the Kootenai County list for both 2007 and 2008. These are very difficult wrens to find in our county and they are missing from many annual lists. If we document it again in February, it will be considered an over-wintering bird.

Why would a wren sing in the winter? Male songbirds generally sing during breeding season for two reasons – to attract a mate and to declare a territory to other males. Since breeding occurs in spring, attracting a female in December does not make much sense. Researching this species turned up answers to many questions. The *Stokes Field Guide to Birds* says little is known about the Canyon Wren's breeding biology. Audubon member, Ed Buchler, a zoologist, said it is possible the bird has a

tumor on the testes causing hormone levels to be erratic. Increased testosterone could initiate singing.

I am the lucky owner of a complete collection of Arthur Cleveland Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*. Published by Dover Publications, Inc., these collections are quite old but contain many anecdotes of sightings and snippets of information that have proved enlightening. I turned to the volume containing the wrens for some insights on the behavior of the Canyon Wren.

First of all, my guides show that this species is year-round in its habitat. North Idaho does not have a lot of the rock faces and canyons favored by this bird. Q'emlin Park in Post Falls is the closest place providing the correct habitat. Why would the wren choose to live at the tree farm? Is there something wrong with it causing it to show aberrant behavior? Or, is it just being a Canyon Wren?

According to my research in Bent, many of the anecdotes explained the "strange" behavior we were seeing in Cougar Gulch. Apparently these birds may sing all year and reports state that females also sing to announce their presence. Canyon Wrens are thought to be monogamous and have three songs. By comparison, Marsh Wrens are polygynous (male pairs with and mates with more than one female) and have had as many as 219 songs recorded. So, our singing bird may be healthy and not so strange after all.

Habitat varies throughout the western states. Although their primary habitat is canyons, this species is known to sometimes inhabit dwellings and barns. In Texas it was reported to nest in eaves of outhouses and rafters of barns, crevices of rock buildings and cross-braces underneath houses and cabins. It even used chimneys of uninhabited houses or occasionally mailboxes. Many ranchers found this wren to be quite friendly and not at all shy. One Arizona resident reported that this bird would share his home, hopping about and exploring every nook and cranny for insect life. One Texan hosted a pair who nested over a window and often sang from a perch on their table.

The *Stokes* guide says the nests are made of twigs and mosses lined with spiders' silk, feathers, fur and plant down. The female lays 5 to 6 white eggs that are finely marked with reddish-brown.

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CANYON WREN

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This species may have a propensity for collecting items and incorporating them into the nest. An observer in Fresno County, California collected a used nest after many items from the general office of a business disappeared. The nest contained a grand total of 1,791 items, some of which were natural while others were not. Interesting inclusions were wire insulation material, 3 kinds of paper clips, T pins, safety pins, straight pins, rubber bands, a three-coil spring, a screw top from a glue container, steel pen points, thumb tacks, screws, carpet tacks, insulation tacks, rusty nails, pieces of rawhide shoelaces, a darning needle, paper fasteners, small pieces of insulated wire, copper wire, steel tape tip, toothpicks and matches. All of these were held together with cobwebs, lint, thread, wood shavings, paper, broom straw, twine, rope, plasterboard, pine needles, shreds of pine bark, asbestos, shells, horsehair, pencil lead, walnut shell and gauzy wings of insects. The foundation of the nest was made of twigs, straw and pine catkins. This bird was a real packrat!

Canyon Wrens are designed for probing crevices. They have a flattened body structure with legs positioned to keep the body close to the substratum. The long curved bill probes the smallest openings. Since its food is insects and spiders, we suspect winter could be fairly tough on this bird. Our wren may have found the barn to be the perfect smorgasbord. We suggested to the Whites that some meal worms left in the barn might be an added treat for their bird.

We will keep updated monthly and hope the Canyon Wren attracts a mate and produces a brood in the barn. Since not much is known about the breeding biology, this could be a wonderful opportunity. After monitoring the Canyon Wren found in Post Falls one spring, we failed to document its presence the following summer and hope this bird will remain in Cougar Gulch.

In the meantime, it seems our mysterious friend is not really as mysterious as we thought and is behaving somewhat normally for a Canyon Wren. The Whites are very lucky to have such a wonderful singer sharing their home and we can only hope this continues in the months to come.

AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION'S PRINCIPLES OF BIRDING ETHICS



**Rose-breasted Grosbeak
from the Fuertes Collection**

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

CODE OF BIRDING ETHICS

1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.

- 1(a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.
- 1(b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area;

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PRINCIPLES OF BIRDING ETHICS

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Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.

Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

1(c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private land-owners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.

1(d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

2. Respect the law, and the rights of others.

2(a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

2(b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.

2(c) Practise common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

3(a) Keep dispensers, water, and food clean, and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

3(b) Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

3(c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member.

4(a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

4(b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

Group Leader Responsibilities [amateur and professional trips and tours].

4(c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

4(d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment, and does not interfere with others using the same area.

4(e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.

4(f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (e.g. no tape recorders allowed).

4(g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.

Note: The American Bird Conservancy has just established a new service that can be subscribed to for free just by visiting its website. <http://www.abcbirds.org/index.html>

ANNOUNCEMENT

Stories Sought: What You Are Doing to Help Fight Global Warming - We're looking for stories from the Audubon family. Tell us what steps are you taking - both individual actions and chapter or other group initiatives. We will share your experiences through Newswire and on the Audubon website - inspiring others to join Audubon in making a difference. Please send your story to kconnors@audubon.org - with photos showcasing what you are doing, if you have them



NOON TIME BIRDING

January 22ND

Lynn Sheridan

The birds at Independence Point were easy to see. We could stand on the ramp to the boat dock and look down on their heads. There was 1 male Common Merganser, a pair of Bufflehead, 2 female Common Goldeneye, 2 female Redhead, and a California Gull amongst 7 Ring-billed Gull and 15 Canada Goose.

Along the road we saw a raptor fly in and land on top a tall pine tree. The three of us studied him for awhile but were undecided on the identification. On our return, he was still there. Along the the Spokane River, we zeroed in on 25 Double-crested Cormorant in the distance and a dozen Great Blue Heron on a raft of logs. Another pair of Bufflehead and a pair of Common Merganser were found along the shoreline.

Thank you, Jan Severtson and Roland Craft for joining me on this cold, beautiful day.

RATHDRUM PRAIRIE FIELD TRIP

Roland Craft

The Rathdrum Prairie field trip on January 26 was quite interesting and successful. First of all, even though it was cold, we did just miss the snowfall.

Our main purpose was to see birds of prey and we were fortunate in spotting 4 Red-tailed Hawk, 6 Rough-legged Hawk and one mature Bald Eagle. Other birds include 43 European Starling, 13 Rock Pigeon, 1 American Crow, 6 Common Raven, 11 Black-billed Magpie, 100s of Canada Goose, 15 Dark-eyed Junco, 8 Mourning Dove, 1 House Finch, 2 male Ring-necked Pheasant, 2 Northern Flicker, and 6 Mallard.

We did find a sad situation at the junction of Lancaster and Huetter where someone dumped 12 dead Canada Geese and one dead Mallard. They were just in the trees along the edge of the road.

Participants were Janet Callen, Roland Craft and Becky Kramer with *The Spokesman-Review*.

COEUR D'ALENE AUDUBON BOARD MEETING JANUARY 21, 2008

- Present: Lynn Sheridan, Jan Severtson, Janet Callen, Mike Mihelich, Jerry Hanson, Lisa Hardy, Roland Craft, Ed Buchler.
- Janet - has ordered 100 Audubon Adventure kits for the schools that she covers. - mentions the Living within Limits program - do we want to participate? - will resign as Education chair at end of (fiscal) year - solicits suggestions for Earth Day booth.
- Mike - no travel plan yet from the CdA USFS. - St. Joe USFS is going to start forming a travel plan - Record of Decision should come soon for Fernan Lake road plan. Will be taking bids in spring.
- Jerry - Mica Bay Adopt-a-wetlands sign was paintballed - he will attempt to clean it.
- Lisa - solicits ideas for increasing participation in chapter activities.
- Roland & Ed - we received letter requesting our support for establishing a migration corridor in Pennsylvania that includes Hawk Mountain. Conservation Committee will examine.
- Lynn - may replace April and May programs with a workshop. Suggestion to do workshop for Living within Limits event.
- During the meeting that followed, Lynn reported \$26.00 was raised from the raffle and silent library book auction. Kris Buchler was given the 2 videos to use in education programs. A few more books will be selected for next month.

BIRD QUOTE

The birds sing at dawn. What sounds to be awakened by! If only our sleep, our dreams, are such as to harmonize with the song, the warbling, of the birds, ushering in the day.

-- Henry David Thoreau --

FEBRUARY -JUNE FIELD TRIPS EVENTS

PLEASE REGISTER: Watch the website for updates to our field trip schedule. Participants should contact the trip leader at least 24 hours in advance of the field trip to find out if the meeting place/time or destination have been changed.

COST: Participants will share in a mileage reimbursement for the driver at a rate of \$0.25/mile, with the trip leader responsible for collection and distribution of the compensation.

RADIOS: We will ask participants to contribute \$1.00 toward batteries as needed.

MICA BAY SURVEY

(2nd Tuesday of each month - 8:00 a.m. September - November and April; 9:00 a.m. December- March: 7:00 a.m. May-August)

DATE: February 12, Tuesday

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

MEET: Fairmont Loop and Highway 95

LEADERS: Shirley Sturts, 664-5318 - Kris Buchler, 664-4739

ACTIVITY: We spend about 3 hours once a month counting birds at Mica Bay.

NOON TIME BIRDING TRIP

(3rd Tuesday of each month - 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.)

DATE: February 22, Tuesday

TIME: 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

MEET: Beginning of Rosenberry Drive, near the sawmill. Walk along the road between the college and riverside.

LEADER: Lynn Sheridan, 765-2603

ACTIVITY: Take an hour out of your busy day to enjoy the out-of-doors. See how many different species of birds one can find in an hour and get to know people who share your interest in nature. Beginner bird watchers are welcome.

SANDPOINT

DATE: February 16, Saturday

TIME: 8:00 a.m.

MEET: K-mart parking lot, south end

LEADER: Lisa Hardy, 783-1262

ACTIVITY: We plan to look over the congregations of waterfowl on Pend Oreille Lake for rarities. This will be a full day trip, so bring lunch and water. We will stop for coffee on demand in Sandpoint.

COMING FIELD TRIPS

MARCH 16, Sunday, Boundary WMA - Ball Creek - Kootenai NWR, leader: Lisa Hardy 783-1262

APRIL 27, Sunday, to be announced, leader: Roland Craft 457-8894

MAY 10 - Saturday, Moscow area, leader: Janet Callen 664-1085

MAY 24, Saturday, Worley - Conkling Park area, leader: Kris Buchler 664-4739

JUNE 7 - Saturday (tentative), Benewah County Century Count

COMING EVENTS

EARTH DAY - APRIL 19, 2008

Our chapter hosts a booth at this annual event in April. Check our website for details.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

On May 3rd we will again tackle our Adopt-a-Highway work on Highway 95, south of Coeur d'Alene. The important "fueling up" on donuts and juice will begin at 8am at the Mica Flats Grange. Expect to finish by 10 am. Long pants and sleeves are recommended. If you haven't tried this before please join us for a satisfying morning spent tidying up the roadway. Call Judy Waring for more info, 765-5378.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY - MAY 10, 2008

Join us in a celebration of the return of warblers and other songbirds from their southern wintering grounds. Check our website for details on this event held the second weekend in May.

ANNUAL SPRING YARD SALE - JUNE 2007 (Day to be announced)

This is an annual fund-raising tradition. Check the May newsletter for details.

