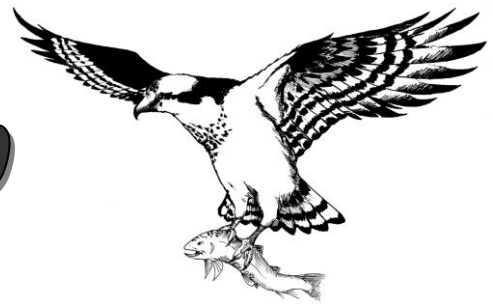


# THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
[www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)

January 2010

VOLUME 19 ISSUE 5

Articles for the newsletters are welcome. Please submit to the editor, Shirley Sturts at: [shirley.sturts@gmail.com](mailto:shirley.sturts@gmail.com) by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. All submissions are subject to editing. Thank you and happy reading!

## JANUARY MEETING

**DATE:** January 5 , Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Lutheran Church of the Maste, 4800 North Ramsey  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.  
**SPEAKER:** Kathy Cousins  
Before her current position with Idaho Fish and Game, Kathy worked for the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii. Her work involved both fresh water and marine fish species, as well as sea turtles, marine mammals and seabirds.  
**PROGRAM:** "Albatross"  
Albatross, or "tubenose birds", soar with great ease over the ocean waves and can smell fish oil from 20 miles away. Come to the meeting to learn more about these remarkable birds that live most of their lives at sea and have no fear of man.

### BOARD MEETING

**DATE:** January 5, Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Mountain West Bank, 125 Ironwood  
**TIME:** 4:30 p.m.  
website: [www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)

## SWANS IN NORTH IDAHO

Part 1

Lisa Hardy



**Trumpeter Swan**  
Photograph by Wayne Tree

Swans are impressively large birds, yet their long necks allow them to retain a sense of elegance. Their all-white plumage makes them symbols of purity. They remain loyal to their mates. For these reasons, swans are a wildlife icon, and we look for them each spring and fall as heralds of the changing seasons.

In March we will attempt to time our swan field trip to when the peak number of birds are moving through

Idaho on their way north to their nesting grounds in Alaska. This is the first in a series of three articles about swans in Idaho, and will discuss the species of swan we see here and their identification.

Most of the swans that come through North Idaho in migration are Tundra Swans. A flock overhead in V-formation can be distinguished from Canada Geese by their long necks and constant "whoop-whoop" calling back and forth to one another. Our subspecies here in North

America is known as "Whistling Swan"; together with the Siberian subspecies, "Bewick's Swan", they comprise the species Tundra Swan.

The calling of Tundra Swans sounds more like cooing or hooting to me, but I suppose "Hooting Swan" sounds too unflattering for such an elegant bird, and anyway, the "whistling" apparently refers to the sound of their wings in flight.

In fall, the first birds begin to work their way south, reaching Idaho in September, with the highest numbers seen in October and November, but the fall migration is more spread out than the spring migration. Small flocks overwinter in our area, and then in March, birds that had been wintering on the coast arrive in our area by the thousands. The peak occurs sometime in mid- to late-March, with 5000 birds being counted in a single day on the Chain Lakes. A few birds linger into May.

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## SWANS IN NORTH IDAHO

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**Tundra Swan (left) - Tundra (Bewick's (right))  
Photographed by Lisa Hardy**

Our other swan, the Trumpeter Swan, shows up in our area in much smaller numbers, no more than one for every hundred Tundras. The two species tend to avoid each other, though this is not immediately evident within a flock of a thousand swans. If you see two groups of swans on a pond, and they maintain their cohesive groupings, not mingling with one another, you are probably looking at one group of each species. Trumpeters nest in freshwater marshes in forested regions, while the Tundras nest farther north, on ponds and marshy areas in the tundra. If we ever had swans nesting in our area, they would have been Trumpeters. Another way to think about them is that Tundras are the more highly migratory of the pair, traveling longer distances between nesting and wintering grounds.

Burleigh (1972) notes that adult Trumpeter Swans are too tough to be palatable, with "only the young of the year being fit for the table", yet hunting brought the Trumpeter population to dangerously low levels by the late 19th century. The reversal of their decline started when they became protected under the Migratory Birds Convention of 1916. In 1932, it was believed that the entire Trumpeter Swan population consisted of fewer than 150 individuals, roughly half of these being in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem, and the other half in interior Canada. In 1952, another population of Trumpeters was discovered in Alaska, and, today, thanks to establishment of wildlife refuges, protection from hunting, and reintroduction efforts, the total North American population is estimated at 16,000.

The Trumpeters we see in north Idaho are most  
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likely from a small population estimated at 1,600 birds that breed in Canada, or perhaps from strays from the largest population, about 13,000 birds that nest in southwestern Alaska, and winter along the Pacific coast. The other populations are small, consisting of birds in and around Yellowstone, and reintroduced flocks in the Midwest and east.

Close to home, 6 Trumpeters were released at Turnbull NWR in 1963, forming a small colony that had some nesting successes over the years, but gradually dwindled to just a few birds. In 2009, the first Trumpeters were hatched on the refuge since 1987.

Expert swan observers are able to distinguish between Tundra and Trumpeter by behavior - how they stand, hold their necks while swimming, and how they greet other members of their species. Bellrose (1976) states that, "Dissection is the most infallible method of distinguishing the two species," but we will confine ourselves to observable fieldmarks.

The Trumpeter is the largest of seven species of swan worldwide, but the Tundra is not much smaller, and so size difference is rarely a good fieldmark. An exception is when the two species are standing - the Trumpeter has obviously thicker, sturdier legs. The call is probably the most reliable fieldmark. After voice, the shape of the bill is the most useful characteristic for distinguishing Tundras and Trumpeters. The black on the bill of a Tundra pinches before joining the dark of the eye. Also, the line between the top of the bill and the feathered forehead forms more of a U-shape than the V-shape of a Trumpeter, and the Tundra has more of a bend in the line made by the side of the bill along the cheek, but these latter characteristics are fairly subtle. All of these fieldmarks are well illustrated in Sibley.

A yellow mark on the bill below the eye is found on about 80% of Tundra Swan, and is extremely rare to find on a Trumpeter. On a lone bird, the lack of a yellow mark is not diagnostic, but if you note a group of say, 8 or 10 swans, none of which have the yellow mark, it is highly unlikely that they are Tundras. In a large group of Tundras, it is interesting to scan through the flock and note the differences in size of the yellow mark. While doing this one day, I found a bird with a really big yellow mark (see photo above). This bird probably had some "Bewick's Swan" heritage: Bewick's is a subspecies of Tundra Swan

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## SWANS IN NORTH IDAHO

Continued from page 2

that nest in Siberia. A few turn up every year in western North America. This bird was not a "full-blooded" Bewick's because the yellow, while quite extensive, was not continuous over the top of the bill.

Two other swan species are possible in Idaho. First is the Mute Swan, the classic swan of fairy tales, a European species that has been introduced and become established in the eastern United States. Mute Swans often hold their wings slightly raised above their backs, giving them the classic profile upon which ceramic and glass figurines are based. Any Mute Swans seen in Idaho would likely be escapees from captivity. In the east, they are considered a pest, and eradication efforts at wildlife refuges include destroying eggs.



**Trumpeter Swan (left) - Whooper Swan (right)**  
**Photograph by Craig Fosdick**

**Whooper Swan Rare Bird report accepted by the Idaho Bird Records Committee**

**<http://www.idahobirds.net/ibrc/archive/reviw09.html>**

The fourth swan possible in our area is the Whooper Swan, a Eurasian species that has been recorded in Idaho only twice. Like the Trumpeter and Mute Swans, it has been named for its voice, described as "bugling". The Whooper is distinguished by extensive yellow on the bill, which, unlike in the Bewick's Swan, comes forward to a point below the nostril. Both these records are from southern Idaho, but we should carefully look over the swans that come through North Idaho.

Next month, part 2 will be about the federal program to mark Tundra Swans with neck collars.

Here are two sites with good information on identifying swans:

<http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/swan-identification.html>

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/crows/SwanID.htm>

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## EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE

The discovery of a small colony of Eurasian Collared-Dove in Kootenai County

Doug Ward

I first noticed these doves when I found a pair at Post Falls Junior High (between Idaho and Spokane Streets on 18<sup>th</sup>) in the spring of 2007. Since then their numbers and regularity have increased significantly.

Beginning this past spring (2009), I started seeing the doves every day on my way to and from work along Prairie Ave. which runs through the rural north end of Post Falls. You could count on multiple individuals (up to 8 one day) at the intersection of Prairie and Chase Road, with a couple more near Prairie and McGuire Road. a mile to the west. As the breeding season ensued, the birds began to spread out along Prairie and by June there were 6 to 7 pairs fairly evenly distributed from just east of Chase Road., to just west of McGuire; my high count was 13 individuals one morning. In addition, there was a pair in town near the baseball fields at Spokane & 21st Streets; probably another breeding pair.

With summer wearing on, though, I'd start to only see a few singles a day but they were always near the same spots, probably on territory. Then by mid-September, a couple of days would go by and I wouldn't see any. By the end of September, they seemed to disappear all together; I didn't see a one – where did they go?

Then last Thursday (5 Nov.'09), voila, they reappeared in force – 10 together in one small deciduous tree near the intersection of Prairie and McGuire! I suspect they have gathered to ride out the winter in a communal roost, probably in one of the conifer "windrows" somewhere nearby

Since most of my observations are essentially along a single transect indicating 15-20 birds over about a mile and a half, I suspect the total number of doves in the area may be as high as 30-40 individuals. All in all, it has been fun to watch this unfold. I hope some of you have a chance to bump into these uncommon doves out there.

*Editors Note: The first Eurasian Collared-Dove in Idaho was reported from Soda Springs on August 3, 2000. A total of 990 were tallied on 29 CBC 2008-2009, a 63% increase from 2007-2008. We hope to add it to the CDA CBC this year.*



## WAYNE TREE AND THE BEST BACKYARD BIRD OF THE MONTH

Dorinda Troutman

Reprinted from her weekly column "Bird Seed" in the Bitterroot Star in Stevensville, Montana



**Wayne Tree took this photo recently of an American dipper while looking for loons at Lake Como**

My friend Wayne Tree collects bird sightings like another person might collect fine bottles of wine or works of art. And each year he begins anew, with an empty cellar or unadorned white walls.

Like many people around the world, Wayne has a hobby involving birds called "Listing," a year-round vocation.

According to "The Birdwatcher's Encyclopedia," Listing is a competitive branch of birdwatching in which one competes against oneself and/or others for the greatest number of species seen in a given place and/or time. Some listers reinforce their interest by keeping detailed notes on their observations such as arrival and departure dates of migrant species near their homes or, among the more widely traveled, by recording faunal information for little-known localities. For most, however, sport and diversion are the chief attractions.

A national organization, the American Birding Association (ABA), sets official standards for validity of records, organizes field trips to good birding localities on the continent, and provides a forum for discussion of listing issues in its bimonthly publication, "Birding." In addition to printing an annual tally of the longest state, provincial, North

American, and international species lists, *Birding* contains a variety of features and articles of value and interest to birds.

This description of the "lure of the list," is by Robert B. Janssen, in the August, 1979 issue of *Birding*:

"Bird-listing is a much-discussed topic in the birding world, especially among ABA members. Some birders malign listing, some can take it or leave it, some are disgusted by it, and others are compulsive about it."

Janssen lists his lists: U.S. life list; Minnesota life list, month list, county list, season list, breeding-bird list, yard list, early spring dates, late fall dates, average fall dates, bell ringers (bird seen in all months), January 1 list, day list (for each field trip), record daily list by month, and year list.

Janssen explains his passion: "Possibly the first question many people will ask is, 'Why keep so many lists?' My first and best answer is that list-keeping is fun because it gives you a chance to compare one year with the next, one day with another day, one area with another, and on, and on. Secondly, lists give me, and others, a good picture of the present distribution of birds in the state.

"I have seen a number of birders become bored with seeing 'the same old bird time after time.' Although the thought of being bored by birds never occurred to me, one way in which I have escaped the possibility of boredom is by listing. Listing provides new challenges and an interest in seeing that 'same old bird' in new areas at different times of the year..."

Wayne may not be as compulsive as Janssen in his list-making. I know of only three lists that Wayne personally keeps: Montana birds, life birds and year birds, but he is very enthusiastic about those.

Wayne's hobby gets him out of his house and into his high-mileage Subaru just every single day looking for birds in Ravalli County and across Montana. For example, my email on Sunday morning, as I was writing this column, contained an excited note from Wayne:

"I cannot believe I am going birding this morning up in the Mission Valley with Paul Hayes and the group headed by Larry Weeks of Five Valley Audubon. I just received a call at 7 a.m. from Larry saying it is not windy up there. I'm having a hard time believing that but I will be on my way shortly to head into the teeth of the arctic air. Hope we get to see a Snowy Owl. That would not only be cool, but frigid."

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## WAYNE TREE ...

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Wayne does keep another list, however, and it is one that about 200 other people including myself participate in: Best Backyard Bird of the Month. Over the years Wayne has expanded this list to include areas outside of Ravalli County as far away as China. Each month Wayne sends out a reminder email with a deadline to send in your best backyard bird of the month. When he has compiled his list, he emails it to me, and everyone else who has participated in the list. I format it, save it as a PDF and send both him and Samantha O'Byrne, owner of Sam's Spade gardening and birding store in Hamilton, a copy. Sam prints it out and hangs it in her birdwatching room for anyone to read.

If you would like to join this fun activity, which helps me review what I have seen in my yard for the past month, shows which species was outstanding, and enables me to read what my near and far neighbors consider their most interesting bird of the month that has visited their yard, email Wayne Tree at [calidris05@montana.com](mailto:calidris05@montana.com). If you are not able to email, simply call Wayne at 777-3159.

*Editors Note: Ed and Kris Buchler and I, along with about 10 other Idaho birders, submit our best backyard bird each month to Wayne's backyard bird list*

*Also Wayne has been sharing his excellent photographs with us for several years, giving me permission to use many of them in our newsletter.*

## 2010 FIELD TRIPS

### MICA BAY SURVEY

**DATES:** January 8, Tuesday (held 2nd Tuesday of each month - times vary depending on month)

**TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

**MEET:** Fairmont Loop and Highway 95

**LEADER:** Shirley Sturts 664-5318

**ACTIVITY:** We spend about 3 hours once a month counting birds at Mica Bay. Everybody is welcome including beginning birders. We will help you with identification skills.

### SANDPOINT AREA AND PEND OREILLE RIVER

**DATE:** January 23, Saturday

**TIME:** 8:00 a.m.

**MEET:** Meet: K-Mart parking lot, south side.

**LEADER:** Bill Gundlach: 667-3339

**ACTIVITY:** This will be an all day field trip so bring water, lunch and dress for the weather. Be sure to register in case Bill has to cancel or change the date due to bad weather.

### RATHDRUM PRAIRIE

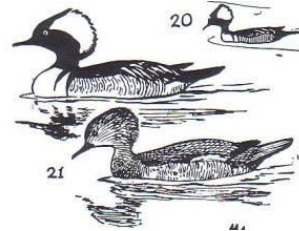
**DATE:** February 13, Saturday

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m.

**MEET:** Meet: K-Mart parking lot, south side.

**LEADER:** Bill Gundlach: 667-3339

**ACTIVITY** 1/2 day - bring water and dress for the weather.



### LATER FIELD TRIPS

Details in upcoming newsletters

**March: (about the 20th)** Chain Lakes for swans and other migrants.  
Leader: Lisa Hardy

**April 24:** Fishtrap/Hog Lake: 30 miles south of Spokane. Leaders: Roland Craft 457-8894 and Janet Callen 664-1085

**May 1:** Elk River Falls, White Pine Drive, Bovill and Deary. Alternate: Westmond Lake and Round Lake. Leaders: Roland Craft and Janet Callen

**May 14, 15, 16:** Three day, 2 night trip to Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge (on the Bitterroot Valley Mountain Birding Trail), Stevensville, Montana. Leaders: Kris Buchler 664-4739 and Janet Callen

**June 5:** Bonner County Century Count  
**Note:** Beginning April, 2010 Lynn Sheridan will lead monthly local-area birding trips for beginning birders. Each event will begin at 10:00 a.m. and last an hour and one-half. See dates and times beginning with the April newsletter.

**June, July, August:** If there is enough interest, field trips can be scheduled in these months.