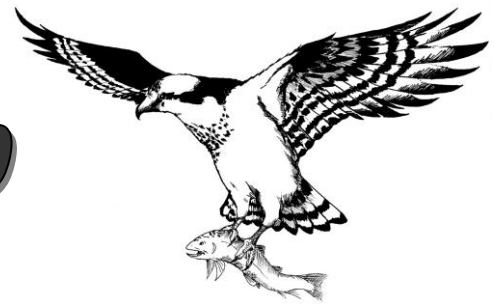


THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society

March 2004

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 7

COMING EVENTS

BOARD MEETING

DATE: March 9, Tuesday

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PLACE: Mountain West Bank
125 Ironwood Dr.

MARCH PROGRAM

DATE: March 15, Monday

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Spokesman Review Building
608 Northwest Blvd.

SPEAKERS: Mark and Delia Owens

PROGRAM: "Wildlife Conservation Projects
in Africa" See Program Article

SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

DATE: March 26-28.

LOCATION: Othello, WA

See page 4 for information

●—————●
Visit our website: www.cdaudubon.org

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN AFRICA

MARCH GENERAL MEETING



It is our great fortune to have Mark and Delia Owens, fellow Idahoans and American zoologists involved in the conservation of wildlife, as fellow Idahoans. They will be presenting a program on their work in Africa with elephants, brown hyenas, and black-maned lions at our March meeting, to be held Monday the 15th, 7:00 p.m., at the Spokesman Review building.

Beginning in 1974, Delia and Mark worked for seven years in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana studying the hyenas and lions, resulting in landmark discoveries regarding both species. With nothing more than their backpacks, \$6,000, and one-way air tickets they headed into the desert, living in tents for the length of their stay.

In 1985 they returned to Africa, this time to the Luangwa National Park in Zambia. They soon found that poachers were killing as many as 1,000 elephants a year for their meat and ivory. The fight was on! The next decade was spent developing a conservation project benefiting both the elephants and the people.

The Owens have also been assisting grizzly bear conservation in the North Idaho Selkircks, one of the five remnant grizzly bear populations in the lower 48 states.

With their third book now at the press, the Owen's books "Cry of the Kalahari" and "The Eye of the Elephant" will be available at the meeting for signing and sale.

Judy Waring, program coordinator

BIRD TRACKS



Audubon Members make a difference

INTERPRETIVE SIGN AT MICA BAY

Kris Buchler

Coeur d'Alene Audubon has partnered with two Lake City High School students to produce an educational sign about wetlands for display at Mica Bay. We began the project in the spring of 2003 when Erik Fenenbock was a senior and Larina Helm was a junior. Larina and Erik have worked together to produce a stunning artwork depicting many species of the native plants and wildlife of the Mica Bay wetlands. The Education Committee developed the text which conveys the value of this vulnerable habitat.

On February 16, at this month's meeting, our chapter was proud to present honorariums of \$250.00 each to Larina and Erik for their efforts and talents. Erik graduated in June of 2003 and Larina will graduate in June of this year. We wish them both the best in all future endeavors.

The interpretive sign will be dedicated May 8th, as part of our celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. Check future newsletters for more information.

PROJECTOR NEEDED

Our chapter is looking for a used slide projector for use in giving educational programs. It should accommodate Kodak Carousels. If you have one you would like to sell or donate, please call Kris at 664-4739.

EAGLE WATCH WEEK

Another Successful Coeur d'Alene Eagle Watch Week

Scott Robinson

The BLM (Bureau of Land Management) has been counting Bald Eagles around Wolf Lodge Bay since 1974. This year, Audubon's Corinne Cameron counted 143 Bald Eagles on December 29, which was our all-time greatest number of eagles. We think our eagles moved down from Pend Oreille Lake where the kokanee population has taken a nose dive as a result of pool level management. Coeur d'Alene Lake's kokanee salmon appear to be slowly recovering from the 1997 floods that flushed many fish down the Spokane River. The BLM is examining the current data, however.

The BLM recently completed its 13th annual watch week. We have asked our eagle watchers to record their mailing zip code in one of two register books since 1994. Nearly 38,000 people have come to watch eagles during these nine weeks of viewing. To date, 49 American states, Washington D.C., 3 military zip codes, and 29 foreign countries have been represented. We continue to wait for Rhode Island to come on over and sign in!

Although people watched eagles before and after our designated week, about 4,800 people came during Christmas and New Year. This number beats the 4,700 people that came in 2001, but was short of the 7,800 eagle watchers in 1994. Residents from 36 States registered their zip code with us in 2003. Seventy-one percent of this year's eagle watchers came from 52 nearby communities in Washington, Idaho, and

Montana. Behind Washington and Idaho, California contributed the next greatest number of eagle watchers.

If we count the number of zip codes, then California represents the greatest geographic distribution of all eagle watchers.

Many of these people were visiting family and friends during the holiday season. For example, people came from Stow, Massachusetts in 2001, 2002, and 2003; Dana Point, California every year since 1994; and Beaverton, Oregon in 1994, 2002, and 2003. Some people, such as one family from Indiana who saw our event in an AAA magazine, came on a skiing vacation. People from Canada, China, Mexico, England, Denmark, the Philippines, South Africa, and Zimbabwe also saw our eagles this year. Some, but not all of these foreign folks were exchange students.

The BLM appreciates the help of local Auduboners Jenny Taylor, Kris Buchler, Maribel Mogilefsky, and Nancy Mertz Prichard for helping with this year's Coeur d'Alene Eagle Watch Week. Thanks for the help, and we'll do it all again next year.

2004 YARD LIST CHALLENGE

Sign up for the 2004 Yard list Challenge with Lisa Hardy - call 682-4808. She will send you a "Check List" of bird species to help you keep track of what you see or hear in or from your yard. Also, having this "Check List" is a good reminder to write the date down each time we see a new bird species for the year.

(Read More - Page 4)

Bird Tracks continued on Page 4

MARCH FIELD TRIPS

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

1. Please register with the leader ahead of time.
 - a. It helps the leader plan the trip.
 - b. You will be informed if the trip time or location is changed or if the trip is canceled.
2. Fees: (to be paid to the driver of the car) \$5.00 - all day trips \$3.00 - 1/2 day trips.
3. We sometimes use radios to communicate between cars. If the radios are used we are asking participants to contribute \$1.00 toward batteries.

MICA BAY SURVEY

DATES: March 10 and 24, Wednesdays

TIME: 8:00 a.m.

MEET: Fairmont Loop and Highway 95

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

ACTIVITY: We spend about 3 hours twice a month counting birds in the Mica Bay area. Beginner birders are encouraged and welcome to join us.

BROWN BAG BIRDING TRIP

DATE: March 16, Tuesday

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

MEET: 3rd Street Entrance to Tubbs Hill

LEADER: Lynn Sheridan - leave messages for Lynn with Kris Buchler 664-4739

ACTIVITY: We will take our first spring hike around the hill as far as time permits. Come help me look for early spring flowers and early migrants.

CHAIN LAKES

DATE: March 14, Sunday

TIME: 7:30 a.m.

MEET: Fernan Ranger Station - meet leader at Rose Lake exit, Country Chef Café at 8:00

LEADER: Lisa Hardy, 682-4808

ACTIVITY: All day trip to look for migratory waterfowl. Bring lunch and water.

HEYBURN STATE PARK

DATE: March 27, Saturday

TIME: 7:30 a.m.

MEET: carpool @ K-mart parking lot, behind Fast Burger

LEADER: Lisa Hardy, 682-4808

ACTIVITY: All day trip. We will be scouting the route for the Idaho Birding Trails. Bring lunch and water.

To volunteer to lead a trip or to suggest places to go, call or email Lisa Hardy 682-4808 or basalt@earthlink.net

2003 YARDLIST CHALLENGE

Lisa Hardy



This year we had 8 households report a total of 109 species. The median list size was 46 species. The challenge in 2002 yielded 121 species. Ten species were reported this year from all 8 participants (Canada Goose, Calliope Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Cassin's Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak). And 31 species were reported from only a single household.

As usual, the largest lists came from yards on or near the water. Highlights were Common Loon (Shirley), American White Pelican (Lori), and Harlequin Duck (Lisa).

Twenty-bird highlights included Kris' American Redstart, Lori's American Tree Sparrow, and Janet's Black-c. Chickadee.

The Warings had both Blue Jay and a Steller's X Blue hybrid. Cooper's Hawks made an appearance in town in Lynn's and the Waring's yards, while Jan recorded the only Merlin.

Lori had all three nuthatches, and Jan and Kris had all three chickadees. Janet had a clean sweep of the finch family. As a group, we tallied a respectable seven species of ducks, and nine birds of prey.

This is the fourth year of the annual Yardlist Challenge, and we added 6 new species never reported before: Harlequin Duck, Gray Partridge, American Redstart, American Tree

Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. This brings our grand total for four years to 156 species. Of those, 95 have been seen every year, but only 2 species have been recorded by all participants every year (Northern Flicker, American Robin). Of our 156 species grand total, 30 have been seen in only one year, or about 19%. Some of these "singletons" are due to one-time participants who represent different habitats.

This year's participants: Kris & Ed Buchler, Janet Callen, Lisa Hardy, Lori Stackow, Jan & Herb Severtson, Lynn Sheridan, Shirley Sturts, Judy & Phil Waring.

Look at the tables on the web page for the complete data.

KOOTENAI COUNTY BIG YEAR

Shirley Sturts

In the year 2000 Steve Lindsay compiled a checklist of all the bird species that have ever been observed in Kootenai County. On January 1st of 2001, he set out to do a Kootenai County Big Year. His goal was to find 200 species in Kootenai County in one year. On December 31, 2001 he was up to 199. Driving to the Harrison area instead of out on the Rathdrum Prairie to look for number 200 proved to be fatal to his plan. That 200th bird was seen a day later, January 1, 2002 on the Rathdrum Prairie.

This effort by Steve inspired me to start a Kootenai County Big Year for our Chapter. I thought with all of us working together we could find 200 birds during 2002. We were off to a good start with Steve Lindsay coming up with our first bird for the year, the Snowy Owl.

However, we didn't get out in the field as much as Steve did and we ended with 195 birds for 2002 and our efforts for 2003 netted us even fewer, 192.

This year Steve is doing a Big Year for the 5 northern counties and we are going to make a real effort to reach the magic number of 200 for Kootenai County. We are not including Steve's sightings on our list. Instead, we are having a "just for fun" contest to see if we can come up with more species than he does for Kootenai County.

We are off to a good start with 80 species as of February 17. Steve has only 59. Being the first to see a bird species is another part of the contest. Of the birds we have both seen, he is ahead of us, 23 to 14. We saw 19 species on the same date as he did. We have 21 species that he had not found yet and he has 3 species that we have not found yet.

One thing that makes me hopeful that we will reach our goal this year is the fact that of the 80 species we have found so far, several of them are difficult to find birds. Kris Buchler had a Common Redpoll at her feeder on January 1st. Then Janet Allen called in a Northern Goshawk near her Hauser Lake home on January 8th and Nancy Mertz added a Blue Jay at her feeder on January 12. Lisa Hardy and Kris Buchler came up with a Red-breasted Merganser on the IBA count in Wolf Lodge Bay on January 20th. Eula Hickam came up with a possible Snowy Owl on Rathdrum Prairie on January 20 and a few days later Corinne Cameron confirmed her sighting by seeing a Snowy Owl close to the same area as Eula saw hers. We are assuming this was the same bird.

Lynn Sheridan and her Brown Bag Birders found a

Thayer's Gull at Independence Point January 20th. Not to be out done, the birders on the January 25th Chapter field trip added a Mew Gull and an American Tree Sparrow. The reporting of two rare gulls, the Mew and the Thayer's, attracted Gina Sheridan, a birder from Spokane. On February 1, instead of finding the Mew and Thayer's Gull which she had come to seek, she added another rare gull, the Glaucous-winged Gull.

With a start like this, how can we not reach the goal of 200 species! Spring is just around the corner and the migrants are going to start showing up. Cindi Langlitz already reported the first returning migrant when one Red-winged Blackbird came by her house on February 1st.

There are 120 bird species left for us to find. All of you can help in this effort and get credit for having the first sighting. Check the Observation Post in the February, March and future newsletters for a list of birds observed to date. For the most up-to-date list check our website: www.cdaudubon.org, and then click on Kootenai County Big Year. I will be updating this list at least once a week. Also, you can pick up a Kootenai County Check List at the March meeting.

THE BIRDHOUSE NETWORK

The Birdhouse Network seeks bird enthusiasts to help monitor the impact of invasive species.

In the mid-1800's, little brown birds called House Sparrows were introduced into the United States from Europe, reportedly to promote the birds mentioned in Shakespeare plays and because they were believed to control insect pests. Since

then, these little brown birds have made themselves quite comfortable here - spreading their wings across all of North America in vast numbers. Their surging populations have resulted in fierce competition with native birds for nesting sites.

According to 2003 data collected by The Birdhouse Network (TBN), a citizen-science project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, House Sparrows account for 43 percent of all competitor species, i.e., species that take over nest boxes intended for native birds. And while most nest box monitors discourage nesting by House Sparrows, they still comprise ten percent of all reported nesting attempts, where at least one egg is laid.

"What effect is this having on North America's bluebirds, swallows, and other native cavity-nesting species? We don't know," says TBN project leader Tina Phillips. There are no long-term studies showing the effect of competition between House Sparrows and our native cavity-nesters. This is one reason why we're asking everyone across the continent to become part of our nest-box monitoring project. The only way to get answers is to get data, which can only be provided by people who monitor nest boxes.

TBN participants monitor activity inside nest boxes, also known as birdhouses, and keep track of data such as egg laying dates, numbers of eggs and nestlings, and fledging dates. They send their observations to researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where they are combined with observations from across North America, to determine the annual nesting success of cavity nesting birds.

In the middle of the last century, things were not looking so good for bluebirds. Their populations were seriously declining due to pesticide use, habitat loss and competition with non-native species, such as House Sparrows.

Today, bluebird populations are rebounding thanks to bird enthusiasts who provide nest boxes in their yards, fields, and neighborhoods. Bluebirds benefit greatly from this simple act because, like most secondary cavity nesters they are physically incapable of creating their own nesting holes, and must rely on pre-existing nest sites in order to raise their family.

Phillips points out that simply putting up nest boxes isn't enough. In order to ensure the long-term future of native cavity-nesters, nest box owners need to monitor and report what's going on inside their boxes. Only then will scientists have a truer picture of the current status and factors influencing breeding success of native cavity-nesting species.

One thing is known for sure. In head-to-head competition, House Sparrows readily out-compete native species for nesting sites. They will do whatever is necessary to acquire and keep prime real estate, including evicting other nesting birds, destroying their eggs, killing nestlings, and sometimes even killing the incubating female. Adding to the competition is the fact that once a male House Sparrow establishes a territory, he remains there year-round, and starts defending that territory early in the season, often preventing later-arriving species such as bluebirds and swallows from nesting.

Continued on Page 6

BIRDHOUSE NETWORK

Continued from Page 5

House Sparrows are also prolific breeders, raising up to four broods per season (compared to just one or two for bluebirds), and each brood averages four to five eggs. They are expert nest builders, building and rebuilding nests at a rapid rate. For these reasons, TBN is collecting data for a new Nest Box Competitor Study, which examines the effect of nest box competition from invasive species on native cavity nesting birds. Participants collect information about the competitor species using the nest box, the type of interference, if any, by monitors, and the final outcome of the nesting attempt.

In addition to collecting data, is there anything else nest-box monitors can do? Since House Sparrows are not federally protected, TBN recommends several tips to discourage them from nesting. These tips include avoiding the use of filler grain such as milo, millet, or cracked corn at bird feeder stations, all favored foods of House Sparrows. Since House Sparrows can be common around human habitation, TBN recommends placing nest boxes away from heavily trafficked areas. Another strategy is to plug the entrance hole of nest boxes until the desired species arrives for breeding in the hopes that House Sparrows in the area have already set up house-keeping elsewhere. Experienced monitors also will remove nest or eggs and deploy traps.

Sometimes the best strategy for dealing with House Sparrows is to not put up a box at all, especially if you aren't willing to discourage their nesting in favor of native species, says Phillips.

She adds again, that to really make a difference for the birds, becoming part of TBN and sharing your observations with researchers is essential. So far, the project has received more than 41,000 nesting records for over 40 cavity-nesting species. Information however, is still badly needed for the new Nest Box Competitor Study.

Serious birders, beginners, families, classrooms, youth groups, everyone is invited to become part of The Birdhouse Network. A registration fee of \$15 (\$12 for Lab members) helps offset the cost of running the project. Participants receive a Welcome Packet that includes a beautiful poster of cavity-nesting birds, access to private and public listserve, an annual subscription to the Lab's quarterly newsletter, BirdScope, and access to an online database where participants can submit, organize, share and store their nest box observations. People can sign up by calling the Lab toll-free at 800/843-2473 (outside the U.S., 607/254-2473) or at The Birdhouse Network web site at <<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse>>www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse.

Nest Box Cams, a Peek Inside the Mysterious Lives of Cavity-nesting Birds

Since 1999, TBN has provided live images of cavity-nesting birds to viewers around the world. Using a system of Nest Box Cams—small cameras placed inside nest boxes, Internet viewers can follow species such as bluebirds, swallows, Barn Owls, American Kestrels, and chickadees, as they build their nests, lay eggs, hatch, feed the young, and much more. Developed and managed

by the TBN staff, the cams have attracted nearly half a million viewers.

The cams are a great way to get a close-up-and-personal look at what goes on inside a nest box, something that just wouldn't be possible without the cams, says Phillips. To get a peek, visit The Birdhouse Network's web site at <<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse>>www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse.

To become a sponsor of the cams, contact Tina Phillips at the above address.

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



"If I were to make a study of the tracks of animals and represent them by plates, I should conclude with the tracks of man"

Henry David Thoreau

RATHDRUM PRAIRIE

Sunday, February 9

Lisa Hardy

Criss-crossing the Rathdrum Prairie from noon until dark did not find us the elusive Snowy Owl, but we tallied a large number of buteos, and a single Northern Harrier. The buteos were either Red-tailed or Rough-legged Hawks, and several excellent views allowed us to appreciate the diagnostic, diminutive bill of the Rough-legged. Most of the Red-tails were unexceptional adult birds, but we had a brief glimpse of one dark-fronted individual, possibly the Harlan's Hawk that

has been reported from the prairie this winter. Harlan's are a race of Red-tailed Hawk that breed in Alaska. We revisited the site on Atlas Road where we saw three species of gallinaceous birds on our trip two weeks ago. On this day, we saw only California Quail and (nine!) Ring-necked Pheasant. We deduced that the residents of a house on Bean Street, a short road on the west side of Atlas, were feeding the birds.

As the sun set in a wash of color, we located several flocks of Canada Geese feeding in the snowy fields around Greensferry and Hayden. And a final highlight was the lone Horned Lark that Janet spotted in the fading light on the railroad tracks west of Highway 41.

Trip participants: Janet Callen, Roland Craft, Bill Gundlach, Lisa Hardy, Shirley Sturts.]

BIRDING WITH A BROWN BAG

FEB 17

Lynn Sheridan.

Meeting at Independence Point, Laura Bayliss, Roland Craft, and myself found 3 Ring-billed Gull, 1 California Gull, 3 Mallard, 1 Red-necked Grebe and 6 Rock Pigeon.

Walking through City Park and along W. Lakeshore drive, we saw about 100 waxwings swirling in and out of the tallest pines, as though fly-catching. We identified both Cedar and Bohemian in the flock. Then along the road, we saw huge flocks perched in bare deciduous trees, estimating another 200. They flew down in groups of 30-40 to eat mountain ash berries from a lawn. These were all Bohemian. Every car that passed interrupted them, but

they kept coming back, beautiful to see.

Out on the lake we counted 6 Bufflehead, 3 Common Merganser, and on piling #37, 4 Double-crested Cormorant waited patiently.

Along Rosenberry Drive, 10 Mallard, 30 Canada Goose (3 of them honking on pilings - reserving a nest spot?), 25 more Ring-billed Gull, and a flock of about 12 Pygmy Nuthatches scampering about completed our list of birds for the trip.

This was a great birding outing, thanks to the deity for no rain and a wonderful cloud of waxwings "swimming" overhead.

OTHELLO SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

Randy Hill, Othello

Planning is mostly completed and the updates have been added to the website for the 7th annual Sandhill Crane Festival. The dates are March 26-28. We always have something to top the last edition, and this year is no exception.

Three new field trips were added on Sunday to follow the "theme" of the Coulee Corridor Birding Trail and the WA ABA Birding Guide. Birding trips down Lower Crab Creek, to the Potholes and Dodson Road areas, and to the North Potholes and Moses Lake areas were added. Lower Crab Creek will also have a shortened version Friday afternoon, and with Mike and Merry Lynn Denny leading both Friday and Sunday trips you can expect something good.

In case you missed it last year, "Winged Migration" makes a return to the big screen. By special arrangements there will be a theater showing at 5 pm both Saturday and Sunday, and

it includes all-you-can-eat/drink popcorn and soft drinks.

This year's featured speaker is Robert Bateman. Friday evening he will do a Seminar on Art, and even with expanded seating we expect a sell-out rather quickly. Saturday evening he will be the banquet speaker, shifting from artist to conservationist in discussing Cranes and other Flagships.

With four lectures every hour (including lots of new topics), 30 field trips of varying lengths, a big children's program and associated displays, there is plenty to do, but popular activities and times sell out quickly. Visit the website at www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org and get more details plus registration information

OBSERVATION POST

2004 Kootenai County Big Year. The chapter website list will be updated weekly with the new birds being seen. Our total to date is 80

Glaucous-winged Gull 1, Independence Point, Coeur d'Alene Lake (Gina Sheridan, birder from Spokane)

Red-winged Blackbird 1 Near CDA Airport (her home) Feb. 1 (Cindi Langlitz)

Northern Flicker 1 Fernan Lake and Armstrong Hill feeders (Shirley Sturts and Kris Buchler)

Pileated Woodpecker Jan. 12 Mica Bay Survey

Cedar Waxwing 30+ Arrowhead Road, CDA Feb. 16 (Theresa Potts)

Bohemian with Cedar Waxwing 300 + Brown Bag Birding Field Trip - City Park/NIC (Lisa Sheridan, Roland Craft, Laura Bayless)

See additional sightings on our Website (ran out of room ☺)

