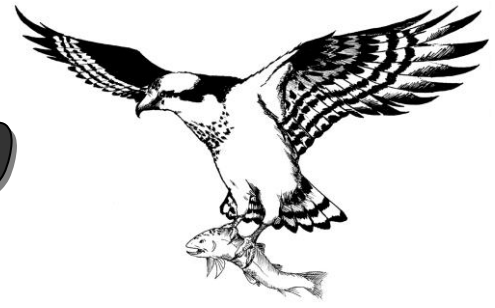


# THE FISH HAWK HERALD



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

March 2010

VOLUME 19 ISSUE 7

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!

## MARCH MEETING

**DATE:** March 2, Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 North Ramsey  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.  
**SPEAKER:** Kris Buchler and Audubon members  
**PROGRAM:** Birding Basics Part 1 - A bird watching class

## BOARD MEETING

**DATE:** March 2, Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Mountain West Bank, 125 Ironwood  
**TIME:** 4:30 p.m.

website: [www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)

## BIRDING BASICS - 2010

March 2, Tuesday, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

### Session I - Backyard Birding



Common yard and feeder birds

Attract birds to your yard

Feeders and proper foods

Cats, squirrels and windows

Binoculars and bird guides

### April 6, Tuesday, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Session II - Birding in the Field



More species of birds and their habitats

Types of binoculars, spotting scopes and costs.

Birding aids such as iPods, CDs and computer programs

Birding with groups and on field trips

Birding etiquette and ethics on trips

Birding opportunities: field trips, seasonal counts and monitoring

Weekend Field Trip - half day field trip

- Each session has a break in the middle with refreshments and time for discussion and questions following presentations.
- Contact Kris Buchler, 208-664-4739, or email at [eagleroost@roadrunner.com](mailto:eagleroost@roadrunner.com) for more information or to register. You may attend either or both sessions.
- Meet at 6:45 p.m. at Lutheran Church of the Master, the NE corner of Ramsey and Kathleen Ave., Coeur d'Alene.

*Photo Credits - Black-capped Chickadee and Eastern Kingbird by Bill Linn*

This Newsletter is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

# SWAN MORTALITY

Lisa Hardy



**Photograph by Bill Linn, Saint Maries area**

In March, thousands of Tundra Swans stop on their northward migration in the Chain Lakes along the Coeur d'Alene River between Cataldo and Harrison. Each spring about 150 swans die in the area, the majority of them from lead poisoning as a result of ingesting sediment contaminated by mine tailings. Swan die-offs have been reported from the area as early as 1929.

From 1992 to 1997, the US Fish & Wildlife Service collected carcasses and examined them for cause of death. They found that 77% of the mortality was attributable to mining-related lead poisoning. Another 7% of the birds died from lead poisoning due to ingestion of lead shot, and the remaining 16% from trauma, disease, or unknown causes.

Though carcasses are no longer counted or collected, the die-off continues each year. Because swans are large and white, each carcass becomes a visible landmark, especially as the wind plucks feathers and drops them in a long downwind swath. Other birds such as Canada Geese also die from the leaded sediments, but their remains are much less obvious.

On our swan field trip, March 13, Saturday, we will no doubt see depressing evidence of the continuing problem. But the recent project to develop the Schlepp Ranch near Medimont as a safe stopover for waterfowl offers hope that numbers of dead swans will start to diminish in time.

THE FISH HAWK HERALD



# COUNTY BIG YEAR

Lew Ulrey, Boise

As 2009 came to an end, so did the 2009 Big Year List. Although additions to the list are still welcome, the overall form of the list is fairly well settled. Consider the following interesting statistics:

- In 2009, 30 of Idaho's 44 counties participated in the Big Year List Project.
- Five counties reported 200 or more species.
- Only three species, Common Raven, American Robin and European Starling were reported by all 30 counties.
- Statewide we recorded 306 species.

The statewide total number of species in the years since the Big Year List Project started were as follows:

2008	305
2007	329
2006	323
2005	296

See:

<http://www.idahobirds.net/reports/idaho/counties/2010countycumulative.html>

and

<http://cdaudubon.org/KootenaiCo2010.htm>

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**Editors Note:** So far in 2010, 168 species (169 with the Harlequin) have been seen in the state. Kootenai County is 4<sup>th</sup> for the most species counted with a total of 89 (when I add the female Harlequin Duck reported by Paul Sieracki on Bennett Bay February 17 and the Northern Saw-whet Owl that Keith and I heard February 19 on Fernan Lake). Ahead of us in the species count as of February 22, Ada 98, Owyhee 93 and Canyon 91.

## USGS: ALASKA SCIENCE CENTER REQUESTS CITIZEN REPORTS

Reprint from the Alaska Science Center Website



Over the past several years, Alaskans have witnessed a startling increase of beak deformities among local birds. Large numbers of Black-capped Chickadees and smaller numbers of many other species of birds have appeared with grossly overgrown and crossed beaks.

We began research in 1999, and have since identified nearly 2,000 deformed Black-capped Chickadees in south-central Alaska—the highest concentration of such abnormalities ever recorded in a wild bird population anywhere! More recently, rapidly increasing numbers of other species, including Downy Woodpeckers, Northwestern Crows, Steller's Jays, and Black-billed Magpies have also been reported with beak deformities by biologists and local residents throughout the state.

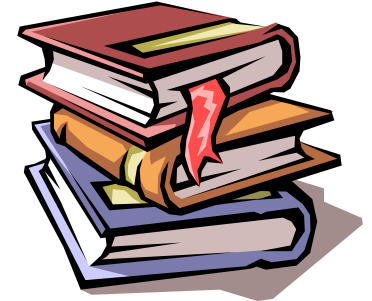
Although we do not yet know the source of this widespread problem, we continue to investigate potential causes, including environmental contaminants, nutritional deficiencies, and disease. Nearly all of the species affected are year-round residents, and we suspect that factors responsible for this cluster of deformities may be unique to Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. We are currently pursuing additional studies to determine where these deformities are occurring and why. Reports from the public help us to determine where and how many birds are affected. If you see a bird with a deformed beak, please contact us at:

[http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak\\_deformity/index.html](http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/landbirds/beak_deformity/index.html)

THE FISH HAWK HERALD

**Editors Note:** As I was working on this newsletter (February 21), I was also doing my feeder count for Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. I was excited to see a White-breasted Nuthatch. I saw one on February 10<sup>th</sup> but had not seen it since. They are uncommon in our area, having seen one at Fernan Lake only 8 other years since we moved here in 1963. This one had a deformed beak very similar to the chickadee picture, but not as long. I don't think the beak of the nuthatch I saw on February 10 was deformed or I would have noticed it.

## BOOK REVIEW



Lynn Sheridan

I recently read a great book called *The Bird* written by Colin Tudge, published by Random House in 2008. I borrowed it from the NIC Library.

The author lives in Oxford, England. He gives a wonderful discussion of the origin of birds, their evolution and adaptation to all kinds of habitat and food sources. Interesting facts are given of birds from all parts of the world. Four examples:

- 1) A Bullfinch will carry the seeds it finds back to the nestlings in the pouches of its cheeks, like a hamster.
- 2) Emus may gather in groups of up to 70,000 to travel towards rainy areas on foot at a steady 4 miles an hour.
- 3) The American chestnut tree, which was wiped out in the 1900's by a fungus, was the main source of food for 1 million Wild Turkeys and countless Passenger Pigeons. They have large gizzards with pebbles in them to crunch the chestnuts.
- 4) A Sun Grebe, of South America, is unique in that the male carries the babies in flight in pouches of skin beneath its wings, even when the nestlings are blind and helpless.

I recommend it highly!

# BIRDING PEND OREILLE RIVER AND LAKE

January 23, 2010

Bill Gundlach

A calm, mild, overcast day with no snow or rain was much appreciated by our group of seven on a great day of birding. On the way north, we stopped at Cocollala for a pit stop and to connect with Dennis and Candy Enslow from Spirit lake who were joining us there. Then it was on to Dufort Road and west to the south shore on the Pend Oreille River.

Our first stop was Morton Public Access where we enjoyed many waterfowl including beautiful Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, Common Merganser and in the distance mature Bald Eagle and a group of 14, most likely, Tundra Swan.

Across the river from Laclede at the old ferry landing where there is a good view up and down the river. Here, there were huge rafts of waterfowl, both ducks and geese that were impressive to see. Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Gadwall and Canada Goose by the 100s were seen here and all along the river. Further west, we stopped along a pull-out on Dufort Road high above the river and got good views of large rafts of ducks and geese including many Canvasback in one raft. Here we were treated to a flying display by four mature Bald Eagles, possibly mating-related.

Our next stop was the old Thama Ferry landing and more of the same, and a view of the Bald Eagle nest. We took a break at Priest River for a pit stop and to eat our lunches. We then headed back east toward Sandpoint with a stop at Dover, the sewage treatment plant, and the city beach area on Pend Oreille Lake. Here we picked up more waterfowl and a few Common Loon in the lake, busily diving.

With some time left, we decided to bird the Sunnyside area east on Oden Bay and around to the public access at the Pack River delta. We saw many Bald Eagle, including the nest on Fisherman's Island. The lake was very calm, with many Horned Grebe fishing. More Common Loon were seen at the Pack River Delta as well as 10 Tundra Swan and 21 swan species.

A total of 37 species were seen on this trip, of which 24 were in the waterfowl, grebe, loon and heron

families. A Northern Shrike was seen. A complete list can be found on our website.

Trip participants: Kris Buchler, Janet Callen, Roland Craft, Dennis and Candy Enslow, Bill Gundlach and Lisa Hardy. Thanks for tallying, Roland!

## Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

MARCH 26, 27, 28, 2010.



The Othello Sandhill Crane Festival began in 1998, sponsored by the Greater Othello Chamber of Commerce and the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service). Since the beginning, the Festival has been financially supported by the City of Othello through tourism development funds (hotel/motel taxes) and logistically supported by the Othello School District and Othello Community Schools, reimbursed by Festival registration fees.

The Sandhill Crane Festival Committee plans, organizes and conducts the festival. The Committee includes Grant Conservation District staff, Othello citizens plus residents from the neighboring Columbia Basin communities of Ephrata, Moses Lake and Royal City.

With admission price into the Festival on Saturday, you may attend free lectures which are repeated throughout the day. Lectures given in the past have included falconry, Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scablands, Woodland Park Zoo, Grouse of Washington, Othello History within the Drumhellar Channeled Scablands, Shrub-Steppe Flora and Fauna, Owls of Eastern Washington and Spring Migration in the Columbia Basin.

**Continued on page 5**

## Othello Sandhill Crane Festival - Continued from page 4

The Festival has many tours for crane viewing along with specialty tours. Specialty tours have included Columbia National Wildlife Refuge/Potholes area wildlife tour, Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scablands geology tour, Lower Grand Coulee birding tour and Wahluke Slope/Shrub Steppe birding tour. Pre-registration is suggested to reserve your seat as some fill up quickly.

For more information please call 509-488-2802.

## 2010 FIELD TRIPS

### MICA BAY SURVEY

**DATE:** March 9, Tuesday (held 2nd Tuesday of each month - times vary depending on month)

**TIME:** 8:00 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.

### CHAIN LAKES

see the article on page 2 "Swan Mortality"

**DATE:** March 13, Saturday

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

**MEET:** Fernan Ranger Station and meet Lisa at Rose Lake Exit 9:00 a.m.

**LEADERS:** Janet Callen 664-1085 and Lisa Hardy 783-1262

**ACTIVITY:** We will be looking for swans and other migrants. This will be a full day trip. Bring a lunch and water and dress for the weather.

### LATER FIELD TRIPS

See details in upcoming newsletters

**April 10, Saturday** - half-day class trip - see page 1

**April 22, Thursday** - 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Tubbs Hill walk to look for birds and wildflowers

**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

**May 22, Saturday** - Adopt-a-Highway - leaders Judy and Phil Waring 765-5378

**June 5:** Bonner County Century Count

## SUMMER BIRDING

Leader Lynn Sheridan: designed for beginning bird-watchers, but anyone is welcome - Each trip will last approximately two hours, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Tentative dates are:

- June 17: Honeysuckle Beach in Hayden
- July 15: Cougar Bay and the Nature Conservancy Preserve
- August 19: NIC and the Spokane River

For details/meeting locations call Lynn at 765-2603

## RIO GRANDE VALLEY OF TEXAS

Trip in the planning stage - Call Ed Buchler if you are interested, 664-4739

Tentative date: November 6-14 (Saturday through the following Sunday)

Leader: John Shipley, Kingfisher Bird Tours  
<http://www.kingfisherbirdtours.com/>

- We would fly into either McAllen or Harlingen
- We would stay at two different B & B see: <http://www.rgv-bedandbreakfast.com/nature.html#top>
- John would price this tour to be all-inclusive from either Harlingen or McAllen. The ball-park price per person is \$2,500-3,000, which will include a \$100/person contribution to CDA Audubon. We should limit it to 8 participants. These tours would involve a minimum of driving, with lots of time spent in walking outdoors. There are also very good feeder locations there, where birds are easily viewed and photographed
- Bird Checklist of area  
<http://www.southtexasnature.com/pdf/LRGV-Birds-Checklist.pdf>

