

# THE FISH HAWK HERALD



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

May 2011

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 9

## MAY PROGRAM

**DATE:** May 10, Tuesday

**PLACE:** Lutheran Church of the Master,  
4800 N. Ramsey, Coeur d'Alene

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

**PROGRAM:** "Superfund Cleanup and  
Restoration in the Coeur d'Alene Basin"

**SPEAKER:** Brian Spears, a resource  
contaminants specialist at the USFWS,  
Northern Idaho Field Office in Spokane,  
Washington. He conducts ecological  
toxicology-related biomonitoring field work  
and provides technical assistance to USEPA  
regarding Superfund cleanup and restoration  
in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. **See more  
about Brian on page 3**

### BOARD MEETING

**DATE:** May 10, Tuesday

**PLACE:** Mountain West Bank,  
125 Ironwood Drive, Coeur d'Alene

**TIME:** 4:30 p.m.

## AUDUBON JUNE PICNIC

**DATE:** Tuesday, June 14

**TIME:** 5:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** Blackwell Island Group Picnic  
Shelter Site

**BRING:** Please plan to bring a dish to  
share! There will be grills available for  
barbecue as well. Bring utensils

**PLEASE JOIN US:** If you have not been  
there before, there is a nature trail in the  
cottonwoods. There will be an award or two  
and the results of your votes for our Service  
Project will be revealed. Hope to see you all  
there. It is always a good time, even if it  
ends up being a temporary farewell until  
September!

Visit our website:

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

## BLUEBIRD TRAIL UPDATE

Shirley Sturts



**Roland Craft doing  
repairs – Tree  
Swallow nest  
(below)  
Photos by Peggy  
Albertson**

After the "Bluebird Trail Monitoring 101" presentation on April 5th, two work crews were organized to visit both the Hoo Doo Valley and Mica Bay/Flat Trail on April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of the trip was twofold. With caulking gun, drill and hammer, nest boxes were made ready for this year's nesting season. While working on the boxes, volunteers were given an orientation on monitoring the nest boxes during the nesting season. They were shown how to record nest information and what to look for in checking the boxes. Kris Buchler took on the job of organizing teams to check the boxes each week during the breeding season. Anyone interested in being on a monitoring team who has not already signed up, should call Kris at 664-4739.



Of the 51 boxes in the Hoo Doo Valley, we found only 1 Tree Swallow nest (see photo). All the other boxes were empty except for a few sprigs of grass in a couple of the boxes. A few Tree Swallow and both Mountain and Western Bluebird pairs were spotted in the area near the boxes. All the boxes in Mica Bay and on Mica Flats were empty. However, during the Mica Bay Survey

on April 12, a pair of Western Bluebirds was perched outside one of our boxes and another pair was at a box on the property of Jerry and Sharon Hanson. All the other boxes had pairs of Tree Swallows around them. We have always had at least one pair of Western Bluebirds nest in Mica Bay until last year. We were very happy to see them back this year.

I'm sure our first monitoring teams will be busy recording completed nests and even possibly eggs on the next visit. However, if the weather remains cold and rainy, the birds may put off egg laying for a while.

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## BLUEBIRD TRAIL UPDATE

Continued from page 1

I want to give a special thanks to Roland Craft for promoting the idea of having more people involved in maintaining and the monitoring of the boxes and



**Cynthia O'Byant**  
checking a nest box  
(above) Theresa Potts  
(below) doing repairs  
Photos by Peggy  
Albertson

to Carrie Hugo for supporting his idea by organizing "Bluebird Trail Monitoring 101". A special thanks also to Kris Buchler for stepping up to the plate and not only doing her bluebird program for those interested in bluebird monitoring on April 5 but in addition, taking on the job of setting up a schedule for monitoring the two trails. Theresa Potts, who has been monitoring the boxes since our chapter adopted the bluebird trail in the Hoo Doo Valley, officially known as the "Gertie (Gertrude) Hanson Bluebird Trail" (see the article on the history of the trail) is responsible for designing our field data sheets. Thanks Theresa, Roland and all those who have helped us monitor the boxes since our chapter adopted the trail in the summer of 1998.



A thank you to the work party participants for getting the houses ready for our current nesting season. On the Gertie Hanson (Hoo Doo) Trail on April 9<sup>th</sup>: Peggy Albertson, Ed and Kris Bucher, Roland Craft, Rob Kroese, Cynthia O'Bryant, Theresa and Saba Potts, Don Scoggins, Shirley Sturts, Mike and Valerie Zagar. On the Mica Bay/Flats Trail on April 10<sup>th</sup>: Roland Craft, Rob Kroese and Mike Zagar.

## HISTORY OF THE GERTIE HANSON BLUEBIRD TRAIL

Shirley Sturts

At the Coeur d'Alene Audubon Chapter board meeting in January 1998, the board voted to adopt Gertie's bluebird trail. Gertie established the trail in March of 1983 as part of an Idaho Non-game Advisory Committee project. Gertie and other members of the Non-game Advisory Committee cut out and built 200+ bluebird boxes and two trails were established. One of the trails, Gertie's, consisted of 43 bluebird houses in the Hoo Doo Valley between Kelso Lake and Clagstone. The boxes were spaced at about 100 yard intervals. Between 1983-1998, Gertie, with the help of her family and friends, faithfully cleaned, repaired, and replaced damaged boxes every spring. She made many trips to check and record bird use of the boxes. Western and Mountain Bluebirds as well as many Tree Swallows used the boxes. A few boxes were also used by chickadees and House Wrens.

In 1998, for health reasons, Gertie could no longer maintain the trail and we Auduboners felt honored to have this trail entrusted to our care. We had our first work party on Friday, February 27, 1998. Using maps provided by Gertie, we located most of the houses and took notes as to their location, nest (if any), type, and repair work done. We replaced 6 worn out or missing birdhouses with new ones that Roger Young had brought with him. The contents of the old nests gave us clues as to last year's occupants. A nest box crammed full of small sticks told us that a pair of House Wren had raised a family. A grass nest lined with many feathers was a clue that Tree Swallows had nested in the box. A grass nest without feathers indicated either a Western or Mountain Bluebird nest. In a couple boxes, we found nests made with a moss base. We knew that either a Mountain or Black-capped Chickadee had built these nests.

Since adopting the trail, we have continued to maintain and record nesting attempts and success. With donated lumber, Roger Young hosted several nest box-building parties in his woodworking shop. Theresa Potts suggested we try pairing our boxes. The idea is that one box will be used by swallows and the other by bluebirds. This was being done in some of the trails in Montana with partial success

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## HISTORY OF THE GERTIE HANSON BLUEBIRD TRAIL

Continued from Page 2

This has worked for some of our paired boxes but in others swallows have taken both boxes. Today, you will find that most of our boxes are paired.

Between 1998 and the present we have banded birds and taken part in the Cornell Laboratory nest box program. For the last two years we have scaled back the work involved in those two activities. This year we will report

bluebird-nesting success to the Mountain Bluebird Trails (MBT). MBT monitors Mountain, Western and Eastern Bluebirds throughout the Northern U.S. Rocky Mountain region and coordinates bluebird conservation efforts for interested persons or groups. MBT promotes bluebird conservation projects, conducts educational programs, distributes educational materials, collects and shares nest box data, and aids in the development of nest box trails. For more information go to their Website:

[http://www.blackfoot.net/~bluebirds/about\\_us.html](http://www.blackfoot.net/~bluebirds/about_us.html)



### A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY ON BLUEBIRD BOX BUILDING IN NORTH IDAHO

Shirley Sturts

Reprinted from *The Fish Hawk Herald*, March 1998

In 1988, Gertrude Hanson learned, through mutual friends, that Donald D. Jones, Assistant Director of Forestry and Fire for the Idaho Department of Lands had put up bird nest boxes in the Hoo Doo Valley after the area had been logged. Gertrude wrote Donald a letter about the bluebird trail that she had established and asked him about his involvement in placing birdhouses in this area.

Gertie gave me a copy of Donald's interesting reply to her inquiry, dated May 17, 1988, to share with the readers of the Fish Hawk Herald. The following are excerpts from this letter.

"My interest in bluebirds and other species of bird life started in the early 60's when I was stationed in Sandpoint. At that time, we were logging state lands lying south of the Pend Oreille River and I became concerned when it was evident that we were destroying nesting trees. White pine and cedar mill trim ends were abundant, so I started building houses and placing them in and around the area that we harvested."

"During the period from 1962 to 1967, I put out around 100 houses. The bad part is that I did not keep any records on these houses and only maintained a few of them. My recollection is that we enjoyed only fair success in attracting bluebirds, although most of the houses were occupied."

In 1967, Donald was transferred to Coeur d'Alene and didn't return to building birdhouses until the early 1970s. A friend of his, working for Diamond, supplied the necessary materials to start another birdhouse project. Over the next 10 years he built 50 to 100 birdhouses a year, using some of them himself and giving the rest to friends and landowners who were interested. He describes the success of the project in the following paragraphs: "I attempted to maintain approximately 100 houses and kept records on these. Unfortunately the maps and records were lost during our move to Boise. To the best of my recall, about two-thirds of the houses were occupied each season and about half of these by bluebirds. I believe that most of the bluebirds were Western Bluebirds until the late 70's when the Mountain Bluebird seemed to become more prevalent."

"I scattered my houses from Coeur d'Alene to the Pend Oreille River, concentrating on state and Diamond lands. Some of these were along Hoo Doo Creek east of Clagstone. I seem to remember that these were usually occupied by swallows"

"Many of the state foresters that I work with still report on seeing some of these old houses, but most of them have long since been out of service. I communicate with one rancher on the Bunco Road that still maintains his houses, and he reports a good population of bluebirds in his area"

### MORE ABOUT BRIAN SPEARS

Brian is the USFWS field station representative on the Coeur d'Alene Basin Natural Resource Trustee Council and serves as the field lead on Coeur d'Alene Basin NRDAR restoration. Brian previously spent time working on ecological toxicology issues, risk assessments and Superfund cleanup at Crab Orchard and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuges.

Brian earned a Masters degree in Wildlife Science at Texas Tech University and Bachelors degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Arizona. He enjoys fly fishing and camping, and is married with two daughters (4 and 7). The Vermillion Flycatcher, Zone-tailed Hawk and Tree Swallow serve as three of his all-time favorite feathered friends.



## DON HEIKKILA - " IDAHO OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR" FOR 2011

Reprinted excerpts from an article appearing in the Idaho State Gange paper - Don organized the Indian Mountain CBC and has been compiler since 1966.



Don Heikkila was honored Monday evening, March 21, at the University Inn in Moscow, ID, as "Idaho Outstanding Tree Farmer of the

Year" for 2011 at the Idaho Tree Farm Program's annual awards meeting. Tom Davis, Chairman, presented the award to Heikkila for his work in managing his 240 acre tree farm, which includes 160 acres of hay and pasture, on Harrison Flats

Mark Lesko, Nominating Forester said, "Don lives on his Tree Farm and derives most of his income from it. More importantly, he puts much back into the land in the form of signs, tree planting, road maintenance, wood cutting, a cabin, and many hours of hard work. His love for the land is exemplified by the excitement of his voice as he takes foresters, friends, and family on leisurely tours of his land. Don and his Mother, Erma Heikkila, joined the Idaho Forest Owners Association soon after it started and took part in annual tours and meetings when possible. He has been working under a written forest management plan since May of 1980 and his property has been a certified Tree Farm since May of 1982.

...

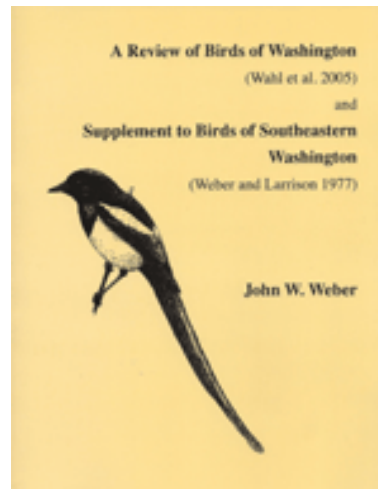
Don has allowed youth groups to tour his tree farm as an example of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Forest Management System started by his father, Neil Heikkila. Timber harvesting, recreation, hunting, wildlife viewing, grazing, and clean water best management practices have been a part of the farm's conservation plan since Neil started implementing them with the help of Mel Carlson with the Soil Conservation Service. In 1955, Neil had a forest road built to the top of Indian Mountain, and had some ponderosa pine selectively harvested. When the Heikkilas moved to the ranch in 1947, Neil cut and installed a half-mile of cedar poles so they could have a telephone. For three years in the late 1990's Don and his mother allowed the Idaho Department of Lands and the

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U.S. Forest Service access to their ranch to provide a training site for several hundred forest fire fighters who were taking part of their training at Kootenai High School a half-mile away.

On Saturday, September 10, 2011 there will be a tour of Don Heikkila's tree farm. (Check our Website and newsletter for further information on this tour in September)

## A NEW BIRD BOOK RECENTLY PUBLISHED. BY JOHN W. WEBER



**A Review of Birds of Washington of Washington (Wahl et al. 2005 And Supplement to Birds of Southwestern Washington (Weber and Larrison 1977)**

By John Weber  
Published by Buteo Books, 2010  
Paperback

It can be purchased from Buteo Books  
Price \$22.00  
<http://www.buteobooks.com/>

This book is divided into 3 sections.

Section 1 reviews "Birds of Washington (Wahl et al. 2005).

Section 2 contains five reprints of articles by Weber which originally appeared in *Continental Birdlife* and *The Murrelet*. These articles include records of terns, Larus gulls, Short-billed Dowitcher, and Semipalmated Sandpiper from both eastern Washington and northern Idaho.

Section 3 consists of two parts: fieldwork in the Blue Mountains and a general update of specie accounts from 1977 to 1984. Important to Idaho birders, Weber includes (as in the 1977 publication) occasional noteworthy records for adjacent northern Idaho.

## HAVING FLICKER PROBLEMS?

Is your cabin or home being damaged by flickers making holes?

Here is an idea that worked for Brian Carrigan of Blackfoot, Idaho.



I have personal experience with this type problem. My damage was to wood cedar-siding on my cabin. I tried all remedies: fake owls, fake snakes and multiple "deterrent agents" around the holes in the siding. Sometimes, all the "deterrents" accomplished was to move the flicker to a different location, and simply make another hole!

My solution, and the only one I found to work, was to re-side that part of the cabin with vinyl siding. Interestingly, the flickers would only make cavities on the west side of the cabin (I suspect it had to do with proper temperature for raising their young and receiving the western sun). Since re-siding, I have had zero flicker problems. I've offered this advice to others in the same cabin area who have had problems with both stucco and real wood siding. And, after re-siding with vinyl, the flickers have moved back to natural cavities.

## THE SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL FIELD TRIP

Roland Craft

The Sandhill Crane Festival at Othello, WA on March 25, 26 and 27 was a very interesting and educational trip. On all three days there were bus tours to view both Sandhill Cranes and Burrowing Owls. We saw hundreds of cranes in the sky and on the ground feeding in cornfields. They sure

are a large bird, and their call is very loud and rattling.

Our bus trip for Burrowing Owls turned out to be spectacular. Early on, we glassed owls standing near their burrow at a distance of several hundred feet, but as we traveled, one person on the bus yelled "stop", and there was an owl standing near his burrow right on the edge of the road, 20 feet from us!! All cameras were clicking away when the owl became really agitated by running around and bobbing up and down. The wildlife biologist on the bus said we had to leave to reduce stress on the owl.

Between the field trips, there were numerous lectures at the high school. Jack Nisbet, author of several northwest books, spoke on early 1800's explorer David Douglas' identification of Columbia Basin plants and animals. Mike Denny gave an excellent presentation on birds of the Columbia Basin. In addition, there were lectures on beginning birding, bird calling, how to choose the best optics, ice age floods, research on Long-billed Curlews, a brief history of bats, and many more.

We had time to tour the Columbia Wildlife Refuge where we saw thousands of waterfowl.

Participants were Eula Hickam, Roland and Pat Craft, and a student from NIC, Kayla Baker.



## ADOPT-A HIGHWAY

### IT'S TIME FOR SPRING CLEANING!

**Date:** May 14<sup>th</sup>, Saturday

**Time:** 8:00 a.m.

**Place:** Meet at Mica Grange Hall for donuts, coffee and road assignments. Plan on about 2 hours. Wear long pants and sleeves, and work gloves are advisable. **Please note, due to revised IDT procedures Audubon is now required to submit a roster of participants' names prior to the clean-up date. Contact Mike Zagar 819-5115 for more information and to get on the roster.**

## MESSAGE FROM CARRIE HUGO PLEASE VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING

Hello Members!

Our Board has been working on some great ideas for using some of the proceeds from the successful Bird Lovers Banquet! We want your input as to which ideas you like best! Each board member submitted ideas and we are sharing the top three with all of our members. Please send me your vote via email, snail mail, or phone. The winning idea will be revealed at the June Picnic! If funding allows we may implement all of the ideas and more, but we want your opinion regardless! If you have ideas of your own, feel free to submit those too.

Here are the top three:

- 1. Tubbs Hill Bird Songs-** Install audio system of bird songs to the Tubb's Hill Audubon signage. Sign Service Merchants advised cost of installation and electrical wiring would be approximately \$500.00+. A flat board or one with recessed buttons was recommended.
- 2. Fernan Lake Eagle Sign-** Partner with the WREN Foundation to install an educational sign about nesting Bald Eagles at Fernan Lake. An overlook has been proposed. A sign about the natural history of Bald Eagles at the overlook could be educational for the public and good publicity for Audubon. Shared costs with Wren would be approximately \$350.00 to \$500.00.
- 3. Website Upgrade-** Upgrade or "modernize" existing web page to include links to local bird songs or information on the Bluebird Trails. Also a web cam could be added to a local nest. The goal would be to make the website more interactive and more attractive to younger birders. We could make the site a way to have interactive data sharing and add an educational element customized for local birders and youth.

Please send Carrie your votes by June 1<sup>st</sup>! You can email your vote to [carriehugo@wildblue.net](mailto:carriehugo@wildblue.net), call her at 661-9777, or mail your response to her at: 26426 South Lakeridge Road Saint Maries, ID 83861

## FIELD TRIPS



**PLEASE REGISTER:** Watch the website or newsletter 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 has been changed. Participants will share in a mileage reimbursement for the driver.

### MICA BAY SURVEY

**Date:** May 10, Tuesday (held 2nd Tuesday of each month - times vary depending on month)  
**Time:** 8:00 a.m. 2-3 hours  
**Meet:** Highway 95 and Fairmont Loop intersection  
**Leader:** Shirley Sturts 664-5318  
**Activity:** Everybody is welcome, especially beginner birders. We will help you with identification skills.

### JAMES T. SLAVIN RANCH CONSERVATION AREA

**Date:** May 7, 2011, Saturday  
**Leader** Roland Craft 457-8894  
**Meet:** K-Mart parking lot, south side  
**Time:** 8:00 a.m.  
 This will be a 3/4 day trip so bring a lunch. We will look for waterfowl and songbirds. The area is located southwest of Spokane about 10 or 15 miles. It is quite similar to Turnbull NWR but will be a new area to investigate. We will be hiking several miles so wear boots. Bring water and lunch.

### KAMIAK BUTTE, LEWISTON, CLARKSTON AND ASOTIN

**Leaders:** Judy Waring 765-5378  
 Janet Callen 664-1085  
**Meet:** To be arranged with drivers.  
**Time:** Depart CdA by 7:30 a.m.  
**Activity:** **Saturday** we will journey to Kamiak Butte and hike the trail to the top (approximately 3 miles) and search for birds, wildflower and a magnificent view of the Palouse. We will then travel on to Lewiston for visits to Mann Lake, Nez Perce National Park (Spalding), the levee ponds, and time permitting, Hells Gate State Park. We will stay the night in Clarkston at the Quality Inn.

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# KAMIAK BUTTE, LEWISTON, CLARKSTON AND ASOTIN

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Target birds: many, including the Black-crowned Night Heron, Black-headed Grosbeaks and Bullock's Orioles. And my secret target: a Yellow-breasted Chat. Descriptions of the various areas are in the Idaho Birding Trail Guide at N40, N41, N42 & N44.

**Sunday** will be spent in the Asotin, WA area. Our target bird is the elusive Mountain Quail, known to be in higher elevations on Asotin Creek. This fellow often responds to a recording, but to see him/her is another story. Fortunately Keith Carlson, an excellent birder and photographer from Lewiston, has said that he will accompany us on that portion of the trip taking us to the more likely spots. Other birds of interest can be found along the way including Chukar and Golden Eagle. On our return to Asotin, we will visit the Asotin Slough Habitat Management Unit at the south end of town for song birds and also visit sites along the Snake River, where several species of geese are reported every spring. Our destinations will be chosen by what is currently being reported in the area. Anyone is welcome to join us for one day only. Bring a lunch for Saturday. Please call the leaders, for more information and to confirm that you are planning to join us.



## BEAR LAKE FIELD TRIP

Date: May 23-28

There are a few people interested in taking the Trip to Bear Lake. We would be gone about 5 days and would be visiting three of the six National Wildlife Refuges in Idaho as well as some other interesting birding sites along the way. A suggested agenda for this trip would

include: **Day 1:** Drive to Boise, stay overnight. Visit the World Center for Birds of Prey. **Day 2:** Drive to Bear Lake. **Day 2-3:** Visit Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge (home of the largest number of nesting Sandhill Cranes in the United States). **Day 4:** Visit Camas National Wildlife Refuge (near Idaho Falls). Day 5: Visit Mud Lake Wildlife Management Area. **Call Eula Hickam: 661-3228 for more information.**

## CENTURY COUNT

### June 4: Kootenai County Century Count

We bird from dawn to dusk. Our goal is to find 100+ species by nightfall. When final plans are made, additional information will be on our Website. If you are interested in joining us, sign up at the May meeting or contact Kris Buchler (664-4769)

## SUMMER BIRDING



Leader Lynn Sheridan- 765 - 2603

These are 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month.

- **June 16:** Honeysuckle Beach , Hayden Lake – meet at the beach
- **July 21:** Fernan Lake – meet at the west docks
- **August 18:** Cougar Bay and the Nature Conservancy Preserve - meet at Highway 95/Fairmont Loop intersection to car pool
- For more information call Lynn at 765-2603



## BIRD FACT

“The largest living bird is an Ostrich of North Africa. It can grow to a height of 9 feet and weight of nearly 350 pounds. It takes roughly 40 minutes to boil an Ostrich egg, and although the shell is just 6/100 of an inch thick,. It can support the weight of a 280 pound man. “

*Birds of a Feather*, compiled by Jennifer Bryant

