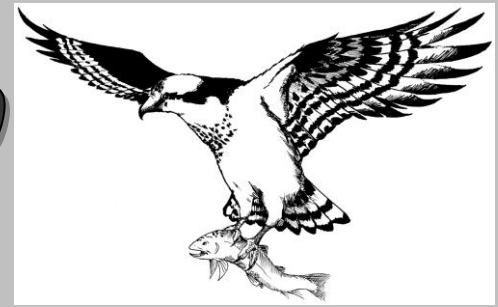


THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society

October 2001

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2

Visit our website: www.cdaaudubon.org

OCTOBER PROGRAM

DATE: October 15, Monday

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

**PLACE: First Presbyterian Church,
521 Lakeside**

**PROGRAM: "ECHOES IN THE
NIGHT"**

**Dr. Ed Buchler, animal
behaviorist, will introduce
you to the bats of Idaho and
how some species use
echolocation to hunt and
maneuver. Recordings of
sounds inaudible to the
human ear reveal bats'
amazing abilities to utilize
echoes in finding prey.**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kris Buchler

Thank you to all who have responded to our newsletter questionnaire! We have enjoyed the many letters and nice comments several of you included. For those who have not replied, there is still time to let us know how you wish to receive "The Fish Hawk Herald".

Your response helps our chapter better meet your needs, reduce paper waste and utilize our funds in more productive ways.

Starting in January, we will stop mailing the newsletter to many who did not notify us that they wish to receive the newsletter by regular mail or e-mail. If you decide you would like a copy after all, call, e-mail or write to our Membership Chair (667-6209) and she will put you back on the mailing list. Some of you will continue to receive a mailing regardless, as we need to mail enough copies to maintain our bulk-mailing license.

Whether or not you receive an e-mail notification when the newsletter is ready each month, check out our website: www.cdaaudubon.org. Enjoy the articles, bird photo quiz and information provided by our webmaster, Shirley Sturts. Let her know how you like the new format and what you enjoy or would like to see in the newsletter. Comments and questions are always welcome.

PICNIC ON YAP-KEEHN-UM BEACH

Lynn Sheridan

Our first monthly meeting was a wonderful evening for 40 members and friends, on the north shore of the Spokane River. The aromas of cooking, sharing of friendship and food, helped to evoke echoes of all the native peoples before us who gathered here for generations.

As the setting sun reddened the sky and water Jeanne Givens got up to enthrall us with song and story of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe's history around the lake. We will all remember how Brother Coyote made the lake so blue! She told us that with North Idaho College's co-operation, the tribe has a dream of building a "long house" on the campus to commemorate and celebrate the centuries of native culture on this land. What a wonderful idea! Thank you again, Jeanne Givens.

FIELD TRIPS - WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Let me know what kind of field trips you would be interested in. I have been trying to schedule a mix of shorter and longer trips, and to include other facets of the natural world in addition to birding. Some ideas for the coming year are a herpetology (reptiles and amphibians) trip, combining birding with wildflower identification, and a night trip to see trapping of bats. But it is time for the membership to weigh in! **Send your suggestions to me, Lisa Hardy, at basalt@earthlink.net**

MISTER STELLER COMES TO STAY

And grants me an honorary place
within the jay clan

Susan Weller

Photograph by Susan Weller



*(Continued from the September
Newsletter)*

11 April

After all the years I have spent observing birds you would think I would learn to listen to my instincts. Even though I noticed that all of the woods were silent when I went out to administer Jay's morning meal, I let him out anyway. Within minutes, the Cooper's Hawk flew into the top of the birch tree and perched. Though I issued the alarm call "Tshook!" that used to send him scrambling back to me, Jay is a teenager now and thinks it patently uncool to listen to me. While exhibiting calm on the surface, I was frantic inside as I sidled over and grabbed him from the roof of his enclosure. He threw a fit, (as I rarely touch him), squawking and biting at my hand until I flung him back into his enclosure.

I ran into the house and grabbed my broadcaster and played the goshawk call a few times. Jay noticed the Cooper's as he flew away and got very silent and contrite. After about
THE FISH HAWK HERALD

five minutes bird life began to return to normal in my yard and the surrounding woods. The Cordilleran Flycatcher began to fluidly and elegantly resume his air dance, the rufous hummers returned to their territorial outposts atop the birch tree, joined by the non-threatening Cedar Waxwings, and the goldfinches resumed their calls from the tall grass.

Just yesterday, I remarked to a neighbor that in my opinion, no chicken on earth was worth the killing of a hawk, or even a coyote. Nor was any cow on earth worth taking the life of a wolf or grizzly bear. Yet, here I am thinking shamefully negative thoughts about a young Cooper's Hawk. I have always welcomed predators on my property. Even when the coyotes got most of my chickens I reasoned that the remainder were the genetic cream of the crop - true coyote-savvy hens. To prove my point, the hens that survived the coyote incursion all died of old age. Usually, the Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks prey on easy pickings like Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks. Now I must ponder the philosophical question: is one human-raised Steller's Jay worth more than the life of a Cooper's Hawk? Though it wrenches my guts to answer honestly, the answer is definitely not. I have done my best to raise him by providing good food, adequate lodging, proper instruction administered with patience and affection, but, as any parent must finally acknowledge: when he flies the coop he's on his own, I can no longer protect him from the world.

Jay's story will be continued in the November Newsletter

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to our chapter and hope to see you at the field trips and meetings! Over the summer, the following joined: Mary Brosky, Robert & Jean Imperatrice, Alan & Karen Lamb, Rosemarie Olsen, Timothy War, Jeff Hennig, George Monette, Michael Tisserand, Joe Lykins, Barb & Joe Tilton, Sharan Hill, Mike Jacklin, M J Lee, Kathryn Erickson, J Gibson, Don & Phillis Heumier, Richard Johnson, Pearl Soderback, Margie A Browning, Deborah G. Dickinson, John Diehr, Cora Gussenhoven, Elizabeth Holt, Lillian Johnson, Olga Richardson. Dora Griffith, Joachim Wirth, Patricia Anderson, Diane Weber.

A BIG WELCOME!!!!

CHECK IT OUT

The "Picture Gallery" on our webpage now has 6 pictures. Four of these are of rare bird sightings in North Idaho.

www.cdaudubon.org

PUBLIC MEETING ABOUT CANADA LYNX

The Forest Service is updating their land management plans to include provisions for protecting and managing lynx, which were listed last year as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. They are having an open house on October 10 from 5 - 7:30 p.m. at the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Supervisor's Office concerning their plans.

Comments are being accepted until October 26. More information is available at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/planning/lynx.html>

OCTOBER 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 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/TIME: October 1 and 15, Mondays / 8:00 a.m.

MEET: Canal Street (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 welcome to join us.

BROWN BAG BIRDING TRIP

DATE/TIME: October 9, Tuesday / 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

MEET: Canal Street (Fairmont Loop Road) and Highway 95

LEADER: Roger Young, 664-4179

ACTIVITY: He will take us birding along the shores of Cougar Bay to look for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. This is a repeat of last month's trip, which was canceled.

CANOE TRIP TO HIDDEN LAKE

DATE/TIME: October 13, Saturday / 8:00 a.m.

MEET: Cove Bowl - East end of Sherman Ave. for car pool - leader at Rose Lake exit 8:30 a.m.

LEADER: Lisa Hardy, 682-4808 or basalt@earthlink.net

ACTIVITY: Bring your canoe or kayak for a water trip into the floating bogs of Hidden Lake (adjacent to Killarney Lake). Contact Lisa if you don't own a canoe and want to go - we will try to have enough canoes to accommodate all those that want to come. Bring a container for picking cranberries, and lunch and water.

THE BIG SIT

DATE/TIME: October 14, Sunday / sign up for a sit time

LOCATION: Mica Bay Platform

LEADERS: Shirley Sturts, 664-5318 and Lisa Hardy, 682-4808 or basalt@earthlink.net

ACTIVITY: As a group effort we are counting birds at Mica Bay from dawn to dusk. Contact Shirley or Lisa to sign up for a time. You can sign up for as few or as many hours as you like. There is no limit to the number of people we can have at one time. We would like to spread participants out over the entire day to get as much coverage as possible.

Bring a chair, binoculars, scope (if you have one), water, food and your enthusiasm.

See the article on page 5 for more information.

MYSTERY TRIP

DATE/TIME: October 28, Sunday 8:00-12 noon

MEET: K-Mart Parking Lot - behind Fast Burger

LEADER: Lisa Hardy 682-4808 or basalt@earthlink.net

ACTIVITY: Where we go will depend on what birds are being seen in the area at this time.

By Faye Wright

SECRETS OF THE NEST: The Family Life of North American Birds, by Joan Dunning.
Houghton Mifflin ISBN:0-395-71820-1 (pbk). (LC# 675.D8).

Photograph by Earl Chapin



Long-billed Curlew nest

Some years ago I bought a flat-bottomed aluminum rowboat and learned how to wrestle it onto and off of my old car so that I could paddle around in our nearby bays. And one hot summer day in Cougar Bay I found floating in front of me a roughly circular platform of grasses and cattail leaves, in the center of which rested four tan eggs, greenly stained. I had never had the means before for getting out into a marsh, so I was beside myself with pleasure as I peered into what I knew to be a Red-necked Grebe's nest. This is the memory that comes back to me as I curl up on my kitchen sofa this cold (45 degree) June morning listening to finches at my feeders and reading *Secrets of the Nest*.

Dunning beautifully illustrated this book with ten watercolor plates (the first of which is one of my favorites—a Pied-billed Grebe on a nest with newly hatched, clownishly marked young) and over one hundred pen and ink drawings of the thirty-four species

of North American birds she writes about. Through the reading of her own (and others) field experiences, I am awakened to a deeper appreciation of the intricacy, vulnerability, strength, and wonder of avian nesting, from the simplest ground nest, to the platform, the burrow, the cavity, the cup, and finally the pendulous variety. Along the way, of course, the reader learns much more than just the basics of nests: s/he learns about *wonder, miracle, and vigilance*.

Who among us wasn't fascinated as a child by birds' nests we would find? All those little baskets in trees with the promise of colored eggs... Easter without the bunny. I can still remember the first robin's nest I found with four, perfect turquoise eggs, and the hours I spent balanced on a log stretching for all I was worth to peer in at them. I didn't know at that age that I shouldn't be so invasive, but how nice to have permission to be a voyeur once again through this book.

From huge colonies of terns to illusive Marbled Murrelets, from Mourning Doves nesting on a cholla cactus to Burrowing Owls in prairie dog cities, the reader will learn of the creativity of nature as it shapes eggs and their destiny.

To whet your appetites a bit more, let me share with you a few of the details I learned about murre. My husband and I try to spend a week each summer on the coast of Oregon, and at Oceanside we stay at an inn that affords us a view of the wildlife sanctuary at Three Arch Rocks. At the base of these three rock islands (that look a good deal like conquistadors helmets to me) are sea lion nurseries; then just above them are gulls, and sandwiched between the gulls at the bottom and the gulls at the top are thousands of Common

Murres. What a misnomer! How can this diminutive member of the auk family, "the Northern Hemisphere's equivalent of the penguin" be considered common? How can any creature that lays a single egg on a narrow (about 12") ledge of rock without losing it be common? The author explains how the pyriform (pear-shaped) egg with its one very pointed end is clearly designed to roll in tight circles. She also goes on to say that in addition to camouflaging the egg, the tremendously varied colors and markings of the murre egg might aid in their recognition by bleary-eyed parents in huge colonies. Studies have shown that puffins, who often nest in the same regions as murre, lay eggs that are much more susceptible to predation by gulls because of their simple whiteness. I read on and learn that murre are very long-lived with "banded birds observed breeding at the age of 20." But best of all I found out that, somewhat like Wood Ducks; the young murre must fall from their cliff ledges before they can fly. To aid in their survival, this leap into the void is accomplished under the cover of dark (at about midnight) with the adult males encouraging their offspring with raucous screams of "Go team, GO!" (or some murre equivalent). The author says the young "approach the cliff edge and back off again, calling desperately, *wee-loo...wee-loo*, as they contemplate the thousand-foot drop to the dark rocks and surf below". You can bet I'd say something a lot more colorful than *wee-loo, wee-loo*. (Actually, I think with my wooziness over edges and heights, I'd be a *murre* statistic to Darwin's "death of the unfitest.")

Continued on Page 5

BOOK REVIEW

Continued from Page 4

Anyway, the kids jump and swim south (under the watchful eyes of their fathers) until they're able to fly. The adult females, on the other hand (or is that *wing*), return to the ledges in the morning with breakfast only to find that everyone has flown the coop. They have been observed bowing and trying to offer their food to the blank spots that were family until it sinks in that they are alone. They then kick up their heels and head south themselves, where they will spend the next eight months in the sun before they join their same mates at the same rock scrape and do it all again. Not a bad life—eight months of fun in the sun, four months of 24/7 as we like to say.

I really liked this book full of stories about disguises, ploys, decoys, murders, intrigue, and devotion. And if you don't already own your own copy, I heartily recommend that you do. The drawings and paintings alone are worth the price. Until next time, keep reading; it's fat free. And remember that our own local *Wild Birds Unlimited* will carry copies of any of the paperbacks I review that are still in print. I'm off to pack for our Oregon trip and will holler at the murrees in your names. (Oh, one last fact: Did you know that murre colonies were protected early on because the racket they made worked to warn off ships from dangerous shores where there were no lighthouses? I find that such a useful idea and think of all the ways in which we would benefit if we'd just listen to all that isn't us.)

THE BIG SIT!!

"If you sit in one place long enough, eventually every species of bird will pass by."

We are participating in the Ninth Annual New Haven Bird Club's, "The Big Sit!"- co-sponsored by [SWAROVSKI OPTIK!](#) Sunday, October 14, 2001. **See the field trip page for how to participate.**

The BIG SIT! is like a Big Day, or a Bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours. The difference lies in the area limitation (17 foot circle) from which you'll be allowed to observe. This free event is open to every individual & every club in every state in every country.

There are 3 categories:

- 1) Best Overall Count (Most species seen by a single circle - wins our commemorative T-shirt)
- 2) Best State Count (Highest combined total from circles within a state - wins state pride.)
- 3) The Big Prize!: Swarovski Optik is offering \$500 to the circle who finds the "Golden Bird". (A random drawing-we could win!)

RULES:

- 1) Observations can be made from any area within the state/country you live, or wish to represent.
- 2) Observations can only be made from within a 17-foot (diameter) circle.
- 3) There's no limit to how many people can occupy one area (other than the obvious spatial limitations). Bring some chairs. Have a picnic or barbecue. Welcome passers-by and their contributions to your list.
- 4) If a bird is seen or heard from within the circle but is too distant to identify, the circle can be left to get a closer look for confirmation. However, any new bird seen or heard while confirming the original, can't be counted unless it's seen from an "anchor" who

stayed behind in your circle, or when you return to your spot.

5) The participants can work in shifts. No one person needs to be there throughout the whole Big Sit! The area can be left and returned to as frequently as desired, but you must be sure to return to the exact spot each time.

6) The same circle must be used for the entire Big Sit!

7) The Big Sit! Will begin at 12:00am midnight on October 14 and end 24 hours.

BOUNDARY WMA FIELD TRIP

Lisa Hardy

Four participants headed north to the international border on Saturday, September 8, 2001. The Boundary Wildlife Management Area has been turned from farmland to a waterfowl stopover point in the last year under the stewardship of the Idaho Department of Fish & Game. The flooded fields held hundreds of eclipse-plumage ducks, and hundreds of very skittish Canada Geese, no doubt from the wild, migratory population that breeds on the tundra.

Identification of the eclipse plumage ducks was an excellent exercise for learning species silhouettes. The Great Egret was easy to identify, though, even at a distance, with close-by Great Blue Herons providing a convenient size reference. We watched as a Merlin harassed a first-year Red-tailed Hawk out of the line of cottonwoods that mark the Canadian border. Trip participants: Dick Cripe, Lisa Hardy, Eula Hickham, Lynn Sheridan. 40 Species (see complete list on the webpage),

FEEDERWATCH DATA YIELD INSIGHT INTO LAST WINTER'S "NO BIRDS" SCARE

and document dramatic
montane irruption in western
mountains



Photograph by Wayne Tree

Autumn 2001, Ithaca, New York Last fall and early winter, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology was inundated with phone calls and e-mails from bird enthusiasts concerned about a lack of birds at their feeders and around their yards. Recent findings from the Lab's Project FeederWatch not only yielded insight into what was going on in the Northeast but also documented a dramatic irruption of montane birds in the West. Many people in the northeastern United States and Canada expressed concern about low numbers in some cases, a total absence of Black-capped Chickadees, American Tree Sparrows, and other familiar feeder birds. They wanted to know, were these anomalies or had feeder bird populations declined?

To find answers, researchers at Cornell Lab of Ornithology turned to data reported by participants in Project Feeder-Watch, the Lab's citizen-science project in which bird enthusiasts throughout North America count

the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders from November through early April. Data are combined by Lab researchers to determine population distribution and abundance of some 100 bird species that regularly visit feeders.

"We analyzed last winter's FeederWatch data for four common northeastern feeder birds Black-capped Chickadee, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco," explains Wesley Hochachka, assistant director of the Cornell Lab's Bird Population Studies program. "We found that numbers of Black-capped Chickadees and American Tree Sparrows were indeed lower in parts of the Northeast, particularly in November and December. However, chickadee numbers returned to near-normal levels by mid-winter." This suggests that the chickadees had probably been present in those areas early on but had not been visiting feeders, perhaps because they had found ample food in their natural habitats. As for the Tree Sparrows, Hochachka notes that they seemed to have shifted their winter whereabouts to the area around western Lake Erie. In short, FeederWatch data do not indicate a general decline in abundance, but rather suggest that the birds probably shifted their wintering ranges compared to previous years. The same is likely true for White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. More dramatic than the early paucity of chickadees in the Northeast was the impressive dispersal of several montane species from the western mountains. Before the Feeder-Watch season even began in mid-November, Internet-based birding listservs were reporting invasions of Steller's and Pinyon

Jays, Clark's Nutcracker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Cassin's Finch. These species were vacating their mountain homes for lower elevations on the Pacific Coast, the Great Plains, and lower elevations of southern Arizona.

"Each year, we expect Feeder-Watch to document the waxing and waning of relatively predictable irruptions of winter finches. Typically, species such as Common Redpoll and Evening Grosbeak irrupt biennially from boreal Canada and the extreme northern U.S. into regions farther south," says Laura Kammermeier, project leader for Project FeederWatch. "We were excited that FeederWatchers were able to capture this unexpected, large-scale montane dispersal." Hochachka and Kammermeier believe that the dispersal is related to a scarcity of food, a result of low precipitation that also resulted in severe forest fires and low river levels in much of the West. The birds likely moved into areas where food was more abundant.

Findings from Project Feeder-Watch help researchers understand changes in North American feeder bird populations not only during a particular winter but also over many years. FeederWatch was the first study to document cyclical changes in Varied Thrush abundance. It also was the first to clearly document the irruptive patterns and movements of the Common Redpoll. Most recently, Feeder-Watchers are helping track the spread of mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, often referred to as House Finch eye disease because it primarily affects House Finches.

Continued on Page 7

FEEDERWATCH DATA YIELD...

Continued from Page 6

It is manifested by symptoms including swollen, crusty eyes, which frequently lead to blindness and eventually death as the birds are caught by predators or eventually starve.

Findings from this study appeared last year in the prestigious Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The assistance of Feeder-Watchers with the House Finch Disease Survey is as important as ever, as Lab researchers try to understand why this disease spread so rapidly and why it persists in eastern North America. Kammermeier and Hochachka invite everyone interested in birds to participate in Project Feeder-Watch. "To get a complete picture of what's happening with feeder birds across the continent, we need as many people as possible to become the 'eyes and ears' of our scientists," says Kammermeier.

Participants receive a Research Kit that includes a full-color feeder bird poster and calendar, and the Feeder-Watcher's Handbook. They also receive summaries of FeederWatch data and other findings published in the Lab's quarterly newsletter, Birdscope. A \$15 fee helps cover the cost of materials and data analysis. People of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to participate. "FeederWatch is a wonderful family activity and is a great way for parents to demonstrate to their kids that their observations matter." Each fall, there is great suspense among Feeder-Watchers to see which birds make the "FeederWatch Top-10 List," the 10 most frequently

reported species in North America. This year's list reads: 10) Black-capped Chickadee 9) House Sparrow 8) European Starling 7) Northern Cardinal 6) Blue Jay 5) American Goldfinch 4) House Finch 3) Downy Woodpecker 2) Mourning Dove, and the species most frequently reported by Feeder-Watchers is 1) Dark-eyed Junco, seen at 85 percent of Feeder-Watch feeders.

For more information or to sign up, call the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800/ 843-2473 or visit the FeederWatch web site at <<http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw>>. Teachers are invited to inquire about Classroom FeederWatch. Project FeederWatch 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850

BOARD MEETING

September 5, 2001

- **next board meeting on October 9th**
- Eleven members present
- Shirley Sturts requested that we pay to renew the domain name on our Chapter Website - \$27.95 for 2 years - Request was granted
- Judy Waring will follow through on last month's decision to purchase a 4th walkie-talkies.
- Susan rescheduled the Conservation Committee meeting for September 27
- George Saylor, Dick Cripe, Judy Waring and Theresa Potts will contact schools about continuing the Audubon Adventures Program
- Ronn Rich will have a detailed report and a budget plan ready for the board meeting.

OBSERVATION POST

Photograph by Wayne Tree



OBSERVERS:
Corinne Cameron (CCAM, Jerry Hanson (JHAN), Steve Lindsay (SLIN), Susan Weller (SWEL), Roger Young (RYOU)

Double-crested Cormorant 1 Cougar Bay, CDA Lake Sept. 11 (RYOU)

Turkey Vulture 14 flying the thermals over Harrison Flats Sept. 2 (SLIN)

Spruce Grouse 1 Latour Peak Sept. 9 (SLIN)

Ring-necked Pheasant a family 1 female w/10 young Sept.14 (CCAM)

Sanderling 1 West Lakeshore Drive feeding on the beach Sept. 10-15 (RYOU); 1 Harlow Point Road south of Harrison Sept. 16 (SLIN) - (possibly this was the same bird)

Pectoral Sandpiper 4+ Twin lakes Sept.13 and 3 Harlow Point Road south of Harrison (SLIN)

Wilson's Phalarope 1 juv. Hardy Loop Road west of Cataldo Sept.15 (SWEL)

White-breasted Nuthatch 1 Mica Bay, CDA Lake -in his yard Sept. 3 (JHAN)

visit our website for more observations www.cdaudubon.org

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