



Volume 42 #3 November 2008

## November Program:

# Guts and Glory at the World Series of Birding!

Join us Thursday November 13th for a 'don't miss showing of a wonderful film that just happens to be all about Birding. This screening will be at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center beginning at 7:30 with doors opening at 7:00 pm

Filmmaker Jason Kessler spent years capturing the World Series of Birding in his movie "Opposable Chums." How can birding be a competitive sport? In the World Series of Birding, held every year in New Jersey, teams try to tally as many bird species as possible in one midnight-to-midnight day. Is there money involved? Yes, but all for good cause; this is the ultimate bird-a-thon, with each team raising money for its favorite environmental cause. Over the 25-year history of the World Series of Birding, over 8 million dollars have been raised.

There are several ways to participate in the World Series of Birding (WSOB). There are youth and senior and non-competitive divisions but the film is mostly about the top-level,

highly competitive (but symbiotic) competitive teams. It is the mix of world-class birding and deep eccentricity that Kessler's film captures so well. Some of these teams scout out their birding route weeks in advance and have the 24 hours scheduled to the minute, with

The November Program is Thursday November 13, 7:30 at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center. Popcorn may be served!

Indianapolis 500 sorts of pit stops for food and fuel. Another team ("The Balding Eagles", comprised of senior birders) hangs out in one exceptionally bird-ridden place for the entire 24 hours. Other teams range from two people running (a birding endurance run) to a team occupying two school buses. Kessler's film has us embedded, so that we get the view from the back of the van (while teams mark their checklist and plot the next stop), some gorgeous views into the trees and ponds and beaches (so that we see what the birders were seeing)

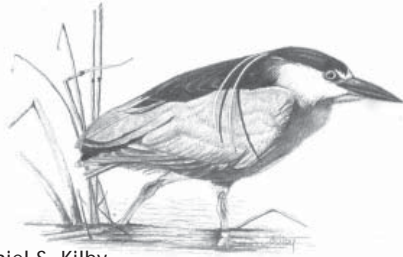
and some very brief interludes with some of the luminaries of birding (so that we get to meet, in a sense, David Sibley).

Who should come to this program? Pretty much everyone and anyone. Not a birder? Find out what birding is about ... and why birding is a hobby and a passion and one of the ways we can help the world we live in. A beginning birder? Here is some inspiration to get outside more and to become one with your field guide. An enthusiastic or expert birder? Maybe you could join some friends and form the North Central Washington team at the next WSOB.

If you would like to do some enjoyable previewing, here is the website for Opposable Chums [www.opposablechums.com](http://www.opposablechums.com) and for the WSOB <http://www.birdcapemay.org/wsob.shtml>

Attendees are invited to strategize and plan for their own world series of birding in addition to informal discussion and refreshments following the screening.

For further information, call Mark Oswald at 662-9087.



Daniel S. Kilby

**North Central Washington Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, is dedicated to furthering the knowledge and the conservation of the environment of North Central Washington, our Nation, and the World.**

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This past month birders from all around the state have converged on a snag covered mountainside near Harts Pass in search of a Northern Hawk Owl. It was first reported on email lists Tweeters and Inland NW Birders September 29th by Khan Tran, an energetic young birder from Portland. The bird has been easily seen from the road between Harts Pass and Meadows Campground many times since then. I have made two trips and was fortunate to find it my first time. While there I ran into birding friends from Wenatchee and we all greatly enjoyed fine views of this visitor from Canada. As of this writing it is still being observed despite the opening of deer season and early snow fall.

## Editor's Note

Other birds reported in the area include Merlin, Mountain Bluebirds, American Three-toed Woodpeckers, and a Northern Pygmy Owl. The Northern Hawk Owl was a lifer for me. If winter holds off and you make the trip up there, the bird is usually seen perched high on a snag with its distinctive silhouette easily identified. Many thanks to Khan Tran for generously sharing his report of this rare and beautiful bird.



Northern Hawk Owl at Harts Pass.  
 Photo by Teri J Pieper

### North Central Washington Audubon Society One Year Membership Form

- New Member National Audubon Society \$20
- Renewing Member National Audubon Society \$35
- NCW Audubon Wild Phlox Only \$15
- Other - donation to NCW Audubon

Membership in National Audubon includes NCW Audubon membership and Audubon magazine six times per year and The Wild Phlox nine times per year. Make check payable to Audubon; mail to Post Office Box 2934 Wenatchee, WA 98807-2934.

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Chapter Code 7XCH Y10

# NCW Audubon Does Birds at the Wenatchee River Salmon Festival

photos and article by Mark Oswood

The Wenatchee River Salmon Festival celebrates salmon but makes room for just about anything environmental or natural or even artistic. As we have for a string of years, NCW Audubon teamed up with our close colleagues from Barn Beach Reserve. The weekend (20 and 21 September) found us handing out adviceful literature and signing up people interested in getting a taste of the Phlox and coming to chapter activities. Jody Marquardt from BBR brought a small menagerie of creepy-crawlies (a tarantula, a black widow spider, hissing cockroaches, and a bull snake) on Saturday. Our signature activity is “What’s that Bird?” – our hand-carved, painted-with-field-marks, life-size bird replicas placed in trees to be found and identified. The aspect that draws so many kids (many said that this is their favorite activity of the entire festival) is probably the treasure hunt. Finding all eight birds is a challenge but nearly all kids (and many adults) manage. Curiously, the kids seem better at spotting the birds than their parental units. It is identifying the birds, using our simplified field guide, that provides some gentle training in Seeing, with kids and many adults coming to notice color patterns, bill shapes, and sizes (but not songs or foraging movements; our birds are the mimes of the bird world). With a small grant from the Washington Foundation for the Environment last spring, we obtained two new birds (house finch and American robin) and produced a wingspan banner. The wingspan banner has overlapping silhouettes of birds, from a hummingbirds to an albatross. Most of the kids had “wingspans” from Broad-winged hawk to Great Horned owl; my wingspan was



Turkey Vulture, hopefully not reflective of a life-long habit of using up leftovers. As always, these things take lots of volunteer energy and time, from setup and takedown, to helping hundreds of people with “What’s that Bird?”, and old-fashioned visiting with visitors (from all over the world) to our booth. Thanks to this year’s volunteers: Karen Haire, Jody Marquardt, Judy Oswood, Mark Oswood, Chris Parsons, Jeff Parsons, Gail Roberts, and Betsy Steele.



Last month, we sent out our annual donation appeal to all of you. In spite of grim-beyond-thinking-about autumn storms in the financial world, donations have been coming in. We are very grateful (and we’ll have the first listing of donors in the December/January Phlox). If you magneted the donation slip to the refrigerator – so that you could send in a donation in good time – but the slip fell off and slipped under the refrigerator to be eaten by the omnivorous dust bunnies – we’ve printed a replacement donation slip for your use.

## Your donations so far: light in the financial darkness

Here is my/our donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please make checks payable to NCW Audubon  
 and mail to PO Box 2934, Wenatchee 98807. Thank You!

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Donors will be acknowledged (name but not address) in a future issue of the Phlox. If you do not wish to be acknowledged in the Phlox, please check here

# In the Columbia Highlands: Birds of Many Feathers

by Paul Bannick Development director, Conservation Northwest pbannick@conservationnw.org

*Reprinted with permission from the fall 2008 edition of Conservation Northwest Quarterly*

**B**ird diversity is greatest where topography and vegetation are most varied. For this reason, birders are drawn to the Columbia Highlands of northeastern Washington, an area currently being evaluated for wilderness protection. Here, three inland mountain ranges collide with the Columbia Plateau, offering a sampling of many Northwest habitat types in a relatively small area. A birder can hike uphill and witness habitats transition from shrub-steppe and riparian areas to thick red bands of ponderosa pine. Higher, the pines first intermingle with and then are replaced by varying mixes of other conifers, including Douglas fir, western larch, and Engelmann spruce, before stunted subalpine fir succumb to rock and ice.

In the drier lowlands where stands of sagebrush dominate, birds such as the Great-horned Owl, which normally nest in trees, are forced to raise their young in caves and enlarged rodent burrows.

Nearby riparian areas host an array of avian species, including the Yellow-headed Blackbird, drawn to the plethora of flying insects. Eastern Kingbirds hover over ponds and lakes, plucking insects such as dragonflies from the air before returning to their perches to consume them.

Mountain Bluebirds can be found in the higher, moister reaches of the shrub-steppe zones, where large trees such as ponderosa pine have sufficient girth to host woodpecker cavities.

Stands of ponderosa pine blanket the middle elevations of much of the Columbia Highlands. White-headed Woodpeckers are indicator species in old-growth pine stands that feature snags for nests and an abundance of mature trees with seed-filled cones these diligent woodpeckers harvest.

In colder and shadier areas of the ponderosa pine zone, drought-resistant Douglas firs join the forest mix and begin to replace the pines. Where these two trees overlap, owl moths flourish and provide sustenance for Flammulated Owls, an indicator species for this type of habitat.

Fire historically played the key role in maintaining open, park-like stands of ponderosa pine. Wildfire consumed the smaller trees and shrubs but could not penetrate the thick fire-resistant bark of the older trees.

The Three-toed Woodpecker and Black-backed Woodpecker are two species that arrive as these fires still smolder, to feast upon the beetle larvae

consuming the burnt wood.

The large openings created in these forests by fires and floods grow green and luxuriant, providing food for voles and other small mammals—animals that in turn lure in predatory birds such as the Great Gray Owl.

Higher elevations provide more rainfall resulting in the addition of other conifers such as western larch. In the Pacific Northwest, the presence of larch seems to be a habitat requirement for the Williamson's Sapsucker. Although this striking woodpecker requires conifers for its constant ant hunting and drilling of sap wells, it also requires stands of mature quaking aspen for carving nest cavities.

Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir grow in the higher elevation areas of the Columbia Highlands, where they provide shelter for Spruce Grouse and Boreal Owls, birds otherwise found mostly in the boreal forests of Canada and Alaska.

The alpine areas of the Columbia Highlands are frequented by a close relative of the Spruce Grouse, the White-tailed Ptarmigan, whose white feathers in winter and cryptic gray, black, and white plumage in summer camouflage it well.

*Conservation Northwest protects and connects old-growth forests and other wild areas from the Washington Coast to the BC Rockies, vital to a healthy future for us, our children, and wildlife. For more information see their website <http://www.conservationnw.org/>*

The Columbia Highlands are the highland ranges and watersheds that feed the upper Columbia River. The richly forested mountains and valleys are rich in large roaming wildlife, including lynx, bears, wolverine, and wolves, and provide a key "landscape bridge" between the Rockies and the Cascades. Because two major ecosystems (the Rockies and Cascades) intersect here, the eastern Okanogan, Kettle River Range, and Selkirk Mountains of the highlands are especially rich in wildlife and a broad diversity of plants and animals. Today are still found many of the same animals as when explorers Lewis & Clark and David Thompson traversed the region.

# June Field Trip to the Methow Valley

Do you have a calendar for 2009 yet? If so, mark this not-to-be-missed event on June 6-7. North Central Washington Audubon Society is planning a field excursion to the Methow Valley! We hope that this is just the first of a series of trips to the farther corners of our extensive Audubon territory. Remember, our Chapter covers Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan and Ferry Counties. We have members spread far and wide and many are doing exciting things – watching birds and other animals, and working to conserve their habitats. Next June we plan to learn about projects in the Methow, do some great late spring birding and enjoy a meal or two or three together. Watch for details in coming newsletters.

## Project FeederWatch Benefits Birds and People

Connection with Nature Promotes Wellness

Ithaca, NY - More than 100 studies have shown that getting closer to nature reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well-being in children and adults. So, filling feeders and counting the birds that visit may be just what the doctor ordered! For more than 20 years, that's what participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch have been doing - benefitting themselves and the birds.

The 2008-09 season of Project FeederWatch gets underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges - a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.

Scientists learn something new from the data each year, too, whether it's about the movements of common backyard birds or unusual sightings of rarely-seen species. Highlights of the most recent season include the largest southward movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the history of the project - part of an expected influx of northern birds that fly farther south when their food supplies run short. Other northern species showing up in record numbers included Common Repolls and Pine Siskins. Among the rare birds reported was a Streak-backed Oriole in Loveland, Colorado - the state's first report of this bird, native to Mexico. A December nor'easter deposited a Dovekie in Newton, Massachusetts,

the first time this North Atlantic seabird has ever been reported to Project FeederWatch.

Long-term data show some species increasing in number, such as the Lesser Goldfinch in the Southwest. Other populations continue a downward trend, such as the Evening Grosbeak throughout their range. Once one of the most common species seen at feeders in the northern half of the continent, the grosbeaks are declining for unknown reasons.



Pine Siskens. photo by Teri J Pieper

Beyond the benefits to birds and science, however, is the benefit to participants. "Nature is not merely an amenity; it is critical to healthy human development and functioning," says Nancy Wells, Cornell University assistant professor of design and environmental analysis. Her studies find that a view of nature through the window or access to the environment in any way improves a child's cognitive functioning and reduces the negative effects of stress on the child's psychological well-being. Wells also

notes that when children spent time with nature early in life it carries over to their adult attitudes and behavior toward the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org) or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird Highlights.

Many FeederWatchers echo this comment from Mary Strasser of Wisconsin: "The greatest reward for me as a participant in Project FeederWatch these many years has been observing birds and behavior that I might have missed had I not been part of this project."

# How Did You Get Started with Bird Watching?

by Bob Spiwak

**D**oc Bledsoe was an All American halfback for the Huskies in the 1930s. He went to med school and ultimately became sort of a society OB-Gyn doctor in Seattle. His passion for John Barleycorn, duck hunting with the guys and the stock market took their collective toll and after his second heart attack he retired.

He and his wife bought 80 acres in the Three Lakes area of Snohomish County. They were well into horticulture and their primary interest was in rhododendrons. ("Don't you dare call them 'Rhodies.'") They had a couple of ponds on the place where they fed countless ducks and other waterfowl of various persuasions, rowing an eight foot pram to a small island and dumping corn out for the water birds. Landward, one could not go fifty feet in any direction around the house without encountering a bird feeder.

They had bird books in several window alcoves along with excellent binoculars and a spotting scope to identify the avians as they frequented the feeders. However, as their passion for breeding rhododendrons increased, he and his wife Sis, found less time spent looking at the birds. For winter Rhodoculture he bought a surplus bus from Seattle Transit and converted it to a hothouse, far from the feeders.

I spent a lot of time with them, and relied on them to tell me which bird was what: I had immigrated from first Montana and then the East Coast to Washington shortly before meeting them. Well, after a time, they decided it was a lot simpler to designate species that appeared far from the guidebooks in two categories. There were Twitter birds and Flutter birds. Seeing an unknown species simplified identification with a mere two categories.

But when it came to birds, their first love was the ducks. It therefore seemed incongruous to me that while shooting ducks was Verboten on their land, it was okay to hunt them a few ponds downstream, maybe half a mile away. So when friends came over to hunt, be they captains

of industry, or just his son Dave and I, we would repair to a semi-permanent blind downstream and wait. At a prearranged time, Doc would create a great commotion; the birds would flush and head straight for the blind. I asked him how he could reconcile his affection for the ducks with 12 gauge demise. As I remember, the sport it offered his human friends (most of us bad shots) outweighed the loss of a few mallards or teal.

Even today when I hear John Kennedy's name it takes me back to the duck blind. That was where I heard about the assassination on a tiny, tinny transistor radio in November 1963.

And I don't even have to hear Kennedy's name. Sitting on my deck behind a camera with a large lens, watching the annual mallard pair on my own pond, it takes me back to those days. Our own feeders are closer together than fifty feet, I can identify almost every bird that visits and owe that knowledge and interest to the duck

I am new to this journal, having been asked by the volunteer editor to contribute 'something.' my past writing has included travel stories and golf humor, and currently I am a columnist for the Methow Valley News. Teri apparently thinks I might be capable of writing something of interest in this space.

happy doctor.



Red Crossbill. photo by Teri J Pieper

## November Field Trip

**J**oin Dan Smith and other birders on November 8th for a birding trip along the Columbia River. Meet at Chelan Falls Park Boat Launch at 8:00 am. Dress appropriately for the weather and bring snacks and water or perhaps a thermos of something hot to drink. Don't forget field guides and optics. The trip

will go til about noon and the final stop will be for lunch in Pateros. If the weather is overly inclement, the trip will be on Sunday, November 9th. For more information call Dan at 509-682-9653 or email at [ptsnorth@flymail.net](mailto:ptsnorth@flymail.net). This trip is open to birders of all levels.

## Another New Bird Book Hits the Shelves

A new book on some of our most interesting birds is receiving rave reviews. It is *The Owl and the Woodpecker – Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*, by Paul Bannick. Ted Williams, Editor at Large, Audubon Magazine said "The Owl and the Woodpecker is a monumental work of photojournalism by one of North America's top wildlife photographers. The images you'll encounter in this book are the result of an encyclopedic knowledge of birds and their habitats, an intense love of nature, and endless patience. For anyone who appreciates wild things and wild places, each of Bannick's stunning photographs is worth ten thousand words." Mike Denny from Walla Walla has this to say - "It is not often that I suggest or comment on a book, but I now have a reason to say something. I just had a chance to look over a truly rare book. Paul Bannick's creation is superb and well worth the time it takes to go through it. The photography alone makes this book worth a good long look."

Paul Bannick is a naturalist and award winning photographer, specializing in natural history imagery. His work has appeared in numerous books and magazines and has been featured as part of NPR's popular 'BirdNote' program. He is the director of development for Conservation Northwest. He will be presenting in Twisp on February 15, 2009.

Paul Bannick will be making presentations on his new book throughout the next few months. In addition to Twisp, he will be at the Sandhill Crane Festival in Othello on March 21, at Kittitas Audubon on April 16, and in Leavenworth on May 2 and 16 for Audubon Council of Washington and also for BirdFest. Watch for other dates in our area soon.

## "The Rhodie" and the Women

Gloria Piper-Roberson  
Second in a Series on Washington State Symbols

In 1870, before women obtained the right to vote, Margaret Knight made a lasting difference. Margaret invented the square bottom paper bag.

Sarah Boone, in 1887, before she acquired the right to own property, made a durable improvement to a household task. Sara invented the ironing board.

In 1891, before Mary Walton received the right to cast an opinion, she accomplished remarkable deeds. She tackled and brought solutions to the health problem of noise and air pollution caused by the Industrial Revolution.

Mary Anderson stepped confidently

into a man's world of automobiles when, in 1905, she invented the windshield wiper. This before women earned the right to become educated.

In 1892, in Washington State, before women gained the right to run for political office, they cast a winning vote to present the Coast Rhododendron as the official state flower. This vote won over the Clover. With all this in mind, perhaps that lovely rhododendron in your yard, as it absorbs the gentle rays of the sun on a spring morn, will bring a meaning

Resources:  
Gardening Made Easy  
Milot Mills Nursery  
[www.leg.wa.gov/legis/symbol](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legis/symbol)  
[www.about.com](http://www.about.com)

## *The End of Food* author at Barn Beach Reserve

On November 6, Barn Beach Reserve will host Leavenworth research journalist and best-selling author, Paul Roberts, presenting timely topics related to his new book, *The End of Food*. According to his publisher, Roberts "identifies the forces that are undermining our capacity to produce food that is safe, nourishing, or adequate to meet the appetites of a rapidly growing population." In addition to discussing how food systems are breaking down, Roberts suggests ways in which they can be put on a course to sustainability. Copies of *The End of Food* will be available for purchase and signing by the author at the November 6 program at Barn Beach Reserve. The program will be from 7:00 – 9:00 pm at Barn Beach Reserve, 347 Division Street, Leavenworth. For more information call 548-7584.

of gratefulness into your day. Perhaps its deep-green leathery leaves cupping the morning dew will seem much more remarkable. Maybe the warm scent of its flower clusters drenched with afternoon warmth will smell more delicious. Moreover, maybe that single cut blossom put in a water filled marmalade jar, and placed on your windowsill will become a lovely reminder of the determined vision of our Washington foremothers - long before they had the right to vote!

Let's give a standing round of applause to all the women of vision, along with their paper bags, ironing boards, windshield wipers, pollution solutions (and so many more for so much more!) and of course, to our beautiful Coast Rhododendron—"The Rhodie."

CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP!

**November 2008 Wild Phlox**

North Central Washington Audubon Society  
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**North Central Washington Audubon Society Calendar**

October 30	NCW Audubon Program	Sustainable Agriculture in the Tree Fruit Industry 7:00 at the museum
November 6	Barn Beach Reserve	<i>The End of Food</i> . See page 7 for details
November 8	Project Feeder Watch gets started	Feed the birds and report your sightings. See page 5 for details
November 8	Columbia River field trip	Celebrate migration on the river. See page 6 for details
November 13	NCW Audubon program	<b>Opposable Chums, Guts and Glory in the World of Bird Watching. See page 1 for details.</b>
February 15	<i>The Owl and the Woodpecker</i>	Paul Bannick visits Twisp on his book tour. see page 7 for details
June 6 and 7	NCW Audubon goes north	A field trip to the Methow Valley. Mark your calendars. See page 5 for details

Check this space next month for Christmas Bird Counts!



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Visit the NCW Audubon Society website for updates on these and other events  
[www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org)