



## Another Great Hawk Migration Festival

Volume 52 #2 October 2018  
by Richard Scranton, Wenatchee

On the weekend of September 15 NCW Audubon, the Chelan-Entiat Ranger District and HawkWatch International (HWI) celebrated migration at the ninth annual Hawk Migration Festival. For the week leading up to HawkFest, we were lucky to have Annette Hansen from HWI visit many local schools and libraries with two birds - Aymara, a Swainson's Hawk and Galileo, a Short-eared Owl.



Learning raptor silhouettes  
photo by Karen Povey, Tacoma

On Thursday night in Chelan, Dr. David Oleyar from HWI talked about the dynamics of raptor migration and listed a number of tips for identifying raptors on the wing. On Friday night in Pateros he talked about owls, their biology and the research now being conducted by HWI.

Saturday started early with a birding field trip to Wells Wildlife Refuge led by Virginia Palumbo and Meredith Spencer. The group saw around forty bird species, including Great Egrets, a Red-necked Grebe, and a Yellow-breasted Chat.

Many people attended the morning and afternoon trips up to the HawkWatch site at Chelan Ridge. They were ushered out to the observation platform where biologists and volunteers count raptors as they make their way south for the winter. Participants saw many birds including a female Northern Goshawk that was captured and banded.

Many thanks to all that had booths at the festival, as well as everyone on the ridge that worked with the visitors to guarantee a wonderful experience. The City of Pateros, the Chelan



Sharp-shinned Hawk  
ready to be released  
photo by Karen Povey, Tacoma

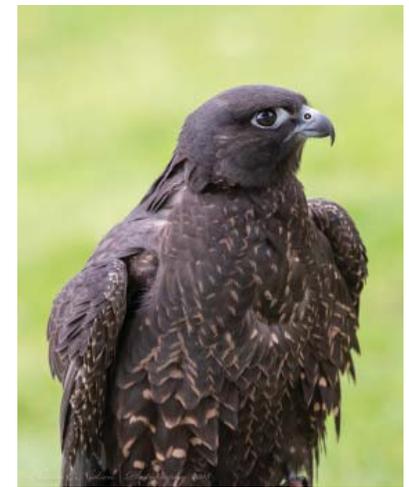
Chamber of Commerce, and the Fire District all played integral roles to ensure a smooth-running event.

Those wanting to learn more about the Chelan Ridge HawkWatch site and all things raptors can go to the HawkWatch International website: [www.hawkwatch.org](http://www.hawkwatch.org). Chelan ridge has a facebook page - friends of Chelan Ridge - which has daily counts and other useful information.

We hope to see many more bird enthusiasts at next year's festival.



Galileo, the  
Short-eared Owl  
photo by  
Christy Nielsen,  
Chelan



This is a Peregrine Falcon/  
Gyrfalcon hybrid owned by  
falconer Brad Felger  
photo by  
Christy Nielsen, Chelan

The mission of the  
**North Central Washington Audubon Society**  
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 on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of people and  
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North Central Washington Audubon Society is on Facebook too

*All phone numbers in the Wild Phlox are area code 509 unless otherwise indicated.*

Joyce Brogan made a generous donation to our NCW Audubon chapter in memory of her husband, Michael D. Brogan (September 1, 1944–August 1, 2018). Mike was a long time member and a stalwart of the Phlox mailing team for many years. We honor his steadfast support of our organization.

## Horan Field Trip Report

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

Naturalist Joe Veverka recently led a handful of NCWAS members (a handful = four fingers, no thumb) for a three-hour bird watching walk through the Horan Natural Area in Wenatchee. We started at the Walla Walla Park Playground. Joe has a preschooler and is attuned to playgrounds.

Joe showed me all over again how much I have left to learn about local birds. He spotted roughly ten species per hour. The brush along our trail seemed to be loaded with Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Lincoln Sparrows, and certain vireos. Joe was excited to hear the distinctive call of the Marsh Wren, but I couldn't pick it out from the incessant meowing of a catbird. We saw Western Wood-pewees, Mallards and American Wigeons of course, a Great Egret, Great Blue Herons, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Flickers, Belted Kingfishers, and Kildeer, while Turkey Vultures sailed overhead. It was nice.

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To join the National Audubon Society which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see their website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Have you noticed? The days are getting shorter. Nights are colder. Some folks have even had frost. Birds are on the move. Soon it will be officially fall. I don't know about you, but I feel like I didn't get my share of summer. Oh well, time to move on.

## Editor's Notes

Migration seasons are some of the best for bird watching. Everyday brings potentially new species to my morning walks. And maybe unusual behavior. For instance, Western Meadowlarks are singing their spring songs. Or some rendition of them. I think they are youngsters trying to learn the words, so they will be ready in the spring. If you spend anytime outside, you are bound to hear migrating ducks and geese flying overhead and on some days the chortles of Sandhill Cranes. We have been seeing large groups of Western Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers at our bird bath. Birds really need water in our dry



White-headed Woodpecker  
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

region so adding any water feature to your yard will give you more opportunities to see birds. Unlike other years, swallows are still here. Generally, they leave by the first week of September and here it is the 20th and yesterday I saw many Tree and Violet-green Swallows flying and perched on the power lines. One big highlight for me was seeing a Peregrine Falcon hunting among the dead trees on our hill!

I had good views of it slicing through the trees after some lucky bird that managed to escape. The falcon perched on one of the snags and I got to watch it considering its new options with this person and two dogs waiting on the road. We turned and left it to continue its hunt.

Have you been up to Chelan Ridge this fall? The counts have been very good recently and you should go while the weather is still nice and before the snow really falls up there. Yesterday they tallied 122 migrants represented by twelve species. Highlights were an adult Bald Eagle and three Broad-winged Hawks!



American Kestrel  
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

## NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from the ncwabird email list and eBird and Tweepers by Teri J Pieper

Chelan: White-tailed Ptarmigan were observed near Trap Pass on the way to Thunder Mountain Lake. Red-necked Phalarope were seen from the Lady of the Lake near Fields Point on Lake Chelan. A California Scrub-jay was seen in Cashmere. A Wilson's Snipe and Long-billed Dowitcher were seen at the Cashmere Juvenile Pond. A Barn Owl was seen at the boat launch near the Colockum Wildlife Area. A Common Tern was seen at Walla Walla Point. An American Three-toed Woodpecker was seen at the Smithbrook trailhead and also at the Blue Lake and the Lake Anne trailheads. Other birds seen recently at Walla Walla Park include Black-bellied Plover, Least and Western Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher.

Douglas: A Pectoral, a Baird's and a Semi-palmated Sandpiper were seen at the Waterville sewage treatment plant (STP). A Bonaparte's Gull was seen along the Columbia in East Wenatchee.



Mallard Duckling  
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

Ferry: Two Northern Saw-whet Owls were hooting not far from the west side of the Kettle River. A Sabine's Gull was seen along the Columbia River. Common Terns and an American Golden-plover were observed at Haag Cove on the Columbia River.

Okanogan: A Fox Sparrow was seen at Upper Wenner Lake. A Ferruginous Hawk, a Flammulated Owl and Purple Finches were seen at Chelan Ridge. Wood Ducks were seen at the Chicken Creek boat launch on the Columbia.

# Getting to Know Your Board Members - Julie Hovis

by Penny Tobiska, Wenatchee

**Tell us a little about your background and how you became interested in the natural world.** I grew up in West Virginia and spent a lot of time outdoors as a kid. When I was 17 years old, my parents traveled to Kenya and Tanzania on a picture safari, and after a lot of begging, they agreed to take me with them. That experience opened my eyes to a whole new world and led me to pursue a career in wildlife biology. The first half of my career I worked as a nongame wildlife biologist for the State of Florida



Julie in her natural habitat  
photo provided

where I did survey and monitoring work on a variety of species including cave bats and colonial nesting birds. The second half of my career I was a wildlife biologist for the Air Force in South Carolina where I managed and monitored a population of endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. I am grateful for a career that expanded my appreciation of the natural world and allowed me to contribute to the conservation of our natural resources.

**What are some of your other interests?** I retired in 2016 and moved to Winthrop to be near family and enjoy the outdoor activities available in the area. In addition to bird

watching I like to hike, bike, cross-country ski and work in my yard. I also am a dog lover and enjoy spending time with my 14-year-old chocolate lab Coco.

**What are some birding spots that you would**

**recommend?**

Because I am a newcomer to the area, I am still exploring and have relied on others to share their birding spots with me. If I had to pick a favorite to date it would be the sewage treatment ponds in Winthrop, which attract a variety of waterfowl species in the winter.

**Do you have a Wow! moment in birding that you would like to share**

**with us?** By far my most memorable birding experience was watching an estimated half-million Purple Martins come in to roost on a 1-acre island in South Carolina. NPR made a video about the roost which is worth watching if you haven't seen it ([www.npr.org/2014/12/04/368324785/the-mystery-of-the-missing-martins](http://www.npr.org/2014/12/04/368324785/the-mystery-of-the-missing-martins)). The martins historically roosted on a ten-acre island but moved to the one-acre island in 2014 for unknown reasons. They returned to their historical roost in 2015.

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## North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring

by Bruce Beehler

In this illustrated lecture, naturalist and ornithologist, Bruce Beehler, will recount his hundred-day-long 2015 field trip following the spring migration of songbirds from the coast of southeastern Texas up the Mississippi and thence into the boreal forests of northern Ontario - breeding ground of many of the beautiful and vocal North American wood warblers. Along the way, Beehler visited various migratory bird field projects as well as scores of local, state, and national parks and refuges critical for the preservation of the migration phenomenon. He also spent time in an array of eclectic and beautiful rural communities from southern Louisiana and Mississippi through the Heartland and to the northern limit of roads in Ontario, land of the Cree and Ojibwe First Nations peoples. Beehler's informal goal was

to spend time with all thirty-seven eastern wood warblers on their prime breeding habitat. In pursuing this objective, he saw a lot of deeply rural North America. His presentation touches on wildlife, nature conservation, migration research, American history, and rural culture.

This event is part of the Environmental Film and Lecture Series and is sponsored by NCW Audubon. It will begin at 7 pm on November 15 at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, 127 South Mission Street in Wenatchee.

Beehler will be signing his popular book, *North on the Wing* (Smithsonian: 2018), after the lecture. Visit Bruce Beehler's blog at: <https://birdsandnatureorthamerica.blogspot.com> or his website at: [brucebeehler.wixsite.com/brucebeehler](http://brucebeehler.wixsite.com/brucebeehler)

# IBA News: Fraser River Estuary Problems

The Fraser Estuary became a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) site of Hemispheric Importance in 2005, mainly for seasonally hosting great numbers of Western Sandpipers. The Fraser River Estuary plays a crucial role as a critical migratory stopover and refueling location for at least 60 % of the global population of this species. It has also been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA). Three main areas of the site, Roberts Bank, Boundary Bay, and Sturgeon Bank, are also important for several other shorebird species, including Dunlin and Black-bellied Plover. The Fraser River Estuary is located just north of the Washington/British Columbia border. The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary is located in the estuary.

But this location doesn't simply attract birds. The estuary is also the ancestral home of the Coast Salish people, and it continues to be inhabited by a number of First Nation communities across the delta. The estuary also supports an important salmon fishery, along with other fisheries.

This site is rapidly changing, threatening the health of the estuary, the communities that use it, and the wildlife that depend on it. Walking paths, dog parks, picnic areas, and other recreational areas are other factors influencing changes to important habitat. The conversion of in-soil agriculture to greenhouses (or other hard infrastructure),

From the Birding Community E-bulletin  
Archives available at

<http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

unexplained die-off of coastal wetlands, and an invasive *Spartina* cordgrass that crowds healthy wetlands and mudflats are collectively issues of concern. One of the biggest threats facing the estuary is the expansion of western gateway trade infrastructure. A proposed port expansion would double the size of an existing artificial island and causeway that already hosts Canada's largest shipping-container facility.

Together these changes add up to the loss of wetlands, mudflats, and agricultural lands which result in fewer places for birds to roost and feed. While protecting the estuary is critical for shorebirds, it is also vital to the quality of life of nearby communities relying on the area for food, heritage, recreation, seafood, and open space. For a thoughtful discussion of the situation, see this recent summary from WHSRN, a report on an assessment trip to the estuary by Bird Studies Canada: [www.whsrn.org/collaboration-fraser-estuary](http://www.whsrn.org/collaboration-fraser-estuary). To access more details on the Fraser River Estuary IBA read: [www.ibacanada.ca/site.jsp?siteID=BC017&lang=EN](http://www.ibacanada.ca/site.jsp?siteID=BC017&lang=EN)

For additional information about worldwide IBA programs, including those in the U.S., check the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program web site at: [www.audubon.org/bird/iba/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/)

## More Photos From HawkFest



NCWAS board member, Julie Hovis helps Tiegen (almost five years old) from Seattle dissect an owl pellet at Hawk Fest.

photo by Merry Roy



Jaime Cuéllar and Elisa Lopez represented Team Naturaleza at Hawk Fest. The purpose of the Team is to educate the Latino population about hiking and outdoor etiquette, snowshoeing, and community service. They also seek to be a positive and interactive bridge between the community and government agencies.

photo by Merry Roy, Wenatchee

# An Elusive Sparrow

The crisp morning air, maybe in the low forties, gave the June morning freshness as I hiked along the trail by Tiffany Lake. Tall living lodgepole pines and Engelmann spruce dotted the shoreline while straight skeletons of burnt trees rose above sapling pines and spruce on the slope above the trail. I had not heard an airplane or car motor since my buddy and I left Winthrop early on the previous day to head north into the National Forest. This lake is more than an hour drive from any human habitation and quite a ways back from the nearest dirt road. The sun had not yet crested Rock Mountain to the east and the water, flat as glass, reflected the granite ridge on the west side. A bird sang, and my first thought was House Wren, but then I paused to look back and forth across this area, mumbling, “Not the right habitat, too high in altitude and the wrong plant community.”

The song was bubbly, a jumble of trills, often husky in nature, lower in pitch, then going up, before coming back down. It was a musical song that seemed to have gurgles, trills, and buzzes. After ten minutes of searching, I found the bird sitting about eight feet up on an Engelmann spruce that grew right along the lake’s bank.

A small plump sparrow with crisp streaks, a gray face and buff wash across the breast, and when it moved, its unmarked white belly flashed briefly. A Lincoln’s Sparrow was defending its territory with a beautiful song and sitting

by Thomas Bancroft, Seattle

former chief scientist for the National Audubon Society prominently in plain sight. I had only seen this species outside of the breeding season when they tend to be secretive, skulking through thick brush often by themselves or with just a few other sparrows. The last time I saw one; it appeared at the edge of a brier patch for only a second before disappearing back into the thicket.

I found half dozen more along the eastern shore of Tiffany Lake. All of them were in the narrow boggy strip between the trail and the lake. They like wet areas with a thick cover of bushes and small trees. In 1833, John James Audubon discovered this species in Labrador and named it after his traveling buddy, Thomas Lincoln. This bird nests in montane forests of the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains and throughout the boreal forest of Canada and Alaska. Unlike the Song Sparrow, their song repertoire varies little across their range. Humans in the United States seem to have a more diverse dialect than these guys.

It was almost 7 am when I turned to hurry back to camp, hoping my buddy was starting to stir; we had stayed up until 2 am watching the half-moon rise over this wilderness valley and set behind the granite cliffs. The shadows, reflections, and winnowing snipe had kept our attention. He would be envious of my discovery. Lincoln’s Sparrows are one of the more elusive of North American birds. Audubon had commented, “We found more wildness in this species than in any other inhabiting the same country.”

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## What is Project Feeder Watch?

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

Anyone interested in birds can participate. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. You can count birds as often as every week, or as infrequently as you like: the schedule is completely flexible. All you need is a bird feeder, bird bath, or plantings that attract birds.

New participants are sent a Research Kit with complete instructions for participating, as well as a bird identification poster and more. You provide the feeder(s) and seed. Then each fall participants receive our sixteen-page, year-end report, *Winter Bird Highlights*. Participants also receive access to the digital version of *Living Bird*, the Cornell Lab’s award-winning, quarterly magazine.

from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

There is an \$18 annual participation fee for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members). Canadians can participate by joining Bird Studies Canada for CAN\$35. The participation fee covers materials, staff support, web design, data analysis, and the year-end report (*Winter Bird Highlights*). Project FeederWatch is supported almost entirely by participation fees. Without the support of our participants, this project wouldn’t be possible. Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.



American Robin  
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

To learn more and sign up to be a feederwatcher see <https://feederwatch.org/>.

***Are you a feederwatcher? Perhaps you would like to share your feederwatch story with the Wild Phlox?***

# More Than 4 Billion Birds Stream Overhead During Fall Migration

from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Using cloud computing and data from 143 weather radar stations across the continental United States, Cornell Lab of Ornithology researchers can now estimate how many birds migrate through the U.S. and the toll that winter and these nocturnal journeys take. Their findings are published in *Nature Ecology & Evolution*.

“We’ve discovered that each autumn, an average of 4 billion birds move south from Canada into the U.S. At the same time, another 4.7 billion birds leave the U.S. over the southern border, heading to the tropics,” notes lead author Adriaan Dokter, an Edward W. Rose postdoctoral fellow at the Cornell Lab. “In the spring, 3.5 billion birds cross back into the U.S. from points south, and 2.6 billion birds return to Canada across the northern U.S. border.”

In other words, fewer birds return to their breeding grounds after going through fall migration and spending months on their wintering grounds. But the researchers were surprised to find that the migrants arriving across the U.S. southern border had an average return rate of 76 percent during the 5 years of the study (2013 to 2017) and the birds wintering in the U.S. had only an average return rate of 64 percent.

“Contrary to popular thought, birds wintering in the tropics survive the winter better than birds wintering in the U.S.,” says Andrew Farnsworth, co-author of the study and leader of the Cornell Lab’s aeroecology program. “That’s despite the fact that tropical wintering birds migrate three to four times farther than the birds staying in the U.S.”

To reach these numbers, the researchers developed complicated algorithms to measure differences in biomass picked up by weather radar—in this case, the total mass of organisms in a given area, minus insects and weather.

Migrants crossing the northern border—such as many sparrows, American Robins, and Dark-eyed Juncos—have shorter migrations from breeding grounds in Canada to wintering grounds in the U.S.

Measurements from the southern border captured data on migrants that breed in the U.S. and spend their winters in places such as Central or South America, such as most warblers, orioles, and tanagers. One explanation for the higher mortality among birds wintering in the U.S. may be the number of hazards they face.

“All birds need suitable habitats with enough resources to get them through the winter,” notes Ken Rosenberg, co-author and conservation scientist at the Cornell Lab. “Birds wintering in the U.S. may have more habitat disturbances and more buildings to crash into, and they might not be adapted for that.”

Another reason for the disparity in migration return rates between short and long-distance migrants may have to do with breeding strategy. Birds wintering in the U.S. have high reproduction rates to offset higher mortality. Tropical wintering species have fewer offspring, but more adults survive through the winter and reproduce the following spring, despite their longer migrations. But it’s a strategy that may backfire without conservation efforts in the tropics.

“Longer distance migrants seem to be gambling on having high survival in the tropics, and they’re therefore more sensitive to what happens to their wintering grounds,” says Dokter. “Even a small decrease in survival due to changes in their tropical habitats might cause a precipitous decline.”

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## An Owl of a Different Color

by Robin Stice, Manager, Eden Valley Ranch

Eden Valley Guest Ranch, located ten miles east of Oroville in the Okanogan Highlands, has had an interesting guest this summer – a pure white owl. The bird has yellow eyes, so it is thought to be leucistic rather than albino. This Great-horned Owl fledged in July 2017 and has been entertaining guests around the ranch all summer. We cannot predict its schedule. One time it hung around the lodge house for two days and we didn’t go to the vault because it was nearby, and we did not want to disturb it.



photo by Woody Rogers,  
Eden Valley guest



photo by Robin Stice, Eden Valley

## *October Wild Phlox*

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Ongoing	CDLT Community Science Projects	see last month's Phlox
October 5-7	BirdFest and Bluegrass	Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge <a href="https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/">https://ridgefieldfriends.org/birdfest-bluegrass/</a>
<b>October 12-14</b>	<b>Audubon Council of Washington</b>	<b>Join chapter members from around the state for an inspiring weekend of workshops, programs and field trips. See <a href="http://wa.audubon.org/events/audubon-council-washington-1">http://wa.audubon.org/events/audubon-council-washington-1</a></b>
November 15	North on the Wing	Travels with Songbird Migration by Bruce Beehler. See page 4 At the Wenatchee Valley Museum. 7:00 pm.

You can find the Wild Phlox online at our website - [www.ncwaudubon.org](http://www.ncwaudubon.org)  
The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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