Many see Numenius tahitiensis

For nearly 20 years, the Washington checklist has included Bristle-thighed Curlew based only on Ralph Widrig's sighting at Leadbetter Point. But after this spring's appearance of the "Bird of the Year," the curlew will no doubt be lifted from supplementary to review status.

Why did Bristle-thighs arrive here—and in California, Oregon, and British Columbia? Not surprisingly, El Niño was likely involved...

Synopsis: First a general summary of the winter weather pattern over the Pacific. There are usually two streams of air prevalent over the Pacific during the winter—the Maritime stream over northern sections and the Polar stream over the southern sections. These are usually just referred to as the "northern" and "southern" streams. When El Niño was still gaining strength during November and December, these two streams were "in phase" (that is, the troughs and ridges lined up in each stream. This augments the strength of the flow in each stream and we ended up with a high speed jet stream across the North Pacific. During these two months, a ridge of high pressure dominated along the west coast of North America (the so-called Pacific North America or PNA pattern) bringing a strong flow of El Niño-warmed air to all the west coast.

As Californians can tell you, this pattern changed drastically...
Prairie grouse now “State Threatened”

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission has listed Sage Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse as State Threatened species. The Commission’s decisions became effective on 23 May.

Surveys indicate both grouse populations have declined dramatically as their habitat has diminished. Sage grouse, historically once were plentiful in eastern Washington, now number fewer than 1000 birds residing only in Douglas, Grant, Yakima, and Kittitas counties. Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, the rarest of six North American subspecies, once were plentiful in eastern Washington, but have been reduced to 700 to 1000 birds in scattered pockets of Douglas, Lincoln, and Okanogan counties.

These declines are due primarily to conversion of shrub-steppe and meadowsteppe habitats, sagebrush removal, intensive grazing, and removal of streamside vegetation.

Status reports for these grouse species may be obtained by calling (360) 902-2515 or linking to <http://www.wa.gov/wdfw/>.

Westport Pelagic records
Murphy’s Petrel

Birders out on a 2 May boat trip to 60 nautical miles off Grays Harbor enjoyed very good sea and observation conditions, reports Terry Wahl in the June 1998 NW Pelagics.

In brief, low numbers continue for common species like Sooty Shearwater, Common Murre, and Cassin’s Auklet. No puffins were seen. Good numbers of albatrosses and Leach’s Storm-Petrel were present. No fishing vessels were observed within range.

Black-footed Albatross 359, Northern Fulmar 55, Pink-footed Shearwater 32, Flesh-footed Shearwater 1, Sooty Shearwater 624, Murphy’s Petrel 1 (50 miles offshore), Leach’s Storm-Petrel 1275, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel 107, Red-necked Phalarope 107, phalarope sp. 8, Pomarine Jaeger 2, Long-tailed Jaeger 1, Bonaparte’s Gull 10, California Gull 1, Herring Gull 6. Western/Glaucous-winged Gull 530, Sabine’s Gull 10, Arctic Tern 5, Common Murre 201, Pigeon Guineenot 6, Ancient Murrelet 1, Cassin’s Auklet 4.

Also seen: Humpback Whale 2, Pacific White-sided Dolphin 50, Dall’s Porpoises 12, Steller Sea Lion 2, California Sea Lions 3, Northern Fur Seal 37, Harbor Seal 4, Northern Elephant Seal 1.

NW Pelagics is an on-line newsletter produced by Greg Gillson.

Spokane Peregrine Falcon chicks get bands

Three 21-day-old female Peregrine Falcon chicks recently received leg bands and lots of attention from state and federal wildlife officials.

The young birds, living under the Sunset Highway Bridge in Spokane, are the progeny of adults that hatched from a nest in the Clark Fork River area on the Idaho-Montana border. Leg bands indicate the adult male hatched in 1993, the female in 1994 and the female in 1991. This is their second year nesting under the bridge.

Biologists banded the chicks, took blood samples for DNA analysis, and collected egg shell fragments and food scraps from the nest. This will allow researchers to analyze and catalogue the birds’ bloodlines, measure egg shell thickness for comparison with others in the west, and record food sources.

In 1980, Washington had only two known nesting pairs of peregrine falcons. By 1997, a total of 46 pairs produced 64 young.

Sandpiper extirpation more certain?

Results from the 1998 Upland Sandpiper survey in the Spokane Valley were identical to those of the past several years: no birds seen or heard. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife searched for sandpipers in historic and potential sites in the valley and around Newman Lake. Local birders and Audubon members also have reported no Upland Sandpipers.

Once a regularly-occurring nester in the east Spokane Valley, the Upland Sandpiper appears to have been extirpated, primarily due to loss of habitat. The last sighting in this vicinity was in September 1993.
Belted Kingfishers in Washington — Part 1: Inklings

by Scott A. Richardson

True or False? Male kingfishers winter further north than females.

As I rumbled through six winters of bird data from Olympia’s East Bay, I found an intriguing pattern. After completing hundreds of surveys, neither I nor other reporting observers had ever seen a female kingfisher during winter. Giving this some thought, I recalled reading in *Natural History* magazine about a similar kingfisher situation. A visit to the library verified my recollection: Jim Davis had written that all wintering kingfishers he saw in southwestern Ohio were males.

Gradually, I discovered other references to a winter sex bias in kingfishers. At Yellowstone National Park: “The winter birds noticed have been males, the females well enough to classify were males.” At Fort Collins, Colorado: 9 out of 10 kingfishers observed in fall and winter were males.

Yellowstone, Ontario, Colorado, Ohio—these reports all came from regions where open water freezes in winter. In contrast, Jim Davis had counted twice as many females as males when visiting southern Florida. Consistently, when Jeff Kelly inspected Christmas Bird Count and Bird Banding Laboratory data from fall and winter, he learned that sex ratio varies with latitude: proportionally, fewer females occur in the north and fewer males in the south.

I wondered about the situation in Washington. Do female kingfishers disappear during winter? In October 1997, I posted a request to Tweeters, asking that birders report their detections of kingfishers to me, noting sex whenever possible. I also asked for input through the pages of *WOSNews*. I promised to compile information and report back.

Male? Female? What’s the difference?

The Belted Kingfisher is found year-round in Washington. We become accustomed to its rattle, registering the species without even seeing it. When a kingfisher appears, we quickly recognize its distinctive form of flight and continue birding. But even though this species is often on our lists, we seldom note the sex of birds encountered.

A glance at any field guide will reveal that Belted Kingfishers are sexually dimorphic: males and females bear different plumages. All kingfishers have the blue “belt” across the breast, but females also have a rufous pectoral band that adult males lack.

With trepidation, I obtained the Pyle book and, to my chagrin, verified the feature. How could so many field guides (and the *BNA* account) fail to mention this nuance of male plumages? Disheartened, I dug deeper into the literature. A key handbook, the *Belted Kingfisher* volume by Fry and Fry, put it that way, too.

Male? Female? What’s the difference? (especially buckwheats). The sparrows were on the ridge-top in one location only 100 m south.

The habitat was a scrubby mosaic of bitterbrush/big sagebrush and scattered bunchgrasses alternating with thin-soiled terrain and low-growing shrub-steppe plants (especially buckwheats). The sparrows were on the ridge-top in one location only 100 m south. These sparrows were only 3 miles from Williamson’s Sapsuckers, which I ran into an hour later, illustrating how abrupt vegetation zonation is on the east slopes.

These were the first Lark Sparrows I’ve encountered in the Cascades. I note the recently-published *Breeding Birds of Washington State* documents Lark Sparrows in openings of the ponderosa pine zone in northeastern Washington. Does anyone have information Lark Sparrows in the Cascades or in any other mountains in Washington? I’m interested in the distribution and habitat choice of this bird, which is mainly a Columbia Basin species in this state.
curlew, from page 1

in January, instead of a phased PNA pattern, it changed to a pronounced "split flow," in which the energy flowing along the streams divided into two or more branches instead of one consolidated one. And the one with the greatest energy was aimed at California through most of January and February, ravaging that state with a constant barrage of storms.

As El Niño peaked in March and April, the flow became more chaotic, with a greater variation in weather patterns as the two streams phased and split several times. Toward the last week of April, the energy started to be funnelled into the southern stream again as a huge split took shape in the flow over the western Gulf of Alaska. A deep upper low centre began to form near 31°N, 150°W by 27 April, about 600 nautical miles north-northeast of
Hawaii. An upstream surface low pressure system caught in the westerlies was forced southward upon entering the Gulf of Alaska and deepened explosively due to the influence of both the presence of the upper low and its trajectory over the abnormally warm waters.

One such surface low pressure system entering the Gulf 28 April, followed this trajectory, and eventually bottomed out at around 985 millibars near 38°N, 135°W on 1 May. The surface low and upper low then began moving in tandem northeastward toward the California coast. By 2 May, the still-strong low pressure center began weakening off the north-central California coast as the warm air occluded out of the system and it became a "cold low."

During this period, a strong cold front, associated with the cold air flowing southward in the wake of the surface low pressure center, was moving steadily southward. This cold front reached the Hawaiian Islands about 2200 hours UTC (Greenwich Mean Time) on 1 May accompanied by strong north winds and lots of showers.

Northerly surface winds to the north of the cold front were averaging 20-30 knots, with the core of fastest wind speeds attaining 40-50 knots on the west side of the surface low center farther northeast. Over the next five days, the cold low center meandered off the California coast and gradually dissipated. The winds to the north of Hawaii remained out of the north but weakened steadily.

From 7-9 May, another much-weaker cold front swept southward down the west coast accompanied by a few showers and gusty onshore winds. On 8 May, another cold front entered the Gulf of Alaska and turned sharply southward off the west coast. By the morning of 12 May, this front arced south and westward from Los Angeles. This front was not as strong as the first one but the winds were still fairly stiff out of the north when it reached Hawaii on 14 May.

Discussion: Most of the Polynesian wintering Bristle-thighed Curlews depart for their western Alaskan breeding grounds in late April or early May. Birds leaving Hawaii for Alaska during this period would have experienced brisk head winds and frequent showers. The first sighting of two curlews (according to Tweeters) was made 8 May at Ocean Shores, one week after the passage of the strong cold front across Hawaii.

It is probable that these curlews were deflected northeastward by the cold front. Note that this is a 50- to 80-degree deflection from a straight-line path to Alaska, depending whether the birds first made landfall in Washington or California. I feel that two scenarios are possible: 1) The birds intercepted the advancing cold front north of Hawaii on either April 30 or May 1. They would have experienced strong north winds and frequent showers. After fighting the head winds for a while, the birds turned northeast toward the west coast; 2) The birds departed Hawaii after the blustery north winds hit the islands and for some reason headed northeast rather than north-northwest to Alaska. The first sounds more plausible to me.

Do not let anybody tell you that this is not a significant event. Indeed, the arrival of other Bristle-thighed Curlews along the coast subsequent to the first two suggests that either a wayward flock dispersed when it made landfall on the coast, or that there was another wave following the first.

The cynics among us may purport that these birds could have been transported by some crazed pineapple-addled seaman. However, I believe that a bout with a feisty Mother Nature is more likely.

**Storm-Petrel, from page 1**

I followed it nearly 2 miles as it flew about 2 or 3 feet above the sand. It maintained a speed of between 21 and 24 mph and at one point nearly alighted on the sand! About 30 seconds into the chase, I grabbed my camera (steering the car with my knee) and began shooting pictures out my window. The storm-petrel didn't seem to mind. Fortunately, the beach was empty of people and cars so the only thing I had to worry about hitting was the occasional stump or lose sand. I finally ran out of film and had to stop. The bird never veered from its course. I lost sight of it down the beach shortly after stopping.

Is this unprecedented behavior for a Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel or does this species do this on occasion while looking for invertebrate goodies in the sand? Is the location near a breeding colony? This was certainly my best look at this species and the first storm-petrel I've seen over land (except for the occasional one or two over a jetty or sandspit during last fall's spectacular flight).

*Posted to Tweeters on 27 April 1998.*
Birds have value
...Tell a politico
by Eugene Kridler

Aesthetics mean little to the average politician. Dollars are what they understand. Being a retired wildlife refuge manager and administrator, I know you need plenty of dollars to preserve, acquire, develop, and manage habitat for birds. You can talk yourself blue in the face to politicians, explaining the need for money to preserve bird habitat, but unless you can cite the economic value of what you wish to do, you’re dead in the water.

What good are birds? One answer is that $5.2 billion was spent by birders in 1991. That compares favorably to $5.8 billion spent for movie tickets and $5.9 billion spent for tickets to all spectator sports. By reading newspapers, one might think that sports and movies are all that matters.

The total economic effect of non-consumptive use by birders was estimated to be $15.9 billion in 1991, according to the Southwick Report1. Sales tax revenues from birders’ expenditures came to an estimated $306.3 million. State and federal income tax receipts were $73.6 million and $516 million, respectively. And birders supported 191,000 jobs.

In Washington, retail sales were an estimated $136.3 million, with sales tax of $11.2 million and federal income tax of $9.8 million. Over 4000 jobs were created and supported.

Not included in these figures was the economic value that birds contribute by consuming millions of crop-destroying, pestiferous, and disease-bearing insects and arthropods.

More recent figures can be found in results from a national survey completed in 1996 and 19972. The survey revealed that 77 million Americans over the age of 16 engaged in some form of wildlife recreation. These people pumped more than $100 billion into the national economy—almost twice the figure for 1991. They supported thousands of jobs. Almost 35.2 million fished and 14 million hunted, while 62.9 million simply watched wildlife, largely birds. Total expenditures for wildlife watching were $29.2 billion, of which $16.7 billion were spent on equipment, $3.1 billion for seed, magazines, dues, and other items, and $9.5 billion for trip-related expenses such as transportation, lodging, and food.

Nearly everyone who watched wildlife from their homes—about 60.7 million people—watched birds. Of the 23.6 million people who watched wildlife away from home, 17.7 million watched birds. In Washington, 54% of the population above the age of 16 watched wildlife, mainly birds. They spent $1.7 billion, including $1.1 billion for equipment and $508.6 million on trips.

When considering the large amount of money brought to communities by over 100 birding festivals in the United States and Canada in 1998, the economic value of birds swells even further.

What good are birds? Dollarwise, plenty. Tell a politician.

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American Kestrels nest in dirt bank cavity in Kittitas County

by Mike Denny

On 15 May 1998, while co-leading a field trip onto the Yakima Training Center in Kittitas County, I spotted an adult female American Kestrel blast up and away from a dirt bank. Upon nearing the spot from which the kestrel had come, the group noticed a hole in the bank. The cavity was 7 to 8 inches high, 5 to 6" wide, and placed approximately 9 feet up the face of the streamside bank, about 2 feet down from the top. The lower lip of the hole’s entrance was spattered white.

Many observers glassed the hole and noticed movement a few inches in. This is when I noticed two small, light-colored fuzz-balls looking back at us. It was a pair of chicks performing their typical jerky, unsteady movement.

The hole appeared to be no more than 10 or 11 inches deep and dug at a slight angle to the right. The bank faced southwest.

This is the first dirt-bank nesting cavity I have seen for the American Kestrel in the Pacific Northwest. I do not know if this species dug this hole or enlarged a Rough-winged Swallow or rodent burrow.

We located this nest cavity on upper Hanson Creek on the Yakima Training Center.

None of the biologists present had ever seen such a nest anywhere in Washington. I would like to know if anyone else has located a similar nest in the state.

Please send details of any such discovery!

See “Report Your Findings,” on page 12 for contact information.

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**Kingfisher, from page 3**

remarks that juveniles are “like the adult female,” but illustrates juvenile males and females as distinct.

Next I went where I should have begun. I read Bent’s life history of the kingfisher, where this passage appears 2:

*The rufous band of the female adult is only partially shown in the young female, mainly on the flanks, and it shows to some extent in nearly all young males, some having nearly as much as young females."

Too late, I realized sex and age influence rufous belts in kingfishers.

In the future, I and others may identify kingfishers to sex most certainly when in the presence of adult males. They are distinguished by the absence of any rufous; as long as the flanks can be seen not to carry rufous feathers, “male” is the call. Adult females can be recognized by complete rufous bands, broader than the narrow or partial belly bands of younger birds.

All juveniles have brown, rufous, or rust flecking in their blue breast bands and some similarly-colored feathers along their sides. Other hints to subadult identity are given by Bent 2, though neither Pyle nor Fry and Fry offer these descriptors:

*The crest is darker than in adults, there is more white in the wing coverts, the white tips of the secondaries are more extensive, and the central tail feathers are spotted, as in the adult female.... Juvenile plumage is also a first winter plumage...worn without much change until spring."

Determining the sex of hatch-year and second-year kingfishers may be the greatest challenge. According to Pyle 6, juvenile females exhibit a virtually unbroken pectoral band, while juvenile males show (at most) two rufous “fingers” reaching in from the sides, but not meeting. Clearly, sexing young kingfishers requires care.

**Immediate Tweeters response.**

This juvenile-plumage quandary did not exist when I first posted my request to Tweeters. In the days following the post, a gratifying number of Tweeters reported males, females, and pairs from around Washington. Dozens of kingfisher records filled my spreadsheet.

It didn’t take long to discount the possibility that “females” depart our region entirely in winter. In fact, they seemed to be more common than males in eastern Washington. West of the Cascade crest, however, many observers reported similar findings to mine at East Bay, with a preponderance of males between late autumn and spring. One early and indicative response came from Michael Hobbs 5:

*Only males in winter—Bah, I thought. ...But when I looked at my records, I’ve only noted one female at Nisqually (10/5/96) and one female at Marymoor Park (11/10/94). No records at all from December through April. In contrast, I’ve seen at least 28 males in the October through April period (and noted them in each of those months). I’ve also seen 34 in winter without determining sex. Looks like there could be something to this..."

Kingfisher records from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

In the late 1970’s, the Washington Department of Game (now WDFW) established a new “non-game” program. To begin the enormous task of establishing baseline information on Washington’s non-game wildlife, biologists began to collect observation reports from a variety of sources. Each report was entered onto a custom index card.

The card file expanded rapidly between 1979 and 1981. Many cards came in from the Department’s new non-game biologists, while others came from other state and federal biologists. A major influx of cards came via an effort by the Washington Conservation Corps to transcribe information from local Audubon newsletters, other publications, “gray” literature, and museum specimens. The observation card system continued to grow more gradually through the 1980’s and 1990’s, frequently through reports from professional biologists, but also through reports from the general public.

I obtained the set of more than 300 “obs cards” representing Belted Kingfishers. I set aside those for museum specimens, but still had over 250 cards for individual sightings. They came from most areas of the state.

Although obs cards include a space for entering an animal’s sex, few kingfisher cards held that information. Of 263 cards inspected, 246 revealed no data on sex, 15 reported males, and 7 reported females (several cards reported both male and female).

In other words, the WDFW obs card file contains some useful information about kingfishers, but provides almost no data to help clarify the sex-specific wintering or migrational status of kingfishers in Washington.

**Posted to <http://www.halcyon.com/salix/beki_obs.htm> on 15 December 1997.**
**Washington Field Notes**  

**Red-throated Loon**  
High count, 350 at Deception Pass Island/Skagit on 12/7 (SM). Uncommon on freshwater, 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 12/18 (BS), and 1 at American Lake Pierce on 1/6 (PS).  

**Pacific Loon**  
Uncommon in e WA, 1 at Richland Benton on 12/12 (BW), High count for w WA, 84 at Sequim Clallam on 12/22 (BN).  

**White-billed Loon**  
1 at Olympia Thurston on 12/8 until the end of the period (mo ob).  

**Red-necked Grebe**  
Irregular inland, 1 at Lake Chelan Chelan on 12/27 (PS), 2 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 12/20 (SM) with 5 there on 1/3 (PS) and 1 on 1/10 (WC).  

**Eared Grebe**  
Reports include 1 at Kent King on 12/3 (PS), 3 at Gardiner Jefferson on 12/22 (TAv), 1 at Seattle King on 12/25 (JB), 4 at Penn Cove Island on 12/27 (SM), and 2 at Purdy Pierce on 1/29 (PS).  

**Western Grebe**  
High count, 2500 at Penn Cove Island on 12/27 (SM).  

**Clark’s Grebe**  
Reports include 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 12/18 (BS) until at least 1/3 (PS), 1 at Skamania Skamania on 1/17 (WC), and 1 at Budd Inlet Thurston on 1/25 (BS).  

**Northern Fulmar**  
1 at Neah Bay Clallam on 1/27 (PS).  

**Short-tailed Shearwater**  
Uncommon but regular in inland marine waters, 1 at Edmonds Snohomish on 12/16 (BB), and 2 at Point No Point Kitsap on 12/17 (VN).  

**Great Egret**  
Uncommon in winter in e WA, 1 at Walla Walla Walla Walla on 12/7 (MD&MID), and 1 at Lowden Walla Walla on 1/1 (MD&MID) and on 1/4 (PS). High count for w WA, 10 at Vancouver Clark on 12/18 (JE).  

**Cattle Egret**  
Uncommon in WA, 3 at Richland Benton on 12/1 (BW), 2 there on 12/12 and 1 on 1/11 (BW), 1 at Lowden Walla Walla on 12/27 (MD&MID), 1 at Silverdale Kitsap on 12/4 (PS).  

**Green Heron**  
1 at Vancouver Clark on 12/3 (TAv) and 1/10 (WC).  

**Black-crowned Night-Heron**  
High count in e WA, 35 at Two Rivers CP Benton on 12/30 (DR). Uncommon and local in w WA, 6 throughout period at Fir Island Skagit (SM), and 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 1/2 (WC).  

**Tundra Swan**  
Local in winter in e WA, 8 at Yakima RD Benton on 12/12 (BW). High counts for Ridgefield NWR Clark varied. 535 on 12/9 (fide JE), 1550 on 12/12 (JE), 560 on 12/17 (fide JE), 101 on 12/19 (fide JE), and a high of 3000 on 12/28 (SM). Reports from elsewhere on the lower Columbia include 52 at Kelso Coulitz on 1/15 (SJ), and 407 at Vancouver Clark on 1/26 (JE).  

**Trumpeter Swan**  
Uncommon outside of regular wintering sites in nw WA, 1 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/28 (SM), 2 at Discovery Bay Jefferson on 1/26 (PS&RS), 6 at Neah Bay Clallam on 1/27 (PS&RS), 1 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/31 (fide JE), and a high of 3000 on 12/28 (SM). Reports from elsewhere on the lower Columbia include 52 at Kelso Coulitz on 1/15 (SJ), and 407 at Vancouver Clark on 1/26 (JE).  

**Greater White-fronted Goose**  
Reports include 1 throughout the period at Two Rivers CP Benton (DR), 6 at Pasco Franklin on 12/9 (BW), 12 at Steigerwald Lake NWR Clark on 12/10 (JE) with 15 there on 12/24 (WC) and on 1/3 (PS), 1 at Monolake Fill King on 12/17 (TAv), 1 at Post Office Lake Clark on 12/20 (SM), 15 at Washougal Clark on 12/20 (SM), 10 at Renton King on 1/16 (BB), and 3 at Ediz Hook Clallam on 1/27 (PS).  

**Tule Greater White-fronted Goose**  
3 at Steigerwald Lake NWR Clark on 12/10 (JE) with at least 1 there on 12/24 (WC), and 1 at Washougal Clark on 12/20 (SM).  

**Snow Goose**  
Uncommon and local outside of wintering areas in Skagit and Snohomish, 1 at Lummi Flats Whidbey on 12/6 (JDul), 1 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/9 (fide JE), 12 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 12/20 (SM), and 7 at Steigerwald Lake NWR Clark on 1/3 (PS).  

**Blue Snow Goose**  
Rare in WA, 3 at Madame Dorrant SP Walla Walla on 12/22 (MD&MID).  

**Snow X Blue Goose**  
1 throughout the period at Everett/Edmonds on 12/1 (SM).  

**ROSS’S GOOSE**  
Rare in WA. 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 13/6 (WC) until at least 12/20 (SM), and 1 at Nisqually NWR Thurston on 1/8 (BB).  

**Brant**  
Rare away from salt water, 1 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/8 (SM) until at least 1/20 (fide JE). What might have been the same bird was 1 at Woodland Coulitz on 12/23 and on 1/14 (fide JE).  

**"Dusky" Canada Goose**  
High count. 1232 at Vancouver Clark on 12/12 (JE).  

**"Aleutian" Canada Goose**  
1 at Kent King on 12/3 (PS).  

**Wood Duck**  
Locally uncommon in ne WA in winter, 2 at Spokane House Spokane on 12/27 (WH) with 3 there on 1/3 (WH).  

**Green-winged Teal**  
High counts include 18 at Blym Clallam on 12/19 (fide BN), and 1023 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 1/27 (fide JE).  

**"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal**  
Rare in WA, 1 at Swantown Island on 12/7 (SM).  

**Mallard**  
High count. 3536 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/8 (fide JE).  

**Cinnamon Teal**  
Uncommon in winter, 1 at Everett Snohomish on 12/21 (SM).  

**Eurasian Wigeon**  
Uncommon in e WA in winter, 1 at Clarkston Asotin on 1/8 (fide MR), and 1 at Dallesport Klickitat 1/28 (SJ).  

**Reddy Shelduck**  
Possible escapee, 1 at Stevenson Skamania on 1/3 (PS) on 1/29 (SJ).  

**Canvasback**  
High counts include 31 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/9 (JE), and 20 at Samish Lake Whatcom on 1/18 (JDu).  

**Redhead**  
Local in w WA, 3 at Olympia Thurston on 12/30 (RS), 1 at Longview Coulitz on 1/1 (TAv). 2 at Snohomish Snohomish on 1/3 (SM), and 1 at Drano Lake Skamania on 1/29 (SJ).  

**Red-crested Pochard**  
Possible escapee, 1 at Tacoma Pierce on 12/20 (PS&RS).  

**Ring-necked Duck**  
High count, 425 at Snohomish Snohomish on 1/3 (SM).  

**Tufed Duck**  
Rare in WA. 1 at Bingen Klickitat.
on 1/31 (WC), 1 at Everett Snohomish on 1/3 (SM), and 1 at Drano Lake Skamania on 1/29 (SJ).

Greater Scap High count. 316 at Seattle King on 12/6 (JB).

Lesser Scap High count. 700 at Stanwood STP Snohomish on 1/1 (SM).

Harlequin Duck Local in south Puget Sound. 1 at Eld Inlet Thurston on 12/9 (BS).

Oldsquaw Rare in w WA. 5 at WWRD Walla Walla on 12/18 (MD&MID) with 1 there in 1/4 (PS), 6 at McNeary NWR Walla Walla on 1/1 (MD&MID) with 2 there in 1/7 (WH&JA). Local in south Puget Sound, 4 at Olympia Thurston on 12/1 (GHo&WHo), and 2 at Tacoma Pierce on 12/20 (PS&RS).

Black Scoter High count. 209 at Oak Harbor Island on 12/27 (SM).

Surf Scoter High count. 4500 at Oak Harbor Island on 12/27 (SM).

White-winged Scoter High count. 2500 at Oak Harbor Island on 12/27 (SM).

Hooded Merganser Locally uncommon. 3 at Clarkston Asotin on 1/18 (fide MK). High count for w WA. 95 at Snohomish STP Snohomish on 12/4 (TAV).

Red-breasted Merganser Uncommon but regular in w WA. 1 at Ice Harbor Dam Franklin/ Skagit Walla Walla on 12/27 (MD&MID), 1 at Lake Chelan Chelan on 12/27 (PS), and 2 at Wallula Walla Walla on 1/4 (PS).

Ruddy Duck High counts for w WA. 630 at Penn Cove Island on 12/27 (SM), and 200 at Vancouver Clark on 1/26 (JE).

Osprey 1 at Samish Flats Skagit on 12/6 (ED).

Bald Eagle Reports from w WA include 2 at Grande Ronde River Asotin on 1/4 (fide MK), 1 at Asotin Asotin on 1/12 (fide MK), and 27 between WWRD and Hood Park Walla Walla on 1/15 (MD&MID).

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK Rare in WA. 1 at West Richland Benton on 1/31 (TG).

"Harlan's" R-tailed Hawk Reports include 1 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/9 (JE), 1 at Samish Flats Skagit on 12/27 (SM), and 1 at Snohomish STP Snohomish on 1/3 (SM).

Ferruginous Hawk Rare in winter. 1 at Dodd Road Walla Walla on 1/4 (MD&MID), and 1 at Richland Benton on 1/10 (BW).

Golden Eagle Uncommon and local in w WA. 1 at Edie Hook Clallam on 12/20 (fide BN), 1 at Stanwood Snohomish on 1/1 (SM), and 1 at Brady Grays Harbor on 1/27 (GHo&WHo).

Merlin Reports from w WA include 2 at Lake Chelan Chelan on 12/27 (PS), 1 at Spokane Spokane on 1/12 (WH), and 1 at McNeary NWR Walla Walla on 1/31 (MD&MID).

Gyr Falcon Reports include 1 adult at Reedman Lincoln on 12/7 (JA), 1 subadult at McNeary NWR Walla Walla on 1/7 (JA), 1 adult at Spokane on 1/15 (JA), 1 at Edison Skagit on 12/27 (SM), 1 at Woodland Cooswitz on 12/30 (JE), 1 at Woodland Cooswitz on 1/3 (PS), 1 at Skagit Flats Skagit on 1/16 (fide BN), 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 1/20 (WC), and 1 at Watch RM Clallam on 1/31 (SA).

Prairie Falcon Rare in w WA. 1 at Samish Flats Skagit on 12/27 (SM).

Crested Caracara 1 at Nehah Bay Clallam on 1/4 (fide BN) until at least 1/31 (RS).

Prairie Falcon 1 at Skagit Flats Skagit on 1/16 (fide BN).

Mountain Quail 1 at Port Orchard Kitsap on 12/4 (PS) with 18 there on 1/23 (PS).

Sandhill Crane High count. 500 at Vancouver Clark on 1/3 (fide JE).

Kildeer Healthy count. 94 counts at Yakima RD Benton on 12/1 (BW).

Black Oystercatcher High counts. 40 at Nehah Bay Clallam on 1/26 (PS&RS), and 26 at Nehah Bay Clallam on 1/27 (BN).

Greater Yellowlegs Uncommon in e WA in winter. 3 at Two Rivers CP Benton on 12/15 (DR), High count for w WA. 45 at North River Pacific on 1/19 (CC).

Lesser Yellowlegs Rare in e WA in winter. 1 at Iowa Beef Walla Walla on 1/1 (MD&MID).

Whimbrel Uncommon in winter. 2 at Tokeland Pacific on 1/25 (CC).

Long-billed Dowitcher Rare in winter. 2 at Yakima RD Benton on 12/17 (BW).

Red Phalarope Seldom reported from land. 1 at Sequim Clallam on 12/22 (fide BN).

Little Gull Uncommon in WA. 1 at American Lake Pierce on 12/3 (PS) until at least 1/6 (PS).

Western Gull Uncommon in e WA. 1 at Wallula Walla Walla on 1/12 (BLa&WLa) with 1 there in 1/1 (MD&MID) and 2 on 1/4 (PS), and 1 at Yakima RD Benton on 12/18 (BW). Locally uncommon, 1 at Centralia Lewis on 1/4 (BS).

Glaucous-winged Gull Uncommon in w WA. 12 at Wallula Walla Walla on 1/1 (MD&MID), and 1 at Clarkston Asotin on 1/18 (fide MK).

Glaucous Gull Reports include 1-2 at Wallula Walla Walla on 12/2 (WH) until at least 1/15 (m ob), 1 at Point No Point Kitsap on 1/1 (VN), and 1 at Neah Bay Clallam on 1/26 (PS&RS).

Ancient Murrelet High counts include 311 at Point No Point Kitsap on 12/3 (VN), and 43 at Port Gamble Kitsap on 1/31 (fide BN).

Cassin's Auklet Rare in inland marine waters, 1 at Point Ne Point Kitsap on 12/18 (VN).

Mourning Dove High counts for w WA include 31 at Woodland Cooswitz on 12/23 (fide JE), and 12 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/6 (JE).

Snowy Owl Reports include 1 at Moses Lake Grant on 12/25 (BB), 1 adult male in Lincoln on 1/1 (JA) with 1 imm there on 1/21 and 2 imm on 1/25 (JA), 1 at Moses Lake Grant on 1/17 (DR), and 1 at Ocean Shore's Grays Harbor on 12/20 (SRI).

Burrowing Owl Rare in e WA in winter. 2 at Kennewick Benton on 1/10 (fide BW).

Long-eared Owl Uncommon in w WA. 1 found dead at Spencer Island Snohomish on 12/25 (ED).

Anna's Hummingbird Local in WA. 1 at Tacoma Pierce on 12/20 (PS&RS), and 3 at
Diamond Point Jefferson on 12/22 (fide BN).
BLACK PHOEBE Rare in WA as reported in last WFN. 1 at Washougal Clark until at least 1/3 (PS).
Barn Swallow Rare in WA in winter, 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 12/3 (BS) until at least 1/2 (WC), and 3 at Post Office Lake Clark on 12/20 (SM).
Blue Jay Uncommon in WA, 2 present throughout the period at Spokane. Spokane on 12/1 (JA), and 1 at Seattle King on 1/4 (BB).
Western Scrub-Jay Uncommon north of south Puget Sound, 2 at Seattle King on 12/19 (BB).
Canyon Wren Uncommon in winter, 1 at Frenchman's Coulee Grant on 1/26 (JH).
House Wren Rare in winter in WA, 1 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/12 (JM&HM).
Townsend’s Solitaire Local in winter, 1 at Richland Benton on 1/26 (BW), and 1 at Seattle King on 1/16 (JAs).
Northern Mockingbird 1 at Kent King on 12/3 (PS), 1 at Olympia Thurston on 12/20 until at least 1/16 (m ob).
American Pipit Reports include 90 at Snohomish Snohomish on 12/4 (TAv), 5 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 1/6 (fide JE), and 20 at Duvall King on 1/29 (TAv).
Bohemian Waxwing First reports for WA include 1 at Copei Creek Walla Walla on 12/13 (MD&MID), 7 at Nine Mile Spokane on 12/21 (WH), and 10 at Twisp Okanogan on 12/27 (PS). Uncommon in w WA, 20 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/14 (SA), and 1 at Olympia Thurston on 1/12 (AP).
Loggerhead Shrike Uncommon in winter, 1 at Steptoe Canyon Whitman on 12/13 (fide MK).
Cassin’s Vireo Rare in WA in winter, 1 at Port Orchard Kitsap on 12/4 (PS).
Black-throated Gray Warbler Rare in winter, 1 at Seattle King on 12/25 (BB).
Northern Waterthrush Rare in w WA, 1 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/25 (SM).
Common Yellowthroat Uncommon in winter, 2, male and female Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/30 (JE), and 1 at Seattle King on 1/17 (JF).
Wilson’s Warbler Rare in WA in winter, 1 at Seattle King on 12/7 (PB).
Gree-tailed Towhee Rare in WA outside of Blue Mountains, 1 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/7 (SM) throughout the period (m ob).
Spotted Towhee High count, 65 at Two Rivers WMA Snohomish on 1/10 (SM).
American Tree Sparrow Uncommon in w WA, up to 3 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/7 (SM) until at least 1/10 (ED), 1 at Sequim Clallam on 12/22 (fide BN), and 1 at Spencer Island Snohomish on 1/1 (BB).
CLAY-COLORED SPARROW Rare in WA, 1 at Duvall King on 1/2 (BB) until at least 1/31 (no ob).
Fox Sparrow High count, 57 at Sequim Clallam on 12/22 (SA).
Song Sparrow High count 300 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/25 (SM).
Lincoln’s Sparrow High count, 24 at Snohomish Snohomish on 12/4 (TAv).
Swamp Sparrow Uncommon in WA. 1 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/25 (SM) and 12/29 (BB), and 1 at Two Rivers WMA Snohomish on 1/10 (SM).
White-throated Sparrow Reports include 1-2 at Madame Dorian SP Walla Walla from 12/2 (WH) until at least 1/9 (MD&MID), 1 at Kennewick Benton on 1/22 (BB), 1 at Ridgefield NWR Clark from 12/1 (JE) until at least 1/10 (JE), 1-2 at Skagit WMA Skagit from 12/8 (PS) until at least 1/10 (ED), 1 at Stumptown Snohomish on 12/10 (TAv), 1 at Vancouver Lake Clark on 12/18 (BS), and 1 at Bayside View Skagit on 12/31 (TAv), 1-2 at Duvall King from 1/8 (BB) until at least 1/29 (TAv), and 1 at Two Rivers WMA Snohomish on 1/10 (SM).
Harris’s Sparrow Reports include 4 at Madame Dorian SP Walla Walla from 12/2 (WH) until at least 1/7 (m ob), 1 at Two Rivers CP Benton on 1/18 (DR), 1 at Skagit WMA Skagit from 12/8 (PS) until at least 1/10 (ED), 1 at Two Rivers WMA Snohomish on 1/10 (SM), and 1 at Duvall King on 1/31 (BB).
“Slate-colored” Dark-eyed Junco Reports include 2 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/25 (SM).
“Oregon” Dark-eyed Junco High count 350 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/25 (SM).
Lapland Longspur Uncommon in w WA, 2 at Nine Mile Canyon Walla Walla on 1/4 (MD&MID) and 4 at Davenport Lincoln on 1/24 (JA).
Snow Bunting Reports include 150 at Twisp Okanogan on 12/27 (PS), 1 at Prosser Benton on 1/17 (BW), 125 at Davenport Lincoln on 1/25 (JA), 1 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/12 (JM&HM).
Western Meadowlark High counts include 130 at Ridgefield NWR Clark on 12/11 (TAv), with 31 there on 1/8 (fide JE) and 85 on 1/21 (fide JE).
Yellow-headed Blackbird Uncommon in WA winter, 6 at Wallula Walla Walla on 1/9 (MD&MID), and 1 at Snohomish Snohomish on 12/4 (TAv).
RUSTY BLACKBIRD Rare in WA, 1 at Madame Dorian SP Walla Walla on 12/27 (MD&MID), 1 Wallula Walla Walla on 1/9 (MD&MID), and 1 at Duvall King on 1/11 (BB) until at least 1/31 (BB).
White-winged Crossbill Irregular in WA, 9 at Steven’s Pass Chelan/King on 1/24 (JaS).
Common Redpoll Uncommon in w WA, 2 at Skagit WMA Skagit on 12/12 (JM&HM).
Abbreviations: ad adult, CP County Park, e east(ern), m ob many observers, ne northeast(ern), nw northwest(ern), NWR National Wildlife Refuge, RD River Delta, RM River Mouth, se southeast(ern), sw southwest(ern), SP State Park, STP Sewage Treatment Fonds, w west(ern), WWWR Walla Walla River Delta, WMA Wildlife Management Area.

WOSNews 55: June/July 1998
1. What is this species?
2. During what months could this photo have been taken?
3. Is this species on your Washington list?
4. Is Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel on your state list? Did you see it from land?
5. How many species are on your Washington list?

Send replies to Scott Richardson, WOSNews editor, at P.O. Box 1644, Olympia WA 98507. E-mail <salix@halcyon.com>.

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White-breasted Nuthatches in western Washington (NEW)
The White-breasted Nuthatch is now a rare and very local resident in western Washington, apparently confined to a very few oak woodland sites. There has been a significant decline in the population in Pierce County over the last 10 years and I know of no records in Thurston County since about 1980. The westside birds are considered a different subspecies ("Slender-billed") than those on the eastside. If you have records of White-breasted Nuthatch anywhere in western Washington over the last 30 years, except Ridgefield NWR (a well-documented site), please dig them out. Date, specific location, activity, and habitat would be helpful. Also, any records from the subalpine or upper treeline areas anywhere in the state would be appreciated. Report to Chris Chappell, 1514 Central St NE, Olympia WA 98506. E-mail <chris.chappell@wadnr.gov>. Phone (360) 709-0503.

Kestrels nesting in dirt banks (NEW)
American Kestrels nest in cavities, but how much do they use holes in dirt banks? Do kestrels exploit burrows excavated by swallows, kingfishers, or rodents? I would like to receive records of kestrels nesting in dirt banks in Washington. Report to Mike Denny, 323 Scenic View Dr, College Place WA 99324.

Color-banded Black-bellied Plovers (WOSNews 54)
Black-bellied Plovers banded in Alaska. Report to Oscar Johnson, Department of Biology, Montana State University, Bozeman MT 59717. Phone (406) 994-4548. Or Robert Gill, National Biological Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage AK 99503. Phone (907) 786-3514.

Gray Jays in western Washington lowlands (WOSNews 53)
Gray Jays below 2000 feet, particularly on the outer coast, Willapa Hills, Puget Lowlands, and west slope of the Cascades. Provide location and date. Report to Chris Chappell, 1514 Central St NE, Olympia WA 98506. E-mail <chris.chappell@wadnr.gov>.

Breeding House Wrens, Vesper Sparrows, Horned Larks, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Western Bluebirds in Pierce and Thurston counties (WOSNews 53)

Color-banded crows (WOSNews 53, WOSNews 54)
Northward-bound Turkey Vultures (WOSNews 53)
Breeding owls (WOSNews 53)
Belted Kingfishers (WOSNews 52)
Mute Swans (WOSNews 52)
White-tailed Ptarmigan and Spruce Grouse (WOSNews 52)
Color-banded Song Sparrows (WOSNews 48)

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