



# WOSNews 89

WASHINGTON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY February / March 2004

## Announcing the 2004 Annual WOS Conference in Moscow, Idaho!

I hear you say: "Why Moscow, Idaho? Isn't this the Washington Ornithological Society?" My fellow birders, it's about space, accommodations, and amenities at an affordable rate. The Moscow location is a mere 2.7 miles inside Idaho and it will work nicely as a departure point for the many planned birding trips into this very interesting region of Washington and Idaho. So without further ado and along with the WOS officers and Board of Directors, I would like to announce with great anticipation the WOS 2004 Annual Conference in Moscow, Idaho the weekend of 4-6 June 2004. This conference will be centered at the University Inn/Best Western in Moscow, Idaho.

From the University Inn/Best Western there will be field trips radiating in all directions. Some of the species that will be zeroed in on are green-tailed towhee, great gray owl, red-eyed vireo, yellow-breasted chat, gray catbird, mountain quail, chukar, and well over a hundred other species. Please circle June 4-6, 2004 on the calendar and plan on this outstanding opportunity to see areas that few have seen or birded. You will get to experience the drop into the Grande Ronde River Canyon, the outstanding birding along Asotin Creek, the very interesting Rose Creek Area, and the Clearwater River drainage. Field Springs State Park and Hells Canyon will never be forgotten once seen. This is the REASON to come join WOS in exploring this distant corner of Washington. Who knows you may even see a life bird! So we look forward to seeing each of you in Moscow . . . Idaho on 4-6 June 2004!

For more details check the WOS web pages and future WOSNews issues.



## True Vagrants or Escapees?

by Ruth Sullivan

One of our favorite places to visit is Ocean Shores, with a short stop at Bowerman Basin. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November the weather was cool and clear with a fairly stiff southeasterly wind. As Patrick scoped the ponds, I decided to drive further on to see if, by any chance, there would be a white-fronted goose grazing with all the many hundreds of Canada's close to Lana's Cafe. I also checked the mudflats where I saw hundreds and hundreds of shorebirds flying in the synchronized flight that most birders so admire about these birds. We decided to look closer at these shorebirds so changed our trip's direction.

On our way to the boardwalk, we noticed that there were so many Canada geese; the first big group of Canada's coming south for the winter. At the last hangar, the exact spot where last year in December we found the bean goose, we again spotted a different looking goose, but this time there were two geese. Both looked special and so different than we expected to see. We watched the geese for a few minutes and figured they had to be bean geese again. We did not study them too long as I was excited and trying to get some photos of the birds. The

geese were in the company of one white-fronted and three snow geese. It took us four hours to be able to get just a few shots since these geese would not allow us to approach close to them.

It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November when we reported the geese on Tweeters and posted photos of these birds onto the Yahoo web site. There were already many birders visiting the place, and it got more exciting yet on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November. I went again to see these birds, and it was an English birder who now lives in British Columbia who told us that he was very familiar with this species and that he thought that they were pink-footed geese. I took some more photos that day, closer to the road. As I looked the photos over, we agreed that, indeed, these two geese were pink-footed geese.

Most of the world's population of pink-footed geese breed in Iceland with smaller numbers breeding in Greenland. They winter in northwest Europe, Scotland, northern England, and Scandinavia. Patrick humbly posted an apology onto Tweeters (for first calling these geese bean geese), and the messages we received were

*(Continued on page 8)*

## WOS Membership Meetings

**February 2 - Sharon Birks and Rob Faucett of the Burke Museum will discuss the programs in ornithology at the Burke.**

Over the past 30 years, the Ornithology Collection at the Burke Museum has grown to one of international stature. With this growth, it has undergone vast changes in holdings and activities. Its collections serve students, researchers, and artists worldwide, but are relatively unknown to many of the birders in our area. Collection Managers Rob Faucett and Sharon Birks would like to take this opportunity to familiarize WOS members with some of the Ornithology programs at the Burke, and to introduce you to some of its special collections and how they are used. They will discuss recent research and expeditions, salvage efforts, and public outreach such as the Burke's Nest Record Card Program. They will also discuss volunteer opportunities at the Burke, including bird specimen preparation and general collections work.

Sharon Birks is the Genetic Resources Manager at the Burke Museum. She obtained her B.S. in Zoology from the University of Washington in 1986, and studied the reproductive behavior of Australian Brush-turkeys for her Ph.D.

Robert C. Faucett is the Collections Manager of Ornithology at the Burke, where he dedicates much of his time to facilitating and participating in international collecting expeditions and growing the collection. Rob received his B.A. in biology from Colorado College and is working towards

his M.S. in ecology and evolution at Louisiana State University where his research concerns the evolution of voice in the genus *Thamnophilus* (antshrikes). His general research interests lie in phylogenetic relationships and character evolution in suboscine birds and biogeography of the neotropics.

**March 1 - John Withey will present a program on western Washington's Crows**

Western Washington's Crows: where are they all coming from? In this talk we'll discuss the natural history of American crows, particularly breeding and roosting behavior. I'll present recent research results from studies in the Puget Sound area on population trends, reproductive success, and movements of juvenile crows. I'll also discuss the impact of West Nile virus on crows and other songbirds in the past year. And, I'll make sure to leave time to share some crow stories - and how you can help us study crows!

John grew up in Seattle and graduated from Pomona College (in California) in 1991. After two years in the Peace Corps in Panama, John decided to return to research and started graduate school at the UW's College of Forest Resources, earning a Master's in wildlife science last year. He is currently working towards his doctorate in the same program, studying crows.

**April 5 - Ann Essinger will present "The Secret Life of the Great Blue Heron."**

Great blue herons are familiar to us all, yet seem to provoke a certain mystique and fascination. Join Ann Eissinger in this special exploration of the heron's secret life through a slide-illustrated lecture. You will be introduced to members of the heron family and guided through the heron's cycle of life by examining its habitat, feeding habits, plumage characteristics, reproduction, and beautiful courtship rituals. Also discussed will be the role of herons as bioindicators and the importance of their conservation."

**May 3 - Ed Schulz and Chuck Henny will present a program on Ospreys**

Dr. Henny will discuss using ospreys as a biological indicator species for a variety of pollutants and his work on ospreys in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. Two years ago, the Oregon studies were expanded to include research on ospreys of the Puget Sound. Dr. Henny has been involved with osprey research for over thirty years and is a Research Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey out of the Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center in Corvallis, Oregon.

Ed Schulz will present photographs of the osprey colony in Everett, where he has been involved with banding and monitoring the nesting activity of some two dozen breeding pairs for several years.

**Note:** Meetings are held the first Monday of each month (except July, August, and September) at the Center for Urban Horticulture on the University of Washington campus, 3501 N.E. 41<sup>st</sup> Street, Seattle, and are open to all. The social begins at 7:00 pm, and the program starts at 7:30 pm.

## The Society

The Washington Ornithological Society was chartered in 1988 to increase knowledge of the birds of Washington and to enhance communication among all persons interested in those birds. WOS is a nonprofit educational organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code. For information about the Society, contact an officer or board member, or write to:

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## FROM THE BOARD

by Rachel Lawson

One of the wonderful things about birding is that it can be done at any time of the year. Birding in winter has its own special rewards, and we hope you all had fun participating in some of the many Christmas Bird Counts throughout Washington. We doubt that a little bad weather will keep you adventurous WOS members from going out in search of wintering waterfowl, wandering waxwings, and other visitors from the north, but please drive safely on those icy roads.

Planning is well underway for the 2004 Annual Meeting which will happen June 4-6. Last year's event was in southwestern Washington, so, following our tradition of alternating between the western and eastern regions of the state, this year we have chosen the Pullman/Moscow area for the meeting. We hope you will join us for another enjoyable weekend of field trips, programs, and camaraderie; mark your calendars and look for details in this and coming issues of WOSNews.

We know many of you already have bought copies of the new *A Birder's Guide to Washington* by Hal Opperman and are putting them to good use. The book has been very well-received and we couldn't be more pleased. A quick look at the acknowledgements pages shows just how many of our members helped to make this book a valuable reference for every birder in the state. Thanks, everyone!

We will be publishing a new Membership Directory, soon, so please don't forget to return the update forms we send out. (By the way, we do NOT sell our membership list.) WOS continues to grow; we added about fifty new members to the rolls in 2003, and we hope we will be seeing these new members at monthly programs, on field trips, and at the annual meeting.

We end this messagenote with our usual request for volunteers. WOS still needs someone people to take charge of help with hospitality for monthly meetings, someone to step intake over as Membership chairperson, and someone to jointstep into the board as position of Vice President. These are our most pressing needs, but there are many other ways you can volunteer, from helping out at the annual meeting to setting up a WOS table at a local birding festival to leading a field trip. If you would like to meet more people in the Washington birding community, if you have benefited from what WOS does and want to return the favor, if you want to help WOS grow and if you would likethrive by offering your fresh ideas and enthusiasm help to make WOS a better organization, this is your chance. We are waiting to hear from you!

## Vulture's Roost

by Diann MacRae

For quite some time I've been part of the on-line list called "A Word A Day." It's a most interesting, sometimes quirky list that is an etymologist's delight. Each week there is a theme, and every day of that week I receive a short message with a word following the theme. A theme can be a specific language, such as Spanish, it can be related to religion, archeology, you name it – anything. The proper dictionary listing of the word is given, then its history, and then the way the word is used in a sentence or paragraph.

The fun part comes when, once a week, a list of reader responses to these words is published. A true learning experience for those who like linguistics and etymology to any degree.

Since I've enjoyed this list so much, I thought it might be interesting to try a similar column in WOSNews. Starting in our next issue, WOSNews 90, we will begin "Bird Words" and see what you think – that is, if you let us know. Feel free to send in a bird-related word to be discussed – the more unusual, the better.

The on-line column is moderated by a Washington resident, Anu Garg who also has an excellent book along the line of the list. To check out "A Word A Day," just key the name into your browser. For those of you who are statistically minded, the list goes to over 500,000 people in 200 countries . . . and it's free.



## Membership News

Just a little reminder from your membership chair: if you have any changes to your address or email please pass them on to me via email or in writing. Send corrections to [Membership@wos.org](mailto:Membership@wos.org) or to PO Box 31783 Seattle WA 98103-1783.

We are striving to improve our member support which will include publishing the directory on a regular basis. In 2002 we initiated a "Welcome to WOS" letter for new members that includes a complementary checklist and information about membership meetings. We appreciate your feedback. Send us your comments and especially any suggestions you might have to improve WOS.

Tracee Gernaert

## Be Informed

WOSNews is published bimonthly by the Washington Ornithological Society to inform members about Society business, bird sightings, ornithological research, and the fun of birding. Readers are welcome to submit articles, announcements, illustrations, photographs, and other items for consideration. Contributor guidelines are available.

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## Book and Publication Reviews

### **A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO WASHINGTON** review by Wayne C. Weber

2003. Edited by Hal Opperman, illustrated by Tony Angell. American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, Colorado. List price \$29.95, but available for \$27.95 plus shipping from ABA Sales ([www.americanbirding.org/abasales/](http://www.americanbirding.org/abasales/) or phone 1-800-634-7736).

At 636 pages, and with 220 maps, this is probably the most detailed and comprehensive bird-finding guide ever published for a single state. It was too thick for the usual spiral-bound format of ABA birding guides, and was published in a standard paperback format. Literally hundreds of birding localities throughout Washington are included. In addition to the bird-finding sections (organized in 9 geographic regions), the book includes a bar-graph checklist of Washington birds by Tom Aversa, and a 45-page annotated checklist of birds of the state (478 species) by Andy Stepniewski and Hal Opperman. Also included are brief sections about Washington mammals, reptiles and amphibians, butterflies, and dragonflies, mostly authored by Dennis Paulson.

This book is a direct descendant of the several editions of *A GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING IN WASHINGTON* by Terry Wahl and Dennis Paulson. (I have a copy of the first edition-- a set of mimeographed sheets, enclosed in a Duo-Tang, that was provided to attendees at the 1971 Seattle meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union.) In 1996, Wahl and Paulson donated the publication rights for future editions to the Washington Ornithological Society. The new book was completed as a WOS project, with Hal Opperman as editor, and ABA as the publisher.

A total of 28 authors wrote or co-wrote one or more area accounts for the book. The main contributor by far was Andy Stepniewski, who authored or co-authored 35 of the 67 area accounts, as well as the Introduction and Annotated Checklist. Other persons who were authors of 3 or more chapters were Hal Opperman (14), Bob Kuntz (7), Bill Shelmerdine, Bill and Nancy LaFramboise, and Mike Denny (5 each), Bob Norton and MerryLynn Denny (4 each), and Bob Morse, Wilson Cady, and Jim Acton (3 each). The book was truly a co-operative project, and WOS can take pride in the results.

Cindy Lippincott, a long-time ABA staff member, is credited as co-editor with Hal Opperman on the publication data page, but not on the title page or cover. Cindy, along with Virginia Maynard, prepared the 220 maps in the book, which are well-designed and very easy to read.

A comparison of the new book with its predecessors-- the 1991 edition of Wahl and Paulson, and Diann MacRae's *BIRDER'S GUIDE TO WASHINGTON* (1995, Gulf Publishing Company)-- may be useful. The Wahl & Paulson book, although packed full of information, was only 177 pages long. The book was privately published, probably on a limited budget. The type was rather small, and perhaps a bit difficult to read for some readers. The maps, although useful, were quite basic and hand-lettered. The writing style was condensed, and almost laconic for some of the shorter locality

accounts. The MacRae book, published by a commercial publisher, was 326 pages long, and featured much more readable type and better maps. It also had numerous bird illustrations (by Elizabeth Mills), which added greatly to the visual appeal of the book. The writing style was more relaxed, and much more non-bird information was included. I found this background information on the geography, history, and ecology of various birding sites very useful. MacRae's book also included many localities not covered by Wahl and Paulson. It tended to give less detailed directions than the Wahl and Paulson book, but often included more details on which birds could be found at each locality.

The new Opperman book combines some of the best features from each of the previous statewide bird-finding books for Washington. The maps, using the latest computer-assisted technology, are particularly outstanding for their number, accuracy, and readability. Each of the 9 regional chapters has a 2 to 3-page introduction, containing much of the kind of general information included in the MacRae guide, plus a regional overview map. Many of the area accounts within each chapter also have introductions of up to a page. The directions are precise, including mileages from key intersections, and the bird-finding information is nearly always detailed, accurate, and informative. I had a chance to use the book for several weeks before writing this review, both in familiar areas and some I hadn't visited before, and I found the directions easy to follow and errors very few.

A couple of examples will illustrate the variation in coverage among the three books. For the San Juan Islands, Wahl and Paulson have less than 2 pages of text and one map; MacRae, 16 pages and one map; Opperman, 12 pages and 3 maps. For Walla Walla County, Wahl and Paulson have about 6 pages and two maps; MacRae, 3 pages and one map; Opperman, 11 pages and two maps. For the San Juans, MacRae provides better coverage in some respects (Opperman lists no localities on Lopez or Shaw Islands), but for almost all areas of the state, the Opperman book includes far more localities and, of course, up-to-date directions.

I have very few negative comments about the book. It is easy to quibble with the selection of localities, or the relative space given to each. I felt that short shrift was given to some birding sites in the immediate Seattle area (e.g. Edmonds and Alki Beach), considering that these areas are birded much more often than some of the remote localities. I was also a bit disappointed by the scarcity of bird illustrations. Illustrator Tony Angell's contribution to the book is minor. In the first 200 pages, I counted only 4 of his illustrations, compared with 30 bird illustrations in the first 200 pages of MacRae's book.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone who does any birding at all in Washington, or plans to do so in the future. This is an essential reference for both resident and visiting birders in Washington. Wherever you are in the state, there will be several nearby birding localities that are described in detail. This book sets a standard for statewide bird-finding guides that will be difficult for anyone to exceed, or even equal, in future.

## Pacific Northwest Site Guides



### The Montlake Fill in Seattle by Constance J. Sidles

Sheer numbers of birds are almost never big at the Montlake Fill in northeast Seattle, but diversity is. On a spring morning you can often find sixty or more different species. Even in the dead of summer there are almost always at least thirty species to be found. Altogether, more than 185 species have been seen at the Fill over the years.

The probable explanation for this diversity is that the Fill is characterized by a multitude of micro-habitats, ranging from deep lake (the Fill borders Lake Washington) to temporary ponds, permanent ponds, riparian woods, prairie, suburban landscaping, sloughs, and bays. The Fill, also known as the Union Bay Natural Area, is the site of an old landfill that was closed in the mid-1960s. It was capped with soil and seeded with grass in 1971. Uneven sinking of the garbage layers has resulted in a topography characterized by gently rolling hills interspersed with ponds and sloughs.

Owned by the University of Washington and managed by the Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH), the Fill has experienced a continuous succession of plants, including more than 150 flowering plants. At times, the Fill has been plagued by non-native invasions of Himalayan blackberry and purple loosestrife. At present, however, the CUH is mounting a major effort to eradicate non-native plants and replace them with native species of grass, shrubs, trees, cattails, etc. The hope is that these efforts will eventually result in attracting even more bird species to the site.

The most magical aspect of the Fill, however, is not its diversity. It is the fact that birds here will let you view them up close and personal. Even the most nervous yellowlegs will often do nothing more than raise wings in a threat to flee, then settle down to behave like a pet hen, hunting and pecking for food within a few yards of the nearest birdwatcher.

Perhaps the reason for this imperviousness to humans is that the Fill is a multi-use site that attracts joggers, walkers, artists, musicians, fishermen, and birders. By and large, these people march along on their own business, ignoring the abundant bird life all around them. The birds soon learn that people are not something to worry about and they begin to live their lives oblivious to us. The lucky birder can see behavior that delights and surprises. On many occasions, I find myself laughing out loud at birds' antics.

For example, one day I was privileged to watch a bald eagle try to perch on its favorite dead snag at the south point of the Fill. The snag used to have a conveniently horizontal limb that this eagle had claimed for its own. But the limb had

fallen in a windstorm, and the eagle was faced with the problem of establishing a new perch. On this day, it tried landing on the top of the snag, which is now just a spike sticking up. The poor eagle bunched all its toes together in an effort to hold on, but it just had way too many toes to fit. After trying to cramp its toes into the smallest possible bunch, it had to let go, fly up, and try again. No use. Even flapping its wings didn't help it to hang on. After a minute of fruitless effort, the eagle flew off and buzzed the dime parking lot pond, putting the fear of God into all the ducks there and venting a little of its obvious ire.

The best time to visit the Montlake Fill is really any time. Birds come and go as the seasons wax and wane. Winter is characterized by large numbers of waterfowl, including rafts of bufflehead, wigeon (both American and the occasional Eurasian), scaup, gadwall, mallard, northern shoveler, canvasback, and northern pintail. Cackling Canada geese are a common sight, and you can see greater white-fronted geese at times, too. Golden-crowned sparrows are winter residents, as are Lincolns, and many other sparrows are common as well.

In the summer, the winter ducks are replaced by all three teals, nesting wood ducks, and hooded mergansers. Swallows and swifts are abundant, as are marsh and Bewick's wrens, savannah sparrows, towhees, red-winged blackbirds, green herons, and the occasional Bullock's oriole.

In migration, almost anything can and does turn up, including a diversity of shorebirds (both dowitchers; western, least, and semipalmated sandpipers; solitary, spotted, and stilt sandpipers; greater and lesser yellowlegs; and Wilson's phalarope, among others). There are also always a few mixed-up passerines to spot as well, including yellow-headed blackbird, Say's phoebe, sage thrasher, common nighthawk, and American redstart. Regular migrants include many species of flycatcher and vireo, including red-eyed vireo.

To reach the Fill from I-5, take the NE 45<sup>th</sup> Street exit and head east. Go past the UW campus and down the long ramp – University Village will be on your left. At the base of the ramp is a stoplight. Keep going straight (east) through the stoplight to the next stoplight (Mary Gates Memorial Drive). Turn right (south). When the Drive curves left (east), look for parking in the lots on the south. The Center for Urban Horticulture is all along here and has free parking available for visitors. The Fill stretches to the south, west, and northwest of the CUH buildings. A gravel trail (Wahkiakum Lane) circles the Fill and takes you to most of the choicest spots.



American bittern, near Brady, *Grays Harbor*, April 15, 2003.  
Photo by Joyce Meyer.



Common nighthawk, Frenchman  
Photo by Joyce Meyer.

Partially leucistic red-winged blackbird,  
Juanita Bay Wetlands Park, Kirkland,  
*King*, April 26, 2003.  
Photo by Joyce Meyer. Compare with  
the bird shown in WOSNews 69.



photo



Great blue herons at the nest, May 26, 2003, at Medina Park, *King*,  
where there is a 4-nest heronry. Photo by Joyce Meyer.



"Streaked" horned lark, Midway  
Photo by Joyce Meyer.



n Coulee, *Grant*, May 24, 2003.  
oyce Meyer.



Great blue heron, Marymoor Park, Redmond, *King*,  
May 16, 2003. Photo by Lacey Hartje.

# gallery



Western scrub-jay, Vancouver Lake,  
*Clark*, October 22, 2002.  
Photo by Ruth Sullivan.



Beach, *Pacific*, April 27, 2003.  
uth Sullivan.



Purple martin nestlings, Shilshole Bay, Seattle, *King*, July 25, 2003.  
Photo by Kevin Li.

## Pink-footed Geese

(Continued from page 1)

overwhelming; so much compassion birders have when it comes to birding. We received much mail, and a birder from the UK wrote "If these birds are true vagrants and took a direct route, as to their origin, one can only speculate, but geese are regularly found out of range.

In an article by Kathleen Wohlgenuth in the *Ocean Shores Observer*, she says "PINK FOOTED GEESE Rare Here." Another issue, far more important, is this: According to the BBC, two major hydro-electric power projects in Iceland which fuel North American-owned aluminum smelting plants there threaten the breeding grounds of most of the world's pink-footed geese.

Another theory on how the geese could have arrived was created by a professional weatherman based on an October 29th map alone. He feels that the geese were swept west from northeast Greenland by a deep low cutting over the southern portion of Greenland. Perhaps this occurred two months ago when they would have normally returned to the British Isles. He figures they might have hung out in the Hudson Bay region enjoying the "Indian Summer" until the very cold Arctic lows that swept in over Hudson Bay on October 27-28 forced them to fly. However, instead of going south down the Mississippi Flyway, they were pushed west by a massive string of three lows centered on the US-Canadian border: over Lake Superior, over the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, and over the three corners of Montana, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (see the Oct. 29th map at 500 millibars). Presuming winds of about 100 mph at 10,000 feet or so, the birds could have reached Hoquiam, 2,000 miles away, in about twenty hours - mostly cruising along with gale winds. This would make the whole flight only 3,000 miles, whereas the bean goose last year traveled close to 4350 miles!

I received this whole flight information from October 27<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>; altogether ten pages. What kind of work had to be going in to this to figure out? A CONCERNED BIRDER AND A GURU OF A WEATHERMAN!

All of this is speculation but, on the other hand, it could happen. We will probably never really know how these geese flew in to Bowerman to be adored by so many birders. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2004, 346 birders had seen these geese. We made a private survey on Tweeters and we are still getting reports of new people seeing the geese.



Bowerman Basin, Grays Harbor, November 2, 2003



K St., Hoquiam, Grays Harbor, December 17, 2002

Pink-footed geese, *Anser brachyrhynchus* (two birds in the left photo), are quite similar to the bean goose, *Anser fabalis* (right). Two of the latter showed up at the same Hoquiam locations in 2002. Pink-footeds are smaller, shorter-necked, have pink (not orange) legs, and have flanks that are darker than the back. All photos by Ruth Sullivan.

## WOS Field Trips

**Saturday, February 14th, 2004** Patrick and Ruth Sullivan will lead a trip to the Waterville Plateau in Douglas County looking for winter specialties. Target species will include gyrfalcon, sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, long-eared owl, Bohemian waxwing, Lapland longspur, snow bunting, and common redpoll.

Areas covered will include Atkins Lake, Mansfield, along Bridgeport Hill Road, Bridgeport, and Central Ferry Canyon. Additional areas covered may include Bridgeport State Park, the mouth of the Okanogan River, and the Cassimer Bar in Okanogan County. An additional day will be added for those participants willing to stay overnight in Pateros. Limit of 8 birders. For details contact Patrick and Ruth at (253) 564-7419 or email at [godwit@worldnet.att.net](mailto:godwit@worldnet.att.net).

**Saturday, February 21, 2003** Owls by Day, led by Mike Denny, with a limit of 12 people. We will visit Snake River parks including Levey, Big Flat, and Wind Dust, cross at Lyons Ferry, stop at Hollenbeck, and finish at Fish Hook. Start at 7:30 AM sharp, meeting at Hood Park boat launch along Hwy 12 in northwest Walla Walla County. We'll look for long-eared, barn, great horned, northern saw-whet, and screech owls plus winter sparrows like Harris, American tree and white-throated as well as gray-crowned rosy finch, northern shrike, merlin, gray partridge, and canyon wren. Mike will start taking reservations on 1 February at 509-529-0080 (Please no calls after 9 PM) or e-mail at [m.denny@charter.net](mailto:m.denny@charter.net)

**Saturday, March 20th, 2004** Doug Schonewald will lead a trip to Grant and Douglas Counties with stops at the Beezley Hills and Grand Coulee areas looking for shrub-steppe endemic species. Target birds will include chukar, loggerhead shrike, sage thrasher, and sage sparrow. Limit of 10 birders. Contact Doug for a detailed itinerary at (509) 766-0056 or email [dschone8@donobi.net](mailto:dschone8@donobi.net).

**Note:** To find out about WOS field trips, you may contact Kraig Kemper and Ken Knittle at [FieldTrips@wos.org](mailto:FieldTrips@wos.org).

## CLASSES FOR EARLY 2004

Seattle Audubon bird classes that may be of interest to WOS; many are taught by WOS members.

All classes held at the UW Center for Urban Horticulture, Douglas classroom, 3501 NE 41<sup>st</sup> Street, Seattle, unless otherwise noted. Call 206-523-4483 to register.

### **Owls of Washington with Jamie Acker, M.Ed.**

Participants in this class will learn about the physiology of owls, the 14 species of owls in Washington, and an introduction to owling via a multimedia presentation and lecture. Participants in the field trip, late that night after the lecture, will owl Bainbridge Island, where barred owls and northern saw-whet owls should be found, and 4 other species are possible. Participants on the field trip should plan on carpooling (can be organized at time of lecture) or providing their own transportation. Participants must be 12 years of age or older. In the event of inclement weather, the field trip will be held February 22, 2004.

Lecture: Saturday, February 7, 1:00-4:00 PM

Field Trip: Sunday, February 8, taking the 2:10 AM (two hours after midnight Saturday) Seattle-Bainbridge ferry

Cost: \$60 members, \$75 nonmembers for lecture and field trip. \$30 members, \$45 nonmembers for lecture only

Limit: 12 for lecture and field trip. 28 lecture only spots.

### **Outrageous Auks of Our Area with David Drummond, Research Wildlife Biologist**

Auks are the Northern Hemisphere's equivalent to the penguins of "downunder." Join us for a lively exploration of auk anatomy, field ID, habitat associations, foraging strategies, behavior, and conservation status. A slide presentation, vocalization review, life history hand outs, and personal experiences discussion will round out our life history overview. Fully "auked," we can better appreciate them on a marine boat trip where other aquatic life forms such as shorebirds, grebes, loons, raptors, sea ducks, and marine mammals will be encountered. Join us for the lecture only, field trip only, or both!

Class: Friday, February 13, 7:00 to 9:30 PM

Cost: \$25 members, \$40 nonmembers for lecture. \$50 for field trip.

Limit: 25 for lecture; 40 for field trip.

Field trip: Saturday, February 14, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, meeting at Viking Cruises Terminal in La Conner, WA to board boat trip around Fidalgo Island. Sign up for field trip through Viking Cruises at (360) 466-2639 or (888) 207-2333 or e-mail to [info@vikingcruises.com](mailto:info@vikingcruises.com).

### **Ornithology for the Birder Series: Biogeography and Birds of the World: Why Birds Are Where They Are with Alan Knue**

Why are there only 600+ species of birds breeding in North America, while much smaller countries like Columbia or Peru have well over 1700? Why is the Kirtland's warbler found in such a small area of the world, and the osprey is found on all continents except Antarctica? The theory of biogeography helps explain how past events in geologic and evolutionary history have shaped the distributional patterns, numbers, and types of birds found from region to region. Using North America as an example, we will learn about areas of endemism, why some species are rare with restricted ranges while others are abundant and widespread, and how human activities are impacting bird distributions. This class will also give an overview of birds of the world; learn what families and other unique taxa are found within the different world regions and which regions support the highest bird diversity.

Class: Fridays, February 20 and 27, 7:00-9:00 PM

Cost: \$40 members, \$55 nonmembers

Limit: 30

### **Ornithology for the Birder Series: What Birders Should Know about Plumages and Molt with Michael Donahue**

What is "alternate plumage" and is it different from "breeding plumage?" Why should the "pre-basic molt" be of interest to birders? This class will cover molt and plumage terminology, give a basic overview of plumage sequences, and illustrate how understanding plumage sequence and molt can be an important aid in bird identification. Research on molt is an expanding field in ornithology, and is revealing some interesting insights into avian natural history. This class will also present the results of recent research conducted on the molting patterns of some northwest birds. Instructor: Mike Donahue has studied molt at the UW Burke Museum and co-authored a paper in *The Auk* on molt in western tanagers.

Class: Thursdays, February 26 and March 4, 7:00-9:00 PM.

Location: CUH, NHS Hall

Cost: \$35 for members, \$50 for non-members, \$20 for youth (24 and under)

Limit: 30

### **Dabblin' and Divin' Ducks, Part 1: Dabbling Ducks with David Drummond, Research Wildlife Biologist**

Here is an opportunity for beginner to intermediate level birders to strengthen dabbling duck spotting and identification skills. We will also explore aspects of their biology and ecology in the classroom and out in the field. The family Anatidae is a diverse and intriguing group. In this class, we will focus on wintering dabbling ducks on freshwater. Join us for an in-depth look! Please bring lunch and binoculars and plan to carpool to local spots.

Class and Field Trip: Sunday, March 7, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Location: CUH, NHS Hall

Cost: \$35 members, \$50 nonmembers

Limit: 25

### **Dabblin' and Divin' Ducks, Part 2: Diving Ducks with David Drummond, Research Wildlife Biologist**

As in part one, this class offers new to seasoned birders an opportunity to build confidence with diving duck locating and accurate identification to age and gender classes. Fun factoids of their fascinating life history will be shared in images, literature, and interactive discussions in class and on the field trip. Our target group of diving ducks are wintering on marine waters. Don't miss this colorful cast of northwest cool characters! Please bring lunch and binoculars and plan to carpool to local spots.

Class and Field Trip: Sunday, March 27, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Location: Wedgwood Presbyterian Church, Fireside Room

Cost: \$35 members, \$50 nonmembers

Limit: 25

## COUNT ONE, COUNT ALL!

### The Seventh Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Invites Everyone on February 13-16, 2004

Families, individuals, school children, community groups – all with an interest in birds, are asked to count the numbers and kinds they see during the seventh annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) taking place February 13 through 16, 2004. The event will create a continent-wide "snapshot" of which bird species are where and in what numbers - information critical to monitoring the health of their populations.

Developed and managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, with sponsorship in part from Wild Birds Unlimited stores and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (a division of the USDA), the GBBC will help researchers understand the status of the birds that people all over North America so enjoy. Participants simply keep track of the birds they see on any or all of the count days, then log their sightings into the BirdSource database at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) (if you don't have on-line access at home, keep reading). Because the event is Internet-based, researchers and participants alike can see which birds are being reported where, all across the continent. "The near-instant availability of results allows participants to see quickly how their reports contribute to the continent-wide perspective," says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "It's extremely satisfying to see that your observation is significant. These individual observations are critical to building a broadscale database of North American bird populations, and the GBBC is the only count that provides a late-winter perspective."

In addition to speedy results and easy-to-follow instructions, the GBBC web site is packed full of information about birds. This year's count encourages participants to become more "bird-friendly" in their day-to-day lives, everything from getting their families interested in birds to creating bird habitat in their backyards. In fact, in the U.S. alone, an average of 2.1 million acres of land is converted to residential use every year. Some 80 percent of U.S. households have private lawns.

In addition to offering bird-friendly tips, this year's GBBC will again help participants identify puzzling backyard species, especially those that are easily confused with other species, such as the American tree sparrow, which to the uninitiated can look much like the more southerly wintering chipping sparrow. The site will also explain why some familiar bird names have been changed. For example, the much-loved rufous-sided towhee is now considered two different species by the scientific community, the eastern towhee (in the east) and the spotted towhee (in the west).

As always, the GBBC web site also includes a vocabulary section, bird-watching and bird-feeding tips, bird vocalizations, and more, including information about Project FeederWatch, House Finch eye disease, and Audubon At Home. Educators will find the bibliography and geography sections especially handy, and there are even suggestions on how to conduct the count with groups of children.

Last winter, as part of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), bird enthusiasts across North America submitted some 50,000 checklists totaling more than four million birds of 512 species. The event, one of the largest citizen-science projects in the world, documented regional declines of the American crow that may be the result of West Nile virus in those regions. Crows, for example, are particularly vulnerable to the virus and were reported in far fewer numbers in Illinois and Ohio, where West Nile virus has had a strong presence, backing findings from the Christmas Bird Count and a winterlong citizen-science project, Project FeederWatch. "This decrease may or may not be related to West Nile, but the situation is certainly something we need to pay attention to," says Fitzpatrick.

Some species showed increases last year during the GBBC. Participants in the east counted more dark-eyed juncos than they had since GBBC 2000, perhaps because of the massive snowstorm that hit the eastern seaboard during the weekend of

the count, driving birds to feeders in high numbers. That same snowstorm apparently held early migrants like red-winged blackbird, eastern meadowlark, and American woodcock farther south, compared to previous years.

In the west, mountain bluebirds were reported farther south than the year before, and all of the rosy finches (black, gray-crowned, brown-capped) were documented farther north. In previous years, GBBC maps of Eurasian collared-doves, introduced in the Bahamas before reaching Florida in the 1980s, showed the species spreading quickly northwestward. Last year's maps show no change, suggesting a slowdown in the rate at which the bird's range is spreading.

Instructions for participating can be found at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). There's no fee or registration. Those who would like to participate but aren't online can try their local library, Internet café, or other public online location. Many Wild Birds Unlimited store owners, as proud supporters of the count, are online to accept reports. Individuals, businesses, Scout troops, and other community groups interested in promoting the Great Backyard Bird Count can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800/ 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call 607/254-2473), 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, or email [cornellbirds@cornell.edu](mailto:cornellbirds@cornell.edu). For Audubon, call 215/355-9588, extension 16, write to Audubon Science Office, 545 Almshouse Road, Ivyland, PA 18974, or email [citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org).

How will this winter compare to the last six? What will it reflect about our bird populations? The participation of novice and expert bird watchers alike will help us answer these questions. "We need every birder to participate with us," says Gill. "The Great Backyard Bird Count has become an important means of gathering data to help birds, but it can't happen unless people take part. Whether you're a novice or an expert, we need you to help us help birds."

## Report Your Sightings

**Accipiters:** Winter site fidelity study. **Cooper's hawks:** Blue VID bands (Note right or left leg and engraved number and letter on VID band). **Sharp-shinned hawks:** either one or two color(only) bands on the same leg (Note right or left leg and top/bottom color if two bands). Other leg has standard aluminum band. Note date, time and location. Report to Jack Bettesworth, 2569 12th Ave W, Seattle, WA 98119, 206-285-5276, jgbett@comcast.net.

**American crows: dead or alive.** We still want your observations of color-banded crows! If possible, please record the color and location (top/bottom left leg, top/bottom right leg) of bands. In addition, as part of our West Nile virus monitoring efforts in the Puget Sound area, we would like to know about any dead crows you observe. If they appear freshly dead, your county health agency may also want to test them for the virus. Report to: John Withey, jwithey@u.washington.edu, phone: 206-543-2764.

**Cooper's hawks:** Color bands have been placed on over 700 nestling Cooper's hawks in Victoria, British Columbia since 1996. This is part of a long-term study on its urban-nesting ecology. Each color band is uniquely coded with two vertical, alphanumeric characters and is placed on the left leg; black bands are on males, red bands on females. Please note band code and color, date, time, and location. Four birds have been reported from Washington, to date. Report all sightings to Andy Stewart, BC Conservation Data Centre, Victoria, B.C. (250) 387-9780, or e-mail to: andy.stewart@gems6.gov.bc.ca.

**Merlins:** Detailed year-round observations are needed for scientific research on the merlin in Washington. Sightings should include exact location/map, date/time, description of bird(s) and behavior. Send to David Drummond, Coastal Forest Merlin Project, P.O. Box 4123, Bellingham, WA 98227, (360) 671-3804 or e-mail to: merlinology@hotmail.com.

**Northern harrier:** Patagial markers have been placed on northern harriers as part of a long-term study of populations on Whidbey Island and in the Kent Valley. Please note the color of the tag (yellow, blue, green, or white), which wing it is on, the letter or number printed (in black) on the tag, and if there is a black circle around the letter or number. Note date, time, and exact location. Report to Jack Bettesworth, 2569 12th Ave W, Seattle WA 98119, (206) 285-5276. jgbett@comcast.net.

**Ring-billed Gulls:** A small percentage of ring-billed gulls in the Pacific Northwest show a pink tint. I would like observations of such individuals, especially any records prior to 1998. Date, location, number of pink birds, and the percentage of pink birds in the flock are needed. Details on age, plumage, and diet items will be appreciated. Lisa Hardy, 2153 B Old River Road, Kingston ID 83839, or basalt@earthlink.net

**Songbird survey:** We have colormarked ~500 crows as well as many other songbirds in the area and would appreciate any sightings of these. Be on the lookout for banded robins, Wilson's warblers, Swainson's thrushes, song sparrows, spotted towhees, Oregon juncos, winter and Bewick's wrens, and Pacific-slope flycatchers. If possible please record the color and location (top/bottom left leg, top/bottom right leg) of bands. Please report any sightings to Dr. John Marzluff, corvid@u.washington.edu.

**Turkey vultures:** The Olympic Vulture Study would like observations of fall migrating turkey vultures from British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Date, location, and number of birds is needed. If possible, report weather, time, and any aspect of behavior to: Diann MacRae, 22622 - 53rd Avenue S.E., Bothell WA 98021, or to: tvulture@vei.net.

**Trumpeter Swans:** The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Wildlife Management Program requests information on marked migrant and wintering trumpeter swan observations. Swans are marked with red neck collars and red legbands with T00-T99 codes. Please report date, location, number of birds, and contact information to Dale Becker, CSKT Wildlife Management Program, POB 278, Pablo, MT. 59855 or daleb@cskt.org or (406)883-2888.

**SASKATCHEWAN VULTURES:** Information needed on Turkey Vulture sightings - Green hercullite patagial tags were applied to the right wing of fourteen nestling Turkey Vultures in central Saskatchewan in August. White numbers are readily visible with binoculars. Sightings of tag numbers can be reported to the banding office, and sightings of a tag, too high to read the number, can be reported to Stu Houston: houstons@duke.usask.ca, Phone 306-244-0742.  
Reprinted from the December 2003 *Ornithological Newsletter*

## RARE BIRD ALERTS

<b>WOS BirdBox</b>	(206) 281-9172
<b>Tri Cities Area</b>	(509) 627-2473
<b>SE Wash/N Idaho</b>	(208) 882-6195
<b>South Idaho</b>	(208) 236-3337
<b>Oregon</b>	(503) 292-0661
<b>Vancouver, B.C.</b>	(604) 737-3074
<b>Victoria, B.C.</b>	(250) 592-3381
<b>Okanagan, B.C.</b>	(250) 491-7738

### Field Notes & Washington Field Notes

**WINTER DEADLINE: MARCH 15**

(December — February sightings)

Send bird sightings to:

**Tom Aversa**

305 NW 75th St  
Seattle WA 98103  
FieldNotes@wos.org



**Washington Review Species** - Reports of review species (see *Washington Birds* 5:1-6 or the WOS Field Card) may be sent to the "Washington Field Notes" compiler or directly to the Washington Bird Records Committee, c/o Phil Mattocks, 5421 Hanson Rd., Ellensburg WA 98926.

Please submit detailed descriptions and drawings or photographs, if possible, of unusual birds.

**BAND RECOVERIES** ("Avisé" leg bands) should be reported. Include the band number, along with how, when, and where the band was recovered, preferably with reference to the nearest town. Persons who report bands receive a Certificate of Appreciation telling when, where, and by whom the bird was banded, so be sure to include your full name and address with all reports.

Report to:

Bird Banding Laboratory  
12100 Beech Forest Road, Suite 4037  
Laurel MD 20708

Phone: (800) 327-BAND

E-mail bandreports@patuxent.nbs.gov

<http://www.pwrc.nbs.gov/bbl>

