

Bird Sightings - (November 16 to December 15, 2003)

Bill LaFramboise (wlafra@owt.com)

Uncommon in the interior, a Pacific Loon was below Wanapum Dam on 12/07 (CW, RMH). A Common Loon was at Two Rivers Park on 12/03 (NL) and 12/04 (NL, RF, CSi). One was along the Columbia River near the Cable Bridge on 12/04 (NL, RF, CSi).

The high count of Horned Grebes was 28 at Vantage on 12/07 (CW). There were 4 Red-necked Grebes there on that date (CW). Rare but annual during winter, an Eared Grebe was at Ginko State Park on 12/07 (CW) and 1 was at the Columbia Park Marina on 12/14 (BL). A Clark's Grebe was at Columbia Park on 11/16 (BL). That date is the latest that I am aware for the Lower Columbia Basin by 1 day. Black-crowned Night-Heron numbers are well below average. There were 2 at Two Rivers Park on 12/03 and on 12/04 (NL, RF, CSi). In past winters, that location has harbored over 30 night-herons.

There were 7 Snow Geese in Pasco on 11/18 (AD, JDiT). Tundra Swan sightings included 5 at Moses Lake on 11/24 (DS), 25 at Cold Springs NWR on 11/26 (CC, JC), and 38 there on 12/10 (CC, JC).

Up to 6 Redheads were at the Columbia Park Marina from 12/03 until the end of the reporting period (NL, RF, CSi, BL). There were 30 Greater Scaup at Vantage on 12/07 (CW). A White-winged Scoter was also there on that date (CW). That species is rare in the Columbia Basin during fall migration. Barrow's Goldeneyes were at Groves Park from 12/02 until the end of the reporting period (BW). One was at Moses Lake on 11/24 (DS). Uncommon during winter, there were 2 Red-breasted Mergansers at the Columbia Park Marina on 12/03 (NL). A Ruddy Duck was also there on that date (NL, RF, CSi).

Uncommon during winter, a Northern Goshawk was at Cold Springs NWR on 11/26 (CC, JC) and 1 was at Hood Park on 11/29 (M&MD). A Golden Eagle was at Washtucna on 12/06 (M&MD). A Merlin was at Hood Park on 11/29 (M&MD) and 1 was at Two Rivers Park on

12/03 (NL). A Gyrfalcon was near Sims Corner in Grant County on 11/21 (RH). An immature Peregrine Falcon was at the Columbia Park on 11/16 and on 11/21 (BL). Perhaps the same bird was at the Yakima Delta on 11/21 (AD, JDiT).

Northern Bobwhites continued to be observed near Two Rivers Park until at least 12/04 (NL). These birds should be considered to have been introduced.

Uncommon during the winter, a Least Sandpiper was at Moses Lake on 11/24 (DS). There were 37 at Cold Springs NWR on 12/10 (CC, JS), which is an unusually high count for December. There have been good numbers of Dunlin. Sightings have included 47 at Moses Lake on 11/24 (DS), 250 at Cold Springs NWR on 11/26 (CC, JC), 21 at the Yakima Delta on 11/29 (DR), 65 at the Yakima Delta on 12/03 (BW), and 160 at Cold Springs NWR on 12/10 (CC, JS). A Wilson's Snipe was at Cold Springs NWR on 12/10 for the only report during the period (CC, JC).

There were 35 Bonaparte's Gulls at Moses Lake on 11/24 (DS). A Mew Gull was at the Yakima Delta on 11/29 (DR) and 1 was at Two Rivers Park on 12/03 (NL). The Moses Lake Western Gull continued to be seen until at least 11/24 (DS). An immature Glaucous Gull was also there on that date (DS).

Rare during winter, a Loggerhead Shrike was along Crab Creek on 11/24 (BSu). There were 2 Northern Shrikes at Lind Coulee on 11/24 (DS). One was on Bateman Island on 12/06 (DR). Rare after August, a Northern Rough-winged Swallow was at Wanapum State Park on 11/24 (BSu). That is the latest fall sighting of that species in the Lower Columbia Basin by over 2 months.

A Brown Creeper was in Pasco on 11/30 (DW). Two were at Windust Park on 12/06 (M&MD). A Rock Wren was along Wanapum Road on 11/24

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

(BSu). That area is a winter stronghold for that species. A Winter Wren was at Two Rivers Park on 12/04 (NL, RF, CSi) and on 12/05 (BL, NL).

There were 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets at the Yakima Delta on 12/03 (BW). Eight were at Two Rivers Park on 12/04 (NL, RF, CSi). A Townsend's Solitaire was at Vantage on 12/07 (CW). There were 5 Hermit and 2 Varied Thrushes at Hood Park on 11/29 (M&MD).

There were 24 Bohemian Waxwings at Burbank on 11/29 (M&MD). One was remaining from last reporting period in North Richland on 12/06 (CC, JC). There were 2 Orange-crowned Warblers at Potholes State Park on 12/01 (DS). The high count of Yellow-rumped Warblers was 27 at Hood Park on 11/29 (M&MD).

American Tree Sparrow sightings include 4 at Lind Coulee on 11/24 (DS), 3 at Moses Lake on 12/01 (DS), 1 on Bateman Island on 12/06 (PB), 12 near Lyons Ferry on 12/06 (M&MD), and 2 along Huntzinger Road on 12/07 (CW). Rare during winter, a Lincoln's Sparrow was at Moses Lake on 12/01 (DS). A Swamp Sparrow, 2 White-throated Sparrows, and 4 Golden-crowned Sparrows were at the McNary Dam Nature Trail on 11/30 (CC, JC). All are uncommon to rare during winter. There were several sightings of "slate-colored" Dark-eyed Juncos (mob).

Birds of the Month

The birds of the month are the 6 Common Redpolls found by Nancy LaFramboise at Two Rivers Park on 12/03. They were present until at least 12/06 and were also observed by Dennis Rockwell, Ruth Fischer, Chris Simonen, Craig and Judy Corder, and me. This was the first sighting for Two Rivers Park. Doug Schonewald also observed 4 at Moses Lake on 12/01. They are less than annual winter visitors to the Lower Columbia Basin.

Observers

PB Phil Bartley, **CC** Craig Corder, **JC** Judy Corder, **KC** Kathy Criddle, **M&MD** Mike and

MerryLynn Denny, **AD** Annet Dittmer, **JDi** Jim Dittmer, **RF** Ruth Fischer, **RH** Randy Hill, **BL** Bill LaFramboise, **NL** Nancy LaFramboise, **RMH** Rob McNair-Huff, **DR** Dennis Rockwell, **DS** Doug Schonewald, **CSi** Chris Simonen, **BSu** Bob Sundstrom, **DW** Dana Ward, **BW** Bob Woodley, **CW** Charlie Wright

Xmas Count Nets "Nearly 100"

On one of the coldest and snowiest count days in memory, we still found nearly 100 different species. The best conditions were 27 degrees, clear and calm, when starting to owl at about 3:30 am. By the end of the day it was 19 degrees. At times the snow and fog were heavy enough that we couldn't see the river from the bank. Depending on drifts, snow levels over 2 feet were regular.

As usual, one of the best count birds was at a feeder. Margaret Greager has a Tree Sparrow regularly coming to her feeder. Two species not seen on count day, and not included in the original count were a Harris Sparrow and Snow Geese.

Other notable birds were a Glaucous Gull in Richland and Thayer's Gull in Pasco. Although I am sure that the Thayer's Gull was seen, it will likely not be submitted in our count. Thayer's Gull is one of the most difficult gulls to identify. Ken Kaufman dedicated a separate chapter just to this species in his *Advanced Birding* (Peterson Field Guide 35). In addition, the bird was seen by only one observer. As indicated in my recent article on rarities, committees seldom accept records from single site observers. This is particularly true for difficult identifications such as Thayer's Gull. If more than one observer wrote details at the time the bird was seen, acceptance would be likely.

Some of the bird behavior patterns reflected the cold conditions. The largest numbers of European Starlings seemed to be in large flocks down in the riparian areas rather than strung along power lines. Bewick's Wren numbers were much lower than normal. The Bewick's Wrens seen acted more like skulking Brown Creepers than their normal active and vocal selves. Virginia Rails were more quiet than normal

(Continued on page 5)

Regional Birding Opportunities

The 25 th Anniversary Celebration of the Annual Winter *Bald Eagle Conference*, Klamath Falls Oregon, February 13-15 at the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT)

The Klamath Basin of Northern California and south Central Oregon is home to over 170 species of breeding birds and world famous for spectacular flocks of waterfowl on the lakes, rivers and nearby National Wildlife Refuges. We're especially blessed to be home to the largest concentration of wintering Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states. The Klamath Basin Bald Eagle Conference coincides with the presence of wintering waterfowl and eagles so that Conference participants can enjoy these magnificent birds. The purpose of the Conference is to share information, increase awareness and gain understanding of our wildlife resources, especially our national symbol, the Bald Eagle.

"The Bald Eagle Conference provides the opportunity to not only learn more about these wondrous birds and the challenges that they face, but also to watch them in the wild. And both are a sure thing. That's a rare combination, in my experience. We all need to learn more about how to protect these special birds, a bird unique to North America and our national symbol. I learned a lot from other speakers at the 2001 Conference that has helped me to spread the word about how we can help to make a difference for these birds, so that we may have bald eagles forever."

- Bill Silliker, Jr.

For more information visit the website below:

<http://www.eaglecon.org/index.html>

(Continued from page 4)

and generally came to the calls, parading on the snow. Usually they are more vocal, but do not come to the calls.

Our biggest "miss" was Western Grebe. This was likely a result of both the frozen water areas (such as the deep water at the Yakima Delta where these birds frequent) and the higher than normal river level.

The annual dinner was warm and welcome. The food system we adopted a few years ago (everyone bring a main dish and either a salad or desert) is simple and ensures enough good food for everyone. Thank you Barb Clarke and company.

Our count is more successful because of the help of local businesses. Ron Hicks at Riverside Consulting was very supportive in allowing access to Columbia Point (Glaucous Gull, Barn Owl – lots of water fowl). The City of Kennewick regularly supports access to the Kennewick Sewage Ponds (Mew Gull). Job's Nursery in Pasco has been a vital spot for years (several species including the only Golden Crowned Kinglets this year). The various area golf courses allow ready access. We should acknowledge and thank these entities when we can.

Thanks to all that participated. The count will not be final until I receive all of the teams' paperwork and go through the count one last time. More will be included in the Curlew next month.

Don't miss the beautiful sunny days of June for this San Juan Island Cruise!

Come and join the LCBAS Far Away Field Trip to the beautiful San Juan Islands. For three days, Monday, June 14, Tuesday, June 15, and Wednesday, June 16, 2004, we will cruise in the 58' Motor Yacht, the Viking Star. The trip leaves from and returns to beautiful La Conner, Washington. Two nights lodging will be at the beautiful Rosario Resort on Orcas Island. All meals but one dinner meal at Friday Harbor are included. This will be a great birding and wildlife experience. The cost of the trip is \$483.00 per person based on double occupancy. A \$200.00 deposit by February 15, 2004, will hold your place on this trip. If you are interested in more details or signing up for the trip, call Barbara Clarke at (509) 588-3362. You do not need to be an Audubon member to join us and we must have 15 participants to fill the trip!!

Don't forget to check off or write in Lower Columbia Basin Audubon on your **United Way donations for 2004**—it is an easy and simple way to contribute. Tom Clarke, our chapter president, has done this to test it out and it works fine. So, please help the chapter continue its great educational work around the community!

Rare and Unknown Bird Sightings

by Columbia Basin College Students

With Comments by Instructor

Connie Estep

On or Over Water

Greves –*sad grebes*

Wood ducts –*but can they carry water?*

Buffalo head –*coins or ducks?*

Green-wing teal mallard –*possible hybrid?*

Northern shovel –*keeps company with the Northern hoe*

Northern shufflers –*you should see them on the dance floor!*

Gadwall gall and Ring-billed gall –*found on plants?*

Rain-bill gull –*possible future in irrigation?*

Hearing gull –*has had special training as a service animal*

Great Blue Herring –*not your usual kettle of fish!*

Night Heroin –*addictive or a rescuer?*

Virgin rail –*but only until spring*

Virginia ringtail –*you never saw a bird with a tail like this*

Double-breasted cormorants –*Very stylish!*

Double-crusted cormorants –*a better version of blackbird pie*

Double crescents –*they were on a roll!*

Marsh rend –*now we know what is destroying our wetlands*

Seen nearby

Northern Harriet –*Where was Ozzie?*

Wookpeckers –*new bad guys for the continuing Star Wars saga?*

White crow sparrow –*another possible hybrid?*

Black-eyed jumpers –*clue: they had white outer tail feathers*

Black hill magpie –*this student crossed out “bill” and substituted “hill”*

High bush cranberries –*they may have been high, but could they fly?*

Totally unknowable

Tweets

Casterns

Clickers

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DON'T Forget about our upcoming Far Away Field Trip—DOWN UNDER: Australia 2004

With Barbara Clarke, Far Away Field Trip Chairman

LCBAS is once again going to travel to Australia. September 17 to October 6, 2004, we will visit the outback of Alice Springs and Ayers Rock now known as Uluru. We will explore southern Australia from Perth to Adelaide. We will include a visit to Kangaroo Island the home of the Little Penguin. We will see them march from the sea to their burrows at dusk each evening and witness their unique vocalizations that have been likened to braying donkeys. September is high wildflower season in the area we will be visiting, remember it will be spring down-under!. We will be seeing both the wonderful Australian birds and unusual and beautiful wildflowers at the same time. We will be traveling with EMU Tours who was our tour guide on our last Australian trip. Cost is \$3,020.00 and includes all land costs. We will be looking at group airfare for international and in country flights. We have four places left for this trip. If you are interested, please, contact me at 509-588-3362. Come travel with us and make memories to last a lifetime!

The Curlew
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**Membership in National Audubon Society includes affiliation with Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, 10 issues of the Curlew, and 4 quarterly issues of the Audubon Magazine.*

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