

# Walla Walla Bird and Wine

Valerie Zagar

What does a Ruddy Duck, a Mountain Goat and fine red wines have in common? They were all a part of the Walla Walla Birding, Hiking, and Wine Extravaganza on April 24-26, 2015. Twenty-five members of the CDA Audubon and Thursday Hiking groups started off their weekend trip with a picnic at McNary Wildlife Refuge in Burbank, WA.

Through scopes several species of waterfowl were spied from the deck of the educational building. After lunch the hikers continued to Walla Walla for a brief hike. A dozen birders walked the short interpretative trail along the Burbank Slough. We all got great looks at a flock of Black-necked Stilts showing off their brightly colored legs as they flew over to a plowed field to forage. Many waterfowl were present along the waterway and at the refuge's blind a Ruddy Duck floated very close to us to show off his stunningly blue bill. What a handsome specimen for a lucky female!

Saturday started off with overcast skies and a bit breezy, but the sightings at Bennington Lake did not disappoint. The trees were full of springtime migrants; a busy House Wren was discovered cleaning out a cozy nesting site, more Ruddy Ducks paired up in a quiet corner of the lake and Osprey were diving for Rainbow Trout. George spotted an adult Great Horned Owl hanging out along the Meadowlark Trail until bicyclists scurried by. A local resident was kind of enough to share news of Great Horned Owlets in the banks of the parking lot. Jim was the first to spot the fat, fluffy camouflaged feathers in a large hole. Another owlet was spotted preening further down the bank. Nature at

its' finest!



**Owl photos by Darlene Carlton**



**Photo by Richard Strehlan**

After lunch the birders visited Whitman Mission. After walking a part of the historic Oregon Trail being escorted by sounds of Ring-necked Pheasant and Wild Turkey we stopped to watch a "convention" of White-crowned Sparrows bathing in the original ditches dug by the pioneers.

Meanwhile, the Thursday Hikers got a surprise spotting of a Mountain Goat along their trek of the Walla Walla River near the Oregon border. Both groups met at the end of each day to taste wine at three of the 150+ wineries of the region.

Sunday, a stop at Palouse Falls State Park brought many oohs and aahs and photo ops. What seemed like a swarm of White-throated Swifts darted over the falls and Lisa heard a Canyon Wren bid us a fond farewell as we departed for home. Overall 68 species were seen and/or heard by the groups. I want to thank Lisa Hardy and Roland Craft for their great recording skills!



Trip participants included: George & Katie Saylor, Jim & Sheelagh Lynn, Russ Hersrud, Jean Sorley, Darlene Carlton, Lisa Hardy, Janet Callen, Roland Craft, Marilyn Robertson, Marlene Stein, Karen Williams, Mary Ayers, Sharon Spear, Dora Griffith, Mike Escovy, Cheryl Frampton, Linda Stanger, Richard Strehlan, Joanne Swierzy, Dan & Evonne Panther, Mike & Valerie Zagar.

