THE FISH HAWK HERALD

Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society
www.cdaaudubon.org

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Articles for the newsletters are welcome. Please submit to the editor, Shirley Sturts at: shirley.sturts@gmail.com by the 15th of each month. All submissions are subject to editing.
Thank you and happy reading!

FEBRUARY MEETING

DATE: February 2 , Tuesday
PLACE: Lutheran Church of the Maste, 4800 North Ramsey
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
SPEAKER Vaughn Paragamian. BS from Iowa State University. MS from University of Wisconsin. He is fisheries biologist who has worked for IDFG for 20 years.
dPROGRAM "Are Kootenai River White Sturgeon Bad Parents, Or Have We Just Messed Things Up?"

BOARD MEETING

DATE: February 2, Tuesday
PLACE: Mountain West Bank, 125 Ironwood
TIME: 4:30 p.m.

REMINDER

Send your "Yard List" report to Lisa if you haven't done so.

website: www.cdaaudubon.org

Take a Mid-Winter Nature Break With the Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15, 2010

2010 GBBC News Release

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY—Bird watchers coast to coast are invited to take part in the 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2010. Participants in the free event will join tens of thousands of volunteers of all levels of birding experience to count birds in their own backyards, local parks or wildlife refuges.

Each checklist submitted by these "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Last year, participants turned in more than 93,600 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

"Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to get outside with family and friends, have fun, and help birds—all at the same time. Anyone who can identify even a few species can provide important information that enables scientists to learn more about how the environment is changing and how that affects our conservation priorities," said Audubon Education Vice President, Judy Braus. "Everyone who participates in the GBBC—families, teachers, and young people—will get a chance to hone their observation skills, learn more about birds, and make a great contribution to the future!"

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Great Backyard Bird Count

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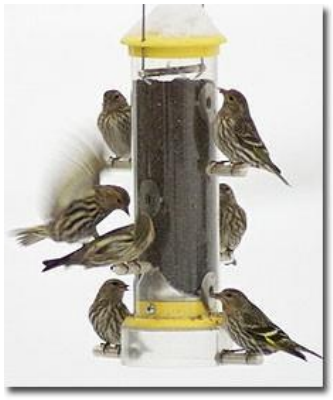
Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. One 2009 participant said, "Thank you for the opportunity to participate in citizen science. I have had my eyes opened to a whole new interest and I love it!"

"The GBBC is a perfect first step towards the sort of intensive monitoring needed to discover how birds are responding to environmental change," said Janis Dickinson, the director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab. "Winter is such a vulnerable period for birds, so winter bird distributions are likely to be very sensitive to change. There is only one way—citizen science—to gather data on private lands where people live and GBBC has been doing this across the continent for many years. GBBC has enormous potential both as an early warning system and in capturing and engaging people in more intensive sampling of birds across the landscape."



Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2009 GBBC data highlighted a huge southern invasion of Pine Siskins across much of the eastern United States. Participants counted 279,469 Pine Siskins on 18,528 checklists, as compared to the previous high of 38,977 birds on 4,069 checklists in 2005. Failure of seed crops farther north caused the siskins to move south to find their favorite food.

On the www.birdcount.org website, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. The site has tips to help identify birds and special materials for educators. Participants may also enter the GBBC photo contest by uploading images taken during the count. Many images will be featured in the GBBC website's photo gallery. All participants are entered in a drawing for prizes that include bird feeders, binoculars, books, CDs, and many other great birding products.

For more information about the GBBC, visit the website at www.birdcount.org. Or contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 or (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473) or gbbc@cornell.edu, or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, Ext 16.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Images by 2009 GBBC participants: Black-capped Chickadee by Rodney Smith, WA; Bird watcher at window by Terie Rawn, NY; Pine Siskins by Steve Gillespie, WV.

Contacts:

- Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, (607) 254-2137, pel27@cornell.edu
- Delta Willis, Audubon, (212) 979-3197, dwillis@audubon.org

More Information: Handouts will be available at our February 3rd CDA Audubon meeting.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Cornell Lab's website at www.birds.cornell.edu.

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. www.audubon.org

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT HIGHLIGHTS AND STATISTICS

Shirley Sturts

Coeur d'Alene - December 19, 2009

Seventeen birders in eight teams covered the count circle by walking 7.5 miles for 6.5 hours and driving 412.3 miles for 48 hours (party miles and hours). We had 4 feeder watchers with a total of 7 hours at their feeders.

Together we counted 69 species + 1 during count week (3 days before or after the count day) and 5749 individual birds. From 1991-2009 our highest species count is 73 in 2003 & 2007 and our lowest is 57 in 2008. Our highest individual count is 10,119 in 2007 and our lowest is 4092 in 1993.

Two rare birds, first for the count, were added to the count list. A Cackling Goose was found along City Beach by Bill Gundlach and 6 Eurasian Collared-Dove were found on Rathdrum Prairie by Theresa Potts and Shirley Sturts. The Eurasian Collared-Dove were first discovered on the prairie by Doug Ward in the spring of 2007 (see the article in our January 2010 newsletter). Sixty-one Double Crested Cormorant is a significant increase in numbers. They first showed up on the count in 2001 when 5 were counted off of the NIC Beach. The highest previous count was 38 in 2006. Missing was one of our favorites, Bohemian Waxing. Flocks of Bohemian are winter visitors only. The Cedar Waxwing. (52 this year) are resident. Waxwing numbers vary with the winter berry food supply. Janet Callen and Judy Waring found our only Pine Grosbeak (6). They are high altitude birds in the summer time and we've only had them on the count two other years: 13 in 1992 and 2 in 1993)

Participants: Derek Antonelli, Laura Bayless, Terry Bohanak, Ed and Kris Buchler, Janet Callen, Janet Carroll, Roland Craft, Ken Eppler, Bill Gundlach, Lisa Hardy, Eula Hickam, Therese Potts, Herb and Jan Severtson, Lynn Sheridan, Shirley Sturts, Judy Waring. Feeder Watchers: Jack and Zela Bloxom, Diane Dalenburg , Mary Vanderbilt, John Weber.

See the total count on our website
http://cdaaudubon.org/Cbcount99.htm

White-breasted Nuthatch

Photo by Wayne Tree

Spirit Lake - January 2, 2010

Seventeen birders in five teams covered the count circle by walking 7 3/4 miles for 5 1/4 hours and driving 325.6 miles for 36 1/4 hours (party miles and hours).

Of the three counts that most of us participate in every year, this is the lowest in count numbers. It doesn't have the variety of habitats that Coeur d'Alene and Indian Mt. have. It also has a lot of lodgepole pine scrub forest that doesn't support bird life. Our numbers this year were on the low side both in species and individuals. Looking at the other years of the count 1997-2010, this year ranks 10th. We had 44 species and 1074 individual birds. The high species count is 57 in 2002 and our lowest is 36 in 2004. The individual high count is 1686 in 1998 and the lowest is 606 in 2003.

Kris and Ed Buchler came up with the prize bird of the count, a Long-tailed Duck (1). We've only had it on the count two other years, 3 in 1997 and 1 in 2007. They also found 2 Greater Scaup which have only been counted one other year, 1997 (2). The White-breasted Nuthatch was a nice find by Lisa Hardy's team. It has has been found on only two other count years. Things were turned around as far as waxwings were concerned. We had 70 Bohemian and no Cedar.

Participants: Ed and Kris Buchler, Janet Callen, Roland Craft, Lisa Hardy, Eula Hickam, Nancy Mertz, Gil and Jo Moncrief, Theresa Potts, Dan Ratzu, Shirley Sturts, Adela Sussman, Judy Waring, Gayle and Mary Wehlacz, Linda Wright.

Go to our website for a complete list
http://cdaaudubon.org/SpiritLakeCBC.htm

Indian Mountain January 4, 2010

Thirteen birders in 5 teams covered the count circle by walking 6.2 miles for 8 hours and driving 165.5 miles for 20.05 hours (party miles and hours).

We found 81 species and 7,563 individual birds, 5,150 (an estimate) of these were Canada Geese. The Indian Mountain CBC was started by Don Heikkila in 1967. I don't have the high/low species and individuals for recent counts. I think 81 species might be the highest. We had 13,937 individual birds (7,419 being Canada Goose) in 2001 which may be the highest individual count.

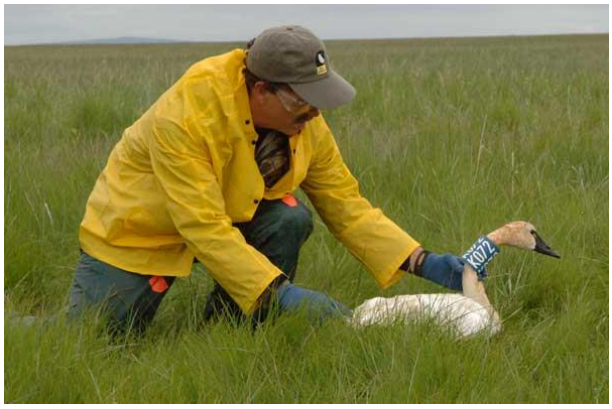
Bill Gundlach was the first to spot 2 Bonaparte's Gull at the Chacolet Bridge. This gull has been found on only 2 other Indian Mt. counts. Except for the more common Red-tailed Hawk (10), hawks were in lower than usual numbers. We only found 1 each Rough-legged, Northern Harrier and American Kestrel. Three Great Horned Owl where heard in the early hours, 2 by Wayne Melquist and 1 by Don Heikkila. A Bewick's Wren found by Lisa Hardy's team was a nice addition. And finally, both waxwing species showed up in respectable numbers on this count: Bohemian (178), Cedar (68), waxwing species (80).

Participants: Kris Buchler, Janet Callen, Roland Craft, Bill Gundlach, Lisa Hardy, Don Heikkila, Eula Hickam, Helen Kevo, Wayne Melquist, Jan Rehnfrow Ellen Scriven, Shirley Sturts, Linda Wright

SWANS AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Lisa Hardy

On March 7, 2008, I saw a swan with a neck collar at the Schlepp Ranch near Medimont. I managed to read off the alphanumeric code on the collar, but was at that time unaware of the banding program, and did not know where to report it. I was curious as to who was marking swans, and where this particular swan had come from, so I reported the sighting to the Patuxent bird banding program. I had been unsuccessful in getting a response from them on a previous occasion where I had seen a marked goldeneye, so I cast about for information by posting to the Inland Northwest Birders listserv. I was directed to the Alaska program - they informed me that my bird had been collared on the Alaska Peninsula. The next year, being primed now to search for neck bands, I scanned through a flock of over 2000 Tundra Swans at nearby Lane Marsh and found two. These birds were from Kotzebue Sound.



Biologist Craig Ely, USGS Alaska Science Center, releasing Tundra Swan after testing for avian influenza,
(photo from the Alaska Science Center Website)

It turns out that the swans were being collared as part of a program to monitor for avian influenza. After the outbreak of a highly pathogenic avian influenza in South China in 1996, strains of the "Asian HP H5N1" virus continue to circulate in Eurasia and Africa, but none have yet been found in the Americas. The migration of waterfowl is considered a potential pathway for HP H5N1 to reach North America from known outbreaks of the disease in Eurasia, resulting in an increase in government funding to monitor for any arrival of HP strains to our shores via wild birds. The first threat is to commercial poultry operations. The second threat is that an HP strain will develop the capacity to be readily transmissible to humans, and spread by human-human contact. This is the deadly scenario hyped by media coverage.

Of particular interest to the researchers are waterfowl that cross between Alaska and Siberia while migrating from nesting to wintering ranges. The monitoring programs seek to define the seasonal movements of birds across the two continents, and use approaches that range from basic - such as tagging the birds with plastic collars - to the sophisticated - using stable isotopes to determine where the bird was when it molted.

Tundra Swans are one of the species selected for monitoring, though several other species, including Northern Pintail and Steller's Eider, have higher monitoring priorities based on biologists' best estimates of their likelihood of acting as disease vectors between the continents. Monitoring of these three species and others in Alaska is conducted under the auspices of the USGS's Alaska Science Center, which maintains an excellent website on the programs. **Continued on Page 5**

Swans Continued from Page 4

Tundra Swans are long-range migrants, and have the potential to carry influenza over wide areas. The American race, or "Whistling Swan", nests in Alaska and northern Canada. The birds from Canada and Alaska's North Slope winter on the east coast of the U.S., mostly in the mid-Atlantic states. The birds from western Alaska winter on lakes from Washington to California. A small population of whistlers apparently nest across the Bering Straits, where they presumably mingle with Bewick's Swan and other waterfowl that winter in Asia. These Siberian whistlers are believed to winter in the United States as do their Alaskan brethren.

Starting in 2006, Tundra Swans have been captured each summer in several locations in Alaska to collect oral and cloacal swabs which are tested for avian influenza. In addition, the birds are banded, collared with plastic neck bands, and in some cases, blood and/or feather samples are taken. In 2008, 465 swans were captured and marked. Also in 2008, 50 birds, 10 each from 5 different sites, were fitted with satellite transmitters.

The swans are captured during July and August when they go through a molt that leaves them flightless. The birds are typically captured by boat with a large dip net. "Captured swans were temporarily restrained with electrical tape wrapped around their legs and heads tucked under their wings...On shore, birds were further restrained using "swan vests"." If you want to see what a "swan vest" looks like, photos of these activities can be seen on the Alaska Science Center website.

To date, no AI has been detected in the tested swans, but strains of LP AI have been found in ten other species, particularly some of the dabbling ducks and the eiders. Of particular interest to the researchers was the occurrence of AI in Northern Pintail. Pintail populations show a degree of crossover between Siberia and Alaska, with some birds that nest in Alaska overwintering in Asia, and another unknown proportion of the population nesting in Asia and overwintering in North America. Sequencing of the genome of an AI strain collected from a pintail in Alaska showed that the virus had originated in Asia, thus confirming that wild birds are capable of transporting AI to North America.

The complete version of this article, including links to the references, is available on our website.

2010 FIELD TRIPS

MICA BAY SURVEY

DATES: February 9, Tuesday (held 2nd Tuesday of each month - times vary depending on month)
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
MEET: Fairmont Loop and Highway 95
LEADER: Shirley Sturts 664-5318
ACTIVITY: We spend about 3 hours once a month counting birds at Mica Bay. Everybody is welcome including beginning birders. We will help you with identification skills.

RATHDRUM PRAIRIE

DATE: February 13, Saturday
TIME: 8:30 a.m.
MEET: Meet: K-Mart parking lot, south side.
LEADER: Bill Gundlach: 667-3339
ACTIVITY 1/2 day - bring water and dress for the weather.

LATER FIELD TRIPS

Details in upcoming newsletters

March: (about the 20th) Chain Lakes for swans and other migrants. Leader: Lisa Hardy

April 24: Fishtrap/Hog Lake: 30 miles south of Spokane. Leaders: Roland Craft 457-8894 and Janet Callen 664-1085

May 1: Elk River Falls, White Pine Drive, Bovill and Deary. Alternate: Westmond Lake and Round Lake. Leaders: Roland Craft and Janet Callen

May 14, 15, 16: Three day, 2 night trip to Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge (on the Bitterroot Valley Mountain Birding Trail), Stevensville, Montana. Leaders: Kris Buchler 664-4739 and Janet Callen

June 5: Bonner County Century Count

Note: Beginning April, 2010 Lynn Sheridan will lead monthly local-area birding trips for beginning birders. Each event will begin at 10:00 a.m. and last an hour and one-half. See dates and times beginning with the April newsletter.

June, July, August: If there is enough interest, field trips can be scheduled in these months.