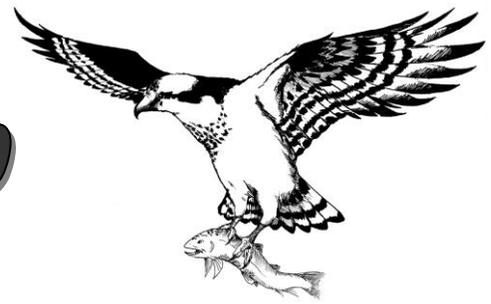


# THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
[www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)

November 2010

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 3

## FISH HAWK HERALD SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Our September issue is complimentary to all local Audubon members. To receive the October - May issues you need to subscribe: \$15 for one year or \$25 for two years. (See the subscription form on the back of this newsletter.) Some of you have paid for two years, and some have a different expiration date. Please call Jan at 667-6209 if you are unsure of your subscription status. The newsletter is free of charge on our website: [www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)  
ALSO: Articles for the newsletters are welcome. Please submit to the editor Shirley Sturts at: [shirley.sturts@gmail.com](mailto:shirley.sturts@gmail.com) by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, All submissions are subject to editing.

Thank you and happy reading!

## NOVEMBER PROGRAM

**DATE:** November 9, Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 North Ramsey  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.  
**SPEAKER:** Andy Dux, Principal Fishery Research Biologist with IDFG.  
**PROGRAM:** "Kokanee - Backbone of the Lake Pend Oreille Fishery"

Learn about the history of the Kokanee from the time it was introduced into Lake Pend Oreille in the 1930s to the present. Kokanee flourished through the late 1960s and supported annual harvests of over one million fish. Kokanee have since declined dramatically. Andy will explain the various recovery programs, past and ongoing, being used to recover Kokanee populations

### BOARD MEETING

**DATE:** November 9, Tuesday  
**PLACE:** Mountain West Bank, 125 Ironwood  
**TIME:** 4:30 p.m.

Visit our website:  
[www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)

## THE FLAMMULATED OWL

By Carrie Hugo



Flammulated is a really fancy way of saying "reddish in color". And it is true that the feathers of this little owl are reddish brown, but what distinguishes it most from other owls in north Idaho is its eye color and its small size. All of our owls in the Panhandle have yellow irises and black pupils except for two species: the Flammulated Owl and the Barred Owl.

Only a few of our north Idaho owls migrate long distances. The Flammulated Owl, which winters in Central America, arrives in our neighborhood around the first week of May for nesting. After nesting season is over, old feathers are replaced by new, sturdy feathers that will assist it in migrating such a long distance. Departure for this fall migration usually occurs around October.

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"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts" - Rachel Carson



## FLAMMULATED OWL

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The other north Idaho owl species that migrates is the Northern Saw-whet Owl. This is another small owl (just slightly larger than the Flammulated) that migrates to Mexico and Central America. This little owl eats mostly small mammals.



The Flammulated Owl uses cavities during nesting season. Larger diameter ponderosa pine snags are an important resource for Flammulated Owls. Also, they have to have some other cavity-excavating bird, like a Northern Flicker or a Pileated Woodpecker, do the hard work for them. They lay around 6 eggs and the female does most of the care-taking of the eggs and chicks, while the male does most of the care-taking of the female (bringing her food regularly). After the chicks leave the nest, both parents feed them until they are able to hunt insects on their own.

While the Flammulated Owl is small, it is not the smallest owl we have in our area. The Northern Pygmy-Owl (see below) has only a 12 inch wingspan—that's smaller than a bluebird! This little guy is most active at dawn and dusk, and can regularly be seen perching in a bush during the day. It eats small mammals, insects, and other small birds (so you may see one quietly perching near your bird feeder in winter!). To protect itself from other predators, this tiny owl has "eyes" in the back of its head! Do you see them in the picture below?



At the other end of the spectrum, we have the Great Gray Owl. This owl lives up to its name with a 52 inch wingspan- that's more than 4 feet! This owl likes high mountain meadows where it sits in a tree on the edge and watches for hares and other small mammals. Like the Northern Pygmy Owl, this owl is more active during the day so you may have a pretty good chance of seeing one if you are out in the woods.



Another common owl in our area eats little Flammulated Owls for a snack! The Barred Owl was once considered to be a more eastern owl species, but the population has been slowly moving westward. It is our other dark-eyed owl. You may be out in the woods and find you are standing right underneath one someday. It is fairly large and while it is quiet and still, it is not so timid that it will flush away from its roost if you are walking underneath one. Often it just quietly watches you as you pass by. Barred Owls have been known to "talk" to each other during daylight hours and the call is very distinct. Some folks think it sounds like they are asking "Who cooks for you?!" Having heard this call, I agree!

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## THANKSGIVING DAY BIRD COUNT

Count Compiler - Dr. John G. Hewston, Natural Resources Building Humboldt State University, Arcata, California 95521 ---- For count form go to: <http://www.utahbirds.org/cbc/ThanksqBirdCount.htm>

Dear Birders:

Thanksgiving Bird Counts are to take place on Thanksgiving Day. The counter chooses the time that best fits his/her holiday schedule. The Count lasts for only ONE HOUR, and is made in a count circle only 15 FEET in diameter. The location of the circle is determined by the counter. Actually, the circle can be considered a cylinder, since all birds seen on the ground (or water), in vegetation or flying over or through the circle can be counted. Individual birds are to be counted only once during the hour, even if they continue to pay visits. Flocks should be estimated or counted and just the highest number at any one time used. Count circles are usually located around whatever attracts birds--feeders, baths, cover, etc. Most participants establish a count area visible from a comfortable spot near a window. Some participants select water areas or choose a favorite birding area and make an outdoor count. The same count circles should be used each year.

This is one bird count which can be done in comfort (indoors) and won't take much time (one hour). Last year 431 counters in the eleven Western States and Alaska made 440 counts. They tallied 161 species of birds (plus a lot of mammals and other things, too). The top five species counted in these states were House Sparrow (1), Dark-eyed Junco (2), House Finch (3), Black-capped Chickadee (4) and European Starling (5). As predicted, the Pine Siskin dropped out of the top five last season, but should be more numerous this year. Participants should send in a report even if no birds were seen during the hour.

Thanksgiving Bird Counts were begun in 1966 by Dr. Ernest Edwards and the Lynchburg Bird Club in Virginia. Counts slowly spread to the West. When I was asked to take over coordinating and compiling this count in the Western States only a couple of dozen counters were active here. Now, over 400 count reports are received each year, but we'd like to get over the 500 mark. There are still many areas in the West, Alaska and Hawaii in need of more counters and better distribution of counts. That's why I'm asking for your help--again! Thanks.

- Dr. John G. Hewston

THE FISH HAWK HERALD

## FLAMMULATED OWL

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All owls have a few common features that make them such successful predators. The first is that their wings have silencers. You may have noticed when a duck or goose flies over-head, there is a noise, sometimes even a whistling that accompanies them. This noise is from the turbulence of the air passing over the surface of their wing feathers. Owls have a soft fringe on each of their flight feathers which allows them to move silently as they sneak up on their prey. Owls also have excellent night vision, as most of us know. In order to have such good night vision, their eyes have to be very large. Relative to other birds their eyes are HUGE! What most people don't realize is that excellent hearing is as important to a hunting owl as excellent vision is. The reason many owls have a "dished" face with two disks around each eye is to enhance their hearing. Similar to a satellite dish being round and concave, the concave feathers around the eyes help to focus sounds to the owls' ears, which we can't see. They are covered with feathers. With their excellent hearing, owls can detect the movement of rodents under many inches of snow!

Owls are a little seen but significant part of our forest bird community in north Idaho. They are an important predator of small mammals. And while that may not sound like much use to us, just think of all the tree seedlings that get girdled by rodents in timber sale areas, or the rodents that bother your grain stores. Owls help reduce these damages. And even if we never see a direct benefit from the silent presence of owls ourselves, it is just kind of neat knowing they are out there. I often wonder how many owls I am walking by when I am in the woods and I never even know it!

## ADOPT - a - HIGHWAY FALL CLEAN - UP, 2010



By Judy Waring

Our Audubon chapter began the task of tidying up two miles of Highway 95 near Mica Bay in 2003 and Mother Nature has smiled on us each time. Our recent Saturday clean-up was a cool and sunny morning, sandwiched between two rainy days.

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## MILL RIVER CANYON FIELDTRIP

October 17

By Philip Waring

Photo by Darlene Carlton



On a crisp and sunny Sunday morning our group set off in search of the White-headed Woodpecker and any other birds we could find. We headed for Mill Canyon where it joins the Spokane River north of Davenport, Washington. The prairie seemed endless until we began to descend down the narrow dirt road at the canyon's head. We passed through ponderosa pine forest, some showing signs of recent burns, limited agricultural activity, forested and denuded hills, and scraggly fields.

Where the canyon joins the river we began our serious search. First we scanned the dammed-up river and found a few expected species. Next we walked along the road looking mostly in the pines for signs of life. We were at the location where other birders had most often seen the White-headed Woodpecker. With no luck, Kris began playing the White-headed Woodpecker recorded call. Still no response. We worked our way back up the road and finally when hope was lagging, a return call was heard. After a few more calls the White-headed Woodpecker flew over our heads and landed in a dead, twenty foot bushy tree by the side of the road. All of our group gathered and with great satisfaction watched this wonderful bird work that tree for ten minutes. Darlene captured some outstanding photos, one of which accompanies this report.

On the way back to Spokane, we stopped at the Reardon ponds and found many more species. Our total species count for the trip was thirty-eight. Those participating were Janet Callen, Joan and Bill Gundlach, Valerie Zagar, Kris Buchler, Dick Cripe, Russ Hersrud, Darlene Carlton, Roland Craft, and trip leaders Phil and Judy Waring.

## ADOPT - a - HIGHWAY

Continued from page 3

Fifteen people arrived at the Mica Grange for the necessary coffee and doughnut ritual, readying us for the job at hand. In a little over one-hour the work was done. Eighteen bags of litter were collected, a surprisingly small number for a fall season. Sharon Hanson's Adopt -a - Highway group that abuts our stretch of highway had similar results and our only explanation is that the sluggish economy may have reduced fast food purchases and the resulting wrappers that comprise at least half of our work. The personal highlight of the day was the \$20 bill that I found after years of hoping for such a stroke of good luck!

Mike Zagar has volunteered to take the lead in this community service. We will see you in the spring - same place, same time - date to be announced in the March newsletter

## BOISE HAWK WATCH FIELD TRIP

OCTOBER 6-9, 2010

By Lisa Hardy



**Sunset Hawk Release  
at Lucky Peak  
Photo by Jay Carlisle**

Despite the top billing for this trip, several unexpected encounters turned out to be bigger highlights than the hawk watch itself. Our schedule included visits to the World Center for Birds of Prey, and to the Lucky Peak banding station and hawk watch. Serendipity led us to encounters with Idaho's herd of wild horses, traditional Basque cuisine, Hermiston watermelons, and a rare sighting of a Ruff.

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## BOISE HAWK WATCH FIELD TRIP

Continued from Page 4

We drove down to Boise through Lewiston and McCall, commenting on the variety of habitats we passed through, and stopping for lunch at Skookumchuck Creek along the Salmon River. The next day threatened rain, so we opted for the Birds of Prey Center visit, with some local birding before and after. The Center has breeding programs for Aplomado Falcons and California Condors in order to reintroduce birds into the wild. A new condor outdoor aviary allows visitors to see these huge birds up close. Inside the library is a mock-up Bedouin camp financed by the U.A.E. and dedicated to Sheikh Zayed, an avid falconer who became a conservationist via his love for hunting.

Leaving the World Center, we followed the birding guides and quickly located a Chukar, as advertised. Continuing to follow the Pleasant Valley route, we stopped at the BLM Wild Horse Corrals, which turned out to be full of horses. A nice BLM employee invited us inside the surrounding fence where we could view the horses close-up, and explained the operation at some length while ignoring his pager summoning him to yet another government employee meeting. What we learned about the Saylor Creek herd is at the [end of this article](#).

Afterward, we discussed what we knew about horse color names. The adoption fee for a wild horse is \$25 - less than for a cat from your local shelter! - and we briefly considered adopting a wild foal, but although we are all experienced travelers with finely-honed skills of packing and organization, it was decided that we would not be able to fit a horse, even a small one, into the car for the return trip.

The next day we traveled the steep dirt road to the Lucky Peak Bird Observatory. The banding crew there is young, enthusiastic, and seasoned as educators to the young and old visitors who make the trek up the mountain. The crew members come to Lucky Peak from all over - from Ohio, Vermont, New Mexico, Washington and even Spain. We watched as lots of Ruby-crowned Kinglets (their number one species) were banded, weighed and measured. It was a cold day, and small birds like the kinglets could become hypothermic while hanging in the mist nets, or hanging in cloth bags while waiting to be measured. We were bemused by the line of bouncing cloth bags pinned to the clothesline over the work table. Birds that became

lethargic with cold were "shirted", or tucked inside a shirt to warm up before being released.

Roland had expressed a wish to see a Blue Grouse, but got a Dusky Grouse instead. While Roland was back at the parking lot, we saw a large hen grouse in the tree above the banding station. The crew quickly identified it as a Dusky Grouse, and fortunately she hung around long enough for Roland to see her when he turned up.

At midday, we climbed up to the hawk watch. A trickle of hawks came through, sharpies, red-tails, and a Golden Eagle. We looked down on the hawk trapping operation that used live birds as lures. Beyond stretched the city of Boise. Several weeks before, a black bear had begun hanging around - there are many wild berry bushes near the banding station. The bear was attracted to the grain in the cages of the lure birds, and ended up eating a few of the pigeons. The bear had moved on, and the new pigeons were doing their job that afternoon, luring in hawks.

That night, we went to a restaurant in the Basque quarter in downtown Boise, where we tried traditional dishes of lamb or squid.

Saturday, we returned to Coeur d'Alene by the interstates through the Tri-cities. Janet suggested we stop for lunch at Cold Springs NWR near Hermiston. Somebody in our car mentioned that Hermiston watermelons are famous, and we resolved to stop at a produce stand to check them out. Near Hermiston, we found our stand; everyone bought melons, and we had to reorganize to fit them in the car.



Photo by Lisa Hardy

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## BOISE HAWK WATCH FIELD TRIP

### Continued from Page 5

After some complications, we located the hidden, unmarked Cold Springs NWR, and settled down to eat our lunch. With lunch over, we wandered down to the mostly dried-up reservoir. A lone birder stood out on the mud with his scope. He gestured for us to come over. It turned out to be Aaron Skirvin of the Pendleton Bird Club, who had located a Ruff along the edge of the remnants of the reservoir. He had put out the word by cell phone, and at first thought we were a group of Ruff-chasers. The Ruff was a first county record, and we had looks at this active, long-legged shorebird through our scopes. It was a life-bird for most of us, and a sweet finish to our trip.

### The Saylor Creek herd



**Photo by Lisa Hardy**

Our BLM guide explained that the stallions fight quite a bit at first, and then settle in as they get used to being in close quarters with other stallions. The stallions are separated into three age classes - the youngest, which have never been "gathered" before, the middle aged group, and then the oldest. The stallions establish a pecking order, and it is not always the biggest and strongest individual at the top of the heap.

The mares are divided into those with weaned foals, those with nursing foals, and those that may be pregnant. The foals that have already been weaned are kept in yet a separate enclosure.

We were interested to see that many of the horses are solid colors. Our guide explained that the most

photographed horses were several dapple gray stallions with long, corded manes, which he said represented the "traditional" wild horse look. He said the pintos were the most in demand for adoption, regardless of temperament. Apparently the tough economic climate is leading to an increase in dumping of horses - he pointed out a large chestnut mare which they identified as a saddle horse by her tame behavior.

The "processing" of the horses consists of veterinary exams, vaccinations, freeze-marking with identifying codes, and hoof-trimming. Horses are only euthanized for untreatable medical conditions such as a broken leg.

The BLM does not "roundup" horses any longer. Instead, they "gather" them, apparently a more PC term. The Saylor Creek herd was gathered by driving the horses towards a corral with a funneled entrance. A decoy horse is used; this horse has performed its job many times, by circling out to the wild herd and leading them back to the funnel, where it swerves aside at the last minute.

### From the BLM website:

It is believed that the Saylor Creek herds foundation originated from mares captured near Challis, ID by a group of horse runners from the Wendell, ID area. According to local history, several mares were transported into the Saylor Creek Area in the early 1960s. A registered stud was then purchased and turned out with the mares. Until the passage of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burro Act of 1971 (P.L. 92-195), the group of horse runners would capture as many colts as possible in annual roundups.

### Saylor Creek Herd Management Area Emergency Wild Horse Gather

BLM recently gathered the entire Saylor Creek Horse Herd beginning August 31, 2010. On August 21, a wildfire was sparked by lightning in the Saylor Creek area south of Glenns Ferry, Idaho. Pushed by winds up to 60 miles per hour, the fire grew at a rate of 15 acres per minute and quickly became the largest fire in the nation at almost 307,000 acres. To date, 53,245 acres of the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area (HMA) managed by BLM were burned in a total of four different fires this fire season.

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# POLICY: SHARE THE COST OF GAS WITH THE DRIVERS

Now that the field trip season is in full swing again, it might be timely to review the compensation plan that has been agreed upon by the Board for drivers of vehicles. **Each driver will have the option to charge 25 cents per mile or the cost of actual gas used divided among the number of passengers in that vehicle.** It will be the responsibility of the driver to calculate the costs and notify each of their riders how much he/she owes. If no option is selected, the default cost will be 25 cents per mile. If a husband and wife choose to drive themselves, they do not receive a share of the costs. As an example when charging 25 cents a mile, two cars made the recent trip to Turnbull Refuge, a husband and wife and one passenger in each car. The round trip was 110 miles (x2 cars x .25/mile=\$55). \$55/6 passengers=\$9.17/passenger. In this case, this is what each of the two riders owe their respective drivers. Let's be fair to drivers and make sure they are compensated for their time and vehicle use.

## FIELD TRIPS 2010



**PLEASE REGISTER:** Watch the website or newsletter for updates to our field trip schedule. Participants should contact the trip leader at least 24 hours in advance of the field trip to find out if the meeting place/time or destination has been changed. Participants will share in a mileage reimbursement for the driver.

### MICA BAY SURVEY

**Date:** November 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, especially beginner birders. We will help you with identification skills.

### EXPLORING FARRAGUT STATE PARK

**Date:** November 7, 2010, Sunday  
**Leader:** Roland Craft 457-8894  
**Meet:** K-Mart  
**Time:** 8:00 a.m.  
This will be a hiking trip. There are many trails we can explore. Check later for details.

### EASTSIDE CDA LAKE-HARRISON

**Date:** November 20, 2010, Saturday  
**Leader:** Kris Buchler 664-4739  
**Meet:** Fernan Ranger Station  
**Time:** 8:00 a.m.  
Target birds: Loons, Waterfowl, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow

### CHRISTMAS COUNTS

**Dates: Between December. 14, 2010-January 5, 2011**  
Coeur d'Alene - around December 14  
Indian Mountain - between January 2-5  
Sprit Lake - between January 2-5

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**BOISE HAWK WATCH FIELD TRIP**

**Continued from Page 6**

Although some areas within the HMA did not completely burn, BLM managers determined that not enough forage currently exists to sustain the herd of 198 horses. This emergency gather operation was conducted for the health and well being of the Saylor Creek wild horses, as 100% of their home range, or preferred area, was burned in the Long Butte fire.

After the horses were gathered, the BLM moved them to the Wild Horse Corrals south of Boise, Idaho. There, the horses are being examined by an equine veterinarian to ensure there are no underlying respiratory issues as a result of possible smoke, dust and ash inhalation following the fire. Horses will be cared for at the corrals until BLM can determine when the herd or a portion of the herd can be re-released back onto the Saylor Creek HMA. At this point, it is too early to determine how many horses the burned rangeland can sustain throughout the coming winter. BLM will begin stabilization and fencing efforts to restore the health of the rangeland this fall.

If the Saylor Creek HMA cannot sustain the entire herd, or a portion of the herd throughout the winter, some may be available for adoption at a yet to be determined location and date. These spectacular horses have desirable traits, and we expect them to be in high demand if offered for adoption.

The Saylor Creek Herd was gathered in 2005 after another devastating wildfire, the Clover Creek Fire. After BLM completed rangeland restoration efforts throughout the burned area, 93 horses were returned to the HMA in February, 2006.

**More information and additional pictures can be found at:**  
[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/jarbridge/wild\\_horses.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/jarbridge/wild_horses.html)

