



The Wild Phlox

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December 6 is the 60th Anniversary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

by Mary and Tim Gallagher,
Lake Wenatchee

In the waning days of his administration, on December 6, 1960, Republican President Dwight Eisenhower designated nine million acres in northeast Alaska as the Arctic National Wildlife Range. Twenty years later, on November 12, 1980 the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was passed in the U.S. Congress and Democratic President Jimmy Carter signed it into law on December 2 in the last days of his administration. This doubled the size of the Arctic Range and renamed it the Arctic Refuge. The 1970s were a time of oil embargoes and long lines at gas stations, clearly still fresh in many legislators' minds. Within the 1980 legislation 1.5 million acres of the coastal plain was portioned out for further study. This area called Section 1002 was to be studied for its wildlife and wilderness value but also oil and gas potential.

Decades have passed, and another administration is coming to an end. During this time, we have improved efficiency in vehicles and developed electric cars and trucks. We understand how important and fragile the coastal plain is to migrating nesting birds from all over the world. We know the critical nutrition it provides for the Porcupine Caribou herd, an animal essential to the survival of the indigenous Gwich'in people of Alaska and Canada. Most importantly, we now understand the consequences of fossil fuel extraction and its impacts to climate change. Over two-thirds of the American people oppose drilling

in this unique wilderness. Yet, this outgoing Administration just announced a "call for nominations" in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, asking oil companies to identify preferred areas on the Arctic Refuge's ecologically sensitive coastal plain to lease for oil drilling. The current Interior Department has set in motion the process for approving a massive new seismic

testing program for nearly a half million acres of the coastal plain. Their proposal would involve hundreds of miles of roads, resulting from 90,000-pound seismic vehicles traveling with bulldozer convoys. These convoys will carry supplies for up to 180 workers, threatening denning polar bears.

With the continued volatility in oil markets and major U.S. and international banks unwilling to invest in Arctic oil, the economic argument is no longer valid. This, combined with significant environmental and social impacts, should require an environmental review.

We need to come together. Protecting the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for future generations

would be a good start. *"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."* President Lyndon B. Johnson, a Democrat from Texas, when he signed the Wilderness Act into law in 1964.

What can you do to celebrate the 60th Anniversary?

- 1) Support organizations like the National Audubon Society, Sierra Club and Alaska Wilderness League that have filed lawsuits against the current administration drilling in the Refuge or efforts to begin seismic testing.
- 2) Call or email the oil companies and let them know you do not want them to drill in the Refuge. Many major corporations such as British Petroleum have started to exit the Arctic.
- 3) Call or email car companies and ask for better fuel efficiency and electric cars that can go further on one charge.
- 4) Call or Email your Congressional Representatives and let them know how you feel about protecting the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge and the Trump Administration's efforts to fast-forward drilling.
- 5) Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper, showing your support for the Refuge.
- 6) Let President-elect Biden know you want him to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and keep it as a Day One priority for his administration.
- 7) Watch for online petitions and information on helping the Refuge and share them with your family and friends.

The mission of the North Central Washington Audubon Society is to:
 "Enhance, protect and restore healthy natural ecosystems and native biodiversity using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation to promote the welfare of birds in North Central Washington"

Homemade Treats for the Birds

by Teri J Pieper, Methow Valley

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Julie Hovis | jahovis711@gmail.com

Joe Veverka | joe_everka@yahoo.com.

Website - www.ncwaudubon.org

Subscribe to our email list at www.ncwaudubon.org

Email us at ncwaudubon@gmail.com

Mailing address - PO Box 2934 Wenatchee, WA 98807

North Central Washington Audubon Society is on Facebook too

All phone numbers in the Wild Phlox are area code 509 unless otherwise indicated.

A friend posted this recipe and I gave it a try. In no time, a Downy Woodpecker was pecking away at it! I used honey in place of sugar and corn grits in place of corn meal. I cut them into squares and stored them in the freezer til needed.

1 cup lard

1 cup crunchy peanut butter

1/3 cup sugar

1 cup whole wheat flour

2 cups cornmeal

1 cup raisins, seeds or crumbled eggshells (optional)

Dump all ingredients in a pot and heat over medium heat until the lard and peanut butter melt. Stir thoroughly. Pour into a square pan or other container and let set. Slice into blocks that will fit into your suet bird feeder.

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Subscribe to NCW Audubon Wild Phlox One Year, Nine Issues - \$15 Suggested donation

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To join the National Audubon Society which also includes a subscription to the Wild Phlox, please see their website at www.audubon.org



Forecasts – do you believe them? NOAA says we are under the influence of a La Nina weather system meaning a long, cold, wet winter is predicted. Does that mean that we will have nearly six months of winter? I'm not sure I'm ready for that. Another forecast that focuses more on the eastern part of North America says that finches will be moving farther south. One article I read said that could be the same for western North America, but I was unable to confirm that. With that in mind, I search through my feeder birds everyday in hopes of seeing Common or even Hoary Redpolls or maybe Pine Grosbeaks or White-winged Crossbills. Those crossbills have already been noted in Winthrop, so my chances are better for that species. And redpolls have been observed in the Spokane area so maybe they will show up here too. In Seattle, there have been several sightings of a Snowy Owl. I don't know if it's the same one being seen repeatedly, moving around the city or if there is more than one. Hopefully, that means they will appear in our region too!

I just went through the eBird reports for NCW to put together the list below and I noticed that there seem to be more reports than usual. Does that mean more people are birding near home or maybe they have more time to file their reports? Either way, it is fun to see what others are seeing and sharing via eBird. If you have not explored eBird, I highly recommend it. The site has a great deal of information about birds all over the world. You can search by species or location. <https://ebird.org/home>

With more covid restrictions in place, people are worrying about the long cold winter looming in front of us. I have heard or read it repeatedly – how will we keep busy at home with only our household members around us? Many of us are accustomed to travel in the winter or getting together in big groups for celebrations, concerts and other events that won't happen. What do you plan to do with your time at home this winter? Are you learning a new language? Training your dog? Taking online classes? Skiing or ice skating? Perhaps taking up a musical instrument? Writing a book? Decluttering your house or your computer?

Do you like to bird the Bridgeport Bar area? A friend there said that WDFW recently installed two new outhouses! One is at highway 173 and Grange Road (Shrable Corner) and the other is at the boat launch at the Wells Wildlife Area headquarters on Moe Road. This is good news for everyone that uses the Bridgeport Bar



Northern Harrier with prey
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

NCW Recent Bird Sightings

compiled from the ncwabird email list and eBird and Tweepers by Teri J Pieper

Chelan: Cackling Geese and Snow Geese were seen at Confluence and Walla Walla Parks in Wenatchee. A flock of Bonaparte's Gull were hanging out at Walla Walla Point. A Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen in a Wenatchee yard. A Western Screech-Owl was seen on the Icicle Ridge Trail. A Peregrine Falcon was seen in the Horan Natural area. Trumpeter Swans were seen from Walla Walla Park. Lesser Goldfinches and a Fox Sparrow were seen on Number 2 Canyon Road. A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch and a Chestnut-backed Chickadee were seen near Leavenworth.

Douglas: A Red-breasted Sapsucker was seen at Lincoln Rock Park. An Anna's Hummingbird was seen in East Wenatchee. Wood Ducks, a Pacific Loon, Hermit Thrushes and Cackling Geese were seen at Rock Island Ponds. A Clark's Nutcracker was seen at Rudd Canyon Road. A Short-eared Owl was seen from the Apple Capital Loop Trail.

Ferry: Red Crossbills, a Golden Eagle and a Canada Jay were seen at Inchelium. A Brown Creeper and a Green-winged Teal were seen at the Kettle River Campground. A Western Grebe was seen at the Barnaby Creek campground. Evening Grosbeaks and Bohemian Waxwings were seen on Mikalson Road. A Bewick's Wren was seen at Swawilla Basin.

Okanogan: A Surf Scoter and a Red-necked Grebe were seen on Pearrygin Lake. At Twin Lakes, near Winthrop, birders have seen a late Pectoral Sandpiper, Snow Geese, Long-tailed Duck, Cackling Geese, Trumpeter Swans and a Northern Shrike. Western Bluebirds have been observed near Winthrop. Rough-legged Hawks were observed between Winthrop and Twisp. A Short-eared Owl was seen on the Fraser unit of the Methow Wildlife Area. White-winged Crossbills were seen at the Winthrop cemetery.

2021 NCW Audubon Society Bird Photography Contest

by Bruce McCammon, Wenatchee

The annual NCW Audubon Society bird photography contest is an opportunity for you to share your best bird photographs. Please visit the NCW Audubon website (www.ncwaudubon.org/outreach/photo-contest/) for detailed information about how to submit your photos. Email us at ncwaudubon@gmail.com if you have any questions.

The contest opens for submission of images on December 1, 2020. No images will be accepted after April 10, 2021. Winners will be announced by April 15, 2021.

Anyone can enter the contest. There are two categories: Adult and Youth (18 and under).

Photos can be from any time period but must have been taken

in Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan or Ferry counties and prominently show at least one bird.

A “Best of Show” will be awarded. For each age category, a 1st place, 2nd place, and 1 Honorable Mention will be awarded. Prizes will be a 16x20 inch print of your award-winning photo.

If the Covid-19 pandemic allows, prints of the winning photos will be displayed together with the 2020 National Audubon Photo Contest winners at the 2021 Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest.

Please share the contest information widely. We look forward to seeing your beautiful bird photos.



American White Pelicans
photo by Bruce McCammon, Wenatchee

Christmas Bird Counts 2020

by Teri Pieper, Methow Valley

The 121st Audubon Christmas Bird Count will be different from past counts. No more early morning meetings for coffee and pastries, no carpools except with household members, and no get-togethers in the evening to share a hot meal and recount the day's adventures. Life is different in covid times, even for birding. Hopefully enough precautions will happen in the coming months and we can look forward to a return to normal next year.

Proposed dates, locations and compilers' contact information in our four-county region. Some counts may not be taking more volunteers and with the continuing increase of covid cases, some counts may not occur.

December 15 - Leavenworth - Joe Veverka joe_everka@yahoo.com
December 16 - Bridgeport - Meredith Spencer merdave@homenetnw.net
December 30 - Wenatchee - Dan Stephens dstephens@wvc.edu or 679-4706
January 2 - Chelan - Steve Easley seasley@nwi.net or 682-2318
January 2 - Omak/Okanogan - Heather Findlay heather@eaglesun.net 429-8167
January 3 - Twisp - Julie Hovis jahovis711@gmail.com or 803-236-1268.

Weigh in with your support for Greater Sage-Grouse Up-listing in Washington

from Audubon Washington

As many of you are aware, Greater Sage-Grouse are in a perilous state here in Washington, with pre-fire estimates of just 770 individuals in Washington state. According to the WDFW 2020 status review, the estimated effective population size following the devastating fires in Douglas County and elsewhere is about 117 birds, with all three remaining populations being affected by fire. We are clearly at a pivotal point in sage grouse conservation in our state. Lend your support to the Department's recommendation to up-list the species from Threatened to Endangered by submitting a comment letter via their public process. Learn more at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/status-review> and submit your comments by email by December 30 to TandEpubliccom@dfw.wa.gov.

In case you missed the recent webinar on Shrub Steppe Conservation, you can view the recording online. The link is on the NCW Audubon website. Thank you to our guest speakers, WDFW Commissioner Dr. Kim Thorburn, Conservation Photographer Dave Showalter, and WDFW Biologist Dr. Mike Schroeder!

Learning New Things in the Time of Covid

drawing and article
by Jane Zanol, Wenatchee

For years I've thought about taking Marlin Peterson's Scientific Illustration class at Wenatchee Valley College. I've taken short workshops from him before at Leavenworth Spring Birdfest and through the Wenatchee River Institute. As a person who enjoys nature journaling but who hasn't had much formal art instruction, taking a college-level art class was a little intimidating. However, there was a lot I wanted to learn from Marlin, and his workshops helped me produce some of my favorite artwork. I knew this fall would be a good time to take the class since I wouldn't be doing any traveling that would disrupt my class attendance.

The twelve-week class meets on Zoom every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The projects are well-designed and creative with lots of personal choices for students to make about their artwork. There was ample time to work on the projects. I love the feedback I receive from my classmates as we discuss each other's journal pages and our formal projects. Thus far I have a pencil drawing of an *Aepyornis* (aka Elephant Bird) leg, a scratchboard moth, a watercolor botanical of a dahlia, and a watercolor sea turtle flipper. I am currently sculpting a dinosaur head.



I'm learning so much from Marlin and from my classmates, who are excellent artists. The experience is valuable, and I love working in my studio on the projects. However, there are materials and resources we cannot access from the college. At times I miss working and having my teacher standing by to make suggestions as I reach a point in the project when I am moving into unknown territory. Tonight Marlin has scheduled an hour of Zoom to check in with our questions, so I will be able to ask him about sculpting

my dinosaur head as I move from the wire and tinfoil phase to the clay and sculpting blade.

I want to share my white scratchboard project: a Black-necked Stilt. I loved seeing them last spring when I drove up the Waterville Plateau to Atkins Lake and the Heritage Road ponds.

Perhaps this winter you might consider taking a class from Wenatchee Valley College. The college is on the quarter system, and classes last 12 weeks.

I am very pleased with the way Scientific Illustration challenged me to grow as an artist in a supportive

environment. It also occupied my mind with research about dinosaurs, moths, birds, art techniques and art media in this challenging time of Covid.

Bright Beacons

As days get shorter and darker this time of year, it is always a happy sight to see bright white Trumpeter Swans arrive from the north to rest and feed on our local lakes. These beautiful birds are easy to spot as they are North America's largest native waterfowl as well as the largest swan in the world! Adult trumpeters weigh close to thirty pounds and have impressive wingspans that can exceed eight feet.

The swans we see here have likely flown south from their breeding grounds in Alaska, western

Yukon, and northern British Columbia. They form long-term pairs and stay together to raise their young. During the first year, the young birds stay with their parents for protection and to learn where migratory stopover and wintering grounds are. The swans feed on aquatic plants



photo and article by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

and are often seen up-ending and dabbling to reach their food. Trumpeter Swans are appropriately named as they have a loud call that resembles a trumpet and can be heard for up to a mile away.

We are fortunate to have Trumpeter Swans in our lives today as they were hunted to near extinction in the early 1900's. By 1940 there were only 69 swans left in the continental United States. Since that time, thanks to many conservation efforts these magnificent birds are recovering and are reoccupying areas

they have not been found in for decades. A survey in 2015 showed their population had increased to 63,000! Next time you see a Trumpeter Swan, think of it as a bright beacon of not only beauty, but one of successful bird conservation in our country.

Of Birds, Baby Talk, and *Bright Wings* (or, could anything induce you to read a book review?)

by Susan Sampson, Wenatchee

Birds learn to make their calls instinctively. Some also pattern their songs on others' noises—I've heard Steller's Jay deliver the perfect call of a Red-Tailed Hawk, listened to a mockingbird play its entire repertory, and laughed at a parrot calling a dog, "Fea! Fea!" (Spanish for "Ugly," feminine gender.)

Our babies, like birds, learn language instinctively. Even when they are too young to speak, their brains are noting tones and cadences. They whip to attention when the speakers around them change languages. Well past infancy, children feel compelled to listen when they hear the cadences and rhymes of poetry, whether in simple nursery verses, or in the hard rhythms and rhymes of Dr. Seuss: "I'm Yertle the Turtle!/ Oh marvelous me!/ for I am the ruler/of all that I see!" (That's anapestic tetrameter, to be exact.)



Snow Geese
photo by Peter Bauer, Winthrop

Even adults instinctively find the sound of poetry compelling. For one school year, I worked as a tutor in the Wenatchee Valley College "Write Lab," assisting students with their English compositions. Helping a student to recognize such devices of sound in poems as alliteration (repeated consonants) or assonance (repeated vowels), I read the assigned poem aloud to him. I read softly, but I disturbed the entire open workplace because people felt compelled to stop and listen. I wondered if that grip of poetry didn't relate to our instinctively learning language.

Poets are always drawn to sound, and hundreds of poets are drawn to birds, as well—their sounds, shapes, colors, and lives—and involve them in their compositions. Billy Collins, who is my favorite poet, has assembled an anthology of 113 bird poems by over 100 poets in *Bright Wings*. Even better, David Allen Sibley has illustrated the book with 60 pictures of the featured birds, in sketches that appear to be done with watercolor and colored pencil. Each illustration includes a factual blurb about the birds. A good

share of them are familiar locally, like crows, herons, and Cliff Swallows.

Collins believes that poetry should be understandable, and I appreciate that. Nor is he above mocking poetry that gets overheated, saying, "...a reader of nineteenth-century poetry might get the impression that poets are incapable of seeing a creature with wings without yelling 'Hark'." His choices for the book aren't opaque, but neither are they light verse like "A peculiar bird is the pelican/his beak can hold more than his belly can..." His own style features droll humor in everyday events, but for the book, he has drawn works from a couple of centuries of works with varying styles and moods. He includes works by all those Englishmen whose names we recognize from high school English class, through works by contemporary Americans like Gary Snyder, Jane Hirshfield (both influenced by Buddhism, by the way) and Mary Oliver with her "Wild Geese;" but he bypasses Poe's Raven, Keats's Nightingale, and Shelly's Skylark as being too familiar already.

Like any set of poems, *Bright Wings* is best read in short segments so that a reader can think about each poem and can let the emotional impact of each one soak in. Appropriately, one of the better times to read poems is during a flight. Short compositions are perfect to fill the delay after check-in and before boarding, and to fill the time on gray days when a flight is like riding on an elevator without elevator music.

On one of my last few long flights, I sat one row ahead of a baby who was just learning to speak. Like a baby bird calling its notes in perfect order, he repeated the same song over and over. Unfortunately, he had patterned his speech on his father's end of a telephone call: "Hello. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. F@#%!" That baby, so patterned on the tones and cadences of language, is destined to become a bird poet.

Billy Collins, ed.

Bright Wings

Columbia University Press, 2013

ISBN 978-0-231-15087-3 (paperback version)



adult and juvenile Trumpeter Swans
photo by Janet Bauer, Winthrop

Okanogan Highlands Alliance Presents a New Nature Podcast: Highland Wonders!

By Jennifer Weddle and Sarah Kliegman, Okanogan Highlands
Graphic by Diana Weddle

For the last ten years, Okanogan Highlands Alliance (OHA) has hosted an indoor speaker series about the natural history of the Okanogan Highlands at the Community Cultural Center of Tonasket. Due to public health concerns, OHA will not be sponsoring large, in-person, indoor events this year. However, we are thrilled to present a new learning opportunity that will be available for everyone, near and far, who is interested in the natural history of the Okanogan. Over the course of the winter, we will release the first season of the Highland Wonders Podcast, and it will be available wherever you normally get your podcasts.

Each episode will feature timeless stories and information from scientists and educators about the iconic wildlife that inhabits the Okanogan Highlands. The episodes will be accompanied by a nature detective story, where you can follow along as Jack, the Nature Detective, uncovers clues related to the podcast's subject. The stories and podcasts will be posted to the OHA website (okanoganhighlands.org) and on the following podcast apps: Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Breaker, Castbox, Overcast, Pocket Casts, Podcast Addict and RadioPublic. Please read, listen (rate the podcast on your favorite app) and enjoy!

Jack the Nature Detective
Season 1, Episode 1: The Phantom of the North

Meet Jack, Nature Detective: Jack is inquisitive, skeptical, creative, quirky, determined, and a friend to ALL critters. His observations of subtle clues and brilliant reasoning make him, quite possibly, one of the world's most talented nature detectives. Like most of us, Jack's understanding of the world comes from his own life experiences. He is five years old, and his investigative skills are top notch. If you were to stop by his house you might find our Nature Detective in the midst of an experiential study of squirrel movement, or determining the optimal shelter and food stores for his new pet grasshopper, named Grasshopper. Today, we will share a mystery that Jack uncovered in the Okanogan Highlands. What clues can you uncover in the story?

One day in October, Jack, the Nature Detective, is out on a hike in the Okanogan Highlands with his family. The needles of the western larch are lighting up the flank of Bonaparte Mountain with yellow, bright against the dark green of the other conifers. The afternoon is warm and Jack's whole family is enjoying the way the sunbeams filter down through the forest canopy.

Suddenly, Jack detects something. His eyes open wide and he whispers, "Who's out there? Mom? Is someone watching

us?" Everyone stops and looks around, but no one is there, just the quiet forest. But the whole family kind of feels like there is something there, so they come to a full stop and really look around. There is a fallen tree, leaning steeply against its neighbor. The trees are tall in this place - and big around. Some have broken off way up in the air. But no one sees any sign of eyes watching them. Jack's mom says, "Don't worry, Jack. Sometimes when you are outside, it really feels like something is watching you. Maybe animals are watching. The creatures that live in these woods are specially adapted to be camouflaged in this habitat. The shapes of their bodies and their colors blend right into the shapes and colors of the forest. They stay very still, so our eyes just slide right past them without even seeing them. Their camouflage keeps them safe." Just a little way farther on, Jack stops again, staring at a splotch of white on the ground, and, looking closer, he notices small gray lumps that look a bit furry, and a little bit...bony. What is this? Does it have something to do with that creepy feeling of being watched?

This is a nature mystery and, fortunately, the Nature Detective is on the job. He pulls out his sample jars, some forceps, and a hand lens, and collects the gray lumps for analysis. Back at home, Jack dons his lab coat, goggles, and protective gloves and examines the gray lumps. He uses the forceps to pull out a pile of tiny bones. He painstakingly counts the bones and declares that this is undoubtedly the droppings of a hungry rodent eater. He considers his clues: forest habitat with big trees, snags, and leaning trees, a creature that eats rodents and lives in the Okanogan Highlands. He remembers that feeling of being watched. Jack's hypothesis is that this nature mystery is likely an owl, but it could be a coyote, weasel, or snake, and he is not quite willing to dismiss the possibility that it could be a baby velociraptor or a saber tooth tiger.

Do you think Jack's owl hypothesis is correct? What other evidence would you need to verify Jack's forest find? To learn more, check out the new podcast, Highland Wonders,

produced by Okanogan Highlands Alliance. The first episode, Great Gray Owls: The Phantom of the North, featuring Matt Marsh, wildlife biologist with the US Forest Service in Tonasket, is out now. Look for episode 2 in early December. You can find the podcast wherever you normally listen to podcasts, including: Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and others.

Stay tuned! Jack will continue to solve nature mysteries on topics related to upcoming episodes of the Highland Wonders Podcast.



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Where to Go Birding	Socially distanced, of course	www.ncwaudubon.org/BirdingSite/index2.php and www.wabirdguide.org/
CDLT Field Guide	Native plants, weeds and trails around Wenatchee	www.cdlandtrust.org/trails-access/field-guide
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The beautiful photos are even nicer in color.



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