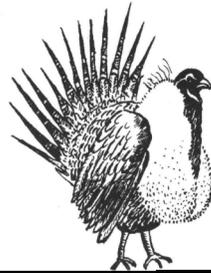


PLAINS & PEAKS



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MURIE AUDUBON

Casper Wyoming - Monthly Publication
<http://www.murieaudubon.org>

27th MURIE AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL BANQUET AND FUNDRAISER

February 5th is the deadline to purchase tickets for the Murie Audubon Society 27th Annual Banquet and Fundraiser. The banquet will take place at the Parkway Plaza on Saturday, February 9, opening at 5:30 p.m. with "happy hour". Richard Cohen will be at the grand piano.

Tickets for the banquet are \$27.50 each or \$200.00 for a table of eight. These are available from MAS board members, the Audubon Center at Garden Creek, or call Karen Anfang, 472-0278. Menu will include a traditional turkey dinner complete with pumpkin pie.

Making the evening more exciting will be a silent auction and many art and collector items for raffle. Mr. Wooden has donated two framed "Images" for auction and Daren Bulow, Master of Ceremonies, is again offering a day's fly-fishing excursion. You could also win \$150.00 worth of backyard birdseed for the mere cost of a \$5.00 "Feed Your Birds" raffle ticket - CHEEP!



CALENDAR

February 9—Annual Banquet & Fundraiser

NO GENERAL MEETING THIS MONTH

Brown Bag Lunch with the Birds—
Every Thursday, ACGC—101
Garden Creek Road

Feb. 15-18 Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb. 18—March newsletter article deadline

SAVE PAPER — READ YOUR NEWSLETTER AT MURIE'S WEBSITE, CONTACT ROSE-MARY

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Guest speaker, J.L. "Woody" Wooden, Wapiti, WY, will present "Images" – a retrospective photographic program – a reflection on his life experiences and career as veteran, commercial photographer, educator and humanitarian. Ask "Woody" and he will say his greatest photographic challenge is – BIRDS!

Banquet Chair—Karen Anfang



ALONG THE PATH- WAY WITH HARRY

Banquet! It's here. I'm excited. But, I'll write about something else. Besides, we all know that it's our big fund raiser for the year, a lot of fun, and for a good cause.

Please attend and be prepared for a lot of food and great entertainment. See ya there!

Next item is what am I going to do this year to get more involved with birding? One of my goals is to get my youngest son more interested in birding. I know for a fact he loves owls. This will be even more difficult because these birds are difficult to locate during the day and even more difficult in the dark. We have a resident Great Horned Owl in our neighborhood and he likes to hang around our house. A neighbor of ours has a couple in his barn and they can be easy to spot as they are used to being around two legged intruders. Another friend has several summer guests, Burrowing Owls, who frequently invade his backyard, by the dozens I'm told.

My oldest son still likes to go birding, but it is becoming more of a challenge to keep him interested.

Myself? I'm still saving for that new birding camera to help me see and record my sightings. I've been reading a mountain of specs to understand what makes a good birding camera along with lenses and the differences with the built in CMOS sensors. It can be mind boggling, but with a little reading effort, I'll have it sorted out pretty soon. I'll share my results when I actually find a camera that fits my skills and budget.

My original plan was to build a bracket to mate my outdated prehistoric point and

shoot digital camera to a very nice spotting scope. After reviewing several plans and the work involved to perform such a miracle, I decided it was better to buy the right equipment, though more expensive, and get better results. Of course, any camera I purchase today, will be infinitely better than the camera I purchased many, many years ago, so it's just a matter of selecting the best fit for my needs. More on this later as I don't want to bore anyone with details.

Anyway, I had a good new year, a fun CBC, and currently enjoying some of the best winter weather yet here in Casper.

See ya at the banquet!

President – Harry Martin - 307-258-1255

AUDUBON ADVENTURES

Thanks to Mary Lynn Corbett, Penny Altafter, and Jeanne and Tom Spawn for sponsoring a class of Audubon Adventures. Children will be thanking them in the spring.

Education Chair – Ann Hines

BIRD NOTES

The results of the 113th Christmas Bird Counts are now being tallied around the country; when we study these numbers, we may have a little better understanding of the impacts of the drought conditions and wildfires in various areas. Here in the Casper area, raptor numbers were down; Tree Sparrow and Pine Siskin numbers were also lower. But Common Redpolls were more numerous than they have been for several years; this was true in other states besides Wyoming. As usual for this time of year, many species are still moving around. 8 species of raptors were tallied on the December Yard Bird Project report, also 5 species of owls. Snowy Owls have again been reported south of the Canadian border,



though not in the numbers seen last year.

For the month of December, Wayne and I received 178 reports for the Yard Bird Project. 80 species were tallied from 72 locations in 17 states plus Yukon Territory. To borrow a phrase from a Nebraska birder, the redpoll-o-rama continues. Lots of Common Redpolls continue to be reported (along with a few Hoarys here and there), and like last month, this species was far and away No. 1 on the Project list for December. Steller's Jay was in second place. No. 3 was Northern Shrike; and Brown Creeper was fourth. All four of these species were among the top species reported last month.

Wyoming Yard Bird List

Casper: Earline Hittel – Red-winged Blackbird, Ed Reish – Mountain Chickadee, Barbara Reish – Brown Creeper, Ann Hines – Northern Shrike, Stacey Scott – Bohemian Waxwing, Chris Michelson – Brown Creeper, Barb Yonts – Steller's Jay, Bob Yonts – Brown Thrasher, Garden Creek Audubon Center – Common Redpoll, Rose-Mary King – Common Raven, Joanne Odasz – Common Redpoll, Frank Odasz – Fox Sparrow, Casper College Greenhouse – Common Raven, Bart Rea – Common Redpoll; **Cheyenne:** Barb Gorges – Downy Woodpecker; **Evanston:** Tim Gorman; **Orin Junction:** Donna Walgren – Bald Eagle; **Riverton:** Suzanne – Harris's Sparrow, Bob Hargis – Northern Shrike; **Ucross:** Ruth Salvatore – Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch.

Thanks to all who helped with the Yard Bird Project in December!!! Let me know what you'all have been seeing; email to Pi-ranga@bresnan.net or phone 234-7455. Hopefully, interesting birds will visit your neighborhoods.

eTIPS FROM eHARRY

TheCornellLab
ofOrnithology

Audubon

This is something new and by popular demand.

I was recently asked, "How can you see a map of a bird sighting reported in eBird?" Good question! eBird has a lot of widgets for seeing all sorts of data. Typically, visitors can

easily browse what birds were seen at what time of year and by whom. You can easily browse by state, county, and other specific data. There are other choices if you like to browse around, like, the top 100 birders for a given location. Getting a map view of a particular sighting may not be so easy.

Let's walk through an example. Suppose you are on the Wyoming Birding mailing list, and a birder such as Ann Hines, a power user of eBird, spots and reports an interesting bird. She will locate and enter the sighting on a map in addition to where, how many, and when. Where do you find the map? Maybe you want to go there to look for the bird.

1. Login to eBird.org
2. In the upper left corner, click on "Explore Data"
3. Displays: View and Explore Data
4. Click on "Arrivals and Departures"
5. Choose a Location—United States Wyoming
6. Select Entire State or Counties or IBA or Hotspots
7. For Wyoming, Select Arrivals or Departures and date range
(I recommend 2012 to 2013) and hit submit.

Now, look carefully, you will see columns labeled: "Species", "Observer", "Location", and "Date"

Clicking on any of those sorts the data in that column.

Click on "Observer" and search for Ann Hines. All of her sightings will be together, sorted by observer.

Now look for species and date. In the right column, you should see "map". Click on a "map" to see where the sighting was located.

Your browser should now show a map for the selected species, observer, and date.

If you know someone with Excel skills, copy and paste all of Ann Hines data into a spreadsheet. You can now sort by column and by a secondary column, like date.

eBird was setup to sort by birds or species, not by observer. So, a little extra work is needed by the browser to see a particular sighting.

Also note that the data is only as good as the reported data.

Was this helpful? Please let me know. If you have a question about eBird or anything related to the Internet, browsers, our website, please send your questions to eHarry at murieaudubon@yahoo.com. I will answer them in our newsletter.

Harry Martin

CASPER'S CBC RESULTS

The results of the Casper CBC held December 15, 2012 follow. There were 37 field birders and 28 feeder watchers.

Count List: Canada Goose - 1,466; Tundra Swan - cw; Gadwall - 6; A. Wigeon - 3; Mallard - 922; A. Green-winged Teal - 4; Red-head - cw; Ring-necked Duck - 2; Lesser Scaup - 2; Bufflehead - 14; Common Goldeneye - 299; Hooded Merganser - cw; Common Merganser - 53; Gray Partridge - 8; Wild Turkey - 135; W. Grebe - cw; Bald eagle - M. - 14, Imm. - 2; Northern Harrier - 3; Sharp-shinned Hawk - 7; Red-tailed Hawk - 12; Rough-legged Hawk - 18; Golden Eagle - M. - 6, Imm. - 1; A. Kestrel - 1; Merlin - cw; Prairie Falcon - 2; A. Coot - 9; Killdeer - 1; Wilson's Snipe - 4; Ring-billed Gull - 19; California Gull - 1; Herring Gull - 1; Sabine's Gull - cw; Rock Pigeon - 931; Eurasian Collared-dove - 1,616; Mourning Dove - 2; E. Screech-owl - 2; Great Horned Owl - 8; Belted Kingfisher - 2; Downy Woodpecker - 27; Hairy Woodpecker - 10; N. Flicker - red-shafted - 169, yellow-shafted - 8; N. Shrike - 1; Steller's Jay - 69; Blue Jay - 102; Pinyon Jay - 2; Clarke's Nutcracker - 22; Black-billed Magpie - 218; A. Crow - 81; Common Raven - 49; Black-capped Chickadee - 151; Mountain Chickadee - 65; Bushtit - 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch - 13; White-breasted Nuthatch - 15; Pygmy Nuthatch - 7; Brown Creeper - 3; Canyon Wren - 1; Townsend's Solitaire - 24; A. Robin - 357; Gray Catbird - 1; Brown Thrasher - 1; European Starling - 2,906; Bohemian Waxwing - 405; Cedar Waxwing - 251; A. Tree Sparrow - 35; Fox Sparrow - 1; Song Sparrow - 13; Lincoln's Sparrow - 1; Dark-eyed Junco - unknown - 117, Oregon - 22 Pink-sided - 20; Slate-colored - 19; Red-winged Blackbird - 20; W. meadowlark - 6; Common Grackle - 2; Gray-

crowned Rosy Finch - 3; Cassin's Finch - 3; House Finch - 950; Common Redpoll - 5; Pine Siskin - 7; A. Goldfinch - 62; Evening Grosbeak - 41; House Sparrow - 3,234. Total species - 75, count week - 6, total number - 15,096.

Chris Michelson reporting

BATES HOLE CBC

The Bates Hole Christmas Bird Count was on January 1. We had 12 people in the field, and 2 feeder watchers. The weather was normal January weather, with a low of 5 and a high of 27 deg. with winds about 5 mph, and about an inch of snow cover. We had 51 species and 1451 individuals, which for a rural count is a pretty good count. Of note, 15 species were represented by one bird, and another 4 species by 2 birds. The Brown-headed Cowbird has been at Milcey's feeder all fall. Ring-necked Pheasant and Sharp-shinned Hawk were count week birds. The 73 Greater Sage-Grouse brings the number down toward the level of the 70's and 80's. To my knowledge, this is the only documented Greater Sage-Grouse population that has stayed above the 70's and 80's numbers for the last decade. It would be nice if this were the cycle bottom for this population.

Count List: Canada Goose - 102; Mallard - 206; Ring-necked Duck - 1; Common Goldeneye - 35 (low); Gray Partridge - 108; Greater Sage-Grouse - 73; Turkey - 56 (low); Great Blue Heron - 1; Bald Eagle - 11 (9 A., 2 Imm.); N. Harrier - 5; Cooper's Hawk - 2; Red-tailed Hawk - 3; Ferruginous Hawk - 2; Rough-legged Hawk - 16; Golden Eagle - 9 (7 A., 2 Imm.); Merlin - 1; Wilson's Snipe - 2; Rock Pigeon - 4; Eurasian Collared-Dove - 15; Great-horned Owl - 14; Saw-whet Owl - 1; Short-eared Owl - 1; Belted Kingfisher - 7; N. Flicker - 4; Hairy Woodpecker - 1; Downy Woodpecker - 1; N. Shrike - 1; Clark's Nutcracker - 1; Black-billed Magpie - 176; Common Raven - 26; Horned Lark - 42; Black-capped Chickadee - 8; Mtn. Chickadee - 2; White-breasted Nuthatch - 1; American Dipper - 4; Townsend's Solitaire - 1; European Starling - 58; Bohemian Waxwing - 1; American Tree Sparrow - 93; Song Sparrow - 23;

Harris's Sparrow - 1; Dark-eyed Junco - 19; Red-winged Blackbird - 50; W. Meadowlark - 20; Brewer's Blackbird - 15; Brown-headed Cowbird - 1; Gray-crowned Rosy Finch - 1; House Finch - 121; Common Redpoll - 7; American Goldfinch - 37; House Sparrow - 61.

Stacey Scott reporting

Murie Audubon extends our sympathy to the Lund family in the passing of Sally Lund.

WINTER IS GOOD TIME TO SPOT UNUSUAL BIRDS

By Barb Gorges

Last winter, snowy owls irrupted. Meaning, there were sightings all across the northern tier of states. Apparently, more owls fledged than usual and there weren't enough small rodents to go around in their Arctic winter territories so they headed for more productive habitat.

This year in Cheyenne, it's the seedeaters that are irrupting, or at least coming down from the mountains.

My first inkling was the Steller's jays I saw at a friend's, up on the north edge of Cheyenne, enjoying the pine-juniper windbreak and the birdfeeders. They are dark blue with black heads, unlike the usual blue and white blue jay. Five made an appearance for the Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count Dec. 22, as they have eight out of the last 38 years.

Named for Georg Steller, the first to find this bird and describe it for science while serving as the naturalist travelling with Vitus Bering in 1740-42 to what became Alaska, Steller's jay is found in western mountains down to Central America. Both its usual plant (seeds, nuts, fruits) and animal (small vertebrates) foods must be in short supply in nearby mountains. Even if the Birds of North America lists cookies and other picnic provi-

sions as preferred food, don't be tempted. Give them black-oil sunflower seed.

Making its first-ever appearance on the Cheyenne CBC was the pygmy nuthatch. A flock was noted several weeks before on the west side of town and we were able to re-find it. The five individuals were mixed in with white-breasted and red-breasted nuthatches and mountain chickadees, all in the same pine tree.

The pygmy nuthatch is another mountain species, but it seldom comes down. It needs dead or partially dead trees with cavities, not just for nesting, but also to stay warm. Studies show families, even whole flocks, will pile into a cavity when it's cold. The birds at the bottom stay the warmest, but the entire space will be several degrees warmer than it is outside.

There must be empty food caches and a dire lack of frozen insects to pick out of the bark of mountain pine trees for pygmies to leave their known hollow trees for an urban area where we keep dead wood to a minimum.

I was thrilled to see evening grosbeaks on the Guernsey-Ft. Laramie Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 29. They were at a feeder between Guernsey and Hartville, looking like over-sized goldfinches. Another mountain species, they expanded their range east from the Rockies in the mid 1800s. It's thought that the planting of box elder (their favorite seeds) and ornamental fruit-bearing trees, and the invasion of spruce budworms, led them on.

Today they are not quite so common back east-the reason they were brought to attention as the 2012 American Birding Association Bird of the Year. They are well known for their irruptive behavior, usually every other winter. We've had a handful of them on each of nine Cheyenne CBCs over the last 38 years.

The range map for common redpolls in Douglas Faulkner's "Birds of Wyoming," shows that every winter they will show up in the northeast corner of Wyoming. They breed in the Arctic. This year, they are all over the state, according to multiple reports on the

WyoBirds e-list, with 24 present for the Cheyenne CBC.

Redpolls too, seem to show up at bird feeders on alternate winters. If you are familiar with house finches at your feeder, scan them closely for redpolls, slightly smaller, streaky brown birds with a small red spot on the forehead and sometimes a wash of pale pink on the breast.

On their home turf, redpolls eat the very small spruce and birch seeds. At your feeder, small seeds like white millet would be a good replacement.

In his report of the Cheyenne CBC, compiler Greg Johnson said the rarest sighting was a red-bellied woodpecker, a species of the eastern U.S., particularly the southeast. The first ever recorded sighting of one in Wyoming was in Cheyenne in 1992. Then there were two other sightings of single birds in eastern Wyoming in 1993 and 2002, followed by three sightings at the Wyoming Hereford Ranch outside Cheyenne in 2002, 2006 and 2008.

Irruptive is not the explanation for the appearance of this woodpecker in Cheyenne. Lost is more like it, though lost seems to be coming a regular habit. Officially, the term is "vagrant." This individual may have gotten caught in some weather in October and was lucky enough to find Mike Schilling's feeder, where it has been since.

There is only one way to see species uncommon for Cheyenne and that is to look. A well-stocked feeder helps, but the best way is to get outside and keep your eyes open. And when you see some unusual bird, tell someone.

AUDUBON CONVENTION

The gathering will take place July 12-16, 2013 at Skamania Lodge, 45 minutes east of Portland, Oregon, near Stevenson, Washington in the spectacular Columbia River Gorge.

The official convention web site will open in early February, chock full of information about workshops and field trips, schedules, speakers, entertainment and local birds. In the meantime, you can find essential

details at www.audubon.org/2013convention.

Online early bird registration will open February 11 and we will send the registration link well in advance. The registration fee will be \$300/person and includes entry to weekend program sessions along with lunches, dinners and snacks from lunch on Friday through lunch on Monday, except for dinner on Sunday.

Friday and Monday of the convention weekend will feature exciting field trips and full/half day workshops. A detailed list will be included with registration. There will be an additional charge for field trips; most full and half day workshops will be offered at no cost to registrants.

You will need to register for housing directly with one of three convention hotels; they will begin accepting convention reservations on February 11. Each convention hotel offers complimentary breakfast. You will be able to view all hotel details on the Web site in advance of registration opening. Complimentary shuttles will be available between hotels and the convention location throughout the convention period. For budgeting purposes: shared rooms (two double beds) are available for \$125-\$145/night while a single room will be \$125-\$135/night. Additional housing options (including cabins and camping) are available nearby and we will provide details about those alternatives as well.

The closest airport to Skamania is Portland International Airport. Regular shuttles between the airport and convention hotels will be provided at no charge from Thursday afternoon through Tuesday morning. To help your travel plans, a schedule of airport and hotel shuttles will be available on the convention website. Driving directions will also be posted.

If you would like to receive regular communications about the convention, just send your email address and full name to convention@audubon.org. Please direct any questions to that address as well.

Thank you very much, Lynn Teneffoss

VP State Programs and Chapter Services
Audubon Chapter Services