

Wallowa Valley — Leader: Ken Chamberlain

January 21-22, 2017

A group of 8 OBA members visited various sites in the Wallowa Valley area from our base in Enterprise, Oregon. Over two days we visited a wide range of habitats ranging from near the town of Wallowa in the lower valley to McCully Creek area east of Joseph, finding 59 species.

The entire area had 1 ft or more of snow cover, temperatures ranged from 17 to 32. All roads were packed snow, all wheel drive or better were need for the higher elevation county roads. On Saturday we had clear cold weather that provided awesome winter views of the valley and Eagle Cap mountains. Sunday, on the other hand, presented us with less ideal conditions, including strong winds and snow much of the day.

Highlights included:

At the Enterprise WMA pond on Friday in the very late afternoon some of the group observed a good variety of waterfowl including HOODED MERGANSERS, NORTHERN PINTAIL and a few PIED-BILLED GREBE. This is some of the only open water in the valley.

A few hundred SNOW BUNTINGS and many HORNED LARKS in mixed flocks along Elk Mountain Rd. All agreed that it was a treat to view the flying mixed flocks of several hundred birds against the winter blue sky. These flocks were generally associated with the open ground and remaining feed created by cattle feeding operations. We found flocks several locations, the locations subject to change as the cattle are moved from pasture to pasture.

At feeders along Elk Mtn. Road and Getting Road we found small numbers of GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCHES and AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS. These birds were picked out of the mixed flocks frequenting the feeders.

We found large flocks of BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS in both Enterprise and Joseph. One flock in Joseph on Sunday included about 120 birds. The birds were observed flying around town. Once located in the air we literally “chased” them a few blocks to where they were feeding. These flocks often perched in trees, then made intense and repeated feeding visits to berry trees and bushes. We observed them feeding on hawthorn and western juniper tree berries. In Joseph a MERLIN hunted and pursued the flock, we saw the same merlin in several locations around town. Again, lots of movement in these flocks. A well stocked feeder was at a brick house SW of the intersection of Joseph and 2nd in Joseph.

Long drives on Golf Course Rd, Leap Lane, and School Flat Roads yielded scatted flocks GRAY PARTRIDGE, HORNED LARKS, a small group of GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCHES, a single AMERICAN TREE SPARROW, best of all was a close prolonged look at a perched SHORT-EARED OWL.

Pete’s Pond in Enterprise had a large number of waterfowl returning in the late afternoon including HOODED MERGANSERS and AMERICAN WIDGON, also, the resident MUTE SWAN.

The area agricultural fields and borders NE of Joseph were generally slow for raptors with only scattered ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS, GOLDEN EAGLES, BALD EAGLES and RED-TAILED HAWKS, KESTRELS, and one probable PRAIRIE FALCON. We searched the area for the Gyrfalcon that has been see in the last few years without success. I could speculate that the deep snow cover and lack of open ground limited the raptors.

We visited McCully Creek Snow-Park and area on Sunday in windy and snowy without much luck, some in the group saw MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES, GRAY JAYS, and RED-BREADED NUTHATCHES. I revisited the site on Monday morning and found a small group of four PINE GROSBELLS, a NORTHERN-PYGMY OWL, CLARK’S NUTCRACKERS, CASSIN’S FINCHES among others. (photos

and sound recordings on eBird)

Wallowa Lake is almost completely frozen. The only open water is at the inlet of Wallowa River where there were several AMERICAN DIPPERS. A single GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE was found associating with several domestic Greylag type geese in a calving pen along Eggleston Rd. east of Hurricane Creek Rd. In the late dusk we called in a female GREAT HORNED OWL. She responded with a cool squeak call several times from near the intersection of Pine Tree Rd and Century Lane.

On my departure I found a single juvenile TUNDRA SWAN with some waterfowl in a small spring fed open water pond near where Rock Creek crosses Highway 82. Several AMERICAN DIPPERS were found along the Wallowa River canyon stretch, several were singing loudly and often.

We posted at least 30 eBird checklists, they can be found at eBird.org, a big thank you to Chuck Gates for keeping the lists. Nagi Aboulenein again took some great photos which are posted at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/aboulenein/sets/72157679440829336/> Also, many thanks for all the great spotting by participants.

Bird On!
Ken Chamberlain
OBA Field Trip Coordinator



Brownsmead Area (Clatsop County)
Leader: Mike Patterson

March 18, 2017

The OBA Brownsmead Field Trip on March 18 was led by Mike Patterson. During the morning we visited the Twilight Eagle Sanctuary overlook, Svensen Island, Brownsmead including Jackson/Pentilla Unit, Bling Slough Unit and Rudat unit, we then moved on to the Big Creek Fish Hatchery. The group enjoyed abundant rain and wind all day.

We observed 74 species. Notable were 85 Tundra Swans, 6 Rufous Hummingbirds, many Snow Geese, Canvasbacks, Greater Yellowlegs, Cinnamon Teal, Great Egrets (uncommon in the county), a Turkey Vulture, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a Merlin.

This American Dipper was photographed at the Big Creek Hatchery.



Medford Area and Flammulated Owl Search

June 10, 2017

Trip Leader: Russ Namitz

A group of 9 OBA members participated in the OBA Medford Area and Flammulated Owl Search trip on Saturday June 10, 2017. We were well led by Russ Namitz. We met at 4pm north of Medford and birded north Rogue Valley areas for southern Oregon specialty birds. At dusk and into the evening we owled the hills south of Gold Hill. We experienced blustery wind with fairly unsettled conditions in the valley, later in the mountains we had wind, rain, and cooler than normal conditions.

Valley birding: Our first stop was at Denman WMA--Whetstone Pond where as we drove into the parking lot we were greeted by a GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE flying over. We later observed both a male and a female attending a nest with several heard begging juveniles of this species. Also at the lake were AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, GREEN HERON, HOODED MERGANSER and a variety of water/wetland birds. We proceeded to a Nature Conservancy parcel along Newland Road where NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD, WESTERN MEADOWLARK, WESTERN BLUEBIRD and other open county birds. Lower Table Rock was our next stop where a short walk gave us ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER and 6 OAK TITMOUSE. Moving along to Tou Velle State Park produced a COOPER'S HAWK (carrying prey, maybe to a nearby nest?), VAUX'S SWIFT, PEREGRINE FALCON, and a pair of confiding BROWN CREEPERS at close range. A short stop a Kirtland ponds was uneventful.

Forest birding: We drove up the Gall's Creek drainage making a few stops in the dusk for passerine birds. One productive stop was at a clear-cut area and adjacent forest approximately 7 miles up. Here a bit of owl tooting by Russ allowed us the record OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER, HERMIT THRUSH, 3 MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER, HERMIT WARBLER, WESTERN TANAGER, and BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK. As it became dark we visited a number of location looking for our target Flammulated Owl and also Common Poorwill, focusing most our efforts on areas with open pine and fir mix on generally west slopes. Rain and windy conditions were marginal for owling. At our first stop were happy and encouraged to hear a WESTERN SCREECH OWL softly singing. Subsequent stops were unproductive despite Russ's repeated best efforts and enthusiasm. We wrapped up our search at about 10:40pm due to the conditions and distance to other likely sites. We will look forward to searching this area another time in better conditions. In total, we recorded 60 species for the trip; all sites and birds were posted to eBird.

Many thanks to Russ for leading us and also to all the very enthusiastic participants who joined the trip. Next time!

The next OBA Field Trip will visit natural cavity nesting Purple Martins in Lane County with Lorelle Sherman on July 15. Details to be announced soon.

Ken Chamberlain
OBA Field Trip Coordinator

