

Trip Report – Wallowa Valley
January 26-28, 2024
Oregon Birding Association



Nine people participated in this OBA trip. Mike Hansen, retired ODFW biologist and birder from Joseph, joined me and seven participants. The weather was cooperative after weeks of ice storms in the Gorge. Roads were muddy but firm. Fields were snow-covered, which drives birds to the roads for grit. Fog came and went each day, playing on the mountains.



My car with two passengers arrived early enough on Friday afternoon to drive out Golf Course Rd from Enterprise and find a few Gray-crowned Rosy Finches. We continued around the loop to Leap Lane and were lucky enough to see three Gray Partridge at close range.



We met the group for supper, then two cars ventured to Williamson Lane to call for owls. We heard three Great Horned and one Western Screech Owl.

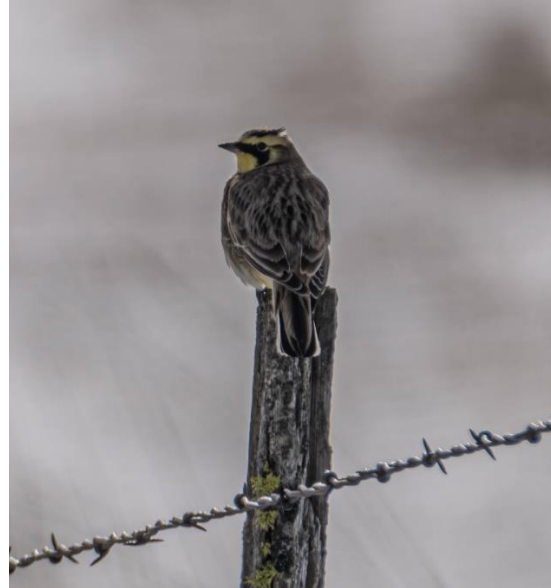
Saturday morning the whole group gathered for breakfast, then set off under overcast skies to Alder Slope, SW of Enterprise. Mike Hansen obtained permission to visit a home in the pines where we found Mountain Chickadee, Brown Creeper, all three nuthatches, and rain. Another home had California Quail.

At the Enterprise Fishhatchery ponds we saw two Bald Eagles, some ducks, three Virginia Rails, and heard a Bewick's Wren – a species I had not heard there previously. The rain eased off as we continued down to Lostine to the home of Steve and Joella Ament. A perched Sharp-shinned Hawk kept small birds away, but we saw Barn Owls in the barn. A tour of their beautiful house was a treat. Steve is a master wood-worker. A Snow Goose was seen flying over nearby fields.

We drove School Flat Rd from west to east, finding a Prairie Falcon and a Golden eagle. A swarm of 85 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches swirled in a quarry. Continuing to Leap Ln, we found 12 Gray Partridge. The play of layers of clouds on the Wallowa Mountains was ever-changing and spectacular.

After a pit stop in Enterprise, we drove out to the top of OK Gulch (start of Zumwalt Rd) where we found 30 Snow Buntings at the goat farm. At the end of the afternoon we opted to evade the fog by going up to Wallowa Lake. On the lake we saw rafts of ducks, including one Redhead. At the inlet we found the predictable Dippers. At the marina we found two pair of Barrow's Goldeneyes and four Common Mergansers.

After breakfast on Sunday we visited Pete's Pond in Enterprise to sort through ducks, then headed out Golf Course Rd. Dense fog limited our ability to see very far, but we eked out a few Horned Larks and Gray-crowned Rosy Finches on the fences and road's edge. When we turned back to town the fog lifted to reveal the sky and the beautiful view of the Wallowa Mountains. We found finches and larks again.



We found a Golden Eagle, a Northern Harrier, and a Rough-legged Hawk. Then we found 250 Snow Buntings! The flighty flock came toward the road, sat, flew, sat, then swirled above our heads with a roar of wings. A thrill for everyone.





Back in Enterprise we drove around town looking for waxwings. We found a few Cedar Waxwings and Robins. Then we found a tree full of birds two blocks away. We rushed up to park and get out to witness 300 Bohemian Waxwings!



We stayed for much of an hour, talking to the homeowner, neighbors, and passers-by, looking in scopes and taking photos. It was a capstone to the trip.

About noon we said good-bye to Mike and headed down the valley. We made one last loop off the highway on Bramlet Lane to see the 100 Wild Turkeys scattered there, plus a Yellow-bellied Marmot. Our last bird was a Kingfisher on a wire as we reached Hwy 82 and headed for home.

Collectively, we tallied 68 species.

Participants were Clayton Crofton, Barbara Dolan, Darren Ferris, Francene Grewe, Andrea Pepitone, Annie Tucker, and Duke Tufty. Thanks to all of you for your great camaraderie and excellent spotting. It was a congenial group.

Paul Sullivan



Townsend's Solitaire

Photo credit: all photos Francene Grewe