

***From waterfowl to woodpeckers to warblers, Walla Walla delivered a wonderful WOS conference!***

***By Jim Danzenbaker***

It's hard to believe that the WOS annual conference in Walla Walla is already a memory. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did even though the pace was sometimes frenetic, days were long but filled with pleasant conversation, and the field trips had binoculars and spotting scopes operating in overdrive.

175 of us birded the area that Mike and MerryLynn Denny call home and I am forever grateful to them for showing us the various nooks and crannies of Walla Walla and the surrounding counties. Bird highlights were many and I know that on each of the field trips that I led, I heard those words that every field trip leader loves to here.... "That's a Lifer"! Of course there may have been many more but the *zen* birders among us stayed silent.

Our 59 field trips visited habitats as diverse as the forested slopes of the Blue Mountains to the sage/shrubland of Rattlesnake Mountain to riparian corridors along the Walla Walla, Snake and Columbia Rivers to the isolated oases of Washtucna and Lyons Ferry. Our 37 talented, patient, and ever-helpful leaders and the WOS conference attendees recorded 190 species (listed below) including several only seen on going to and returning from Walla Walla trips.

Perhaps the highlight came on the last day when, on Mike and MerryLynn's Biscuit Ridge trip, Shep Thorp, Barbara Webster, and Ruth Godding tracked down an odd calling warbler that turned out to be a male Black-throated Blue Warbler on territory - a WOW bird if ever there was one! Many saw this wayward warbler the following day so it will forever be immortalized in WOS photos and memories. Other conference highlights included several sightings of Great Gray Owls found in different ways, a Chestnut-sided Warbler and American Redstart in the vagrant oasis of Lyons Ferry, and a very cooperative Virginia Rail family that provided stunning views to many at McNary NWR. Owling trips were successful with highlights being a cooperative family of recently fledged Western Screech Owls being fed by attentive adults (scope views at 40 feet) and incredible shows of Barn Owls at Bennington Lake. I believe a high percentage of WOS conference participants visited the Bennington Barn Owls.

Our congratulations at the Saturday night banquet were extended to Louis Kreemer, our Patrick Sullivan Young Birder's Fund recipient. I know we'll be seeing Louis and his family at future birding events.

In honor of Gene Hunn's commitment to many aspects of Washington birding, he was honored with the Zella M. Shultz Lifetime Achievement Award.

Our two speakers, Tim Parker and Christi Norman, introduced us to the challenges that sagebrush species are facing and ways that we can become involved in citizen science projects like sagebrush bird surveys. Thanks Tim and Christi!

I know that I speak for the WOS Board when I thank Mike and MerryLynn Denny for their tireless efforts in organizing all the field trips - their local knowledge helped many out of town field trip leaders learn the routes that produced the birds. The incomparable Shep Thorp did an incredible job with all things registration both before and during the conference and in lining up both of our speakers. I don't think I heard a single complaint about anything going wrong on that aspect of the conference - a win in and of itself! Ann Brinly and Paula Kennedy did an outstanding job of producing the registration packets so that we all knew where we should be and when. Amy Powell did a masterful job of presenting all the information on the website so that we could easily navigate through the long list of field trips so we could choose which birds and habitats we wanted to see.

Our amazing group of 37 field trip leaders from locations close and far can't be thanked enough. Without them, the field trips would not have happened, the final bird tally would not have reached an incredible 190, and far fewer "Life Bird moments" would have been enjoyed.

The real unsung hero of the conference was our own WOS President, Penny Rose. Hard to believe that she could keep the helm of the ship sailing toward a successful conference while preparing for her wedding a week before the conference and moving her residence. Congratulations Penny and Scott! It also takes a tremendous amount of talent to turn a rather inconvenient power outage into a time for socializing with your fellow conference goers!

To the WOS membership who attended the conference, I appreciated your ability to meet in a parking lot at 5:15 in the morning, volunteer to drive, ask questions, and provide pleasant conversation as we motored along in search of the next bird.

A shout out also to Barbara Webster, our esteemed WOS Treasurer, who kept a keen eye on all funds which included assurance that the funds were secured and handled in the most responsible way possible. Thanks for ensuring that the fiduciary goals of the membership were protected at all times.

Finally, I want to give a big “thanks” to the WOS officers and board members who, either directly or indirectly, led this conference to the success that it became. The conference couldn’t have happened without you! Whether it was providing guidance at the registration desk or mingling with the attendees, you were all amazing and highly appreciated volunteers! This conference was truly a collaborative effort.

Here’s the list of birds recorded from June 2-6 (boldface are write-ins on the master checklist and italicized birds are species of special interest):

Canada Goose	Gray Flycatcher
Wood Duck	Dusky Flycatcher
Gadwall	Pacific-slope Flycatcher
American Wigeon	Cordilleran Flycatcher* - <i>N. Fork of Coppei Creek and Bluewood</i>
Mallard	<b><i>Ash-throated Flycatcher</i></b> – 6/6 <i>WW to Yakima trip</i>
Blue-winged Teal	Say's Phoebe
Cinnamon Teal	Western Kingbird
Northern Shoveler	Eastern Kingbird
Northern Pintail	<i>Loggerhead Shrike – Rattlesnake Mt.</i>
Green-winged Teal	Cassin's Vireo
Redhead	Warbling Vireo
Ring-necked Duck	Red-eyed Vireo
<b>Greater Scaup</b>	Gray Jay
Lesser Scaup	Steller's Jay
<b>Bufflehead</b>	Black-billed Magpie
Common Merganser	<b><i>Clarke's Nutcracker</i></b> – <i>Bluewood and Oregon Butte</i>
Ruddy Duck	American Crow
California Quail	Common Raven
Chukar	Horned Lark
Gray Partridge	Tree Swallow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Violet-green Swallow
Ruffed Grouse	N. Rough-winged Swallow
Wild Turkey	Bank Swallow
Pied-billed Grebe	Cliff Swallow
<b>Horned Grebe</b>	Barn Swallow
Western Grebe	Black-capped Chickadee
Clark's Grebe	Mountain Chickadee
Double-crested Cormorant	Chestnut-backed Chickadee
American White Pelican	Red-breasted Nuthatch
American Bittern	White-breasted Nuthatch
Great Blue Heron	Brown Creeper
Great Egret	Rock Wren
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Canyon Wren
Turkey Vulture	House Wren
Osprey	Pacific Wren
Bald Eagle	Marsh Wren

Northern Harrier	Bewick's Wren
Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Dipper
Cooper's Hawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet
<i>Northern Goshawk – Jasper Mountain</i>	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Swainson's Hawk	Western Bluebird
Red-tailed Hawk	Mountain Bluebird
Ferruginous Hawk	Townsend's Solitaire
Golden Eagle	Veery
Virginia Rail	Swainson's Thrush
American Coot	Hermit Thrush
Black-necked Stilt	American Robin
American Avocet	Varied Thrush
Killdeer	Gray Catbird
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Sage Thrasher – Rattlesnake Mt.</i>
Lesser Yellowlegs	European Starling
Long-billed Curlew	Cedar Waxwing
<b>Dunlin</b>	Orange-crowned Warbler
Wilson's Snipe	Nashville Warbler
Wilson's Phalarope	MacGillivray's Warbler
Franklin's Gull	Common Yellowthroat
Ring-billed Gull	Yellow Warbler
Western Gull	<b>American Redstart – Lyons Ferry</b>
California Gull	<b>Chestnut-sided Warbler – Lyons Ferry</b>
Glaucous-winged Gull	Yellow-rumped Warbler
<b>Bonaparte's Gull</b>	<b>Black-throated Blue Warbler – Biscuit Ridge</b>
Caspian Tern	Townsend's Warbler
Forster's Tern	Wilson's Warbler
Rock Pigeon	Yellow-breasted Chat
Band-tailed Pigeon	Grasshopper Sparrow
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Chipping Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Brewer's Sparrow
Barn Owl	Lark Sparrow
Western Screech-Owl	Fox Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	Dark-eyed Junco
Burrowing Owl	White-crowned Sparrow
<i>Great Gray Owl – Oregon Butte and Biscuit Ridge</i>	<i>Sagebrush Sparrow – Rattlesnake Mt.</i>
<i>Long-eared Owl – 6/5 Lewis and Clark Trail Park</i>	Vesper Sparrow
Common Nighthawk	Savannah Sparrow
Vaux's Swift	Song Sparrow
White-throated Swift	Green-tailed Towhee
Black-chinned Hummingbird	Spotted Towhee
Rufous Hummingbird	Western Tanager
Calliope Hummingbird	Black-headed Grosbeak
Belted Kingfisher	Lazuli Bunting
Lewis's Woodpecker	Red-winged Blackbird
Williamson's Sapsucker	Tricolored Blackbird
Red-naped Sapsucker	Western Meadowlark
Downy Woodpecker	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Hairy Woodpecker	Brewer's Blackbird
<i>Am. Three-toed Woodpecker – Oregon Butte</i>	Brown-headed Cowbird

Northern Flicker	Bullock's Oriole
Pileated Woodpecker	House Finch
American Kestrel	Cassin's Finch
Prairie Falcon	Red Crossbill
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Pine Siskin
Western Wood-Pewee	Lesser Goldfinch
Willow Flycatcher	American Goldfinch
Least Flycatcher	Evening Grosbeak
Hammond's Flycatcher	House Sparrow

If you haven't already done so, please fill out the conference evaluation at [http://www.planetreg.com/attendee\\_register\\_input\\_B.asp](http://www.planetreg.com/attendee_register_input_B.asp). Please be sure to let us know your thoughts on where our next annual conference should be: Vancouver, WA, Bellingham, WA, or Astoria, OR (to access Ilwaco and extreme southwest Washington) .....or somewhere else.

We look forward to seeing you at next year's conference!