

The

Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

January 2011

Rainier Audubon Presents
Monday January 17, 2011
6:30 PM

From Ridge to Reef in Tompotika: Saving the maleo bird and other conservation success stories from Indonesia

Marcy Summers & Ellen Kritzman

Marcy Summers, native Washingtonian and a former senior scientist for The Nature Conservancy, was living and working in Indonesia when she stumbled across a very special place and people on Indonesia's island of Sulawesi. The Tompotika peninsula is home to one of the last remaining communal nesting grounds for the culturally-important yet endangered maleo bird, as well as the world's richest coral reefs, pristine tropical forests, unique and endangered wildlife, and many other natural wonders. In the last four years, an unlikely alliance of Pacific Northwest conservationists, Tompotika villagers, and Indonesian scientists called The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation, or "AITo," has come together and made great strides in conserving



this remarkable natural heritage. Marcy will present stories and photos of how the decline of the maleo has been reversed, how poaching of sea turtles and fruit bats is being halted, and how Tompotika's great tropical forests are being saved from destruction. AITo was recently honored with the 2010 Conservation Award from Mongabay.com, a premiere website of international environmental news and information.

Ellen Kritzman—Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (AITo)

Marcy Summers—Director of the Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (AITo)

www.tompotika.org

Environmental Priorities Coalition Legislative Workshop

When: Saturday, January 8th, 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Where: Seattle Pacific University, Gwinn Commons

Environmental Priorities Coalition Lobby Day

When: Tuesday, February 15, 8:30 AM – 6:00 PM

Where: United Churches, Olympia, 110th East 11th Ave

Rainier Audubon programs are held at

Federal Way United Methodist Church, 29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001
(in unincorporated Auburn)

Directions: In Federal Way, take 320th St. EAST past The Commons, crossing over I-5 and Military Rd.

At 321st St, turn left. Stay on 321st as it becomes 51st Ave. So. Follow 51st Ave. to 296th. Church will be on your left.

Nominations open for Board of Directors

The Society Bylaws stipulate that there will be 6 to 9 directors with at least two directors elected each year to three-year terms. This means that at least two directors will be elected each year.

We currently have 7 directors on the board, with Steve Feldman's position expiring this year. This means we can elect three new directors this year. If you are interested, please notify one of the Board members (see page 2). Our annual Membership Meeting is in May.

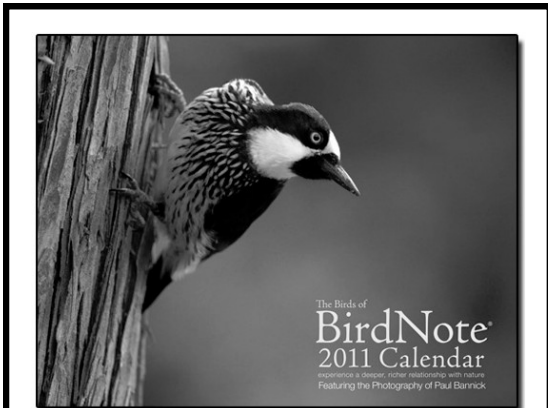
President's Message by Nancy Streiffert

By the time you get this, it will be 2011! The 2010 Christmas bird count will have been completed and the compiling of the sightings lists will be in progress by Mark Freeland – our vital link between the bird counters in the field and at home and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology where all the numbers go to be crunched by their computers. The data is then available to the many people – researchers, students, the public and agencies that use it to make important decisions about habitat, climate change, resource management and many other things I can't even guess at! Thank you to everyone who helped with this huge citizen science project. As of December 14, there are 46 people signed up to count in the field and about 15 signed up to count at their feeders.



Did you make any New Year's Resolutions? Maybe you will attend more member meetings to enjoy the camaraderie, good food and great programs. Maybe you will write an article on a bird or outdoor

topic that interests you for the Heron Herald. Maybe you will volunteer to help out at an event that introduces Rainier Audubon and its programs to the public. Maybe you will participate in more bird walks. Maybe you will contribute an idea for a future program. Maybe you will volunteer to bring snacks to share at one of our meetings. Whatever you do, I hope you will continue to be an active and engaged member! Thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way during this past year – you are what makes RAS great! - Nancy



BIRDNOTE CALENDARS ON SALE AT OUR JANUARY MEETING FOR \$10!

Win a Backyard Habitat Consultation!

Rainier Audubon Society is offering a chance for you to win a Backyard Habitat Consultation! An expert native plant specialist/bird enthusiast will come to your "estate", of any size, and help you design a beautiful, water-efficient, bird and wildlife-friendly habitat that both you and the critters you share space with will enjoy.

Tickets are \$1 each and will be on sale starting September 18th at the Frog Frolic at Shadow Lake Bog and from then on at our meetings and events until the drawing at our April meeting. Enter early and often! If you are too far outside our RAS boundaries or would prefer, you can choose Russell Link's book, *Living with Wildlife*. Questions? Nancy at nancy_streiffert@hotmail.com



RAINIER AUDUBON OFFICERS

President	Nancy Streiffert	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
Treasurer	Jim Tooley*	253-854-3070
Secretary	Heather Gibson	253-856-9812
Program Chair	Dale Meland*	253-946-1637
Field Trip Chair	Carol Schulz	206-824-7618
Membership Chair	Pat Toth*	206-767-4944
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Webmaster	Nancy Hertzell	253-255-1808
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Education Chair	Annette Tabor*	253-927-3208
Christmas Bird Count Coordinator	Nancy Streiffert	253-796-2203
Board Member	Max Prinsen*	425-432-9965
Board Member	Erin Wojewodski-Prinsen*	425-432-9965

*Also serves as Board Member.

Board meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of each month and are open to all members.

Birding Costa Rica in November

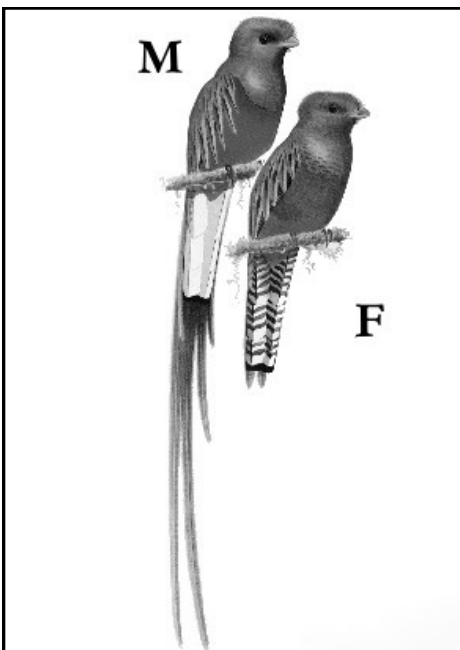
By: Pat Toth

Early this past November, my husband, Andy and I were extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to go on a birding expedition to the beautiful country of Costa Rica. After arriving in the capital city of San Jose' and spending the night, we met the rest of our determined little group, our intrepid guide, Jose' and our most diligent driver, Raphael, the next morning eager to begin our adventure.

Piling into the van that would carry us over mountain passes, through valleys of coffee plantations and farmland, past quaint villages and up into the Cloud Forest for the next ten days, we set off for our first destination, Savegre Lodge.

Located at seven thousand two hundred feet above sea level, this lodge is actually a family farm with beautiful gardens, surrounded by tropical cloud forest. It is one of the best locations to observe the Resplendent Quetzal, one of the most magnificent birds in the Americas.

We learned that the quetzals love to eat avocados and will go where the fruit is



Resplendent Quetzals

ripe.

In Costa Rica, they grow fifteen different kinds of avocados some no larger than the tip of your thumb and, of course, they all ripen at different times. Since the avocados in the orchard at Savegre were not ripe, we ventured up the road to a farm owned by a wonderful man named Mario. After climbing a very long, steep hillside we spotted a pair of quetzals in a large tree. These birds are absolutely incredible! The male and female are both a striking turquoise blue with iridescent green/gold and blue/violet. The male has a head crest, an incredibly intense red breast and a twenty-six inch long, trailing forked tail. The female does not have a crest and her tail is long and rectangular with black and white stripes. They are the largest birds in the trogon group.

We watched them in awe for quite a long time and eventually saw a total of three males and two females. Absolutely fabulous!

We stayed at Savegre a total of three wonderful nights and besides the quetzals, observed many more fantastic birds including a variety of hummingbirds, mountain gems, flower piercers, tanagers, finches and warblers. We also saw a Collared Trogon, a Black-thighed Grosbeak, an Emerald Toucanet and even went on a special excursion to see a Volcano Junco.

Next we were off to spend two days at Rancho Naturalista with its views across the valley to a smoking Volcano Turrialba. The backyard of the lodge boasts two "feeder trees" which the staff fills with bananas each morning. The fruit attracts a variety of birds including several tanagers,



orenpendulas, warblers, Chachalacas and Keel-billed Toucans. All along the back balcony of the building are several hummingbird feeders constantly aswarming with hummers from sun-up to sundown. We saw Green Hermits, Green-violet Ears, Green-breasted Mangos, Sabrewings, White-necked Jacobins, Violet-crowned Wood Nymphs, Magnificents and Rufous-tailed hummingbirds but did not spot the elusive and somewhat shy Snow-capped hummer that the lodge is famous for. To find it, we took a short hike just before sunset down into the forest to the "bathing pools". Not soon after we arrived, a male Snow-capped appeared, brilliant purple with a shimmering white cap aglow in the fading light. It was quite magical!

Other bird highlights at Rancho included a White-collared Manakin, a Blue-crowned Mott Mott and a Rufous Mott Mott.

After two glorious days of birding we were on the road again to Monteverde to explore the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve and surrounding area. The Poco a Poco Mountain Hotel became our home base for a few days. The first night we were there, we went on a night walk at a nearby reserve and saw coatis, an orange-kneed tarantula, a blunt-nosed vine snake, a little fruit bat, a two-toed sloth, pygmy gray frogs, a golden orb spider and a Blue-crowned Mott Mott and a pair of Orange-

(Continued on page 6)



Our fall field trips were quite successful. Steve Johnson's beaches field trip in Oct saw a Barred Owl at Dumas Bay. Carol Schulz's after-Thanksgiving trip to NE Seattle gave our group good views of 15 Bohemian Waxwings perched right above us at Magnuson Park. These are rare in King County and many birders came out to view them. Roger Orness and Charlie Wright's trip to Kittitas in early December saw good numbers of raptors including a Prairie Falcon, 3 different Chukar flocks down near Vantage, and some American White Pelicans on the Columbia River.

Here are some more trips for January and February. Come on out and join us! —Carol

Soos Creek Owl Prowl

Saturday Night, February 19, 2011

10:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Leaders: Joe and Liz Miles

Join Friends of Soos Creek Park volunteers Joe and Liz Miles for this late night program and walk exploring the world of owls. We'll start indoors for the first hour learning calls, ID, and info about our local owls, then venture outdoors to prowl for owls. There is limited space for this program. Reservations are required. Best for adults and children over 13 years. Group size is limited to 15. The owls program is sponsored by Kent City Recreation Dept.

Meet: Meet at the Soos Creek Park Maintenance Shop. Soos Creek Park/Trail 24810 148th Avenue SE, Kent.

Directions: Take James Street east from Kent. To reach James St, exit I-167 at Willis, turn east to Central, and North to James. Travel east on James as it becomes SE 240th St. Travel about 4 miles, as 240th dips and turns downhill. Turn right (south) on 148th Ave near the bottom of the hill. The Soos Creek maintenance yard will be down the road about ¼ mile on the left at a barn and chainlink-fenced parking lot.

Sign-up: Call Kent Commons, Kent City Parks and Recreation, 253-856-5000. This trip FILLS EARLY. Please register in advance. For further info: E-mail or call Joe Miles, friendsofsooscreekpark@q.com, (253)-639-0123. Joe can answer your questions but cannot arrange the sign-ups.

Raptors of the Auburn/Kent Valley

Sunday, Feb 6, 2011

8:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Leader: Roger Orness



Roger Orness will take us to prime raptor viewing spots in the valley during this very-popular field trip. Past trips have been productive for falcons, accipiters and many red-tails to compare the different color morphs. Eagles could be occupying their nest and there is a chance for an early nesting red-tail, if we are lucky.

Meet: We will meet at the Auburn Super Mall parking lot north of McDonalds on 15th SW off I-167 at 08:00 and start at 08:30. We will car pool and return by 2 PM.

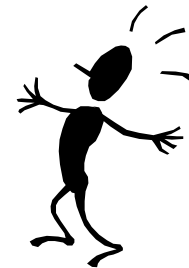
Bring: Bring your lunch, drinks and snacks, dress warm for the weather and be prepared for a short walk on a level gravel road inside a closed area of the Kent ponds.

Space is limited, so email or call Roger soon to reserve your spot.

Sign-up: Roger Orness, r.orness@comcast.net, 253-922-7516, 253-312-6561(cell)

Birds on the Eastside

(Surprise Trip)



Saturday, Jan 22, 2011

8:30 AM to Early Afternoon

Leader: Amy Schillinger-Powell

As of our newsletter deadline, Amy was still scouting out areas on the Eastside for her January field trip. She will be looking for good habitats such as lakes, parks, and wooded trails. The destination for this local trip will be a surprise! We can expect to see waterfowl, songbirds, hawks, and other winter birds.

Bring: Lunch, snacks, and drinks (hot drinks?). Dress for the weather, as we hope to walk up to a mile to see the birds. Bring a scope if you have one.

Meet: At the Newcastle P&R at 8:30 AM.

Directions: Take I-405 to exit 9 north of Renton. Exit and go uphill about 1/2 block and turn left into the P&R. Do not go back onto the freeway!

Sign Up: Contact Amy Schillinger, schillinger@hotmail.com, 425-243-2269. Consult the RAS website, www.rainieraudubon.org or email Amy for more details as the time for the trip approaches.

Weekly Bird Walks at Nisqually

Wednesdays 8:00 A.M. to Noon
Leader: Phil Kelley

Join Phil Kelley on his weekly bird walks as he counts the birds at Nisqually NWR. [See latest changes happening at Nisqually at bottom of this field trip.] The group walks over to an area near the visitor's center to view the entry road estuary, and then takes the boardwalk/trail loop out to the Twin Barns, and the Nisqually overlook area. From there, the group walks the new dike, and back to the Riparian Forest. The walk totals about 2.5 miles.

Bring: Good walking shoes or boots, rain-gear, water, snacks, and \$3 for entry fee unless you have a pass. Scopes are welcome.

Meet: At the Visitor's Center Pond Overlook.

Directions: Take I-5 south from Tacoma and exit to Nisqually NWR at exit 114. Take a right at the light.

Sign-up: Call or email Phil Kelley to confirm details. (360) 459-1499, scrubja-y323@aol.com.

A new dike was completed in January, 2010. It can be seen from the Twin Barns, and leads from the Nisqually River almost over to McAllister Creek. A BRAND NEW boardwalk extension is being built. It will provide good views of McAllister Creek. The first section of the brand new boardwalk (roughly 1600 feet) to the McAllister Creek viewing platform should be open by the end of 2010. The last section out to the mouth of the creek will be open approx. Feb 1 after hunting season ends.

For information about the Nisqually NWR estuary reconstruction project and more, go to <http://www.fws.gov/nisqually/>. Click on wildlife, or on other sections. Another website with more up-to-date info and a map is at <http://nisquallydeltarestitution.org/>

Black-capped chickadees a cheerful presence during dark days

Among the books that had accumulated in the RAS storage space, I found *The Folklore of Birds* by Laura C. Martin. Short chapters feature descriptions of various birds and folklore from many cultures about each. I've enjoyed learning about some of these ideas and beliefs and will share some with you. Chickadees are known to be quite tame and personable. Their chirpy song was thought to sound like "Spring's soon!" or "Sweet weather!" so they were considered harbingers of spring. Cherokee Indians named them tsikilili and thought they brought news, perhaps of a long absent friend returning or an enemy plotting to get you! The chickadee is reported as saving the life of Tom Starr, once a noted solitary figure of the Cherokee Nation of the West. When Starr heard the chirpy call of this small bird, he realized he was being followed and managed to escape



to safety.

Chickadees weigh only 1/2 ounce! They puff out their feathers for increased insulation during cold weather. Although even in winter, they usually only get about 25% of their calories from our bird feeders, during extremely cold weather – below 10 degree F. – feeders double their chances of survival. Chickadees may need 20 times more food during cold weather than they do during the summer! Enjoy these amazing tiny creatures who brighten our dark, rainy winters!

Nancy Streiffert

Sign up for our new Google Group!

We have recently created a new group to serve as an email list server for Rainier Audubon. The intent of this site is to assist in publicizing our activities members and the general public relating to our club activities. Anyone may join or leave the group at any time. You may sign up on our website or at:

<http://groups.google.com/group/ras-activites?hl=en>

Upcoming Programs

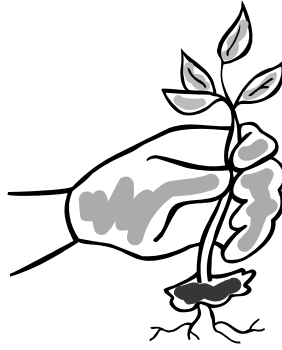
- February 21, 2011 *Mason Bees*— Jim Ulrich
- March 21 2011 *Hummingbirds of Snohomish Ponds*—Chris Caviziel
- April 18 ?
- May 16, 2011 *Ravens and Dog Sledding* - John Muzloff
Annual Membership Meeting

Plant Sale – Deadline

January 31, 2011

The King Conservation District plant sale is underway NOW. If you want to attract more birds, butterflies and good insects to your property at the cheapest cost and least work, PLANT NATIVE PLANTS! The initial cost is cheap – \$0.80 to \$4 each, depending on variety. The initial work is minimal – these are small, bareroot plants or little plugs. While they will require some supplemental water during the hottest days of summer the first 2 or 3 years, after that, they are adapted to our conditions and thrive! Unlike feeders and birdbaths, they do not require cleaning, refilling or squirrel baffles. And unlike many non-native plants, they do not require spraying for insects and diseases and they do not become invasive pests. Instead, they are happy to provide homes and food for many critters – seen and unseen, that contribute to the overall health of our environment.

Where we live on the east hill of Kent, we



have about 1/3 acre that used to be a cow pasture. After years of borrowing friend's grazing animals to keep the grass down in the summer to minimize the fire danger or mowing – a waste of time and fuel and a source of pollution, in 1994 I started planting native plants. My first 20 or so 18" tall twigs were less than impressive! I added more each year for about 5 years. Now I have a dense, self-maintaining (they choke out any weeds) "2nd growth forest" where cedar wax wings, robins, jays and the occasional varied thrush chatter as they eat service berries and hawthorn berries. A pileated woodpecker was even eating berries and squawking loudly. Rufous-sided towhees keep the ground stirred up while chicka-

dees of both kinds inspect branches for insects.

In hindsight, there are some plants I would have planted fewer of – they've thrived to the point of needing endless pruning to be able to keep a path open! There are several club members who have been experimenting and learning about growing natives that can give you ideas about how to get started and which plants are "better behaved" in an urban setting than others. You don't have to be a purist – mix natives with your existing landscaping and you can have it all!

The plant sale is by prepaid order. Go to the website: www.kingcd.org. Read the descriptions of the plants and their growing habits. Fill out the order form – plants are in bundles of 10. If that's too many for you, share with a friend. Send the order form by mail or email with your check or credit card info. This will reserve your plants to be picked up at their office on Grady Way on March 4 or 5.

Nancy Streiffert

Birding in Costa Rica

—(Continued from page 3)

bellied Trogons sleeping in the trees!

Some of the birds we observed while in the Monteverde area included White-fronted Parrots, a Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Purple-throated Mountain Gems, a Magenta-throated Woodstar, Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, a Fiery-Throated Hummingbird, a Brown-hooded Parrot, a pair of Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Slate-throated Redstarts and a Scarlet-thighed Dacnis Honeycreeper. A few of us saw another Resplendent Quetzal in the reserve and we all saw White-faced Monkeys.

Saying "adios" to Monteverde, we began our journey back to San Jose'. Stopping here and there along the way, we saw a

Hoffman's Woodpecker, a Turquoise-browed Mott Mott, Groove-billed Anis, Red-billed Pigeons and Scissor-tailed flycatchers. Jose' and Raphael had one special excursion planned for us at Jungle Crocodile Safari.

Exactly one week before, torrential rains had caused the Tarcoles River to severely flood and totally wipe out their place of business, sweeping their boats down the river and literally destroying concrete buildings. In a week's time, these resilient folks had cleaned up their property, set up tents for doing business and rescued and repaired their boats so that they could operate once again.

Happy to support their enterprise, we went out on the river and through the mangroves to see crocodiles and a huge variety of birds including Anhingas, Orange-chinned Parakeets, Tiger Herons, Tri-

colored Herons, Yellow-crowned Herons, Roseate Spoonbills, Mangrove Swallows, Willets, Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras and Blue and White Swallows. Although all of these birds were awesome, highlights included Chestnut-Mandibled Toucans, a Black-bellied Whistling Duck, a Mangrove Warbler, an American Pygmy Kingfisher, a Barred Antshrike and a Black-necked Stilt.

We saw and experienced so much it is impossible to relate it all to you here. Overall, two-hundred and six species were observed.

If you love birds and nature, I highly recommend visiting Costa Rica. It is a wonderful country, a land rich in the wonders of nature and I know we will remember our adventures there for a long time to come.

THE FINAL FOREST

Big Trees, Forks, and the Pacific Northwest

By William Dietrich

S ometime in the early 70's, shortly after we moved to the PNW from Michigan, we decided to visit Lake Ozette. It was early in the year, probably around Easter weekend. We found there was a "resort" there with cabins to rent, so we called ahead and reserved a cabin for the weekend. I looked on the map and figured we could make the drive leaving after work on Friday afternoon. It turned out to be one of those very rainy days, and the route turned out to be a long windy road from Port Angeles through a "town" called Pysht. Much of this road turned out to be a 35 mph windy road through this wonderful canopy forest. This was probably our first real experience in a PNW rainforest and as it kept getting darker we were getting very tired and ready for a nice warm cabin.

We eventually arrived at the Lake Ozette Resort about 10 PM. The store was open so we went inside to check in. It was still raining very hard making it difficult to see, and the place was not particularly well lit. The owner gave us some keys, sheets and blankets, and pointed across the street to our cabin. We proceeded to the cabin, which turned out to be rather crude, with a propane heater and a few lights hanging from exposed electrical outlets on the ceiling. We were too tired to care and the only other options were several hours away, so we had some dinner and hopped into bed.

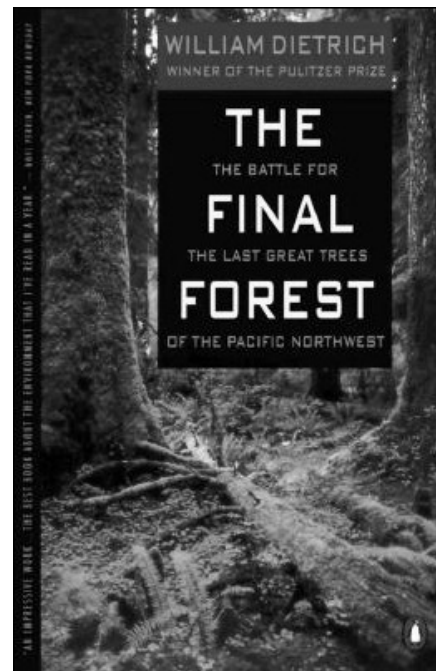
The next morning, it was still raining hard. We drove about a half mile to the end of the road, past more dilapidated buildings to the trail head for Sand Point. This is a three mile trail to the ocean through a cedar swamp. As we sat in the car, a hiker emerged from the woods, soaking wet, removed his wool cap, wrung it out, and proceeded to his car. We had planned on doing this hike, but were quickly losing interest. (Did I mention we had a two-year old daughter with us?)

After a brief look around for anything else that might be of interest, we went back to the cabin, packed up, and headed for home.

We eventually got into back-packing and grew a bit more accustomed to the PNW weather. We would return to Lake Ozette many times, usually spending 3 day weekends there in the spring doing the 9 mile loop trip and camping on the beach. During those years we saw dramatic changes to this rainforest. Eventually the canopy forest was virtually logged off and replaced with endless miles of clear-cuts. The National Park eventually took over the old town of Lake Ozette, improved the parking and camping, and built cedar boardwalks through the swamps so you could get to the beach without wading through knee-deep muddy trails.

I remember many times driving the roads from Port Angeles to Lake Ozette, seeing endless numbers of logging trucks carrying these beautiful, huge Douglas firs. I remember once trying to count the number of trucks going by and it was nearly one a minute at times. At the time, I was not particularly aware of the logging issues, but I often wondered how it would ever be possible to sustain such an industry.

The Final Forest documents the history of these forests over two decades, describing the changes and controversies surrounding the logging industry. The story begins in the summer of 1968, when a twenty-year-old student named Eric Forsman was sitting on his porch. "I heard a kind of barking sound," Forsman recounted. "Finally it occurred to me, because I had read a lot about owls, that it was probably a spotted owl." Intrigued, Forsman hooted back. "The owl answered, and eventually fluttered down into the yard of the guard station and stared at Forsman." The perfect ecological representative had landed in



front of one of the few people who could recognize its significance. As Forsman continued his study of these birds, he soon realized that the only places he seemed to find them were in stands of virgin old-growth timber.

This connection was to have enormous political consequences. Using the Endangered Species Act, environmentalist urged the Forest Service to set aside more and more land to protect this owl, which few persons had actually ever seen. As more studies were done, the focus expanded beyond the owl to logging practices, land management issues, and protection of whole ecosystems. Over the years, this has changed the function of the Forest Service from a strict tree-growing service to "multiple-use" land management.

The town of Forks, Washington ultimately evolved from a logging town to an international tourist destination where "in 2009, the Forks Chamber of Commerce recorded 70,000 visitors from all over the globe. The pilgrims were excited readers of Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series of four vampire novels set in the timber community".

Reviewed by Dan Streiffert

The Quizzical Owl

By Thais Bock*



1. The nesting location of this sparrow in the Churchill are of Canada completed the final discovery of ground-nesting birds in North America. What is the bird's name?
2. The only Kingbird in the West with a notched tail is _____.
3. In the Spring this species' courting display includes wings loudly vibrating as it rises into the air before plunging back towards earth.
4. Of the two "stiff-tailed" duck species in the U.S. name the one with an upright tail and a white cheek patch nesting in our area.

*Reprinted with permission from Djana Bock.

Answers are on bottom of page.



Mewsings from Millie

BRRRRRRR! Hello again and welcome to my meowical musings!

Do you know the story of why we have winter? Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, had a daughter, Persephone. One day, Hades the god of the underworld, snatched Persephone and carried her down to his dark, dreary universe. Persephone could not be found for some time. Then, one day, Apollo spotted her down there and reported his find to Zeus. Zeus sent Hermes, the messenger, to bring Persephone back. Unfortunately, Hades had given Persephone six pomegranate seeds to eat which she did after which she was bound to return to the underworld for six months every year. When Persephone returns from the underworld, Demeter makes the earth bloom and grow. When she returns to the underworld, Demeter stops and we experience winter.

A few people have come into the

store asking if robins stay all year or fly south for the winter months. One of my people knows from personal experience helping with the Christmas Bird Count that if there is sufficient food on their breeding grounds, the robins will remain where they spent the summer. Literally, hundreds of robins have been seen on farmer's fields during the winter months.

If you have birdhouses in your yard there is no need to take them down for the winter. On very cold nights, some birds will use them for shelter and roosting.

This is the time of year when many people like to take a day trip up to the beautiful Skagit Valley to observe snow geese, tundra swans, trumpeter swans and other winter visitors from the north. But how can you tell them apart? Here's a few tips:

Snow geese stand a little over two feet tall with a wingspan of fifty-four inches. They are white with black wingtips, pinkish legs and a pink bill with a blackish "grinning patch". Snow geese forage mostly on land making harvested agricultural fields an critical part of their winter habitat. They will forage in shallow water and estuaries. These geese feed almost entirely on grasses, shoots and waste grain. Snow geese

are often called "wavies" due to the irregular waves they form in flight.

The much larger Tundra Swan can be over four feet tall with a wingspan of sixty-six inches. They are white with black bills as adults that taper to a thin horizontal line at the eye. There is usually a patch of yellow skin below the eye.

The even larger Trumpeter Swan measures five feet tall with an eighty inch wingspan. They are also white with a long, black bill that extends to the eye in a broad triangle.

Both of these swans have black legs and feet. They forage on land and in water for plants, waste grain and potatoes. I'm happy to say that after almost becoming extinct a century ago, the Trumpeter Swan is making a rapid comeback.

Do you think we will ever run out of collective nouns for describing groups of birds? Since we've been discussing geese and swans, here's a few that refer to them: a skein or plump (on water) of geese and a whiteness or bevy of swans.

Until next time,

Millie the Muse of Mews

Answers to Quizzical Owl: 1. Harris's Sparrow, 2. Tropical Kingbird, 3. Wilson's Snipe, 4. Ruddy Duck

Lenard Peyton



Leonard Peyton, noted Alaskan bird bander and bird song recorder died on December 10, 2010. He attended local schools and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management, at Utah State University in 1951, following service in the Army Air Corps, primarily in the Southwest, where he served in the training command.

His interest in birds began when he went with his father, Sidney Peyton, into the hills of the Los Padres National Forest in California on egg collecting ventures, an acceptable hobby during the first of the century. His collection is part of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Camarillo, California. Sidney was the local authority on the Condor population, maintaining a record of the bird sightings.

Leonard's love of birds influenced the rest of his life, taking him to Alaska. He took a position at the Arctic Health Research Center as part of the Physiology Team. He assisted the project director, physiologist Dr. Laurence Irving, in bird banding as part of the migration study. In 1962, Dr Irving, with four staff members, moved to Fairbanks to begin the Zoophysiology Lab at the University of Alaska, concentrating on studies of cold adaptation. Over the years this developed into the Institute of Arctic Biology. Peyton continued the migration/vocalization studies. He continued to band birds as a hobby after his retirement, concentrating on the Redpoll. In his lifetime, he banded 49,059 birds.



As part of their migration work Peyton was a pioneer in recording bird songs. The Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University is the repository for his vocalizations, and has produced a CD with most of the recordings credited to Peyton. His own major focus was on the song of the Fox Sparrow. He was intrigued with various dialects that he found throughout the state, but if there was another bird singing nearby, he also collected that song. He has recorded over 7000 birdsongs, and has banded numerous birds.

He is a member of AAAS, American Ornithologists' Union, Cooper Ornithological Society, American Bird Conservancy, Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Foundation, Washington Ornithological Society and Rainier Audubon Society.

His other major accomplishment was building his own house. From ground clearing to digging the septic system to constructing a two story home, with professional guidance and occasional hired help, he acquired carpentering, plumbing and electrician experience

He enjoyed river boating, hunting, fishing, traveling and gardening. The Peytons traveled extensively in the US, Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Tasmania, Bali,

China, Cambodia, Thailand, Egypt. and the Galapagos.

Leonard married Irene Melnick of Brockton, MA in 1960. The Peytons have two children, Sarah and Leonard James Jr. , two grandchildren: Elena, the daughter of James and Jennifer. Nick, the son of Sarah and Matt Wood. . Memorial services have not been planned at this time. Memorials may be sent to the Alaska Bird Observatory, PO Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK 99708

Lenard and Irene had been married 50 years. They traveled a lot. This year they went on a train tour of the Mountain West, and took a jet boat tour on the Snake River!

A previous article on Lenard appeared in the April 2009 issue of the Heron Herald. This issue can be retrieved from the www.RainierAudubon.org site.



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If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to sleep in a room with a mosquito.

~ Author unknown

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