

THE JOY OF ORIENTEERING

## Map + compass = fun in forest

My son Max was so focused on following the heading on his new compass that he didn't notice he had dropped one of his black ski gloves.



**ON THE TRAIL**

JAYSON JACOBY

successful.

Max went along, albeit grudgingly. I had to reassure him several times that his mom and I would buy him a new pair of gloves. He accepted the offer but continued to mourn the missing garment, saying, with a rather touching wistfulness, that the remaining glove would forever be without its mate.

Dropped glove notwithstanding, our modest excursion through the pines served to introduce Max to orienteering.

And it rekindled my enthusiasm for the hobby.

I've never been especially devoted to orienteering. I hike

most of my miles on trails or roads; and when I head off cross-country it's usually in an area where I'm intimately familiar with the topography.

Still and all, I think it's a worthwhile skill — to be able to use a compass and map to plot a route and then follow it and end up approximately where you expected to.

The ubiquity of GPS has of course made traditional orienteering if not obsolete then at least quaintly nostalgic.

But batteries die.

And electronic devices fail. Besides which there is a certain satisfaction that comes with properly employing decidedly analog items such as a paper map and a compass in a largely digital world.

Most importantly, Max had that new compass and he was

keen to try it somewhere other than his bedroom.

It's a fine instrument, made mostly of metal rather than the plastic I expected based on its \$8 price, and with a fetching camouflage pattern on the case.

Max, who bought the compass with a gift card (another Christmas present) picked a lensatic compass, a type I don't have much experience with.

I told him I would bring along my orienteering compass, a Silva I've owned for close to 30 years, because I was more familiar with how to use its baseplate to plot a course on a map.

After we strapped on our snowshoes I calculated the bearing on my compass, set the same number on his compass, and off we went.

As I hoped, Max was fascinated with the procedure — lay the compass on the map, twist the rotating dial to align its vertical lines with those on the map, then adjust the bearing to account for declination (the difference between magnetic north, which the compass needle points to, and true, or geographic, north on the map).

He seemed relieved that both my compass and his aimed us in the same direction.

After a week or so of generally benign weather the snow was spring firm, and our snowshoes in places scarcely scratched the icy crust.

This makes for easy walking but hard talking, as the shoes with every stride make the sort of crunch you might get if you stepped on a pile



Jayson Jacoby / Baker City Herald

Max Jacoby checks a bearing on his compass near Phillips Reservoir.

of corn flakes. An unlikely scenario, to be sure, but you get the point.

Because the terrain near the reservoir is relatively gentle, lacking prominent peaks that would be ideal destinations when navigating by map and compass, we had to settle for a nearby power line, and then a modest ridgetop barely tall enough to be depicted on the topographic map.

From there I plotted a course back to the car.

The key to navigating, I told Max, is to pick out a landmark that's on the proper heading, walk to that, recheck the bearing and choose another landmark.

In the forest, naturally,

these intermediate goals tend to be particularly tall trees.

Max enjoyed this selection process — he seemed especially pleased when I had the good sense to agree with his preferred tree.

We were getting close to the road when Max, who was walking about 10 feet behind me, uttered a sort of half cry, half moan.

I turned around and, seeing the crestfallen look on his face, assumed that only the loss of his compass could provoke such anguish.

My immediate thought was that the snow crust was so firm that at least the compass probably hadn't plunged out of sight.

When he told me the

missing item was a glove I was relieved. And after just a few minutes I glimpsed our Toyota through the pines. Max's sorrow turned to enthusiasm as he realized that the compass really worked.

A few days later I drove back to the reservoir; followed our backtrail and within 15 minutes I came across the glove, dusted with snow. I took a photo of the glove and texted it to my wife, Lisa, so she could let Max know his gloves would soon be reunited.

The next day a major storm dropped more than a foot of snow — more than enough to have buried the glove, making that reunion all but impossible.

## Results from Northeastern Oregon Christmas bird counts

The annual Christmas bird count in Baker County yielded 71 species and thousands of individual birds.

Twelve volunteers followed a route near Salisbury Junction, south of Baker City, on Dec. 21, and 14 people conducted the Baker Valley count Jan. 4, said Bruce Raffety, who helps organize the count.

The routes are within 15-square-mile circles set by the National Audubon Society.

Raffety said that although searchers didn't see any gray-crowned rosy finches during the official counts, he and his wife, Wanda, saw a flock of more than 100 of the finches the day after the Baker Valley count, in the northeast part of the valley.

"It was truly amazing," he said.

Following are lists of species and individual birds tallied during three Baker County counts, as well as counts in Union and Wallowa counties.

**Baker Valley**

Canada geese, 551; American wigeon, 2; mallard, 241; Northern pintail, 4; ring-necked duck, 5; common goldeneye, 7; California quail, 70; wild turkey, 11; pied-billed grebe, 2; bald eagle, 9; Northern harrier, 3; sharp-shinned hawk, 2; Cooper's hawk, 2; red-tailed hawk, 34; rough-legged hawk, 15; American kestrel, 4; rock pigeon, 115; Eurasian collared dove, 540; great horned owl, 6; downy woodpecker, 4; hairy woodpecker, 2; Northern flicker, 16; Steller's jay, 6; California scrub jay, 1; black-billed magpie,

75; American crow, 15; common raven, 211; black-capped chickadee, 27; mountain chickadee, 16; pygmy nuthatch, 3; brown creeper, 2; Townsend's solitaire, 6; American robin, 9; European starling, 1,231; song sparrow, 6; white-crowned sparrow, 1; dark-eyed junco, 104; house finch, 44; house sparrow, 1,066; cedar waxwing, 12

**Salisbury**

Mallard, 24; common merganser, 156; California quail, 145; wild turkey, 154; great blue heron, 2;

bald eagle, 7; Northern harrier, 2; red-tailed hawk, 9; rough-legged hawk, 1; golden eagle, 2; American kestrel, 3; Eurasian collared dove, 51; great horned owl, 2; downy woodpecker, 4; hairy woodpecker, 1; Northern flicker, 3; Steller's jay, 11; black-billed magpie, 73; common raven, 35; black-capped chickadee, 9; mountain chickadee, 17; brown creeper, 5; Townsend's solitaire, 15; American robin, 8; European starling, 39; spotted towhee, 1; dark-eyed junco, 102

**Halfway area, Dec. 28**

Canada goose, 73; American wigeon, 2; mallard, 116; green-winged teal, 54; ring-necked duck, 4; hooded merganser, 2; California quail, 754; ring-necked pheasant, 13; wild turkey, 225; great blue heron, 5; golden eagle, 1; sharp-shinned hawk, 1; Cooper's hawk, 8; bald eagle, 20; red-tailed hawk, 16; rough-legged hawk, 11; Eurasian collared dove, 81; mourning dove, 4; great horned owl, 6; belted kingfisher, 3; downy woodpecker, 8; hairy woodpecker, 3; Northern flicker (red-shafted), 21; pileated woodpecker, 2; American kestrel, 6; merlin, 1; Steller's jay, 18; blue jay, 7; black-billed magpie, 155; American crow, 14; common raven, 32; black-capped chickadee, 159; mountain chickadee, 23; red-breasted nuthatch, 12; brown creeper, 4; Pacific wren, 2; golden-crowned kinglet, 3; Townsend's solitaire, 1; American robin, 92; European starling, 286; American tree sparrow, 4; chipping sparrow, 23; dark-eyed junco, 572; song sparrow, 5; red-winged blackbird, 5; house finch, 32; Cassin's finch, 2; pine siskin, 67; American goldfinch, 43; evening grosbeak, 7; house sparrow, 42

shinned hawk, 2; Cooper's hawk, 5; Northern goshawk, 1; bald eagle, 17; red-tailed hawk, 165; rough-legged hawk, 34; ferruginous hawk, 2; buteo species, 1; Virginia rail, 3; killdeer, 1; Wilson's snipe, 1; rock pigeon, 828; Eurasian collared dove, 315; mourning dove, 35; barn owl, 1; Western screech owl, 2; great horned owl, 14; Northern pygmy owl, 4; Northern saw-whet owl, 1; belted kingfisher, 3; downy woodpecker, 9; hairy woodpecker, 4; white-headed woodpecker, 1; Northern flicker (red-shafted), 43; American kestrel, 21; prairie falcon, 8; Northern shrike, 4; Steller's jay, 17; black-billed magpie, 674; American crow, 18; common raven, 66; horned lark, 53; black-capped chickadee, 111; mountain chickadee, 13; red-breasted nuthatch, 7; white-breasted nuthatch, 5; brown creeper, 2; Pacific wren, 3; marsh wren, 24; Bewick's wren, 42; American dipper, 1; golden-crowned kinglet, 5; Townsend's solitaire, 7; American robin, 82; European starling, 2,272; American pipit, 10; cedar waxwing, 18; yellow-rumped warbler, 1; American tree sparrow, 25; dark-eyed junco (slate-colored), 6; dark-eyed junco (Oregon), 357; white-crowned sparrow, 85; Harris' sparrow, 1; song sparrow, 313; spotted towhee, 1; red-winged blackbird, 581; western meadowlark, 21; Brewer's blackbird, 88; pine grosbeak, 3; house finch, 398; pine siskin, 14; lesser goldfinch, 8; American goldfinch, 256; evening grosbeak, 4; house sparrow, 752

buffhead, 30; common goldeneye, 10; Barrow's goldeneye, 3; hooded merganser, 2; common merganser, 8; California quail, 125; ring-necked pheasant, 18; gray partridge, 15; wild turkey, 31; pied-billed grebe, 1; great blue heron, 6; golden eagle, 7; Northern harrier, 5; sharp-shinned hawk, 2; Cooper's hawk, 4; bald eagle, 38; red-tailed hawk, 116; red-tailed hawk (Harlan's), 2; rough-legged hawk, 24; buteo species, 3; eagle species, 1; Virginia rail 1; American coot, 5; rock pigeon, 73; Eurasian collared dove, 200; mourning dove, 31; barn owl, 2; Western screech owl, 1; great horned owl, 7; Anna's hummingbird, 1; belted kingfisher, 3; downy woodpecker, 11; hairy woodpecker, 2; Northern flicker, 14; Northern flicker (red-shafted), 5; pileated woodpecker, 4; American kestrel, 4; merlin, 2; gyrfalcon, 1; prairie falcon, 6; Northern shrike, 2; Steller's jay, 11; black-billed magpie, 266; Clark's nutcracker, 1; American crow, 8; common raven, 89; black-capped chickadee, 51; mountain chickadee, 39; chestnut-backed chickadee, 4; red-breasted nuthatch, 23; white-breasted nuthatch, 6; pygmy nuthatch, 3; brown creeper, 14; Pacific wren, 1; marsh wren, 1; Bewick's wren, 1; American dipper, 8; golden-crowned kinglet, 2; Townsend's solitaire, 32; American robin, 159; European starling, 517; Bohemian waxwing, 1; cedar waxwing, 66; snow bunting, 7; American tree sparrow, 3; dark-eyed junco, 30; dark-eyed junco (slate-colored), 1; dark-eyed junco (cismontanus), 5; dark-eyed junco (Oregon), 34; Harris' sparrow, 1; white-throated sparrow, 1; song sparrow, 17; red-winged blackbird, 32; pine grosbeak, 1; house finch, 306; common redpoll, 4; American goldfinch, 53; evening grosbeak, 51; house sparrow, 457.

**Wallowa County, Dec. 22**

Snow goose, 3; cackling goose, 1; Canada goose, 595; mute swan, 1; wood duck, 31; gadwall, 4; American wigeon, 50; mallard, 630; Northern shoveler, 1; Northern pintail, 8; green-winged teal, 22; redhead, 1; ring-necked duck, 60;

### A Fast-Growing Hobby



Photo and caption by Jim Ward

Birdwatching is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the nation. More than 51 million Americans — one in six of us — participate. A study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows that birdwatching-related activities added over \$80 billion annually to the U.S. economy and employs over 666,000. Like our own Bird-a-thon at Ladd Marsh, birdwatching festivals are conducted at thousands of communities across the nation. E-Bird.com, an online birding website, gives updated bird observations from thousands of hotspots. The photo depicts a male wood duck showing off his gaudy plumage to a nearby mate. Although not common, the birds are present in many sloughs and backwaters of Northeast Oregon.