

# Weather slows bird count

By Rocky Wilson  
Wallowa County Chieftain

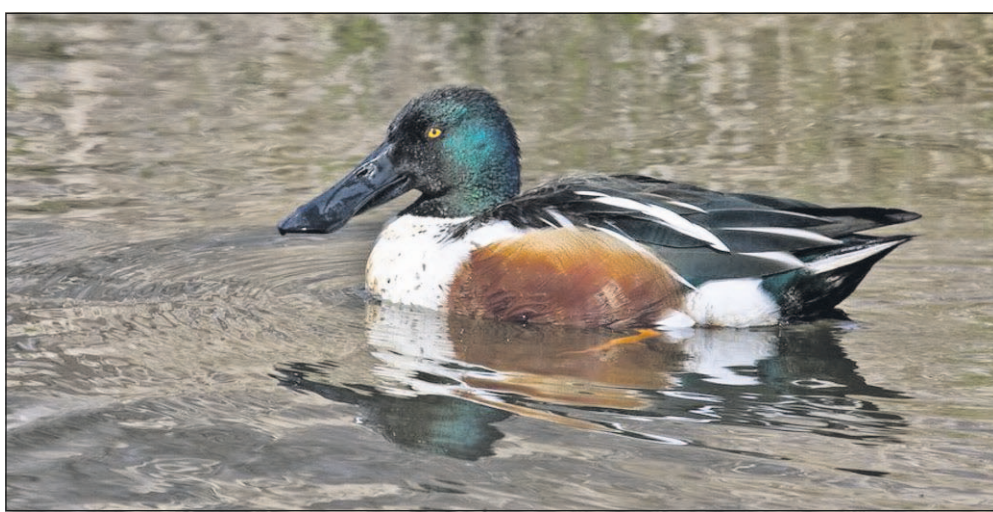
Although more species were counted and the total overall bird count was higher than one year ago, inclement weather again contributed to lower-than-normal sightings of feathered vertebrates during the annual Wallowa County bird count held the last Sunday before Christmas, Dec. 21, 2014.

Counts turned in to the National Audubon Society noted three more species identified than in 2013, 62, up from 59, and an overall count up to 8,111 from 6,533 one year earlier.

These numbers are far lower than in most previous years. In 2010 alone, the count of one popular species, the mallard duck, was at a 34-year high of 13,855.

Yet the reasons for low counts the past two years are far different. In 2013, a warm winter triggered a late arrival of ducks and geese — annually near the top of Audubon numbers' lists in Wallowa County — and on Dec. 21, 2014, the count was held on a blustery day when winds varied between 10 and 30 mph. On such a day, many smaller birds stay hidden in the brush, says Mike Hansen, Enterprise-based assistant district wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Last month, 23 bird watchers volunteered their time to count birds within a prescribed 15-mile diameter centered about one mile northeast of Joseph. This compares with 15 bird counters one year earlier.



This male Northern Shoveler was photographed at Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Ladner, British Columbia. The latest Wallowa County bird count spotted five Northern Shovelers, the highest number ever for this species in the annual local count.

Courtesy photo/Alan D. Wilson

This was the 34th such Audubon bird count for Wallowa County and none of the 62 species sighted on this latest count was making its first appearance in the county's annual roll call.

The number of mallard ducks more than doubled from those counted in 2013, from 1,966 to 4,283, and those mallard numbers far exceeded the second-most seen bird on that rainy, snowy, windy day last month, the European starling that numbered 867 birds.

As is common with Audubon counts, atypical numbers are flagged to denote variations from anticipated norms in specific areas.

Highest-ever counts for two species, the Northern Shoveler and American Crow, were reported this past Christmas. This was only the third year that the Northern Shoveler has been docu-

mented during the Christmas count, and five were spotted. In contrast, American Crows have been seen in 24 of the 34 Audubon count years here, and this year a record 84 were spotted.

Also tagged with having higher-than-normal counts were the Black-billed Magpie and Common Raven.

Eight species were flagged as having unusually low numbers, although the inclement weather could explain such numbers, especially for smaller birds, says Hansen.

Those eight include the American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Mourning Dove, Northern (red shafted) Flicker, Dark-eyed Junco, Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco, Cassin's Finch, and Evening Grosbeak.

In addition to the Northern Pintail, Mourning Dove, Cassin's Finch, and Evening Grosbeak, solitary sightings

were recorded of eight additional species. They were the Canvasback, Osprey, Eagle, Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Bewick's Wren, American Dipper, and Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco.

Hansen says other variables besides the weather can affect bird counts. One variable he mentioned concerned the time of day when bird counters visit certain areas within the prescribed bird-counting diameter. The example he gave was Wallowa Lake, where many birds may have relocated on the day of the annual count before the bird counters arrived.

# Wintering warbler excites birders

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Dozens of birders who journeyed to Enterprise in recent weeks spent a chunk of their time trying to glimpse something that all agree is rather rare: a Cape May Warbler wintering in Oregon.

Among the visitors was Eugene resident Alan Contreras, co-editor of the 2003 guide, "Birds of Oregon: A General Reference." According to Contreras, Wallowa County normally attracts birders during January from various locales — because "several kinds of birds are found there in winter that are hard to find elsewhere in Oregon," he says — and this year's sighting of the Cape May Warbler, early in January, added to the allure.

The warbler has been located generally near the southern end of Enterprise City Park. This is only the second time a Cape May Warbler has been spotted wintering in Oregon. Contreras said the first time was in 2001 in relatively balmy Brookings. He said the species, which breeds in central to eastern Canada, normally winters in the Caribbean or in Central America.

After visitors from Port-



Courtesy photo

Tristen Hynes, of Albany, shot this photo of the Cape May Warbler that has been wintering in Enterprise.

land made the initial sighting here, birders visiting from Eugene, Albany and Corvallis relocated the warbler on Sunday, Jan. 18, Contreras said. The following weekend brought groups from the Salem Audubon Society and the Bend Bird Club. In all, roughly 50 such enthusiasts made the trip during January, Contreras estimated.

Contreras said Enterprise's Cape May Warbler has been living "off of suet feeders and whatever it gets out of old apples." He expects it to remain here until winter ends, but its survival can't be assumed.

# FCCLA trio raising funds for 'Dimes for Downs'

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Collection jars sporting a blue-and-yellow design began to appear last week at some local businesses, where they were placed by a three-member team from the Enterprise High School chapter of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

During February, EHS students Stefany Christman, Reece Christman and Tiffanie George will be accepting donations to "Dimes for Downs," a project begun several years ago by Judy Adams, 16, who has Down Syndrome. According to the project's website (dimesfordowns.com, where there's a link to a Facebook page), Adams began the project when she was 12, and her mission is "to collect as many dimes as I can to help grant wishes and needs to children and adults with Down syndrome."

Stefany Christman, a junior at EHS, said she learned about Adams' project while watching television. "I actually was watching a TV program and it came up as a commercial," Christman said.



Rob Ruth/Chieftain

Enterprise FCCLA members Stefany Christman (left) and Reece Christman, cousins, display one of the containers they've placed inside local businesses to collect donations to the "Dimes for Downs" project. Not pictured is FCCLA member Tiffanie George, who is also part of this effort during February.

She said the types of wishes that Dimes for Downs seeks to grant to people with Down

Syndrome vary widely — from providing them trips to Disneyland, to buying them an iPad or even a stroller.

EHS FCCLA members were being encouraged to pursue charitable efforts during the month of February, and Christman thought raising money for Dimes for Downs would be a good way to fulfill that directive. She formed a team with her sister, sophomore Tiffanie George, and cousin, Reece Christman, a freshman.

In addition to collecting money in jars they've set out at businesses, the three FCCLA members can be contacted directly by donors: Stefany Christman at 541-398-1480; Reece Christman at 541-398-0693; and Tiffanie George at 541-398-0857.

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