

# 2020's Bird Blitz coming to county

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Who are those people with the binoculars looking out over your neighbor's field?

Don't worry, they're just some of the birders who are taking part in one of the biggest, most popular birding events in the state. It's the Bird Blitz, a special June 27-28 multi-county bird count.

It should be exciting. Wallowa County has amazing birds including rare warblers and flycatchers, Spruce and Ruffed Grouse, pygmy owls, Hairy Woodpeckers, Mountain Bluebirds and Spotted Towhee.

The Oregon 2020 event, which is similar to the Christmas Bird Count, is organized online. If you want to be part of the bigger count, sign up with Oregon 2020 by visiting

tinyurl.com/nk4grme/.

For the Wallowa County Blitz, 30 to 50 one-mile-square grids (Hotspot Squares) have been identified and volunteers will go out and count birds on those grids to get a more in-depth catalog of native birds.

Participants and teams will spend the weekend counting birds in assigned Hotspot Squares for the morning. Birders then spend the afternoon visiting birding hotspots and looking for rarities.

Finally, they'll all meet in the parking lot at the north end of Wallowa Lake at about 5:30 p.m. Friday evening to tally numbers. The data will be posted to eBird (ebird.org).

That's the Bird Blitz, but local bird fanciers may also take part in the larger, ongoing count from the comfort of their own home or back porch.

Simply spot as many birds as you can in five minutes and turn in the information.

Oregon 2020 was set up to establish a state-wide, high-quality measurement of the abundance and distribution of Oregon birds. Oregon has more than 500 species, according to W. Douglas Robinson, the Mace Professor of Watchable Wildlife at Oregon State University. Oregon 2020 got its name from the goal of meeting the challenge of creating the Oregon bird database by the year 2020 and the goal of providing future scientists with the ability to see changes in bird abundance from our time to theirs with "20/20 vision."

The eBird site is a national database run by Cornell University. Although it receives more than 1 million submissions each month, few of those come from Oregon. Prof. Robinson hopes to change that.



Courtesy photo/Elane Dickenson

Yes this one counts, too. Count every bird during the Oregon 2020 Bird Blitz, or count these guys out your back window any time of the year to be part of the cataloging of birds across the nation.

## Oregon hunters hire Enterprise's Akenson as director of conservation

The Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) has hired Jim Akenson of Enterprise to be OHA's new conservation director.

In the newly created part-time position, Akenson will lead OHA efforts in areas such as reviewing management plans and submitting comments, as well as organizing OHA chapters to make a difference in natural resource management at the local level.

An avid bowhunter and backcountry packer, Akenson served as the first executive director for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, where he secured funding support and coordinated conservation efforts. A member of the OHA Union-Wallowa OHA Chapter, Akenson holds a



Courtesy photo

Jim Akenson, an avid bowhunter who lives in Enterprise, has been named OHA's director of conservation.

master's degree and a bachelor's degree in natural resources. He had long tenures working for the University of Idaho and the Oregon Department to Fish and Wildlife (ODFW).

In Idaho, he managed a remote field station and did studies on bighorn sheep, and on cougar and wolf predation effects on ungulate popula-

tions. While with ODFW, he conducted research on cougars and black bears in the Catherine Creek and Starkey units, respectively.

"We feel really fortunate to have someone with Jim's qualifications coming on board," said OHA State Coordinator Duane Dunganon. "He will serve as the staff biologist we've needed

for years, and he gives us a staff presence in an area of the state where it will really help us."

"I am really looking forward to helping OHA enhance its conservation efforts and to promote hunters as the real conservationists in America," Akenson said. "We also need to engage more strongly on the decision-making front for wildlife management. I feel we can elevate our effectiveness by better using biological facts, and our clout with membership numbers, regional knowledge, and active chapter coverage over most of the state."

The Oregon Hunters Association is the state's largest Oregon-based pro-hunting organization, with 10,000 members and 27 chapters statewide. Its mission is "to provide abundant huntable wildlife resources in Oregon for present and future generations, enhancement of wildlife habitat and protection of hunters' rights."

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