

Wildlife viewing

April 20, 2007

Around Oregon: Common yellowthroats and orange-crowned warblers have been abundant statewide in the past two weeks. Other migrants included black-throated gray warblers, Bonaparte's gulls, chipping sparrows and purple finches.

Oregon Coast: A Manx shearwater was seen off Boiler Bay. The great-tailed grackle is at Lakeside, north of Coos Bay, where a purple martin also has been reported. A horned puffin was off the south jetty of the Siuslaw River. A Pacific-slope flycatcher was in the Coast Range in Coos County. A group of common terns passed Tillamook Bay.

Southern Oregon: The first blue-gray gnatcatcher of the season has been reported near Grants Pass. A male Nashville warbler was at Cave Junction.

Wildlife watch: The National Wildlife Federation is encouraging nature lovers to get a group together and make a difference in the community during National Wildlife Week, starting Saturday and running through April 29. Project organizers can choose a range of conservation service projects to create healthy wildlife habitat and to connect people with nature. Activities include National Wildlife Watch, in which participants take a walk around a local park, green space, river bank or forest, and see how many animals they can observe, then post their findings at the National Wildlife Federation's NatureQuest site. Participants are also encouraged to upload their wildlife photos. To learn more about National Wildlife Week, National Wildlife Watch and community service projects, go to www.nwf.org/nationalwildlife/week

Packy's birth: The Oregon Zoo, in searching its archives prior to the 45th birthday of elephant Packy, has unearthed footage from Packy's 1962 birth at the zoo. To see the film, go to www.oregonzoo.org/Video Archive/PackysBirthday.htm

Northeast Oregon: Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mule deer and bald eagles can be observed along Snake River Road between Huntington and Richland, where waterfowl are also abundant. Visitors should listen for ruffed grouse drumming in forested areas. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer can be seen at the Wenaha Wildlife Area near Troy. Deer and elk frequent Eden Bench, while bighorn sheep are often observed in rim rocks above the Grande Ronde River. Bald eagles are common along the Grande Ronde River near Troy and along the Wallowa River from Minam to Joseph. Elk viewing is good at the Bridge Creek Wildlife Area near Pendleton.

Butterfly protection: Federal land managers working to keep a rare Nevada butterfly off the list of endangered species have closed scores of off-road vehicle trails 75 miles east of Reno at one of the biggest, most popular sand dunes in the West. The closure affects about six square miles of public land. The emergency order replaces a voluntary measure the U.S. Bureau of Land Management imposed two years ago on a portion of up to 200 miles of trails that run through shrubs and other vegetation that is home to the Sand Mountain Blue Butterfly. Agency officials could not say how many miles of trails were closed but said the main sand dunes at Sand Mountain where most motorized use occurs will remain open. "The closure is a good first step toward protecting the Sand Mountain blue butterfly, which exists nowhere else in the world," said Lisa Belenky, staff attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity in Tucson, Ariz. For information about the butterfly, go to www.fws.gov/nevada/nv_species/documents/smbb/90_day_smb_faq.pdf

Southeast Oregon: A lesser yellowlegs was seen near Burns.

Grosbeak watch: Project FeederWatch wants birders to be on the watch for evening grosbeaks, raucous birds that used to descend on feeders in large numbers but are being seen far less frequently. The evening grosbeak is a yellow, black and white finch with a bill that appears too big for its body. Its winter range typically covers the northern half the United States, and it is found year-round in many Western states and southern Canada. Evening grosbeaks are an irruptive species, meaning their migration is irregular, linked to the availability of food. They may be abundant in an area one year and nonexistent the next. Reasons for their recent decline are unclear. Anyone interested in signing up for Project FeederWatch can go to www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or call (800) 843-2473. Registration is \$15, and participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, a poster of the most common feeder birds, a subscription to a newsletter, FeederWatch instructions, a calendar and the FeederWatch report.

Roy Gault's weekly wildlife viewing report is compiled from telephone calls and e-mails to the Statesman Journal,

from Oregon and Washington fish and wildlife department reports, and from various birders and Audubon Society reports. Gault can be reached at (503) 399-6723 or [rgault@ StatesmanJournal.com](mailto:rgault@StatesmanJournal.com)