

# **RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS OF OREGON AND WASHINGTON**

**JUNE 6-12, 2010**

**LEADERS: BOB SUNDSTROM AND BRIAN GIBBONS**

**LIST COMPILED BY:  
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*Our inaugural Rivers and Mountains of Oregon and Washington tour started in Portland, Oregon, and then headed east along the Columbia River Gorge, whose towering basalt cliffs and tree-clad lower reaches surely put it among the most scenic places in the United States. On the first day we birded part way up the Columbia Gorge, on the Washington side of the river. Our first birding stop, at a refuge with a mix of wetland and forest habitats, produced our first views of a wide variety of birds, including a MacGillivray's Warbler that posed for long scope views and a splendidly colorful Red-breasted Sapsucker. A second stop along river habitats that morning turned up Bullock's Orioles and other riparian species. We picnicked at Beacon Rock State Park, with the named feature of the park in full view—an 848-foot-tall volcanic feature with sheer stone walls. Peregrine Falcons nesting on the Rock made sorties back and forth across the river, nesting Ospreys overlooked our picnic table, and Winter Wrens sang their complex arias.*

*Farther east along the Gorge—and after a superb view of American Dippers at a rushing streamside—we turned inland to Glenwood, Washington, for the first of two nights in the South Cascades at Mt. Adams Lodge. This comfortable lodge, which sits at the foot of 12,281-foot Mt. Adams, has a large area of forested grounds to explore and offers fine food. The lodge's bird feeders were busy with Evening and Black-headed grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, Cassin's and Purple finches, and Calliope and Black-chinned hummingbirds—all at close photographic distance. We arrived at the lodge amid stunning views of Mt. Adams, a loner peak among the Cascades that stands well above everything else, and glistens with snow and glaciers over most of its scenic grandeur.*

*A walk on the lodge grounds before breakfast the following morning gave us our first dazzling Lazuli Bunting of the tour, plus Nashville Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and others. After a wonderful breakfast of huckleberry pancakes at the lodge, we headed for one of the many tracts of Ponderosa pine nearby. It wasn't long before we were scoping a White-headed Woodpecker, one of the most anticipated birds of the tour, alongside peeping Pygmy Nuthatches. The same day, we explored downslope along the Klickitat River into the oak forest for fine views of gorgeous Lewis's Woodpeckers, Black-throated Gray Warbler, pin-wheeling Vaux's Swifts, and more brilliant turquoise Lazuli Buntings. A drive upslope that afternoon took us into the very tall fir forest on the slopes of Mt. Adams to the snow line, where Hermit Warblers flashed yellow and silver; and Varied Thrushes tried to out-sing Hermit Thrushes as Gray Jays glided from tree to tree.*

*It was hard to leave Mt. Adams Lodge after such great birding, dining, scenery, and hospitality, but there was much more yet to be seen. Our next primary destination was Oregon's Blue Mountains, one of several local ranges in the northeast quadrant of the state. After another scenic drive down the Klickitat River canyon from Glenwood—and a stop for Acorn Woodpeckers—we once again struck the Columbia Gorge. Driving east on the Oregon side of the mighty Columbia, and now through a drier landscape but still with amazing rock features, we watched bighorn sheep on the*

*rocky slopes on one side of the road, and soaring kettles of White Pelicans and flights of California Gulls on the other.*

*By mid-afternoon we had reached our goal of the forested Blue Mountains, just north of the town of La Grande, and soon were driving among stands of tall pines and larches, set apart by grassy meadows. We were in prime Great Gray Owl habitat. As we neared an owl nesting area, a shout came out from the passenger side of my van, “Whoa, there’s a huge bird right next to us!” There, on a low branch less than 50 feet from the van, perched an adult Great Gray Owl! Other eyes soon located another bird just ahead of us—a newly-fledged owlet, just off the nest and still downy around the face, watching us carefully. We backed up a respectful distance and spent the next half-hour viewing the two owls at length, while digiscoping and photographing fine shots. It was a truly splendid encounter with what had been for many the most anticipated bird of the trip.*

*With two nights in La Grande, we birded more thoroughly in the Blue Mountains forest zones, finding Williamson’s Sapsucker (one of 10 species of woodpeckers seen on the tour!), Townsend’s Solitaire, and Townsend’s Warbler, among others. Just south of La Grande lie extensive freshwater marshes where we found nesting Cinnamon Teal and other ducks, as well as Black-necked Stilts on nests, a very public Virginia Rail, and a pair of Sandhill Cranes with two rufescent large chicks.*

*We left La Grande’s birding riches behind on Day 6 of the tour and drove northwest through the stunningly beautiful high elevation grasslands of Oregon’s north central region. The drive was intended mostly as a scenic route, but one after another bird surprise marked our way: Grasshopper Sparrows and Horned Larks perched at the roadside, a pair of Gray Partridge right next to the road, and then a family of Chukars. Normally pretty skittish, one of the adult Chukars stood calling at the roadside for minutes—just barely in front of the bumper—as the young regrouped in the tall grass just off the roadway. At one scenic photo spot, two Golden Eagles soared overhead. By midday we had once again reached the Columbia Gorge, and continued west to Portland, past more bighorn sheep.*

*The scenic beauty, wonderful food, and remarkable wildlife diversity of this new tour made for a very memorable week, at an ideal season to travel in the Pacific Northwest.*

## **ITINERARY**

**June 6:** Arrivals in Portland with a get-acquainted dinner and our first night of the tour.

**June 7:** After breakfast at the hotel, we drove across the border to Washington with our first birding at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Mid-morning driving east along the Columbia River on the Washington side, we stopped at William Clark Park then Cape Horn Overlook followed by Beacon Rock State Park where we picnicked and birded the woods and river’s edge. Later this afternoon we continued east to Bonneville Dam where we watched the passage of fish upstream. We then drove farther east to bird along Old Hwy 8 before backtracking to the town of White Salmon, then north to Glenwood. We had dinner and the first of two nights at Mt. Adams Lodge. After dinner there was an optional drive around the perimeter of Conboy refuge.

**June 8:** There was an optional outing before breakfast on trails through the wooded grounds of Mt. Adams Lodge. After breakfast we birded ponderosa pine habitat near Glenwood for White-headed Woodpecker and other birds, then drove a substantial part of the Glenwood-Goldendale Road along Klickitat Canyon. In the afternoon we picnicked on the Mt. Adams Lodge grounds

then drove via the town of Trout Lake up into Gifford Pinchot National Forest, birding forest roads up to the snow line then returned to the lodge late in afternoon. We had dinner and our second night at Mt. Adams Lodge.

**June 9:** We departed Mt. Adams Lodge after breakfast, travelled along Glenwood-Goldendale Road, then along the Klickitat River to the town of Lyle. We birded the oaks near Lyle for Acorn Woodpeckers, than crossed the Columbia River into Oregon at The Dalles. We then drove east along IH-84 in Oregon stopping for lunch in Hermiston and continuing on to Wallowa-Whitman National Forest spots north of La Grande. We spent a wonderful half hour near an adult and fledgling Great Gray Owl before continuing to the motel in La Grande. We had dinner at Ten Depot St. then settled for our first night in La Grande.

**June 10:** After breakfast at the motel, we drove south to bird Ladd Marsh wetlands and La Grande treatment ponds. We travelled north to Hilgard Jct. Park and then Bird Ck. Trail along Hwy 244. We had lunch in La Grande then, after a break at the motel, birded again in Wallowa-Whitman National Forest until late in the afternoon. Dinner was at Foley Station followed with an optional drive into the Blue Mountains for night birds returning by 11:30 p.m. for our second night in La Grande.

**June 11:** After breakfast we departed north toward Pendleton, than followed 395 southwest, then west and north on Hwy 74 through amazing grasslands ultimately returning to the Columbia River and IH-84. We had lunch in Arlington then a final drive toward Portland reaching the hotel around 4:30 p.m. where we had a farewell dinner at the Sheraton and our final night near the Portland airport.

**June 12:** Departures home.

### **BIRD LIST**

[names in *italics* are rare or unusual; ***bold italics*** are exceptionally rare or unusual]

#### **GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS:**

Canada Goose

Wood Duck – a pair on a woodland pond near Glenwood

Gadwall – many pairs at Ladd Marsh

American Wigeon – one drake at least at Ladd Marsh

Mallard

Blue-winged Teal – pairs at Ladd Marsh and La Grande treatment ponds

Cinnamon Teal – handsome drakes, lots of pairs at Ladd Marsh and nearby

Northern Shoveler

Green-winged Teal

Redhead – at both La Grande ponds and Ladd Marsh, spiffy drakes

Lesser Scaup

Common Merganser – along several rivers and streams

Ruddy Duck – multiple pairs at La Grande ponds, flashy blue bills and reddish brown bodies

#### **GALLINACEOUS BIRDS:**

Chukar – We encountered a pair with chicks near rocky habitat along Hwy. 74 in. As the chicks and one adult disappeared into the roadside grass, the other adult (probably the male) lingered for minutes at the edge of the road, standing tall and calling softly to its brood. An amazing view of what can be a difficult bird to find – and we weren't really even looking for Chukar!

Gray Partridge – Another amazing roadside encounter along Hwy. 74 in north central Oregon, as a pair of adults hung out on the roadside for about a minute – a long time for such a typically skittish game bird.

A very nice surprise on the final, long driving day of the tour.

Ring-necked Pheasant – a couple of family groups in north central Oregon; heard at Ladd Marsh

California Quail – a number of pairs, and a dashing, crowing male atop a brush pile near Glenwood

### **GREBES:**

Pied-billed Grebe

Eared Grebe – a breeding plumage pair at La Grande ponds

Western Grebe – one adult on a small lake near Glenwood

### **PELICANS:**

American White Pelican – mostly near the Columbia, soaring flocks and other roosting on islets

### **CORMORANTS:**

Double-crested Cormorant

### **BITTERN & HERONS:**

American Bittern – flying over Ladd Marsh

Great Blue Heron

Great Egret – one at Ladd Marsh

Black-crowned Night-Heron – several at Ladd Marsh

### **AMERICAN VULTURES**

Turkey Vulture

### **EAGLES, HAWKS & ALLIES:**

Osprey – many fine views of Osprey along the Columbia, including a pair at a nest in view of the picnic spot at Beacon Rock State Park

Bald Eagle – a few adults along the Columbia River and near Portland

Northern Harrier – at Ladd Marsh, we saw a male transfer prey in flight to a female!

Cooper's Hawk – several seen in flight, evidence of nearby nests

Swainson's Hawk – one hovered over a field near La Grande ponds; others at a nest

Red-tailed Hawk

Golden Eagle – a pair soared over a grassy hilltop along Hwy. 74

### **FALCONS:**

American Kestrel

Peregrine Falcon – seen flying in and out a nest site on the back side of Beacon Rock

### **RAILS & COOTS:**

Virginia Rail – With a little coaxing, a Virginia Rail at Ladd Marsh walked right out into the open and across a grassy area for all to view in detail.

Sora – heard at a couple of marshes

American Coot – pairs with young chicks

### **CRANES:**

Sandhill Crane – Also at Ladd Marsh, we watched a pair of adults and two red-orange large chicks as they worked their way across a grassy field.

### **PLOVERS, SANDPIPERS & ALLIES:**

Killdeer – an adult on a nest offered wonderful photo opportunities

Black-necked Stilt – pairs on nests at Ladd Marsh

Spotted Sandpiper – mostly heard  
Long-billed Curlew – Brian's part of the group saw some along the road  
Wilson's Snipe – flying over at Ladd Marsh  
Wilson's Phalarope – a number at La Grande ponds

#### **GULLS, & TERNS:**

Ring-billed Gull – this species and the following were nesting on small islands in the Columbia River  
California Gull  
Glaucous-winged Gull – near Portland

#### **PIGEONS & DOVES:**

Rock Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared-Dove – surprisingly widespread, seen in most small towns in Washington and Oregon during the course of the tour  
Mourning Dove

#### **OWLS:**

Flammulated Owl – heard hooting on a night outing near Spring Creek  
Great Horned Owl – hooting during the day at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge  
*Great Gray Owl* – The most anticipated bird of the trip, we had wonderful views in the forest north of La Grande of an adult and a fledgling barely off the nest. We scoped them at length, digi-scoped nice photos, and photographed them at closer range during this splendid encounter. Amazingly, impending rain showers held off until we were just leaving the owls.

#### **NIGHTJARS:**

Common Nighthawk – at Mt. Adams Ranch

#### **SWIFTS:**

Vaux's Swift – nice views in several spots along the Klickitat River drainage

#### **HUMMINGBIRDS:**

Black-chinned Hummingbird – males visiting the Mt. Adams Ranch hummer feeders  
Anna's Hummingbird – a male perched in the willows at William Clark Park  
Calliope Hummingbird – males at the Mt. Adams feeders, showing the purple streamer-like feather pattern of their lovely gorgets.  
Rufous Hummingbird

#### **WOODPECKERS & ALLIES:**

Lewis' Woodpecker – several along the Klickitat River drainage, in or near the oaks  
*Acorn Woodpecker* – two of the tiny population in Washington, not far from Lyle  
Red-naped Sapsucker – one furtive bird at Bird Ck. Trail  
Red-breasted Sapsucker – nice views at several spots (Ridgefield, Beacon Rock, Mt. Adams Lodge)  
Williamson's Sapsucker – after a good bit of searching, we had fine views of a male near Spring Ck.  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
*White-headed Woodpecker* – a much hoped-for species, we had good views of a male near Glenwood  
Northern Flicker – of the “red-shafted” form  
Pileated Woodpecker – in the montane forest north of La Grande

#### **FLYCATCHERS & ALLIES:**

Olive-sided Flycatcher – good views, and singing a lot at Mt. Adams lodge  
Western Wood-Pewee – widespread  
Willow Flycatcher – in the marshy edge of Ridgefield and elsewhere

Hammond's Flycatcher  
Dusky Flycatcher  
Gray Flycatcher – in the oaks at Klickitat Wildlife Area  
Pacific-slope Flycatcher – the first morning, at Ridgefield  
Ash-throated Flycatcher  
Western Kingbird – seen at many spots in dry, open country  
Eastern Kingbird

**SHRIKES:**

Loggerhead Shrike – one flying to a nest shrub along Hwy 74's grassy hillsides

**VIREOS:**

Cassin's Vireo  
Warbling Vireo

**JAYS, MAGPIES & CROWS:**

Gray Jay – at higher elevation in the very tall conifers of Mt. Adams  
Steller's Jay  
Western Scrub-Jay  
Black-billed Magpie  
American Crow  
Common Raven

**LARKS:**

Horned Lark – good views in the Oregon grassy hills

**SWALLOWS & MARTINS:**

Tree Swallow  
Violet-green Swallow  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
Bank Swallow  
Cliff Swallow – peering out of mug jug shaped nests  
Barn Swallow

**TITMICE through CREEPERS:**

Black-capped Chickadee  
Mountain Chickadee – often rallied to the owl tooting  
Chestnut-backed Chickadee – seen well at Ridgefield  
Red-breasted Nuthatch – a frequent sight at many forest stops  
White-breasted Nuthatch – coming in to the suet feeder at Mt. Adams Lodge  
Pygmy Nuthatch – in the same habitat as the White-headed Woodpecker  
Brown Creeper

**WRENS & DIPPERS:**

Rock Wren  
Bewick's Wren – the first morning, singing in the bushes at Ridgefield refuge  
House Wren  
Winter Wren – great views of a singing wren at Beacon Rock State Park  
Marsh Wren – dancing through the marsh vegetation at Ladd Marsh  
American Dipper – wonderful views of this aquatic songbird at a fish hatchery dam

**KINGLETS:**

Golden-crowned Kinglet – one of the trip highlights was two males facing off, with the red-orange centers of their crown feathers raised like Mohawk haircuts  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet – singing near Spring Ck.

**THRUSHES & ALLIES:**

Western Bluebird – at a number of spots near Glenwood  
Mountain Bluebird – one pair flashed out quickly near Spring Ck.  
Townsend's Solitaire – good views of this peculiar thrush near Spring Ck.  
Swainson's Thrush – seen exceptionally well in the riparian spots the first morning  
Hermit Thrush – singing  
American Robin  
Varied Thrush – heard singing in the tall conifers of Mt. Adams

**STARLINGS & ALLIES:**

European Starling

**WAXWINGS:**

Cedar Waxwing

**WOOD WARBLERS**

Orange-crowned Warbler – close views at Ridgefield  
Nashville Warbler – seen well at Mt. Adams Lodge and in mobbing flocks  
Yellow Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler – of the Audubon's form  
Black-throated Gray Warbler – a beautiful warbler, near the Klickitat River  
Townsend's Warbler  
Hermit Warbler – a couple of males in the tall conifers north of Trout Lake  
MacGillivray's Warbler – scoped at Ridgefield  
Common Yellowthroat  
Yellow-breasted Chat – heard

**TANAGERS:**

Western Tanager – very nice views of brightly colored males

**SPARROWS & ALLIES:**

Spotted Towhee  
Chipping Sparrow  
Vesper Sparrow  
Savannah Sparrow  
Grasshopper Sparrow – a good find in the grassy rolling hills in Oregon's back country  
Song Sparrow  
White-crowned Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco

**GROSBEAKS & BUNTINGS:**

Black-headed Grosbeak – lots of nice views, including at the Mt. Adams Lodge feeders  
Lazuli Bunting – dazzling males, wonderful views of this gem of a songbird

**BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES:**

Red-winged Blackbird  
Western Meadowlark  
Yellow-headed Blackbird – males singing their growly songs near the Hot Springs resort

Brewer's Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Bullock's Oriole – a few neon-orange males

**FINCHES:**

Purple Finch – all three of the red finch species (Purple, House, Cassin's) at the Mt. Adams Lodge feeders!  
Cassin's Finch  
House Finch  
Red Crossbill – also incredible views at Mt. Adams Lodge  
Pine Siskin  
Lesser Goldfinch – a quick view at William Clark Park  
American Goldfinch  
Evening Grosbeak – splendid views at Mt. Adams Lodge

**OLD WORLD SPARROWS:**

House Sparrow

**MAMMALS, HERPS & OTHER CRITTERS**

Bighorn Sheep – we saw multiple rams with curled horns along Columbia Gorge  
Mule Deer  
White-tailed Deer  
Black-tailed Deer  
Elk – three seen on an after dinner drive near Glenwood  
Coyote – heard in full howl during the owling expeditions  
Northern Raccoon – a mother and 3 young ones  
Striped Skunk – at Ladd Marsh, where it suddenly appeared in a parking area  
Cascade Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel  
California Ground Squirrel  
Columbian Ground Squirrel  
Belding's Ground Squirrel  
Douglas' Squirrel  
Red Squirrel  
Eastern Gray Squirrel  
Townsend's Chipmunk  
Yellow Pine Chipmunk  
Eastern Cottontail  
Pacific Chorus Frog  
Chinook Salmon – swimming toward the Little White Salmon hatchery  
White Sturgeon – one hanging out at the fish viewing windows at Bonneville Dam  
American Shad – thousands moving past Bonneville Dam  
Banana Slug – the Northwest's famed big slug, at William Clark Park