



The Mountain Quail

Newsletter of Plumas Audubon Society

Chapter of the National Audubon Society

P.O. Box 3877, Quincy, CA 95971

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Newsletter Editor - Harry Reeves - hgreeves@att.net

Plumas Audubon home page www.plumasaudubon.org

Plumas Audubon Society Meetings & Events

All programs are free -- the public is welcome

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m. Plumas County Public Library, 445 Jackson St., Quincy: **Plumas Audubon Annual Membership Meeting and Pre-Christmas Bird Count Winter Bird ID Workshop.** This is the Plumas Audubon Society's annual membership meeting and we would like to hear from you! Let us know what we are doing that you like, that you may not like, or that you are interested in seeing us do in the future. This is also a good opportunity to learn about how you can become more involved with our chapter. Following the membership meeting, we will have a winter bird ID workshop to get ready for the local *Christmas Bird Counts* (CBCs) that Plumas Audubon conducts in *Sierra Valley, American Valley, and Lake Almanor*. Come meet the count coordinators and learn how you can participate. David Arsenault, Darrel Jury and Colin Dillingham will conduct the **Pre-Christmas Bird Count Winter Bird ID** with photos and descriptions of the commonplace and the obscure species we may encounter at this time of year

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC)

The object of the traditional Christmas count is to find out, every year at the same time, how many birds of each species are within an established count circle. While the CBC is a lot of fun for everyone involved the information collected for more than a century throughout North America provides valuable information about population trends, migration behavior, and environmental quality.

Please be sure to contact the CBC coordinators (listed below) for information about when and where to meet. It is necessary to know who is going to show up in order to set up teams for each quadrant of a fifteen mile count circle. Inexperienced birders will be teamed with expert observers so anyone will fit in and be useful to their team. Be sure to dress warmly, carry water and lunch, and bring binoculars and field guide.

Three Christmas Bird Counts Dates and contacts:

Sierra Valley: Monday, December 14. Meet at Lena's Cantina on Highway 70 in Portola at 5:45 a.m. for breakfast and RSVP with Colin Dillingham at (530) 283-1133, dillingham7@juno.com.

Lake Almanor: Wednesday, December 16. Meet in Chester at the Holiday Market bakery seating area at 7:00 a.m. and RSVP with Ryan Burnett at (530) 258-2869 rburnett@prbo.org.

American Valley: Saturday, December 19. Meet at Dunns coffee shop in Quincy at 730 a.m. and RSVP with Darrel Jury at (530) 283-2939, djury@frc.edu.

(Please call 283-0455 or see < www.plumasaudubon.org> for event or program information)

In Finland it's called the **WATER PRIEST**
by Bob Battagin

In Finland the Dipper is black and brown with white chin and breast. Resembling the habit of some clerics, it is locally nicknamed, the Water Priest. In field guides it is more formally referred to as the White-throated Dipper. You only need watch the bird as it surveys its preferred habitat – a swiftly flowing, rocky stream to go a step further in the comparison of this Dipper with a priest. The little bird perches on a rock surrounded by roiling rapids, all the while bobbing up and down, like a priest genuflecting in his place of worship. Species in this family are the only songbirds that make their living in and under the water.



Here at home our familiar Dipper is uniformly dark gray and we call it the American Dipper. Much like the Finns, we also have an endearing nickname for the Dipper, the Water Ouzel.

Who could not help but appreciate the fascinating antics of Dippers. Other birds, like the Spotted Sandpiper and Wandering Tattler may bob up and down at water's edge searching for food. But only the Dipper jumps right in, more in the manner of a penguin or duck. One may bob along, then diving headlong into the stream's current use its wings and feet to negotiate its course underwater in search of caddis fly larvae and other prey hidden in the rocks.



The American Dipper is no wimp. It is the consummate mountaineer, reveling in the river's rapids year round; leaving for warmer climes only should the water become so cold it freezes hard. John Muir, famous for his appreciation of the Water Ouzel, put it this way: "No canyon is too cold for this little bird, none too lonely, provided it be rich in falling water. Find a fall, or cascade, or rushing rapid, anywhere upon a clear stream, and there you will surely find its complementary Ouzel, flitting about in the spray, diving in foaming eddies, whirling like a leaf among beaten foam-bells, ever vigorous and enthusiastic."

Our species, like other dippers, is equipped with an extra eyelid called a nictitating membrane that allows it to see underwater, and scales that close its nostrils when submerged. Dippers also produce more oil than most birds – its preen gland is ten times larger than that of any other songbird – which helps keep it dry when seeking food underwater.

A final thought: There is an American Dipper nest under the Highway 70 Bridge that spans Spanish Creek in Quincy. Have you found an American Dipper nest under a bridge in Plumas County?

PLUMAS AUDUBON news:

At the December 1st Board meeting Treasurer Darrel Jury said we have \$10,435 in the bank. Most of this is grant money to be used for a mobile viewing platform to complete the nature trail and observation project at Feather River Land Trust's Maddalena Ranch in Sierra Valley. \$1020 is from dues and contributions to be used for chapter activities.

Darrel and David are working on the information required by the IRS to establish our own tax exempt status.

Tony Hall and David Arsenault are working on more "Birds of the Feather" articles for Feather Publishing's sports pages.

Jerry and Terry Williams have received four requests for Audubon presentations at schools and they are ordering three classroom Audubon Adventures kits.

Water conservation, water quality, watershed restoration and water distribution are of such importance to California that the Board agreed that the spring Plumas Audubon meeting programs, Earthday in April, and Biodiversity Month in May should focus on water issues as an overall theme. Times, dates and presentations will be forthcoming.

PLUMAS AUDUBON OFFICEERS

President	David Arsenault	530-283-0455
Vice President	Michelle Fulton	530-283-1632
Secretary	Anthony Hall	530-283-3052
Treasurer	Darrel Jury	530-283-2939
Newsletter	Harry Reeves	530-283-1230 <hgreeves@att.net>
Membership	Isabelle Stone	530-283-2745 <quinston@sbc.net>
Education	Jerry and Terry Williams	530-832-5992
Board member	Bob Beckwith	530-283-0967
Board member	Darla DeRuiter	530-283-2939
Board member	Sally Yost	530-284-6649

Don't forget annual chapter dues, \$15, which includes your subscription to this newsletter, are due by March 2010. (National Audubon members are automatically chapter members and receive the newsletter -- however a \$15 subscription donation is welcome and appreciated.)

When you receive the Mountain Quail via e-mail Plumas Audubon saves reproduction and postal costs. You receive the newsletter more promptly, in color, and help protect our natural environment. If you are not already on our e-mail list please send your address to membership chair Isabelle Stone- quinston@sbc.net.

PLUMAS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Please sign me up:

_____ **New member - NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY - \$20.00** payable to ***National Audubon Society***. You will get *Audubon magazine*, also become a member of Plumas Audubon Chapter and receive the local newsletter, *the Mountain Quail*. (Do not use this form for renewal of National Audubon membership. You should get a renewal notice directly from National)

- OR -

_____ **Chapter membership - ___new___ renewal - \$15.00** payable to ***Plumas Audubon Society*** (Includes *the Mountain Quail* newsletter - 6 issues per year).

Name _____

Please send my newsletter by e-mail to _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Chapter member renewal \$15.00 is due in March

Mail this completed form with check to:

Plumas Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3877, Quincy, CA 95971

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**Plumas Audubon Society
P.O. Box 3877
Quincy, CA 95971-3877**