

**BIRDMAN**

**Spectacular migration**

BY TED A. GLOVER

The spring migration this year was really spectacular. The strange weather pattern probably contributed to the behavior of some species. But overall, most birds arrived on schedule. The Rufous Hummingbirds are usually the first to arrive in the spring and we saw our first in early March, though we did have a visit from a Band-tailed Pigeon in late January.

Although the Band-tailed Pigeon is a year-round resident in our area, they do head for the milder coastal regions during the winter. You can distinguish the Band-tailed from an ordinary pigeon (now called Rock Dove) by the darker rump and the wide light gray band at the base of the tail. Not long ago these birds were nearly extinct in the United States due to excessive hunting. But they have now recovered and the current population is healthy.

By late April the migration through our area was in full swing. The Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, American Gold Finch, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and the colorful Western Tanager all arrived at the end of April. A fine assortment of warblers came through about the same time, including the Nashville, Black-throated Gray, Townsends, Yellow-rumped and Wilson's.

We had a larger number of Purple Finch this year and a lack of Pine Siskin. This behavior is referred to as 'irruption' by birding experts. During certain years birds seem to travel to different areas than normal, only to return to their regular areas the following year. Although no one knows for sure why this happens, it probably has to do with the availability of food.

Now that summer is here, some of our regulars, including the Red-breasted Nuthatch and many chickadees, move into higher, cooler areas. The warblers have mostly headed farther north to their natural breeding grounds.

This spring we were fortunate to see a pair of Bar-headed geese in the Williams Valley. Thanks to a tip from one of our readers, we saw the pair grazing in an open field off Panther Gulch Road. This species of goose and the Black Swan are usually seen at Lake Selmac, along with so-called exotic waterfowl that frequently escape from private collections or zoos.

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Photos clockwise from above left:

**Wilson's Warbler**, *Wilsonia pusilla*. A common warbler of willow thickets in the West and across Canada, the Wilson's Warbler is easily identified by its yellow underparts and black cap. Photo by Donna Dewhurst, USFWS.

**Townsend's Warbler**, *Dendroica townsendi*. This Pacific Northwest bird nests in coniferous forests from Alaska to Oregon. Identified by by yellow head and chest, stripes along the chest. Photo by Donna Dewhurst, USFWS.

**Nashville Warbler**, *Vermivora ruficapilla*. A small, sprightly songbird of second-growth forests, the Nashville Warbler nests on the ground and feeds almost exclusively on insects. Distinctive features include grey head and white eye ring. Photo by Dave Menke, USFWS.

**Kaye Clayton, the Squirrel Charmer**

Kaye Clayton recently proved that she is at one with the critters of the woods. Check out this baby squirrel who took a real liking to Kaye. No one is really sure why this squirrel decided to get up close and personal. Kaye thinks the juvenile squirrel may have been frightened by a small dog and mistook her for a tree—but whatever the reason—it was a HOOT!



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