THROUGH THE LEPIDOPTERAN LENS

Lindsey's Skipper of the Pacific Northwest

BY LINDA KAPPEN

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Lindsey's Skipper (*Hesperia lindseyi),* a skipper of the butterfly family of Hesperiidae, has a wingspan of up to 1.25 inches. On the dorsal wing are colors of a brighter orange with a narrow dark border. The ventral view of the hindwing is yellow to light brown in the background, with yellow to white bands of spots with very little veining.

Males will patrol over the grasslands in search of females. Females will oviposit eggs on *Usnea florida,* an arboreal frondose lichen that grows on trees and old wooden fence posts. Some females will choose lupines or sheltered fallen oak leaves to oviposit their eggs. The caterpillars search the grasses for their host plants of Idaho fescue and *Danthonia californica*. The grown caterpillar will diapause (hibernate) through most of the summer and winter in nests of silken blades of grass on top of or just under the soil. When weather conditions are right, they will emerge and feed until pupation. There is only one brood. The flight period is from very early June to the middle of July. Adults will drink nectar from spreading dogbane, wild onion, and other early summer blooms.

A Lindsey's Skipper photographed by the author at Lower Jenny Creek in the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument.

The Lindsey's Skipper habitats are drier mountain meadows, grassy chaparral habitats, and oak woodlands. It occurs in Jackson, Josephine, and Klamath counties to the south, and Curry and Douglas counties to the north. In California, the range for the Lindsey's Skipper is from northern California in Marin County, north on the coast range and the Sierra foothills.

This photo was taken during a butterfly bio-blitz in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. We have documented Lindsey's Skippers at the Sampson Creek Preserve near Ashland as well as throughout the Siskiyous and its foothills. They can be found in the Applegate watershed areas.

We should pay attention to the butterflies and other insects in our Applegate watershed to ensure we have good wildland habitats preserved for them and their host plants.

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To poison rodents is to poison raptors

BY DIANA COOGLE

When we see an osprey settling into her nest atop a tall fir by the Applegate Lake, or when we watch a hawk soaring over the valley, red tail glinting in the sun, we might feel as Gerard Manley Hopkins did in his poem, "The Windhover": "My heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!"

Eagles, owls, hawks, and other majestic and graceful raptors (flesh-eating birds) of the Applegate are, like the Applegate's human inhabitants, at the top of the food chain. Like us, they should, barring accidents, die natural deaths.

Inadvertently, however, in our effort to control rodent pests, we sometimes bring about the untimely death of these birds.

Last March, Applegate residents Patty and Dan Buren found an inert great horned owl along the Applegate River. They called Wildlife Images, in Merlin, a rehabilitation center for injured wildlife, and learned how to box it up so they could bring it in. "Good Samaritans," Lindsay Magill, animal services assistant manager at Wildlife Images, called them.

"The owl was not responsive upon arrival," says Lindsay. "Its eyes were closed, but it was still alive. It had pale mucous membranes and very pale feet, indicating inadequate blood flow. We did initial blood work. All signs led to ingestion of a poisoned rodent."

Pellets used to kill rodents (rodenticides) act by blocking the coagulation of blood. Mice and rats eat the pellets, then wander away to die of internal bleeding. Before dying, the rodent moves slowly and erratically, becoming easy prey for raptors, which are especially susceptible to rodent poisoning because they swallow their prey whole, whereas other predators avoid eating the guts.

Steve Godwin, wildlife biologist with the Bureau of Land Management, in the Ashland Field Office, points out that the newer rodenticides are more potent than the first generation, more lethal at smaller dosages and slower to break down, providing more opportunity for predators to scavenge this prey as it's dying.

The great horned owl is one of the most common owls in Oregon. Photo: Brian E. Kushner, courtesy of Cornell Lab of Ornithology (hereisoregon.com/experiences/2023/01/owls-of-oregon-get-to-know-the-14-species-found-here-from-pygmy-to-great-horned-owls.html).

"Usually, there is no cure for a raptor poisoned by rodenticide—no cure or treatment or way to reverse the damage," says Lindsay. "The bird is bleeding internally. We give it fluids and supplemental treatments, such as vitamin K, to help coagulation. That's all we can do." In the last couple of years, she said, of six birds that came in with rodent poisoning only one, a scrub jay, responded to treatments enough to recover.

Steve, however, tells of picking up an eagle suffering from rodenticide poisoning years ago at a house in the Colestin valley. "It was just a lump on the floor," he says. "It barely responded when I nudged it with my foot." After a night of hourly treatments of vitamin K, "the next morning," Steve says, "it was feisty and upright." When it had regained full health, he helped release the bird, an immature bald eagle, at Emigrant Lake.

Wildlife Images receives between 800 and 1,200 patients a year, according to Lindsay Magill, including raptors with rodent poisoning.

These are preventable deaths. Poison is not the only way to solve a rodent problem.

"Exclusion is the best solution," Lindsay says. "Close the spots where pests are getting in." She also recommends snap traps and electrical traps that kill rodents quickly. A mouse dying of poison suffers in death. If a raptor eats the poisoned mouse, that bird suffers likewise. If a scavenger animal eats that carrion, then the poison continues its work a third time around.

Since the best rodent-killers are the raptors themselves, it is doubly unwise to use rodenticides. Instead of placing those predators in jeopardy, it is better to entice them to your property by putting up nesting sites.

More than 20 kinds of raptors can be found in the Applegate. (See sidebar.) We owe it to these important and beautiful birds to protect them from unnecessary deaths. Here are some things you can do:

- Don't use rodenticides.
- Use lead-free sinkers for fishing and lead-free ammunition for hunting.
- Don't litter. Roadside garbage attracts rodents, which, in turn, attract raptors, who are then susceptible to death by car.
- Secure Christmas lights tightly to structures, eliminating loops that could entangle birds.
- Educate yourself. Raptorsarethesolution.org, by the Earth Island Institute, is a good place to start.

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Raptors found in the Applegate region

Most of these birds can be found year-round except the vulture, which migrates in the winter, and the northern harrier, which is less common May through August. This list was compiled by Applegate birder Marion Hadden.

Very common
Red-tailed hawk
Turkey vulture

Common
Red-shouldered hawk
Osprey
American kestrel
Sharp-shinned hawk
Cooper's hawk
Great horned owl
Barn owl

Less common
Bald eagle
Merlin falcon
Golden eagle
Northern harrier hawk

Uncommon
(Marion has never seen these in the Applegate)
Peregrine falcon
White-tailed kite
Rough-legged hawk
Short-eared owl
Northern saw-whet owl
Flammulated owl
Uncommon (hard to find)
Barred owl
Northern spotted owl
Northern pygmy owl
Western screech owl
Great gray owl