

Trip to Western States - 2008

by Sylvia R. Gallagher

Part 4

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

Bear Lake North RV Park and Campground, St. Charles, ID

No entry.

5:00 p.m., Thursday, May 29, 2008

Bear Lake North RV Park and Campground, St. Charles, ID

Yesterday was mainly a day of driving. We drove only about 170 miles, but the roads were fairly slow and quite scenic, so we didn't rush it. We returned to Manila, filled up on \$3.699 gasoline at the unmanned gas station there (cheapest we've seen anywhere), then took SR 43 northwestward. It became SR 414 at the Wyoming border. It's a very good road—not particularly steep or winding—with spectacular views of the snow-capped Uinta Mtns.

We stopped in the little town of Mountain View to buy all the groceries the tiny store in Manila didn't have. I had quite a list, since it had been a while since I visited a supermarket. When I came out, there was a Mountain View Police car parked right next to the trailer, driver's window next to our driver's window. I wondered at first what the problem was, but soon realized Jim and the policeman were just gabbing. The man, who it turned out is half of the police department, had seen our California plates and just stopped to be friendly. Of course, when he discovered Jim's background on LAPD, they talked until I got the groceries all put away. Jim said he learned the man had been on the Mountain View Police Force for 27 years, has two sons and a daughter, and that all of them are crack hunters. He even showed Jim photos of his daughter with some of her trophy animals. Jim had to bite his tongue on that one, for he doesn't think much of hunting.

The policeman said we shouldn't leave the area without visiting old Fort Bridger, just a couple of miles off the route we were taking. It was established in the 1830s as a trading post by famous mountain man, Jim Bridger. Later, the government took it over as a fort for fighting the Indians. It got pretty run-down after it was decommissioned, but some of the buildings were moved elsewhere in the area and used for other purposes. When the state got interested in restoring the place, some of the buildings were rounded up. It turned out that one man had bought one of them that was by then being used as a hotel, dismantled it, and preserved the parts for forty years, hoping they could be reassembled. The restored building was the commanding general's home and has now been refurnished as it might have appeared then. We also viewed the officers' quarters and a museum recounting the history of the site. All were well worth visiting. Anyone driving I-80 through southern Wyoming should plan a stop of an hour or so there. It's only a few miles off the freeway.

We didn't get on the freeway. Instead we continued right across it on SR 412, then US 189 to Diamondville/Kemmerer (lunch stop), then west to the southern end of Bear Lake. The southwestern shore of the lake is an overdeveloped tourist destination for Utahns, Garden City. But when we crossed into Idaho, there was much less development, just tiny towns with farms in between. Very pretty.

The lake itself is in a valley with snow-capped mountains on both sides. It's not blue, like most lakes, but rather a sort of greenish hue. We learned today in the Forest Service office that the color is due to suspended calcium carbonate. I guess the particle size is responsible for the color—or maybe the chemical is impure.

We were going to go to Bear Lake State Park, but saw a pretty—and almost empty—commercial RV park that looked like it was closer to the Bear Lake NWR we want to visit. It has full hookups and WiFi, which are nice. Its sites are beautiful green grass and back up to a field with a white horse in it. Not far away is another field with 3 horses, which were frolicking elegantly yesterday afternoon. Beautiful white puffy clouds, blue sky, and a distant view of the lake complete the picture.

It rained a bit in the night and this morning it looked like more rain was on the way, so we decided to drive into Montpelier, a town of 1700 people about 14 miles away, and do some long-delayed shopping. I needed a prescription filled (had been out of the stuff for nearly a week—no pharmacies anywhere near Flaming Gorge) and Jim had to get a blood test run at the local hospital.

Afterwards we went to The National Oregon/California Trail Center, an interpretive center for this portion of the Oregon Trail. It was OUTSTANDING. [Later: I looked up the place on the internet, and it seems to be totally a local project—city of Montpelier and surrounding communities in the county. Something they have every reason to be proud of.] The main feature is a “living history” guided tour conducted by three different people, who played their roles beautifully. One was the wagon master, who was supposedly in Independence, MO, and he discussed and showed the items that “we” (i.e. people getting ready to travel) should and should not take with us on a six-month wagon trip across the west. Then we were put into a covered wagon, which bounced around realistically, while we listened to excerpts from letters written on the trail. Then the wagon “got stuck in the mud” at a location that happened to be right in the spot that is now Montpelier. A man and a woman interpreted what people did on an enforced layover on the trail. I can't begin to remember all the information conveyed. Most of it I was aware of, but I'm sort of a westward-movement buff. It was great fun to interact with the role-playing people. Jim and I were the only people in our particular tour group, but the folks didn't stint on providing us with the full experience.

In addition to the tour, the museum has a group of several dozen paintings—maybe 2 ft x 3 ft, done by a local artist—illustrating wagon trains at various historical locations on the trail and experiencing various aspects of their trail lives. In their way the paintings were outstanding “living history,” too. You could look at each one a long time and still miss details. For example, Jim caught sight of a very small image of an Indian's face high on a rocky hillside watching the passing wagon train.

Upstairs there was a temporary exhibit of quilts done by local women. All were very colorful and beautiful; closer looks revealed varying skills in execution: some excellent, others just good. Some were hand-quilted, others by machine. I saw only minor amounts of embroidery, and it was mostly so-so. To top off our day, there was a tour group in town, and they were being treated to some entertainment of the period, followed by a luncheon. We watched the tail end of the entertainment, but were not

invited to lunch. That we bought at a forgettable restaurant up the street from the museum.

We have been expecting it to start raining all afternoon, but the clouds just seem to be hanging over the northern Wasatch Mountains to our west. However, it's suddenly getting kind of windy, so we may get some rain after all. Tomorrow morning is supposed to be sunny. We'll check out that NWR then. I got information about it when I was in town and learned that all the roads are open; the water level seems so high that I was worried. The USFS office is in the same building as the museum.

4:00 p.m., Friday, May 30, 2008

Bear Lake North RV Park and Campground, St. Charles, ID

This morning we explored the Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding farmlands. It was really hard to tell the two apart, for there were lots of flooded pastures with cattle sometimes wading in the water and sometimes on the high spots. I don't know if it's been an unusually wet spring or if this valley is always wet. From what I read in the literature, it was wetter historically than it is today. Much management of water flow is in evidence—impoundments, dikes, water gates, etc.

In order to have the sun behind us on the back roads, we took the main highway north and then a little bit east almost to Montpelier. Then we took the Airport Road south paralleling the highway we had come up on, but maybe three miles farther east. Since this is the recommended route to the refuge from Montpelier, we knew it was a good road. I drove so Jim could have the light right for photographing whatever decided to perch on the fence posts. And there were lots of fence posts—nice interesting ones made out of whatever sticks were available. He got nothing on the posts that he had never photographed before, but a good variety: Western Meadowlark, Eastern and Western kingbirds, Savannah Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird. Several of these birds were crouched down, apparently due to the cold—temperature was in the 40s. There was no wind. However, the best bird shot of the morning was an American Bittern, which went into bill-high camouflage posture when we drove up. It was just the right range and had a background of last year's brownish sedges all toppled over, so he was anything but invisible. The bird gave Jim time to shoot it three ways with his 500 mm lens—with the 2x teleconverter, the 1.4x teleconverter, and with neither. They should be outstanding.

A little farther down the road, Jim discovered a Striped Skunk shuffling through the wide belt of grasses beside the road. He got out and “stalked” the animal and got some very nice shots. When it gave him the rear-end-up posture, however, he decided he was close enough. He did photograph it from that distance in that posture, though. After that, the animal ran across the road—right in front of the truck so I could see it well, then disappeared down a steep grassy bank. Amazingly enough, later in the morning, Jim found another one and photographed it for a while. This seems to be Jim's year for skunk photos.

We got no hint of skunky odor from either of those animals, but three other times on our morning's drive, we detected a strong odor without seeing the animals.

When we reached the east-west Paris-Dingle Rd., we drove straight across and soon came to the approximately four-mile Salt Meadow Wildlife Observation Route, the official NWR tour route, which we took. We then returned to Paris-Dingle Rd. and headed east a little ways. I heard a Sora and stopped and walked a stretch of the road, flushed a couple out from practically at my feet, but didn't hear another one until I gave

up and had Jim drive up with the truck. As the truck stopped, one gave its whinny call again. I seem to have bad luck getting an outstanding recording of that bird. Either their calls are ten or more minutes apart or there are a lot of other birds calling at the same time—or both.

By then it was almost noon and getting cloudy. We were getting hungry and Toby had been in his kennel in the trailer for hours, so we came back. Not ten minutes after we got here, we had a brief hail storm with pea-sized hail, then a touch of rain. This happened again a couple of hours later. It's been mostly cloudy all afternoon and could give us some more action before the day is over.

We've decided to stay over one more day here. There are other roads we haven't explored and which are recommended in the Idaho birdfinding guide (ABA/Lane series: *A Birder's Guide to Idaho* by Svingen and Dumroese). Besides, we really like this little RV park and its setting in this beautiful valley. We had the roads almost to ourselves this morning and extraneous sounds were almost nonexistent—although there were a lot of noisy Canada Geese I could have happily strangled when I was trying to record other sounds. They and their young chicks were everywhere we were.

3:15 p.m., Saturday, May 31, 2008
Bear Lake North RV Park and Campground, St. Charles, ID

It dawned clear this morning with just a few high clouds and no wind. We completed touring the roads we wanted to investigate in the Bear Lake area. This time we drove north to the little town of Paris. There we turned east on Paris-Dingle Rd. at the north edge of town. This road runs about 8-10 miles to the town of Dingle, almost entirely through wetlands and flooded pasturelands. We were headed towards the sun, so Jim couldn't do any photography. When we came to the stretch where I had heard the Sora yesterday, I had him let me out and I walked a mile or so along the road, but never heard one at all. I got a few Wilson's Phalarope calls, but not much else of interest. When I got back into the truck and we continued, the pastures became a bit drier and we started to encounter more and more White-faced Ibis. I recorded them for as long as Jim could stand it. (He wanted to shoot birds and these were too far away.)

At Dingle we turned south on Dingle Rd., which runs between the NWR and a steep sagebrush-covered hillside. We saw a fair number of northbound migrants, especially Western Tanagers, which seemed to be everywhere. Jim tried to photograph them, but they just wouldn't hold still. We've been seeing them in our campground, too, which is on the other side of the valley. I drove and the light was good for Jim on the passenger side, but I don't think he got much of anything, even though there were nice perches—bushes and fences. I'd love to walk long stretches of that road, too, for I kept hearing recordable sounds. One of the many large lakes we passed was totally covered with birds, mainly Franklin's Gulls, but they were so far away I had to get the scope out to identify them. This valley is the southwesternmost breeding ground for that species, and thousands nest here, according to the brochure. The roads that go near their colonies are closed during the breeding season. These distant ones, plus a fairly large flock in a pasture the other day, are the only ones we've seen, except for an occasional fly-over by a single bird.

When the road came to the causeway between the NWR and the Lake (reservoir) proper, we continued south seven more miles to check out the Bear Lake State Park (Idaho) campground, which we knew had electrical hookups. It's a nice campground, but just on a sagebrush flat. It's next to a broad expanse of shoreline

(100-200 yd maybe) that extends gradually to the lakeshore. People drive their ATVs around there. Even though it was around noon on a Saturday, the campground wasn't anywhere near full—too early in the season, I guess.

All along the seven miles between the causeway and the state park campground, there were vacation homes, most of which looked quite new. Many of them were quite pretentious, with all sorts of elaborate gables, rooflines, etc. Others were just big boxes. It was kind of a letdown after the totally pristine shoreline between Dingle and the causeway.

I tallied up all the birds I've seen in Bear Lake Valley and it totals 65 species—a combination of breeders and transients, but mostly breeders. I'd never heard of this place, or maybe I confused it with Bear River NWR at the north end of the Great Salt Lake, but I'll certainly return here if I'm ever in this vicinity. We'll probably leave tomorrow, but I could be happy staying longer and doing more recording along those wonderful quiet roads. Even the airplanes are few and far between.

Jim just caught sight of a flycatcher through the trailer window. It may be the same *Empidonax* I saw yesterday and tentatively ID'd as a migrating Hammond's. He's gone outside with his camera.

Sunday, June 1, 2008

Three Island Crossing State Park, Glenn's Ferry, ID

No entry.

Monday, June 2, 2008

Ponderosa State Park, McCall, ID

No entry.

4:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 3, 2008

Ponderosa State Park, McCall, ID

I haven't written up the last two days, because we mainly drove. I'll just summarize them briefly.

For starters, Jim sat outside for hours, but never got a shot of that probable Hammond's Flycatcher. It hung around, but usually perched on a fence perpendicular to and beyond the fence he wanted it on. He said he had an opportunity to get a back view, but didn't want it. He doesn't realize that *any* view of an *Empidonax* is worth getting. It was a beautiful day, though.

Later in the afternoon, a couple of horseback riders drove a small herd of cattle down the road right next to where the white horse is corralled. Whether it was the cattle or the other horses that caused it, that white horse started galloping, cantering and/or trotting all around its little enclosure, tail high and mane flowing. It was so beautiful. It was interesting to watch its gait change as it sped up and slowed down. I really don't know how to recognize the gaits, but it definitely was using different ones.

We hated to leave the beautiful Bear Lake Valley on Sunday morning. I could have happily gone back to the road on the east side of the NWR and walked along recording birds. That's definitely a place we'll want to return to if we're ever anywhere near southeastern Idaho. And we'll definitely return to that RV Park. The owner was so

nice and we were amazed at how he was always doing something to keep the place up or improve it. We noticed he was busily installing a new children's play apparatus. Yet he already has an adequate one elsewhere on the grounds. Jim said the restrooms and showers were fine. We still don't understand why his park isn't listed in the Trailer Life Guide.

Our drive was 275 miles. We took US 89 north to Montpelier, then transitioned to westbound US 30. This took us to the freeway, which we followed north to Pocatello, then west to Glenn's Ferry. We stopped for lunch in Twin Falls and opted for an IHOP, having given up on finding a tasty meal at an independent restaurant in this part of the country. The IHOP is at one end of a mall. Just north of the parking lot for the mall is the Snake River Gorge, with a nice trail along the brink. The gorge must be at least 500 ft deep there. We walked Toby along the trail for a ways, and out to one or two viewpoints, one of which was cantilevered over the gorge a little bit. All in all, a pleasant break in the drive.

Our destination was Three Island Crossing State Park. This is the place where the Oregon Trail crossed the Snake River. For the first 20+ years, the only way to get across the river was to ford it. Even though most travelers got there in August, when the water was fairly low, it was a frightening experience. The place has a Visitors Center, but we discovered too late that it closes at 4:00 the days it is open and isn't open at all on Mondays and Tuesdays, so we never got to see what was inside.

We had paid for two nights at Three Island Crossing, but Monday morning we decided there really wasn't much to do there. I could have wandered around recording, but the birds weren't that interesting. The campground itself consisted of turf with lots of shade trees, but no shrubs. It's a great spot for a cool overnight stop on a hot day, but hasn't much to offer otherwise. I did see some ponds, sagebrush stands, and a small riparian woodland that I'd have checked out had we stayed.

Since I had thought we'd stay over, we didn't get up very early and had 190 miles to drive, 100 of which were on a slow road. We continued west on I-84 until just past Boise. Then we took SR 55 north to McCall. The latter road was an extremely scenic and enjoyable drive. It first ascended high over a ridge and down the other side (8% grade for many miles), then it followed the Payette River and then the North Fork of the Payette River upstream all the way to McCall. Although it was slow and winding, except for about a five mile stretch, it was smooth and wide with lots of passing lanes and turnouts, so we didn't hold up following traffic very long. There were also lots of pullouts where we could stop and marvel at the rushing whitewater. I've forgotten how rapids are categorized, but these must be among the most difficult; we saw no boats on the river. Since there was no IHOP in any of the small towns we went through, I suggested we stop along the river and eat lunch in the trailer and watch the rapids. I really enjoyed it.

We were driving upstream along the river—and it looked like the river was flowing that way from the truck—but both Jim and I had the feeling we were driving downhill all the time and kept trying to tell ourselves the river was flowing the opposite direction. It was a strange optical illusion. I'd have thought Jim would realize he was applying his foot to the gas pedal, but he was as bamboozled as I was about the sensation.

Near the end of the day's drive, we departed from the river and drove through some beautiful green meadows carpeted with wildflowers of various hues—white, yellow, blue, cerise, etc. I'd have loved to stop and investigate what they were, but they were all behind fences. Besides, the shoulder was too narrow to stop.

When we got to McCall, we wondered if we really wanted to stay there. It's a busy resort town, although most of the businesses seemed tasteful. However, the Idaho Birdfinding Guide really recommended Ponderosa State Park, so we followed the signs and found it. The park is on a peninsula that juts out into Payette Lake. It took us forever to decide on a site. It has EWS and EW sections. The sweet clerk in the office marked all the sites in the EWS section that had no reservations through the weekend and we looked them all over. But they were back toward town and close together and the campground had private homes just across the road from the campground. It seemed too much like a commercial RV park. So we drove through the EW section. Its sites are pretty close together also, but there were very few people there and it seemed more like actually being in a state park. We selected site #95, which is one of the few with shrubs around it, hoping we'd attract more birds. The shrubs are actually a little too close—maybe three feet from the trailer—so if we get anything for Jim to photograph, it'll be hard for him to find a place to put his camera. [Later: When I was walking Toby around the campground, I discovered that the Aspen Loop, which was closed when we arrived, is the nicest. It has larger sites and more shrubs, as well as trees.)

So far our wildlife consists of squirrels, which are busy hauling off all the birdseed Jim provides. Columbian Ground Squirrels and Yellow-pine Chipmunks are our main customers, but I got one glimpse of a Red Squirrel and have heard them in the treetops.

The only bird I've seen or heard in the campground is a single American Robin. This is a bit of a disappointment. The campground has only been open for the season since May 25, and there are still a lot of piles of dirty old snow here and there in the park. So maybe it's just a bit early for much bird activity. The weather may be a factor, too. It's been about 10-20 degrees below normal temperatures the last few days. Our drive yesterday was mainly accompanied by high clouds, then puffy clouds, but just as we arrived, there was a bit of rain. This morning dawned totally overcast with a temperature of 47°, and the thermometer hasn't budged from that reading all day.

After breakfast, we drove the park road a distance of about 2.2 miles out to the tip of the peninsula. Payette Lake is a natural lake—not a reservoir. It was formed by a huge chunk of ice in the last ice age. It slowly melted and left a natural dam at one end. The base of the peninsula starts out more or less at lake level, but the land ascends until at the end of the road, you're on a high cliff. Along the way, there are meadows, ponds, and beautiful old forests of mixed conifers—an amazing assortment of habitats for such a small area.

There are a lot of trails, both hiking and biking, but I decided to confine my walking to the road today, because it looked like it was about to start to rain the entire morning. When I walk roads, Jim can come and pick me up when it starts raining. (I did hear singing Townsend's Warblers off in the distance—a bird I've never recorded on its breeding ground.) Actually it held off until 11:00, then started very gradually. But since it started, it hasn't stopped. We just listened to the weather forecast on the Boise TV station. They said what we've been having today is the light rain due to the warm front (47° isn't very warm!). The cold front is expected in an hour or two and should be bringing a couple of hours of heavy rain. Then scattered showers tomorrow. Despite the warm front/cold front thing, the temperature isn't expected to be much different tomorrow from what it was today.

We originally signed up for three nights here, but Jim just went over and signed up for three more. (Today has essentially been a loss.) We'll be here through Saturday night. The varied habitats are really intriguing, and I really want to explore this park thoroughly—and get nice recordings of those Townsend's Warblers. And I forgot to

mention that on this morning's drive, we saw a wide variety of beautiful wildflowers beside the road in the park. I really want to go back on a sunny day and photograph them. Furthermore, the birdfinding guide describes a couple of nearby areas that also sound interesting. (Those chapters were written by a woman named Marilyn C. Smith. I've been wondering if it's the same Marilyn Smith who used to live in Orange County and worked on the Breeding Bird Atlas, etc. I know she moved away a number of years ago, but can't recall where she went. Does anyone know?)

Wednesday, June 4, 2008
Ponderosa SP, McCall, ID

No entry.

4:30 p.m., Thursday, June 5, 2008
Ponderosa SP, McCall, ID

I'm sitting here watching the owner of a monster fifth-wheel trying to back into the site across the road from us. The road is so narrow, there's very little room to maneuver. He must have gone forward and back and forward and back two dozen times. As I was writing this, he drove off. Maybe he gave up. Whenever we see that happen, we're happy our trailer isn't a big monster. . . Five minutes later: He's back, trying again with not much more success than before. I told Jim he should go out and direct him into the site, as he directs me when we have a tight squeeze, but he didn't. . . After a score more tries: He seems to have given up and is trying another site farther away. . . That one didn't work either, so he's now trying one in between the two and also across from us. This time, success after only two or three tries. (The whole process must have taken half an hour—while I was writing much of what follows.)

Still later: Another fifth-wheel just came around and backed right into the site where the other one had so much trouble. Maybe it's a bit shorter. Must go out and check. . . Later: it was identical, and the folks are friends or relatives of the inexperienced driver.

The weather Tuesday performed as predicted. After light rain all day long starting at 11:00 a.m., it became heavier in the evening. I kept checking the two trailer leaks we had at Flaming Gorge, and all seemed to be in order as late as Jim's bedtime (around 9:00). Then when I went to bed at 10:30, I felt dampness on the blanket, then felt that screw hole under the vent and discovered drops of water. Darn it! I got out the plastic table cloth that seldom covers a table, but which we carry for such problems. I laid it on top of my side of the bed and put a heavy bath towel on top of that to absorb the drips, and tried to go to sleep. But all night long, my legs were too hot and my shoulders too cold, and I kept worrying that the thing would slip. Actually the rain pretty well stopped after midnight.

Wednesday morning dawned cold (30s) and cloudy, but the forecast was that the rain was over. So I decided to walk the trail where I had heard the Townsend's Warbler, carrying my umbrella just in case. For those who may want to visit this park, it's at the north end of the Lily Marsh. I walked a loop that went by the Lily Marsh, crossed an end of it on a bridge and boardwalk, then looped back around through tall coniferous forest. There was a lot of postfrontal wind in the tops of the tall conifers, which marred my recordings, but I did get some fairly good Townsend's Warbler sound. I also got a nice

piece with a mixture of species, including MacGillivray's and Yellow warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, plus Red-winged Blackbird and Canada Goose, which I could have done without. As I was completing my loop, the sun started to emerge.

The wind kept getting stronger, and there really wasn't a lot of sun until late afternoon, so I finally gave up and we went shopping. Late in the afternoon I took Toby for a walk, which included a stretch by the lake. There the 20-30 mph wind plus the temperature in the 40s made it pretty cold. Our campsite is maybe 100 yards from the lake and much more sheltered.

This morning dawned totally clear and calm. I repeated the walk from yesterday morning, but took it in the reverse direction, wanting to get the Townsend's Warbler first. This time I got some really nice recordings, although maybe not the solos I craved; Western Tanagers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were also sounding off. There seemed to be at least ten times as many birds out as I found yesterday. Everywhere I walked there were lots of birds, including species I hadn't detected before: Western Wood-Pewee, Hammond's and/or Dusky Flycatcher, Wilson's Warbler, etc. After completing the loop trail, I walked the road along the Lily Marsh for quite a ways, too. It was hard to quit and come back to the trailer for lunch. It's amazing what a difference a clear, calm, slightly warmer (mid 50s) day makes.

After lunch the sky began to cloud up and is totally overcast now. Another cold front is supposed to come through tonight, but the rain isn't supposed to last as long as it did last time.

We've really been having trouble attracting birds to our feeding station, but certainly not squirrels. We've had as many as eight Columbian Ground Squirrels at a time. The Yellow-pine Chipmunks come in, too, and a Red Squirrel comes as well. Jim sat outside for a while yesterday afternoon and photographed them. Then just as it was getting dark and the squirrels had gone to bed, a lone Chipping Sparrow came in and ate for at least an hour. Today it came in occasionally while the squirrels were there.

The trees in the campground are fairly widely scattered, but along the trails, they are tightly packed and extremely tall. I don't know if this peninsula has ever been logged. Conifers include Ponderosa and Lodgepole pine, Western Hemlock, Douglas-Fir, and Larch. The Larch trees, deciduous conifers, are fairly well needled out now and there's one near our campsite. We notice that the Chipping Sparrows and Mountain Chickadees seem to be foliage gleaning the tips of the branches. Sometimes they even hover briefly before landing and hanging precariously. I wonder what they're eating— insects or shoots. [After I got home, I looked for the answer in *The Birds of North America*. It said nothing about either species eating shoots, just seeds, insects and spiders. So apparently insects and spiders were attracted to the new shoots, and the birds were eating them. It also said that Chipping Sparrows rarely forage more than a meter or two above the ground, so these birds foraging high were apparently unusual.]

4:30 p.m., Friday, June 6, 2008
Ponderosa SP, McCall, ID

I had a short but interesting morning, with the rest of the day spent indoors. It rained lightly for a long time last night. Knowing that the leak over the bed doesn't start right away, I just put a heavy towel over the place where the rain drips down and hoped for the best. But when it continued for two or three hours I began to wonder when it was going to get heavy and come in. I lay there trying to figure out an alternative to the

plastic table cloth. Finally it occurred to me that we had made a cloth cover for the vent that we use when we're in a campground with a strong "security" light that shines right down on the trailer. It has strong gripper fasteners at the four corners. I could hang that thing up, looping a piece of string around the leaking corner before snapping it up. Then I could hang up the small bucket we'd hung from the window shade by a paper clip when we had the window leak. The only problem was: Jim was sound asleep. I didn't want to awaken him, and I wasn't sure where that vent cover was. So I just lay there hoping the rain would stop—or that Jim would decide he had to get up and go to the bathroom. I don't know how long I lay there, but finally the latter happened at around 2:00 a.m. I found the cover in only the second place I thought it might be—in the cupboard right over Jim's head. With him up, I was able to turn on the light and do it right. The plan worked fine, and the gripper is pretty tight, so I think the bucket would hold a lot of water before breaking loose. It turned out, however, that the rain pretty well stopped just about the time I got that bucket up, but I was able to sleep soundly the rest of the night.

The morning dawned mostly cloudy, but with blue breaks in the clouds. Because it seemed to be getting clearer and clearer, I took a chance and walked the Fox Run mountain-bike trail from the south end, 1.4 miles. The trail is actually a well-maintained fire road and was easy walking. (I started out on the Lily Marsh hiking trail, but it was narrow and there were wet shrubs protruding out over the path. I knew my pants, shoes, and microphone case would be soaked in no time.) The Fox Run trail started out by ascending to the top of the ridge. It started out through tall forest, but was soon in an area with scattered young Ponderosa Pines, but mostly grassland. Eventually it descended gradually into the forest again. There were very few birds audible or visible for most of the time, perhaps due to the cloud-cover. I did get a nice Chipping Sparrow song and a series of "whit" notes from a Swainson's Thrush. I also saw an area where Pileated Woodpeckers had obviously been working recently. There were several dead trees with the bark stripped off in places and lots of depressions pecked into them. One tree had a huge pile of fresh wood chips at its base. I'm quite sure it was the same location from which I heard a single call series and a single round of drumming yesterday. Unfortunately, I neither saw nor heard the woodpecker.

Eventually I worked my way around to where I had such success yesterday with the Townsend's Warbler. By then there was quite a bit of sun—or else it's just a good place—but anyway, there was lots of sound there today, too. For those who might want to visit this park, it's at the junction of three trails, the Fox Run, Huckleberry Bay, and Lily Marsh trails. There's a little opening in the forest and also the trails are almost down to Payette Lake. (The park map shows the lake farther away, but it's wrong. A woman yesterday let her dogs take a swim in the lake there.) Again I recorded everything I could for a long time. I think I improved my Townsend's Warbler and got it doing more of a solo. In fact, I think I got all the birds more or less separately instead of always all together: Cassin's Vireo, Western Tanager, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, etc. I must have spent half an hour wandering around that little area.

I was so engrossed in what I was doing that I almost failed to notice that the sky was getting really dark. When I noticed it, I decided I had better start on toward the truck; Jim was waiting for me at the end of the trail, having driven there from where he let me out. I probably had a quarter of a mile left to go. I had only gone a short distance when Jim called me on the radio and told me to get a move on; it was hailing. He was right, for I soon got into it myself. It was really puny hail, maybe rice-grain size,

and a actually preferred it to rain, for it just bounced off me and my gear. By the time I got back to the truck, it had pretty well stopped.

Since the precipitation had stopped and it was only around 10:30, I decided to try walking a stretch of road that I hadn't done before. It was through the forest south from the parking area at the north end of the Meadow Marsh Trail. (I didn't dare take the Meadow Marsh Trail itself, with the weather so threatening, but it looked inviting; will do it tomorrow.) I must have walked a half-mile when it started raining, so I called Jim to come and get me. He was already on his way, having discovered the rain. There were essentially no birds, so I wasn't sorry to quit.

We got back to the trailer and have spent the rest of the day here. The same short bursts of tiny hail have been intermittent all day long. The sky has been mostly cloudy, but with partly sunny periods. I just went outside to check the thermometer and found it was raining lightly, as it does alternatingly with the hail. Low temperature last night was 40° and temperature right now (5:00 p.m.) is 46°. It's supposed to get down to 28° tonight, but be clearer and warmer tomorrow. It's still raining, but the sun has come out.

4:15 p.m., Saturday, June 7, 2008
Ponderosa SP, McCall, ID

Jim just counted 14 Columbian Ground Squirrels outside the trailer all at the same time. The Yellow-pine Chipmunks chase each other so much that three at a time maximum is about it, and I've only seen one Red Squirrel at a time. One or two Chipping Sparrows are regular customers, but nothing else. In fact, the only other birds we've detected right here in the campground are Robins and Ravens.

This morning dawned mostly cloudy and 30°, but there were a few blue patches, so I hoped the front had passed and I could explore the last portion of the park along the Meadow Marsh Trail. Jim took me to the parking area at the north end of the trail. I carried an umbrella this time, just in case. Despite the overcast, there were a few birds audible, including the first singing Swainson's Thrushes I'd heard—got calls yesterday. Again there were signs of foraging by Pileated Woodpeckers all along the trail. At one place, the Meadow Marsh Trail itself deviated from an old dirt road for a stretch, so I elected to follow the trail through the forest, figuring it would probably pass by the marsh, too, which it did, although there were no birds sounding off there. The marsh was actually in a depression above the old road; this entire area was carved by glaciers with depressions remaining wherever huge chunks of ice took a long time to melt.

Suddenly I was electrified by an extremely low sound that I seemed to feel more than hear. It started out slowly, then accelerated: thump. . .thump. . .thump..thump..thump..rumble. I knew instantly what it was—a Ruffed Grouse. Only once before, many years ago, did I hear that sound, but you don't forget it. I've since learned that extremely low sounds are partially propagated through the ground, and I was amazed that I actually seemed to be feeling, as well as hearing, that sound. It was very difficult to decide from what direction the sound was coming, but I thought it was coming from across the road below me. I wished I had taken it, but I recorded the sound as well as I could from where I stood. There were long intervals between "drum rolls," but I just kept the recorder on waiting for the next one. To my pleasure, a Pileated Woodpecker

started up just about that time, doing both its drumming and its “quee quee quee. . .” series that resembles a flicker. I never saw the bird, but it wasn’t too far off.

After I got all I could, I walked on and was pleased to come to a side trail that took me back to the road. When I got to the road, I looked ahead and saw a grouse (sex?) on the road, but it couldn’t have been the one I recorded because it was too far away. I doubled back to where the grouse seemed to have been sounding off and stood there wondering if I was in the right spot. It was an opening in the forest with a lot of leafy low shrubs and some still-bare taller ones. Then through the twigs I caught sight of a dark form on a log about thirty feet away. I quickly released the pause button on my tape recorder, and was rewarded by a complete drum roll. After this single performance, the grouse disappeared behind the log.

I stood there a while longer, hoping for a repeat. I’d been paying no attention to the weather, and suddenly it started to hail—that same fine stuff we had yesterday. Knowing it could turn into rain at any time, I got out my umbrella—and discovered that the darn thing wouldn’t open properly. It was one that some student left at my house and never claimed. It was one of those collapsible double-folding ones that I usually love, but this one just wanted to be inside out. I used it the best I could to shield my binoculars and tape recorder. Despite the fact that I’d been out an hour and a half, I realized I was still closer to where I started than to the end of that segment of the trail where there was another parking lot. I tried to call Jim on the radio, but got no answer. This surprised me, for I had gotten through to him well from not far away. Knowing there was a little bit of shelter back where I came, I took a chance and retraced my steps, but no Jim. (By that time the precipitation had stopped.) I figured he had driven to the other end of the trail to wait for me. Luckily, I hadn’t been there long when a little golf cart with some park employees drove up. I asked them if they had seen a white Suburban with a ladder on the roof. They said they had seen it way down by the visitors center. I hoped he would come back to where I was, but didn’t want to take any chances, so asked them if they’d go tell him where I was. They were happy to do it. It turned out he was waiting for me at the parking lot at the other end of the trail and the radio just wouldn’t carry that far through the thick forest. We both agreed later that he should have called me on the radio before leaving for that other spot. He said he had attempted to call me several times, but I was out of range of his radio, too.

After that experience, we searched hard in the truck and came up with a more dependable umbrella. But the sky looked threatening again, so we came back to the trailer around 10:30. After sitting there for about fifteen minutes, it began to clear up, so I thought maybe I could walk the trail from the other end for a while and had Jim take me to the trailhead. This was a beautiful trail, mostly through Douglas-Fir forest but with occasional small, shrubby openings, but I heard almost no birds. It clouded up and hailed twice for about five minutes each time while I was on the trail, with sunny breaks in between. Finally the trail came to a place where it crossed the park road. A couple of Ospreys were flying around the treetops, each giving a different type of call (male-female?, adult-juvenile? will have to figure it out later). After I recorded them well, the sky opened up once more with lots of hail. I decided that was it for the day and was able to get through to Jim, who was back in the warm trailer, to come and get me. By then it was lunch time. All the rest of the day it has been cloudy with intermittent hail or light rain. Right now it’s raining. High for the day is probably in the upper 40s.

I’ve really loved this park, despite the problems with the weather. I can just imagine what it would be like if the temperatures were seasonable, instead of ten degrees or more below average. I really want to come back here again sometime.

Tomorrow we're off to what Idaho calls its "banana belt," Lewiston. This city is below 1000 ft elevation and right on the Snake River. Hell's Gate State Park looks interesting in the bird-finding guide. Several years ago we spent some time at the upstream end of the Hell's Canyon section of the Snake River and it will be interesting to see what the Lewiston end looks like.

Jim hasn't done very well here. He needs sun for photography and wouldn't carry his heavy camera off on a trail if there was a threat of rain. I've really appreciated his willingness to follow after me in the truck and pick me up whenever possible when it rains. When the birds vocalized, I was able to do pretty well, because most days there has been very little wind. Occasionally a small airplane flew round and round, but that didn't happen too often. I was surprised at how few boats were out on the lake, but possibly they would be more of a problem on a warm day.

Sunday, June 8, 2008
Hell's Gate SP, Lewiston, ID

No entry.

Monday, June 9, 2008
Hell's Gate SP, Lewiston, ID

No entry.

5:45 p.m., Tuesday, June 10, 2008
Steamboat Rock SP, 10 mi. south of Grand Coulee Dam, WA

I hated to leave Ponderosa SP on Sunday, especially since it turned out to be a nice, fairly warm, sunny day for a change. I never got any photos of the landscape or the flowers, which I really regret. Also, I'm pretty sure there would have been much more bird activity than we'd had on the cloudy, rainy/haily days. But it seemed as though we'd been there long enough—and Jim was getting really antsy to go somewhere else.

It was a beautiful day to drive the 180 or so miles to Lewiston. The route was very scenic almost the entire distance. We took SR 55 a few more miles until it ended at US 95, which we followed the rest of the day. Scenery included beautiful valleys with meandering streams, then the rushing water of one of the forks of the Salmon River. Then it ascended over a high pass to the beautiful agricultural valley with the town of Grangeville.

Soon after that we drove through the Nez Perce Indian reservation, which consisted of trim farms just like those around Grangeville. It did not have the squalor we usually see when we drive through Indian reservations, no matter where they are—Arizona, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wyoming, etc. The final leg turned out to be an easy descent along a small creek to Lewiston in the Snake River Valley. Along that piece of road, we were following an old railroad track, which at first seemed to be abandoned. Later we began to see old railroad cars on the tracks. They were all the same—sort of like a flat car, but with a really strong-looking ridge with intermittent openings down the middle of each car. The cars seemed to have been placed there for storage, and there were hundreds of them. We really wondered what they had been used for and why they and the railroad had been abandoned, but never found anyone to

ask while we were in town. When we get WiFi, hopefully tomorrow night, maybe we can find an answer on the internet. [Later: I looked and couldn't find anything.]

We got there about lunch time, and had an awful time finding the main drag with all the new businesses on it, just the old downtown. We had gained an hour we hadn't expected because northern Idaho is on Pacific Time, After fogging around a while--not fun when you're dragging a trailer--we found the street and a Shari's Restaurant (a chain) and ate a second breakfast--very good.

Hell's Gate State Park is right on the shore of the Snake River, which is actually just a reservoir at that point. It is a pretty park with nice widely spaced sites, but the bird life is sort of limited because it's just turf and trees with very few shrubs. The day we got there it was actually pretty warm (elevation less than 1000 ft), and the next day it was either raining or thinking about it, so I never did much birding. My list had perhaps a dozen species. I was surprised to hear--and later see--a California Quail, but I read in the Idaho bird-finding guide that they've been introduced into the state in a number of places--for hunting no doubt. (How can people kill those beautiful birds?)

Sunday and Monday were quite warm, although Monday was somewhat cooler because it was overcast and raining off and on as a cold front approached. Last night the front came through around 1:00 a.m. with a tremendous amount of wind that seemed to be trying to turn the trailer on its side. It lasted maybe an hour and stopped as suddenly as it had come up. There was no rain in the night.

Monday we spent doing a number of errands, which took most of the morning. In the afternoon we went to the park Visitors Center, where they had a few displays about Lewis and Clark, who camped right there on their westbound and eastbound trips. They also had a very good video on the problems L. and C. faced getting over the Sawtooth Range of mountains, and how they discovered there was no easy northwest passage from the Missouri River watershed to that of the Columbia.

This morning dawned partly cloudy and got more and more threatening as we ate breakfast and got ready to leave. After we got going, it began to rain lightly, then more heavily. In fact it probably rained the first two-thirds of our drive, with the last third mostly cloudy, but dry. Our route took us up from the Snake River onto the Palouse (pronounced pa-LOOSE), the rolling grassland created by glacial action during the last ice age. The hills are actually glacial till that has been blown into dunes, then stabilized by vegetation. Some of this is so steep that it can only be used for pasture, but as we got farther west, it leveled out and became wheat country.

We took US 12, then cut off on SR 261, which passed through the little town of Starbuck. SR 261 was a very slow and quite rough road, but for many miles went along a creek bordered by a wide swath of beautiful riparian woodland. Just before we got to Starbuck, we passed a really nice-looking RV Park, which was right beside that riparian woodland. I suggested that we stop there and wait out the day's rain, then see what birds were in the riparian area, but Jim wanted to go somewhere else and not spend a day sitting in the trailer. A little farther along the valley widened out and there was a dedicated wildlife preserve along that creek. It's a place to keep in mind for a future trip. The RV park isn't in the Trailer Life Guide, but, as we found in Bear Lake Valley, that need not matter.

We pressed on in the rain. I was exceedingly disappointed not to be able to get some photos of the Palouse. I wanted some to use in workshops about grasslands, for this is a truly unique type of grassland. Last time we drove through the Palouse it was too hazy to get decent photos.

It took us an hour to drive the 30 miles to SR 260, which we took northeast to SR 26. Then we went west to northbound SR 17, and finished up our drive on SR 155. From Soap Lake on SR 17 to the end of the drive, we were following the Columbia River, which seemed to be a succession of little reservoirs, with just a little bit of natural flow here and there. Before we even reached the river, the flat lands beside the road were strewn with enormous (and sometimes smaller) jagged boulders, which really piqued our curiosity. They couldn't be glacial erratics, because they weren't rounded off. We debated their possible origin for many miles.

We were to find the answers to the preceding questions at the most interesting part of the drive, the Dry Falls Visitors Center, which overlooks a portion of a gorge along the Columbia River where a tremendous waterfall occurred intermittently during the most recent Ice Age. Here's what happened: Glaciers formed an ice dam on the Clark Fork River up in Montana, creating a huge "Lake Missoula" behind it. According to *Roadside Geology of Montana*, p. 52, "At its maximum during the last ice age, the lake level reached an elevation of about 4350 feet. The water was then at least 2000 feet deep at the ice dam, and the volume of the lake was about 500 cubic miles--comparable to that of modern Lake Ontario." At least three times, and perhaps as many as 40, the dam would suddenly break and a colossal wall of water would descend (termed the "Spokane floods" by geologists), sending the water all at once (8 to 10 cubic miles per hour according to *Roadside Geology of Washington*, p. 173) coursing over the entire landscape of eastern and central Washington. It was temporarily blocked when icy debris clogged the Columbia Gorge above Portland, but it eventually found its way through it. Another debris dam formed below Portland backing the water well up the Willamette Valley. Soon that valley drained and the water all reached the Pacific Ocean. Most of the water reached the ocean in a matter of a few days after the dam broke.

The most recent of the floods is the best studied, because it pretty much obliterated the effects of previous deluges. During the peak of the most recent flood, the entire landscape was covered to a depth of 200-600 ft. It was 1000 ft deep through the Columbia River Gorge and its scouring action created the steep cliffs over which the famous falls like Multnomah descend.

The Dry Falls Visitors Center is located overlooking a giant, almost circular, horseshoe-shaped cliff. Only during the floods was there water flowing over the cliff--and then it would have totally dwarfed Niagara Falls. Despite the short duration of each flooding event, the brink of the falls steadily moved 20 miles back from where it originally was. What we had thought were man-made reservoirs had actually been the plunge pools at the bottom of the waterfall during various flooding events. These gigantic ice-age floods totally altered the landscape of the entire Columbia Plateau and created geologic features found nowhere else on earth. These areas are called the "channeled scablands" Even the untrained eye can see some of the features: channels that only huge amounts of water could have created, but in areas with no uplands above them for a watershed; giant, jagged boulders here and there all over the landscape that only a tremendous amount of moving water could have carried (these were what had puzzled us so much); ripple marks 30 ft high and 200 ft from crest to crest; broad layers of sediment in roadcuts; and on and on. As we drove through the countryside, we got better and better at recognizing these and other features.

Nothing remotely like these floods has ever occurred anywhere else on earth. J. Harlen Bretz, the geologist who pieced together the evidence for them, spent his entire career trying to convince other geologists that they did indeed occur. They were

gradualists and didn't believe in catastrophic geologic events—too much like Noah's flood in the Bible, I guess. But finally Bretz was able to assemble enough evidence that they had to accept his ideas. He had to hike over roadless terrain and didn't have any aerial photos or GPS systems in the 1920s and 1930s, which would have easily illustrated his ideas. The giant ripples were particularly hard to document. Bretz eventually received the highest award possible in the field of geology, sort of the equivalent of a Nobel Prize.

The Dry Falls Visitors Center is a must for anyone interested in this mind-boggling geological story. Its displays were great, and we also watched an excellent video on it. I bought a copy of what I think was the video they showed, plus another, which I'll have to look at to flesh out—and correct—what I've typed above. But not now. I should be fixing dinner. [Later: When I put the video in my computer's DVD player, it wouldn't play. It wouldn't play in Jim's either. I don't know why, for we've played other DVDs in them.]

After leaving the Dry Falls, it was a short distance to our destination, Steamboat Rock State Park. It's on sort of an island in the reservoir behind Dry Falls Dam, and we were hoping the campsites would be surrounded by sagebrush, but it turned out they are the usual mowed grass and trees. There is sagebrush and a trail to the base of the huge rock formation, but the campground is like all others—more like a park in the city than a camp in the country.

We are actually pretty disgusted with the campground and how it's run. There was no one in the entry booth. A sign said to select a site, then register in the campground. We did that, but when I went to the kiosk by the restroom, I discovered a list of reserved sites, which included the one we had just set ourselves up in. We were just about to move to the next one over when a park employee drove up in a golf cart and said that site is occupied, too. There was no one in it that we could see. Furthermore, no one has yet come into it or the two reserved sites. We selected a dumb site, thinking that no one would want to reserve it in case we stayed a second night. (There's no way to find out today if it's reserved for tomorrow night, she said!) We gave up on any ideas of staying tomorrow night when I discovered that they charge \$31.00 a night for the sites—more than we've paid just about anywhere on the trip. They do have full hookups, though, and I intend to wash Toby tomorrow morning before we leave—and we are going to leave! And we're going to avoid Washington state parks from now on. Oh, another thing: the site numbers are on the sides of the posts for the electrical boxes, so you have to walk to the rear of each site to see what number it is. And why was that park employee driving around the campground telling everyone they were in the wrong site, when she should have been sitting in the entry booth assigning them to unreserved sites as they came in?!

To top it all off, Jim just gave me the business for not taking him just to places where he can shoot birds outside the trailer: "I haven't shot a bird in two weeks." I can't tell from the descriptions of campgrounds what the habitat is like. This place actually sounded promising, and Ponderosa SP even looked as though it should have had birds in the campsites, but it didn't. Furthermore, I'm not responsible for the cold, dreary weather we've had for the last week, and we did have a lot of travel days. (If he wants to, he can shoot cowbirds, Brewer's Blackbirds, and House Sparrows. They found his birdseed in no time here.) I think he's just grouchy because he had a hard drive on mostly rough roads—even the newly paved ones—with lots of trucks blinding him with showers of water. It's 7:20 and he's sound asleep on the couch. Guess I'll have to fix dinner and wake him up.

[Note: Some of the geological details were added after I got home and could organize the material from the two *Roadside Geology* books, neither of which I had at the time. "*Montana*" was at home and I bought "*Washington*" later, the Dry Falls Visitors Center being out of it.]

6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 11, 2008
Riverbend RV Park, Twisp, WA

We got up early this morning and before breakfast I walked the trail up hill from the campground at Steamboat Rock SP. It went through the sagebrush--and eventually to the top of the rock, but I didn't go that far. I wanted to see if there were any birds in the sagebrush, but found only the campground birds there--no interesting sparrows, etc. After breakfast I washed a very dirty Toby. We haven't had full hookups for a long time, and it takes so much water that our gray water tank can't handle it; we have to have a direct line to the sewer. When he was nice and clean and fluffy, I took him outside to the picnic table and trimmed him a little. He looked like a little lion. Now at least his head looks like a poodle. The rest of him is still pretty bushy, but with the cold weather we've been having, he was probably glad for his thick fur coat.

We then hooked up and were happy to leave that park. We drove ten miles farther north to Grand Coulee Dam. I thought I had been there before, but realized when I saw it that I hadn't. It's really an impressive engineering feat. To make it even more awesome, the water was flowing full all across the spillway and out a number of huge pipes on the face of the dam as well. I always have mixed feelings when I see a sight like that. Of course, I use water and electricity, along with everyone else, but when I think of the 191 miles of riparian habitat that was inundated by just that one dam and the salmon spawning ground that was made totally inaccessible to the fish, I feel really sad. And, of course, this is only one of many dams on the Columbia and its tributaries. The rivers of this area are mainly just a succession of reservoirs. But the people up here--at least, some of them--love them: we've seen several signs and bumper stickers that say SAVE OUR DAMS, so apparently there is pressure to remove a few of them.

From there it was about 90 miles, mostly on slow, bumpy roads again, to Twisp, a town on the eastern side of the North Cascades. We stayed here many years ago, and were happy to find the nice RV park unchanged. Riverbend RV Park is right along the Methow River with natural habitat on the opposite side. As I'm sitting here writing this, I can look out at it through tall Black Cottonwood trees shimmering in a brisk breeze. The sky is actually clear for a change, so it's a lovely scene. When we walked over to the river right after we got here, there were Tree Swallows foraging right over the water, sometimes barely moving in the strong headwind. I suggested that Jim ought to try photographing them, but he said the camera would focus on the water and not the birds and didn't want to try. Spotted Sandpipers are also in the area; there's a gravel bar on the opposite side of the river. The river is much higher than it was last time we were here. Then there was a gravel bar on our side, too. One of the park staff told us the water was even higher two weeks ago and actually flooded the row of sites right next to the river. They're not using them right now because they're still soggy, so there's no danger of anyone blocking our view.

The Methow River runs through the valley of the same name and is pronounced "MET-how." It's named for the Indian tribe that got kicked out of here when the Anglo settlers wanted the valley in the early days.

We paid for two nights, but may stay through the weekend. Our plan while we are here is to drive around looking at the many US Forest Service campgrounds in the area, then camp several days in each of several of them. We always check these out ahead of time, for some of them can't accommodate our trailer, either because the sites are too short or the roads are too narrow and curvy.

5:30 p.m., Thursday, June 12, 2008
Riverbend RV Park, Twisp, WA

We checked out four campgrounds this morning and found two that look interesting and different enough in habitat that we'll probably spend a few days in each of them. They are both west of here on SR 20, the North Cascades scenic highway. We also took a drive north out of the town of Winthrop about fifteen miles and looked at the Falls Creek Falls Campground. It was OK, but the noise of two creeks plus the waterfall would put a severe crimp in my recording capabilities. Besides, the forest there seemed to be a monoculture of second-growth Ponderosa Pines. I did hear birds, though, even though it was almost noon.

We stopped at a book store in Winthrop on the way back and I found a *Roadside Geology of Washington*. I spent most of the afternoon reading it: extremely interesting stuff—and I haven't even gotten to the part about the Ice Age floods.

Jim doesn't seem at all interested in trying to photograph the birds here in Twisp—just sits in the trailer—so I guess we'll leave here tomorrow for one of the campgrounds we found this morning. This place isn't too great for recording either—too much noise from the Mazama River, traffic on the highway, and the lawn sprinklers in the RV park.

Beautiful clear weather today, with high around 70°. Sort of windy in the afternoon, but not so bad that I couldn't enjoy sitting outdoors for the first time in weeks.

One bird I hope Jim can photograph while we're in northern Washington is the *rubra* race of the Red-breasted Sapsucker. I had no sooner mentioned this to Jim, when I caught sight of a sapsucker, but it turned out to be a Red-naped. This surprised me, for we are in the foothills just east of in the Cascades. But I checked Kaufman's range maps in his field guide and found that species to be here, but uncommon. Maybe we'll find the Red-breasted a bit farther west. Curiously enough, the flycatcher calling most of the day from the tree behind the trailer is a Pacific-slope, not a Cordilleran. So we're really on the edge between Rocky Mountain and Cascades influence. Red-breasted Sapsuckers and Pacific-slope Flycatchers are expected in the Sierran Mountains and Cascades and west. Red-naped Sapsuckers and Cordilleran Flycatchers are expected east of there, including Great Basin mountains.

I am just learning about this area north of the Great Basin. Mountains in northern Washington and southern British Columbia sort of connect the two great mountain chains. I just learned today from *Roadside Geology of Washington* that these mountains were parts of neither the Pacific nor the North American plate. Instead they were separate subcontinents that were drifting around in the Pacific Ocean until the westward-moving North American Plate crashed into them.

Friday, June 13, 2008
Klipchuck USFS Campground, North Cascades Hwy (SR 20), WA

No entry.

8:30 p.m., Saturday, June 14, 2008

Klipchuck USFS Campground, North Cascades Hwy (SR 20), WA

Yesterday, after shopping for last-minute groceries at Hanks Market in Twisp, which opened at 8:00, we hooked up and drove the short distance (maybe 30 miles) west on SR 20, the North Cascades Scenic Highway, to the Klipchuck Campground, one of the two we selected on our scouting expedition the day before. Although it's east of the crest, it's in a beautiful forested canyon with a slight coastal rainforest feel about it: Western Red-Cedars are here for the first time on the trip; the rest of the conifers being more or less what we had in Ponderosa SP, Idaho. We had picked out site #20 as our first choice, but found it occupied, so went to #28 instead. In hindsight, I think it was a better choice. Although the roar of Early Winters Creek is audible everywhere in the campground and on the access road, #28 is farther from it than #20. Site 28 has a "back 40" that is easy to wander around in. It also is giving us plenty of photons (from sunlight) to keep our batteries charged, but we think #20 would have been OK on that score, too. This place has no hookups, but does have toilets and water faucets here and there. The only faucet with threads is by the host's trailer, but fortunately we came with a full water tank.

It was a beautiful sunny day both yesterday and today. When we arrived yesterday the wind was just starting to pick up and became fairly strong by nightfall. There has been much less wind today—and it's been a bit warmer, too. We've sat outdoors in the afternoon, but with coats on most of the time. Highs in the 60s yesterday and perhaps the low 70s for a time today. Low last night in the 40s.

This campground has lots of birds. I took Toby for a leisurely walk around the loop and was delighted to hear what I was pretty sure was a Townsend's Warbler. I wanted some Cascades ones to contrast with the Rockies ones I got in Idaho at Ponderosa SP. When I got back to the campground, I found Jim standing in front of a small Douglas-Fir, hoping he had found the nest of an Evening Grosbeak. He hadn't, but the birds have been around off and on both yesterday and today. Unfortunately, they are much easier to hear than see, spending most of their time well up in the 200-ft-high trees. I've recorded quite a bit of their sound, but the recordings will be marred by creek and wind-in-conifers noise. The field guides describe a "pyeer" or similar call, which I'm hearing, but there are other more trilled sounds that I'm pretty sure are coming from the same birds. Sibley has the most information and he says only the eastern birds do the trilled version, but that more study is needed. I haven't bothered to listen to commercial recordings. I can do that and also find out what *The Birds of North America* says on the subject when I get home. [At home later: BNA shows sonograms of trills recorded in the west--California and Colorado. The authors comment that Evening Grosbeaks are unusual among finches in rarely using learned, musical songs. Those that have been detected are quite soft and perhaps used only for communication with mates. I'll have to listen carefully to my recordings from this day and subsequent ones to find out if I got any short, soft songs.]

Later in the afternoon, I heard a high, thin, warbler-like song. The only species that seemed possible was Townsend's, but this song had no buzzy notes. The ones in Idaho had started out buzzy, and my information from the book accompanying Borror's *Warblers* recordings says that western birds' songs are buzzy, too. So I played-back the sound, and in charged a Townsend's Warbler, singing a buzzy song. I wasn't 100% sure it was the bird I had recorded, but thought so. And I still could hear the clear song off in the distance, perhaps from another bird. So I played it back again and the bird

came in again, even more agitated. He flew back and forth, flitted around in the tree right over my head, etc., and sang his buzzy song. I concluded the buzzy song was probably just an agitated version of the clear one. This hypothesis was verified when, after I had quit playing him his own music for a few minutes, he drifted off. I watched carefully where he went and in a few minutes started hearing the clear song from him again. Of course, I recorded both the clear and buzzy songs. They won't be the greatest recordings because of the afore-mentioned creek and wind sounds, but maybe I can use Raven Lite to delete the unwanted frequencies from my recording.

This morning we sort of slept in, because the sun doesn't get down into this canyon until two hours after official sunrise and it's pretty quiet before that. After breakfast I took my tape recorder and walked most of the 1.2-mile access road from the highway. I got some *Empidonax* sounds, almost certainly Hammond's Flycatcher, but I never say I'm 100% sure until I've plotted sonograms, which I'll do at home. However, the habitat is more like Hammonds's, the song sounds to me like Hammond's, and the distant views I got of the shapes of them were more like Hammond's. We'll see.

I also got recordings of MacGillivray's and the first Nashville warblers on the trip. Other species were more distant. I had made arrangements for Jim to come and pick me up in the truck after two hours. I was glad I had, for the road went steeply down-hill most of the way. I wouldn't have wanted to walk back up.

Jim is very frustrated. Even though there are lots of birds, there are also lots of tall trees and that's where the birds spend most of the time. He's never gotten a picture of the Evening Grosbeaks. He hasn't even succeeded in photographing the Steller's Jay, which will only come in for sunflower seeds when Jim is not watching the site. Steller's Jays are usually incredibly bold. Maybe he'll have to set up his blind, for this jay is kind of interesting-looking. Its eyebrows are very dark blue and only visible through binoculars. The checkering is also very dark, as well. They're very different from the Rocky Mountain race and also from the birds in most of California. I'll have to check what subspecies these are when I get home. They certainly illustrate Gloger's Rule: Birds in moist climates are darker than their relatives in drier ones. [At home: I looked it up and found these are of the subspecies *stelleri* or *annectens*. Those from central Oregon to southern California are *frontalis* and those in the southern Rockies are *macrolopha*.]

All Jim has photographed is a Western Wood-Pewee, which he really doesn't need. A pair of them are aggressively defending the area next to the trailer against all comers. I got recordings of some of their "pip-pip-pip" calls when they chased the Steller's Jay. That they only did at first. Now they've apparently figured the jay is only coming in for the birdseed and not worth bothering with.

Last night we had fresh King Salmon and tonight we had steak, both purchased at Hanks Supermarket in Twisp. Both were excellent—far better than that at most markets. They advertise having fresh Alaska seafood on Fridays and Saturdays, and I was there first thing on Friday morning. (A few weeks ago I bought some salmon at Wal-Mart that tasted a bit spoiled, yet it hadn't reached its expiration date. We both had upset stomachs afterwards, which might have been caused by that fish.)

8:15 p.m., Sunday, June 15, 2008
Klipchuck USFS Campground, North Cascades Hwy (SR 20), WA

I was awakened this morning at 5:30 by the loud "teew" calls of Evening Grosbeaks above the trailer. I had to get up to record them before the rest of the

campground got up. After I got dressed and raised the blinds, the Steller's Jay was eating birdseed. It quickly departed and, to my extreme pleasure, down flew a pair of Evening Grosbeaks. By the time Jim had gotten dressed, there were two more. They had finally found the sunflower seeds. We were hopeful that they'd be around all day—and they were. We had spent two whole days knowing they were in the treetops, but fearing they'd never find the treasure Jim had out for them.

They called off and on all the while they were feeding and staging to come down to feed, so I set up my microphone in the trailer window and recorded them from about 20 feet or so. Having it inside the trailer eliminated quite a bit of the creek noise, but unfortunately didn't eliminate the sounds of the tent campers (family with kids) in the next site. I'm going to have to try it again tomorrow morning. Those folks have gone home and two adults are tenting there now. I was able to confirm that the birds not only make the loud "teew" calls, but also the softer, more trilled ones. Sibley likens the loud one to House Sparrows [quoting Pough according to BNA]. Maybe a distant Evening Grosbeak might resemble a close-up House Sparrow, but I really can't find much similarity. [BNA mentions the possibility of regional variation in their calls, so maybe eastern birds sound like House Sparrows.]

After breakfast Jim decided that since it had taken the birds so long to find the birdseed, they'd be pretty wary, so he got out his blind and brought it very carefully around the trailer. There were a couple of grosbeaks eating, so he approached cautiously. They paid no attention. He set up the wooden sides and front of the blind. They paid no attention. He spread the cloth roof on and snapped it down. They paid no attention. Obviously he didn't need the blind, but as long as he had the thing out, he sat in it. It does enable him to have two cameras set up at once.

I watched the birds from the trailer, turning on the tape recorder from time to time, while Jim watched and photographed them from the blind. We really enjoyed observing their behavior. Although we often had as many as seven or eight birds there at once, they were definitely paired up. Usually a pair would come in together. The male spent more time watching his mate than actually feeding. If another male came anywhere near her, he'd first try getting between the rival male and his mate. If the other male was the least bit persistent, he'd get chased off. I noticed that the interlopers were often approaching the female from behind as though to copulate with her if they got a chance. (Recent DNA studies are showing that extrapair copulations are far more common in birds than had been previously thought.) Two other behaviors that we saw frequently were (1) courtship feeding in which the female fluttered her wings and begged from the male while he stuffed birdseed in her bill and (2) courtship displays by the male in which he elevated his head and tail assuming an exaggerated posture. (Jim was very happy that he got several shots of the males doing their displays.)

After getting lots of shots from the blind, Jim got out and sat in his chair, hoping to get some photos of the birds staging from the nearby conifers. They looked so pretty on the greenery of Douglas-Fir, Lodgepole Pine, and Western Red-Cedar.

After the sun was fairly high in the sky, I took my camera and circled the campground photographing wildflowers. I think these were the flowers I got, but will check the IDs for sure when I get the pictures back.

Common Red Paintbrush, *Castilleja miniata* (right outside our trailer, used occasionally by Calliope Hummingbird male)

Groundsel sp., *Senecio* sp.

Cascade Oregon Grape, *Berberis nervosa*

Arctic Lupine, *Lupinus arcticus*

A large shrub with white flowers—some berry I think. I didn't take my recording gear with me because of all the Sunday morning campground noise. I heard a couple of sounds I wasn't completely sure of and stood or sat around "pishing" and hoping the vocalists would come out. Tomorrow morning I'll record and play back these sounds and hope to figure out what those birds are. (I heard them Friday when I walked Toby, so am pretty sure they'll still be on the same territories doing the same songs.)

This afternoon Jim spotted some swifts high in the sky. I looked in the book and found they could only be Vaux's or Black, with the former more common. A while later they came back and I saw them, too, and they were Black—identified by their almost total lack of fluttering. Most swifts, including Vaux's, flutter a lot.

This campground seems to be a popular birding spot. The man in the next site was doing some birding, and there's also a field trip of about 20 people from Skagit Valley (?) Audubon Society. A few of them were camping, but others seemed to be staying elsewhere. (There's a lodge not far away.)

Monday, June 16, 2008

Lone Fir USFS Campground, North Cascades Hwy. 20, WA

No entry.

8:40 p.m., Tuesday, June 17, 2008

Newhalem Creek NPS Campground, Newhalem, WA

Yesterday morning I walked around the campground loop at Klipchuck one more time, this time with my tape recorder. I couldn't lure one of my mystery birds down out of the treetops with playback, and I didn't even hear the other one, so I'm still uncertain what they were. I tried for a better Townsend's Warbler, but don't think what I got is as good as the previous ones. But while I was standing round trying to figure from what direction the Townsend's song was coming, I heard a sapsucker calling very close to me. I got a nice sequence of calls and then the bird flew across and landed right in front of me—no longer calling, but it allowed me to identify it as another Red-naped.

We drove into the tiny community of Mazama to use the telephone to check our Pocketmail. The phone is at a small store, which turned out to be all organic items—and quite expensive. Since I didn't know when I'd find another grocery store, I bought what I really needed—or as close to it as they had—despite the prices.

We also checked out the lodge (Freestone is the name, I think) and it looked like a very nice place to stay. They serve meals, the sign on the road says, but I don't know if they serve all three. It would be a nice place for people who don't camp, but want the rural experience. I don't think there's a better-located accommodation for exploring the North Cascades highlands.

When we got back, we debated staying another night, but Jim really couldn't see how he could improve on what he had already done (2 rolls) with the Evening Grosbeaks. So we drove eight miles west on SR 20 to the last campground before the summit, Lone Fir. Its elevation is 3640 ft, while Klipchuck is 2940. Its trees aren't as tall as Klipchuck's, so we thought the birds might be a little different. We selected a nice long site that we thought would give us morning sun for the solar panels and afternoon shade to keep the trailer cool. It also turned out to have men sawing down dead trees and cutting them up into firewood right across the campground road from us. We

debated finding another site, but this one was nice and it seemed a lot of trouble to do it, so we just endured the noise. Woodpeckers seem pretty scarce in these campgrounds, no doubt because they systematically remove all the dead trees, not just the ones that might fall on campers.

Swainson's Thrushes were singing from the thicket along the stream and I occasionally heard Evening Grosbeaks in the treetops. Early Winters Creek runs by this campground, too, and we were closer to it than we had been at Klipchuck, so I didn't try to do any recording after the wood-cutters left. I sat outside until it got too cool, but the bird life was pretty scarce—none of the nice flycatchers we'd had at the last place (Western Wood-Pewee and Hammond's).

This morning we drove up to Washington Pass (5400 ft) and, a bit farther along, Rainy Pass (4800 ft). Each is in a different life zone with different trees, and each has a nature trail, but unfortunately they were both still snowed in. There was a heavy snowfall this past winter; the highway didn't open until May 1 and it usually opens the first half of April or even earlier. We took a few scenic photos of the spectacular glacier-carved North Cascade Mtns. There are still many glaciers remaining—the most of any place in the lower 48 states. We drove the access road to the trail to Cutthroat Lake. The trail was supposed to be fairly level and easy walking, so I was hoping to do some recording. But it turned out that it went along right beside Cutthroat Creek. All creeks are running full and very noisily. So much for that idea.

We returned to the campground, and our decision that we might as well leave was confirmed by the presence again of the wood-cutters. We forfeited the second night that we had paid for, but it was only \$4.00. We then drove a scenic 49 miles westward on SR 20 to the Newhalem area. There was very little traffic and lots of turnouts, so we took it easy and really enjoyed the scenery. There were also quite a few viewpoints with interpretive signs, and we took them all in. At one stop there were dense patches of large, blue, bell-shaped flowers. I can't seem to find them in my flower books right now, but will look harder when I get the photos developed.

Another stop had excellent signs interpreting the geology of this area. The North Cascades are mostly metamorphic rocks, with just a couple of volcanic peaks. There were labelled boulders of the various types of rocks, including green schist, which has beautiful green flecks in a blackish rock—really pretty. I'd have thought the flecks were lichens if I hadn't read otherwise. Geologically the North Cascades aren't really related to the more southerly Cascades. There is strong evidence that they and a large piece of British Columbia north of them were originally a subcontinent out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. When the Atlantic Ocean widened, it forced the North American plate to move westward. It collided with this subcontinent and thereby added it to the North American land mass. (The Okanogan Mountains just east of the North Cascades were acquired in the same fashion, but earlier.) These mountains were volcanic when isolated, then the forces of the collision were responsible for the uptilting and geochemical reworking of the rocks into their present metamorphic composition.

As we drove westward, it got cloudier and cloudier. There had been quite a few clouds at the passes first thing this morning. By the time we got to Newhalem, it was almost totally cloudy and we scarcely saw the sun the rest of the day. There are no campgrounds with hookups in the area, but we managed to find a site that wasn't too covered by trees and will hope to get enough daylight to keep our batteries up while we're here for a couple of nights.

After lunch we drove the mile up the road from the campground to the Visitors Center for North Cascades National Park. I think it's pretty new; the AAA Tourbook

didn't even mention it. It's an extremely nice interpretive facility. The displays are very creatively done and describe the life zones on both sides of the mountains in such a way that you actually feel you are there. There's a little alcove for each zone and when you enter it, a video comes on the screen to go along with the various displays. All around you are the sounds of the birds of that area. We also looked at the 25-minute movie on the park. It was more of a mood-setter and motivator for conservation of wilderness, leaving the educational aspects for the displays. Anyone coming to this area shouldn't miss this center.

I also picked up literature on the National Park and also on the trails along the highway in this area, which are actually in a National Recreation Area. The park itself is fairly new (1972, I think) and is bisected by the highway. Much of the Skagit River and its tributaries in this area were chopped up into a series of reservoirs in the 1920s and later, so can't qualify for National Park status. These facilities provide water and power for the city of Seattle. In fact, Newhalem seems to be a Seattle Power Co. town. It has no motels, restaurants, or commercial RV parks.

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

Newhalem Creek NPS Campground, Newhalem, WA

No entry.

8:15 p.m., Thursday, June 19, 2008

Cascade Kamloops Trout Farm and RV Park, Darrington, WA

We thoroughly enjoyed our stay in the Newhalem area. Yesterday morning we visited several areas and walked short nature trails. Our first stop was the Gorge Power House, not because of the power house itself, but because of the waterfall and gardens behind it. We were there once before and we put a photo of the waterfall in our Shaped by Fire and Ice three-projector program, but Jim didn't remember the area at all, nor did he remember the photo of the waterfall in the program. The gardens contain plants from all over the world and have been in existence for decades. They're a project of Seattle Light Co., which owns the powerhouse. Rhododendrons, azaleas, and many other plants were in bloom, so it was really beautiful. I didn't walk the entire loop, for it involved very steep paths and even steeper stairs. The stairs did have hand-rails, so I executed some of them. The gardens seem to be somewhat neglected, however, and just left to do their own thing.

Next we drove about three miles westward on SR 20 to the Gorge Dam. It goes along a stretch of Skagit River whose water has been diverted to a pipe in order to run the power house. Lots of bare riverbed was visible between the dam and the powerhouse, whereas elsewhere the river is flowing full and fast bank to bank. The dam was just a dam and the river behind it was just a skinny lake. The most memorable thing there is the extremely high waterfall where Gorge Creek runs into the river just above the dam. The signs at the power house said that even before it was built few fish (salmon meant, I suppose) ever succeeded in going upstream past where the dam is. However, the National Park Service, which runs the interpretive trails for viewing the dam and waterfall had a sign explaining how the Gorge Dam and two others upstream had interrupted the fishery and how they were trying to find ways to compensate.

Next we went into “downtown” Newhalem. We parked at the end of Main Street, where a footbridge crosses the river to the 0.3-mile “Trail of the Cedars” nature walk through some old-growth (or nearly so) forest. A natural fire occurred many years ago, leaving just a few of the mature trees. Since then the forest has filled in with many very impressive trees. The signs along the trail were exceedingly interesting and explained the effects, both good and bad, of fire on a forest and how to recognize them. They also identified the various trees. Everything was very well done and both of us really enjoyed the trail.

After a brief trip to the Newhalem “General Store,” whose fudge is highly recommended by “everyone”—or at least two different folks we talked to—it was back to the trailer. The General Store is really more of a gift shop, with almost no grocery items. Jim had put birdseed on the picnic table behind the trailer, and when I looked out, a Spotted Towhee was up on the table partaking. This bird was a very dark one, having extremely tiny white spots on the wing—another example of Gloger’s Rule, which I mentioned in the June 14 entry. After lunch Jim swept up the birdseed and put it on his log (the rotten one with the groove for birdseed that he carries with him everywhere) on top of the BBQ and sat at the picnic table. After a while the towhee came back and he got some nice photos. He also got photos of the dark race of the Steller’s Jay. This morning he sat out there some more, but didn’t succeed in photographing any different species. He said that he glimpsed a possible Winter Wren yesterday afternoon and a warbler of some type this morning, but they didn’t stay long enough to be photographed.

Late in the afternoon I took Toby for a long walk on the dirt road that goes out of loop C of the campground (we’re in loop A). It crosses Newhalem Creek (noisy) and eventually hooks up with the Trail of the Cedars and ends up in the town of Newhalem. I didn’t walk that far. Instead I started up a side trail to an ancient Indian shelter, but realized it was getting late and time to start dinner and turned back.

The highlight of the walk was seeing a very dark Hairy Woodpecker. I flushed him up from the ground and was able to observe him briefly at close range. His breast was a medium shade of slightly grayish brown. It’s illustrated in the National Geographic field guide. Interestingly enough there was another Hairy near our campsite and he was the normal shade of nearly white.

This morning while Jim sat photographing birds, I took Toby for a long walk out of the campground on the “To Know a Tree” and River Loop trails—a total of about 2.2 miles, according to the literature, but it didn’t seem that long. We saw very few birds, but I did flush a Pileated Woodpecker away from its workings right next to the trail. Toby behaved amazingly well. Even when I stopped to record a Douglas’ Squirrel that was in plain view in the tree in front of us, he just stood there and looked at it intently and delayed whining for quite a while. After I flushed the Pileated, I walked past the place and stood quietly for a long time hoping it would come back, and Toby stood there with me, just doing a bit of minor sniffing around, but no whining. Maybe there’s hope for the guy yet. I keep remembering how Charlie used to stand motionless for many minutes at a time while I recorded birds. I’d love it if I could induce Toby to behave similarly. He’s almost three years old now and should be settling down. He wouldn’t be left in the trailer so much if he were better behaved.

The sun had been out this morning, but it had clouded up considerably while I was walking. The forecast was for rain today and tomorrow, so we decided we probably wouldn’t be getting enough sun for our solar panels if we stayed there any longer. Yesterday was mostly cloudy in the morning, but became clearer as the day progressed, so we got good charging. Anyway, we decided to leave.

I had read about Rockport State Park 25 miles farther west and it sounded like it might have nice sites back in the forest. It also had full hookups and didn't take reservations, so we'd have a chance to stay for the weekend. But when we got there, a sign out front said "No Camping." It looked like a nice wooded park, too. We were really disappointed. We took a look at a Steelhead County Park across the highway along the river, but it was just one of those turf-and-trees places, and this one was mostly turf. Although it was nearly full with reservations, the extremely nice manager told us we could have gotten a site for the weekend, but it just wasn't very inviting, just a paved pad out in a grassy field far from the nearest trees, so we went on our way. In desperation, I selected the place where we are now, but it's just a jammed-in trailer park. It does have a pretty trout pond, though, and Jim went over there, checked out a pole, and caught a couple of trout for our dinner. I really don't know how to cook a whole trout, so it was a bit of a disappointment.

We're really running out of nice-sounding campgrounds in the North Cascades, so plan to start south tomorrow.

Friday, June 20, 2008
Alpine View RV Park, Leavenworth, WA

No entry.

Saturday, June 21, 2008
Brooks Memorial State Park (13 miles north of Goldendale on US 97), WA

No entry

9:15 a.m., Sunday, June 22, 2008
Brooks Memorial State Park (13 miles north of Goldendale on US 97), WA

It's been mostly travel the last couple of days, so it shouldn't take too long to get this caught up.

We left the trout farm/RV park late because we decided Jim should go catch another trout. He had caught a large one and a smallish one the previous evening. I only cooked the big one. This time he caught a medium-sized one. Last night I tried baking the two trout, instead of sauteeing as I'd done the other one. It would have been best had I used deep fat and fried it—or else split it in half, a job neither of us was willing to tackle. However, the fish was much better baked than the way I fixed it the first time.

We left around 9:30 and had to drive west almost to I-5, then south about 15 miles to US 2, which we took back across the Cascades. This route skirted the Seattle traffic, but it wasn't too bad. US 2 is badly in need of widening and repaving, especially the first part. It's narrow with almost no shoulder very few passing lanes. It also has lots of traffic. Whenever we found a turnout and pulled over, a dozen vehicles would pass us. Then as soon as we were back on the road another parade would catch up with us. Even so, I thought Jim was driving too fast for that narrow, curvy road and sat there all tensed up the whole time. (He didn't think so.) The scenery along the road was spectacular—high knife-edged mountains covered with snow and glaciers, rushing rivers, tall forest, etc.

Our destination was the tourist town of Leavenworth, which has remade itself into a village in the Bavarian Alps. It really is very quaint looking and I thought it was very pretty, but I think Jim gagged on the cuteness of it all. I really wanted to stay there so we could find a German restaurant for dinner. We headed first for the KOA, but when we drove into the place, it turned out to be nearly full of jammed-together trailers on turf. Since it was Friday night, we were pretty sure they wouldn't have a vacancy, so we left without even asking. I had seen a small RV park which was not listed in Trailer Life Guide, so thought we might be able to get in there—and it couldn't be worse than the KOA. They did have a couple of sites, and we had our choice of being backed up to a trailer with a large group of people sitting outside or being backed up to the highway. We chose the highway. There was another trailer about ten feet away on one side, but a few trees between us and the trailer on the other side. The highway wasn't too bad in the night, but I wore my earplugs all night long just in case. It also had the bright light from the campground sign that shone into our bedroom.

I looked in the AAA Tourguide for German restaurants and found two listed, both right downtown. One had entertainment, the other didn't. I had also seen what I thought looked like one on the main highway through town. We checked it out first. Its lounge was really going strong, TV and all the patrons blaring. The restaurant part had hardly anyone in it. I took a peek at the menu before someone even came out to seat us and discovered it was just American food, despite the decor. So I told Jim we'd have to brave the main tourist street with all the people and traffic. We really lucked out and drove into a parking place right in front of Christa's Restaurant, the one in the AAA book that didn't have entertainment. The restaurant itself was upstairs, with a German deli downstairs. The place was attractively decorated in the Old World manner and we both enjoyed our dinners. I had a pork schnitzel with mushrooms, caramelized onions, and Swiss cheese on top. Jim had assorted German sausages. Both were served with home-fried potatoes, sauerkraut, and sweet-and-sour red cabbage.

Having had the German meal we wanted, we were happy to get on the road around 7:00 a.m. yesterday. After only a few miles, we reached southbound US 97, which we took all the way to where we are now: Brooks Memorial State Park. It's in the mountains south of Yakima and about 13 miles north of Goldendale. We hadn't been planning to stop as early as we did, but there are very few campgrounds along our route. When we looked the place over, it seemed promising. There were hardly any other people here when we got in around noon, but as the day wore on, overnighters arrived, but it was never anywhere near full. We got a nice back-in site among Ponderosa Pines. The sites across the way are on grass and backed up to a willowy stream, but they're much closer together and in the open. We had resolved to avoid Washington state parks after our previous bad experience, but this one doesn't take reservations and they were the source of all our problems.

All afternoon and evening we were "entertained" by drumbeats and music from the group area across the highway. It wasn't very loud in our campsite, but in the afternoon it sounded like Indian music; we had driven through a huge Yakima Indian Reservation almost all the way from Yakima here. In the evening it sounded more like country music, but as I learned from a book I read on Navajos, Indians like country music, too. The music ended around 9:30 p.m. and was never really objectionable. Usually only the drums were audible.

The afternoon was warm, but overcast with occasional minor thundershowers. I'd have liked to sit outside, but it's a lot of trouble to put my chair in and out of the truck,

which we'd have had to do when it rained. Jim's feeding and watering station isn't a big hit—just Robins and Brewer's Blackbirds. The Robins are eating the birdseed and Magic Meal, which in our experience is a sign they're feeding chicks somewhere. They don't care to eat it themselves.

The clouds blew over before dark and it's partly cloudy and cooler this morning. I tried to do a little recording before breakfast, but only got a few "tik" calls from a junco. The trails are in bad shape and the only dirt road here runs under high-tension power lines, and they crackle. The road through the tent-camping section goes right next to the highway. (That's why I'm sitting here in the trailer catching up on this log in the middle of the morning.)

The camp hosts have set up a variety of bird feeders on the eaves of the park entry building—birdseed, sunflower seeds, sugar water, suet, etc. I think I saw a Rufous and perhaps a Calliope Hummingbird among the group. Black-headed Grosbeaks, Spotted Towhees, Hairy Woodpeckers, and lots of Brewer's Blackbirds were eating the offerings.

This morning Jim spotted a Hairy Woodpecker cavity, but unfortunately the best place to photograph it from is an occupied campsite. He stood a while in another grove of trees, hoping for some action, but just came back reporting, "This place is really dead." We've paid for two nights and will stay around and see if anything develops. I plan to go out and photograph the flowers under the pines behind the camping area:

Snowbrush with white flowers (*Ceanothus velutinus*, a large shrub with much larger leaves and flower clusters than most *Ceanothus*)

A rangy light blue Lupine (*Lupinus* sp.),

Wild Rose (just starting to bloom where it's sunniest)

Arrowleaf Balsamroot.

The ground around the trailers is totally bare, except for pine needles.

Monday, June 23, 2008

Lava Lake USFS Campground, Cascades Lakes Hwy. west of Bend, OR

No entry.

8:15 p.m., Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Lava Lake USFS Campground, Cascades Lakes Hwy. west of Bend, OR

Not much happened the rest of the day Sunday. The place wasn't particularly good for recording.

We left early Monday morning to drive the 207 miles to where we are now. Most of it was south on US 97. We had to get groceries, prescriptions, gasoline, and propane and were happy we could accomplish all except the gasoline in Madras or Redmond, for I remembered that every time I've been in Bend I've gotten lost. We should have gotten the gasoline, too, for it turned out to be sort of a hassle finding a gas station.

I thought we could just drive down to Bend, look for the exit that said either Cascades Lake Highway or Hwy 46, which are the designations on all the maps. We did see an exit for Mt. Bachelor, which was what we should have taken, but we didn't know it at the time. We didn't even know that Mt. Bachelor is a big-deal ski area. Anyway, we were all the way through town and out the other end before we knew it. I knew if we came to the High Desert Museum, we'd have gone too far—and we did. So I had Jim pull in there and went into the entry building and found out how to get to the

right road. The woman at the desk got a brochure from the rack of free stuff and marked a route for us that included a selection of gasoline stations. It also involved a succession of signals with minuscule road signs, so I had to get out my binoculars and peer at the signs the best I could from the moving truck. I finally called one wrong. It turned out the small print on the sign I was reading said the street I wanted was in "one block." Then when we finally got turned at the right corner, we had to maneuver through more traffic circles than I've been in during the last ten years. I knew we had to turn left at one of them, but not all of them were on the little map I got at the museum, and it turned out the one just before the right one was a left turn onto "Mt. Bachelor Street". By then we knew we wanted to go toward Mt. Bachelor, so we took it. Then when we got around the corner and had gone just past one short block, it said "no outlet." So Jim had to back up and turn around--not an easy task when pulling a trailer on a narrow street. We finally got headed out the Cascades Lakes National Scenic Highway, but certainly the city of Bend had been no help in finding it!

The highway itself goes across north of Mt. Bachelor and south of South Sister, Broken Top, and several other lower mountains. All are spectacularly snow covered. After it gets past Mt. Bachelor, it turns south and runs for maybe 30 miles. I had gotten advice from Terry Hill as to where was a nice campground. She had really done a lot of scouting and kept records, which she shared with me. She must have told me about eight or ten places and what features were good and bad about each. I decided on Lava Lakes Campground, for it was the place they spent about ten days a few years back. She said it had birds and trails. (Of course, it also had fishing for her husband John--always an important consideration for them.) We drove the main loop and discovered it was almost full, so in a panic we drove around again and took site #13, which seemed more secluded than most of them, although it was in the center of the loop, not on the outside. Jim set up his bird station and managed to attract a female Western Tanager, as well as a bunch of Brewer's Blackbirds. Steller's Jays and Chipping Sparrows were also interested. However, as the afternoon and evening wore on, we began to realize we had plunked ourselves down between two loud generators, which ran off and on, but mostly on. One of them continued well past 10:00, when quiet hours are supposed to start. (The rules also say generators can be run only twice a day and for no longer than two hours at a time. These folks were forever turning the things on and off.)

After breakfast today while Jim was doing the dishes, I decided to walk Toby around the loop we had not explored yesterday. I was delighted to find a couple of nice big sites at the far end of the loop with enough sun for our solar panels. I selected #35 because it was farther than the other one from where we had been before. We moved there right away.

After settling into our new site, we took a drive. First we just went to the boat launching area with a nice view of the lake and took a few pictures of it with South Sister behind it. There was a large flock of Common Mergansers fairly close-by on the water and I really wanted Jim to get some pictures, but by the time he found all the parts to his camera and tripod, just-launched boats had chased them all off. Next we went to the nearby store/gas station/full-hookup RV park to see if they had a phone. They did, but charged \$3.00 (or was it \$4.00?) for an 800-number phone call. We said to ourselves, "Forget it."

When we drove through the mountain pass yesterday, the sky was overcast, but this morning the clouds had passed and the sky was pure blue. We decided to drive

back up there and take some pictures of the mountains and the lakes that are still surrounded and, in some cases, covered with ice and snow. Elevation at the pass is around 5600 ft. It's still early spring up there and most of the turn-off roads and campgrounds are still closed. Lava Lake is a bit lower, but still almost 5,000 ft. The temperature got down to 31° last night, but warmed up nicely to what I'd estimate as the upper 60s this afternoon.

On the way back we stopped at a small burned-over area and I walked up a dirt road and looked hard for evidence of Black-backed or American Three-toed woodpeckers, but all I found was a flicker, which called, then flew over. By then it was almost lunch time, so we came back and spent the rest of the day in the campsite.

Our customers at our bird food and water are kind of disappointing—just Brewer's Blackbirds, Chipping Sparrow, Steller's Jay, and a chipmunk species I've yet to figure out. I think it's probably Yellow Pine, which we've seen lots of places. I sat outside most of the afternoon and heard Olive-sided Flycatcher "pip-pip-pip" calls and Red-breasted Nuthatch "tin-horn" calls, but they weren't very close.

There are mosquitos here—the first place in the entire trip we've had any. They aren't very numerous, fortunately, and a bit of insect repellent kept them at bay during the day, but toward evening they got worse. I took a short walk before dinner and discovered there are a lot of water-filled depressions here and there. They're miniature versions of Lava Lake and all of the smaller other lakes on this highway, which are dammed by natural lava flows. There are some man-made reservoirs on the southern portion of the loop, which we'll explore tomorrow.

An old bird-finding guide for Oregon (*The Birder's Guide to Oregon* by Joseph E. Evanich, Jr., published by Portland Audubon Society in 1990) promised Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Pine Grosbeak, Pygmy Owl, etc., here at Lava Lakes. It's in the Lodgepole Pine zone of the mountains, with Mountain Hemlocks here and there. As we go south along the highway, the elevation will get lower and lower and we'll be in the Ponderosa Pines, where we've spent lots of time on other trips. [Later: This turned out not to be quite true. We were still seeing mainly Lodgepole Pines, although there were no more Mountain Hemlocks.]

8:00 p.m., Wednesday, June 25, 2008

Lava Lake USFS Campground, Cascades Lakes Hwy. west of Bend, OR

This morning we drove south and found that most of the reservoirs and lakes were not visible from the highway. The signage as to where to turn off to view them was abysmal, so we missed the two reservoirs completely. However, Davis Lake, a naturally lava-dammed lake, was recommended most strongly by Evanich's book, so we made a point of finding it. We first drove down to the Lava Flow Campground at the northeast end. The access road went past a huge ridge of aa lava (the chunky type) maybe 60-70 feet high. It ended up at a very small campground on the lakeshore. The campground roads were dirt and very uneven—totally unsuitable for a trailer. Besides, there weren't very many birds (Killdeer, Western Wood-Pewee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and the ubiquitous American Robin) and the campground was bounded on one end by the lava ridge and on the other by a road that was closed to all entry because of nesting Bald Eagles, so there is no place to walk except around the campground. Furthermore, it was loaded with mosquitos. We took some photos of the lake, the mountain in the distance, and, especially, the lava. The multicolored lichens on the lava were especially beautiful.

After returning to the highway and trying a couple of roads that led nowhere, we came to the road to East Davis Lake Campground, which had been recommended by the book for birding and was also listed as OK for RVs in the Trailer Life Guide. Terry Hill had also mentioned it as a possibility. The dirt access road was very washboardy, but otherwise OK, and the campground has nice large sites right next to the marshy edge of the lake. All along the access road and completely surrounding the campground is a large recently burned section of forest. The burn even encroaches on the sites farthest from the lake. Whether that will decrease the bird life we don't know, but the birds mentioned in the book are mostly water and marsh species. We drove through the campground, which had only about a quarter of its sites occupied, and decided the place had possibilities. We'll take the trailer down there tomorrow.

We drove back up to Lava Lakes. One road off to the west said it went to North Davis Lake Campground, but it didn't say how far away it was. We decided to check it out, but after driving and driving on an increasingly bumpy road, we decided we really didn't want to see the campground that badly and turned around. Another place was supposed to have an interpretive trail to an Osprey viewing location. We turned off the highway, but had a hard time recognizing the trailhead. When we found it, a man and his dog were just returning from walking it and he said he'd walked about half a mile and come to high lake water amongst the forest trees and had to turn back. So we decided to forget that and came back to Lava Lakes Campground.

It was only 11:00, so I walked Toby around the campground and part way around Lava Lake on a decent trail. Again, not many birds, but I did add Common Nighthawk to my list. I saw no sign of the large flock of Common Mergansers we'd seen yesterday morning. Lots of small boats were out on the lake, but they were there yesterday, too.

Late in the afternoon Jim and Toby had an adventure, which I've asked Jim to describe:

Around 5:00 p.m. Sylvia shamed me into taking Toby for a walk. I had been sitting behind my camera for most of the afternoon hoping (unsuccessfully) for a new bird to find my birdseed offerings and my birdbath. So off I went with Toby on the trail that led to the boat launching area of our campground, which gives one a wonderful view of the lake and the snow-capped mountain named South Sister directly across the lake. After taking in the view I decided to try out a new trail that I noticed. About halfway across a small, tree-bordered, meadowy area completely surrounded by campground, boatlaunch area, etc., a large angry problem came charging out of the woods at us. Actually it was charging at Toby, not me. It was a doe Black-tailed Mule Deer. Toby was in the lead on his flexi-leash and I jerked him back toward me as the deer came running at him. I couldn't get Toby all the way behind me fast enough, so I was forced to stop the deer's charge, kicking her in the chest to stop her. She did stop and gave me the time to snatch Toby up and beat a hasty retreat out of the meadow. This was all that the doe wanted, as she did not give chase. Later it came to me that she must have had a fawn hidden there in the meadow. I should say that I was not wearing heavy boots, just New Balance running shoes so my kicking her was not that damaging to her. She, fortunately, did not take offense and try out her sharp hooves on me which would really smart. Lucky me!

One other thing: Our first morning here we drove down to check out the same boat launching area. While we were parked there I saw a doe browsing on shrubs just along the road. I grabbed my camera to get her picture, but had trouble getting her to look at me. She was so tame that, even when I walked within 20 feet of her, she would

just glance at me and then turn her head away before I could get the focus. (I'm sure this doe was the same one that ejected Toby and me from the area that she must have claimed. It appears obvious that she has spent most of her time living right among campers, showing no fear of them, which is probably why she ignored me and went just for Toby.)

8:30 p.m., Thursday, June 26, 2008
East Davis Lake USFS Campground, Cascade Lakes Hwy., OR

Right after breakfast we moved south about 25 miles to the lovely campground we settled on after yesterday's scouting. It's in a small area of trees that escaped a huge fire that, from the age of the new Lodgepole Pines, probably occurred 4-6 years ago. On the other side of the trees from the burn area is Odell Creek, which meanders through a large marshy area, then enters the approximately two-mile-wide, shallow lake. On the other side of the lake we can see a number of snow-clad volcanic peaks, the most impressive of which is again South Sister. Our site backs right up to this exquisite view of blue water, bright green marsh dotted with some sort of tall reddish-purple flowers, blue sky, and white mountaintops. It's probably the most beautiful campsite we've had on the entire trip—and it's our last. When we leave here, we'll be driving straight home and staying in utilitarian RV parks.

When we arrived, there was only one other campsite occupied, but now there are tent-campers on both sides of us. The main activity here is fishing, so the folks are nice and quiet. The water is so shallow until they get out into the main lake that they have to paddle their boats from the boat launch down Odell Creek, so there aren't even any boat motors to mar the calm—just Toby barking at all the squirrels. [Later we saw a few brave people use their outboard motors, and they didn't seem to have trouble avoiding underwater hazards if they watched carefully where they were going.]

When we first arrived, a female Bufflehead and a couple of Spotted Sandpipers were loafing on logs out in the creek. I recorded and Jim sat on his chair on the creek bank and photographed the Spotties. I also got distant Wilson's Snipe calls in the same recording, but want to get the combination better tomorrow morning, if possible. The Spotty's voice is higher and thinner. Also present is another vaguely sound-alike group, Western Wood-Pewee, distant Chipping Sparrow, and Common Nighthawk. I hope to get them together. Around 11:00 the breeze got up and became stiff most of the afternoon. I sat outside a while this afternoon, but the wind in my face all the time became unpleasant, so I came inside. Jim tried for more Spotted Sandpiper pictures this afternoon, but they wouldn't come anywhere near him. Maybe they didn't like the wind either.

Low temperature last night was 37°, in between the 31° the first night and 39° the second. The high today here at Davis Lake was probably in the 60s.

From our campsite, we can look across the creek, marsh, and edge of the lake to a parking area and boat launch about a quarter-mile away, which is all that is left of West Davis Lake Campground. That area burned completely in the fire. I could see the skeleton of one of the rest rooms. They have a new-looking one by the boat launch, but I doubt there are any plans to restore the campground. Who wants to camp totally surrounded by dead trees? There's no access to that area from where we are without driving round-about on various highways.

Mosquitos are almost no problem here. It was pretty cool this morning and the breeze this afternoon kept them in hiding. I've been thinking about why there were so

many of them at the Lava Flow Campground. I suspect that all that piled up, fused-together, chunky lava has lots of interstices where rainwater can collect. It should be a wonderful place for mosquitos to breed.

9:00 p.m., Friday, June 27, 2008

East Davis Lake USFS Campground, Cascade Lakes Hwy., OR

Today was the day of the ducks—and a few other species. Odell Creek makes an S-curve before it enters Davis Lake. As the creek meanders, its flow rate diminishes. I walked the shoreline trail to where it slows down about half-way around the S. In the calmer water a mother Bufflehead with three half-grown chicks has established her territory. All the time we've been here, she's been in that same general area. Whenever I got too close, she made soft, gruff quacks to her brood, saying, "Come on, kids, let's get out of here." Somewhat later a couple of ducks flew in quacking fairly loudly and landed in the water. I didn't know for sure what they were because they were flying away up-sun from me, but they cooperatively swam right past me, so I could easily identify them as female Common Goldeneyes. Certain places along the trail seemed to be right in the middle of nesting areas of Wilson's Phalaropes, for occasionally I would be chewed out by adults flying back and forth past me. All of these sounds I was able to record. Unfortunately, Red-winged and Brewer's Blackbirds were in all the recordings. I never got the combinations of sounds I mentioned in yesterday's installment.

Meanwhile Jim carried his folding chair down to the water's edge and waited for Spotted Sandpipers to pose for him, which they did every twenty minutes or so, he said. He noticed that one member of the pair he was shooting had much stronger spotting than the other and that this one was doing most of the posturing and displaying. Usually you can confidently say this was the male. However, there's significant sex-role reversal in Spotted Sandpipers, so I think I'll wait until I can look up the answer in *The Birds of North America* when I get home before saying for sure. [BNA No. 289, pp. 12-13: "Female performs most courtship on her territory. Males also court females to which they are attracted." Page 24: "Spotting highly variable among individuals and, on average, extends farther down lower belly toward vent in females than in males." However, before discussing plumages and molts on p. 23, the authors say, "There have been no detailed studies of plumages and molts. The account that follows has been prepared by piecing together our casual personal observations and descriptions from . . ." (9 references).]

Jim was so intent on his Spotties that he didn't notice a female Common Merganser approaching him from upstream in the rushing creek. Fortunately I came back from my walk about that time and was able to point her out to him. He got several nice shots, he said. I saw her dive and come up with a fish, but I don't think she was close enough for a picture then.

This afternoon when the light was right, Jim went over and photographed the Bufflehead family. He said it was a real job to get all four birds to pose nicely at the same time.

Today got uncomfortably hot and our trailer gets a lot of afternoon sun. (I misjudged where the sun was going to set when we chose this site.) I think it got as high as 86° inside. I sat outside, moving my chair every so often to stay in the shade of the densest Lodgepole Pine in the site. Fortunately there was a good breeze. At first it came from the south and was hot, but then it changed to the northwest and came from

partially over the water and was cooler. It got stronger and stronger as the afternoon wore on, as is typical.

Most of the other people camping around us are here to fish. The water is so shallow that many of them are afraid to put their outboard motors into the water until they get out of the creek and onto the lake. Yesterday the wind was strongly from the north and helped them get back up the creek. But today's wind was a header and some of them had an awful time. One guy took his small pontoon boat out of the water and hauled it over a portion of the S and then put it back in the water and floated *downstream* to the boatlaunch. Another let out his passenger and had her walk back to the campsite while he laboriously paddled the last 100 ft or so, which took a long time. There's a group of about five men across from us, and they have several small one-man pontoon-type boats that they ride with their legs dangling into the water; they wear hip-waders. They were the ones that struggled mightily, paddled and paddled their one-man pontoon boats a couple of hundred yards against the creek current and a stiff wind in their faces. They were all totally exhausted when they finally made it to the boatlaunch area. Jim, being the wag he is, went over later to the group and inquired if they had any boats they wanted to sell. He got a laugh but no takers.

Saturday, June 28, 2008

East Davis Lake USFS Campground, Cascade Lakes Hwy., OR

No entry.

9:00 p.m., Sunday, June 29, 2008

East Davis Lake USFS Campground, Cascade Lakes Hwy., OR

We've just had two days of enjoyable mornings and extremely hot afternoons—91° high both days. The nights have been pleasantly cold—probably in the upper 40s or low 50s, so it takes most of the morning for the heat to become uncomfortable.

Late yesterday afternoon, it began to get cloudy, but unfortunately the clouds didn't come between us and that hot sun very often. Well after sunset we had a pretty good thunder shower, with rain off and on for about an hour. Most of the lightning was fairly far away, with just a couple of fairly close bolts.

Yesterday and today I did a lot of recording, concentrating especially on the Spotted Sandpipers and Wilson's Phalaropes, but also getting Wilson's Snipe and more Red-winged and Brewer's Blackbird sounds than I wanted. I discovered that the Wilson's Phalaropes have two call types. One is a low, almost bark-like, aggressive alarm call that they do when they fly right past me, but the other is faster and higher and they do it when they are farther away, but sometimes when they fly past me at a moderate distance. I was only aware of the aggressive one before, so was glad to get this new one. It wasn't easy to get it close up and without Red-winged Blackbirds, so I spent a lot of time on the task.

Jim worked on phalaropes in flight this morning, and it wasn't easy. They'd fly right past him too close for a photo. I was recording them, too, and liked having them fly close to me. It occurred to me that if I moved down-sun from him, he could photograph them as they flew past me. This worked fairly well. Finally I decided I'd done as well as was possible and perhaps my waving my microphone to aim at them as they flew by was causing the birds to suddenly divert as they passed me. So I just stood there for a

while and he was able to shoot off a volley on a several different passes. We'll not know if he got anything good until we get the film developed.

Yesterday morning I discovered a female Common Goldeneye with four chicks and recorded her calls to them. Then, because our new FRS radios from Wal-Mart have already quit working and our old ones are also defunct, I went back to the campsite and sent Jim out to get photos of her. He came back having found a second female Bufflehead with three chicks. He said the chicks with one female all had white face patches larger than hers, but the other had a mixture of patches the same size and larger. We're wondering if the ones with larger patches are males—amazing to be able to sex birds as young as that, if so. [Later: BNA No. 67 says the sexes are indistinguishable in juvenal plumage, so I don't know what accounts for the differences he observed--perhaps age??] He was never able to get the goldeneye with her chicks. We saw them this morning, but they were too far away and steaming out the creek toward the open lake.

I also took a lot of scenic and flower pictures. I discovered that those beautiful pinkish-purple flowers were right next to the path, not on the other side of the creek. They were two different species of lupine and one species of *Penstemon*. One of the lupines is very tall and spectacular. I haven't tried to figure the flowers out yet. I'll do so from the photos when we get around to looking at them.

I've also walked a few trails out of the campground. One leads to a crossing of Odell creek maybe 0.1 mile from the opposite end of the campground from our site, but with the high water that's the end of the line. Before the crossing it goes along the creek with lots of willows bordering it, but not very many birds—mostly Song Sparrows and one Yellow Warbler and one Common Yellowthroat, all identified by voice only. The other trail leads out at the other end, but soon peters out in dense brush. I guess no one has bothered to maintain the trails since the fire. They were probably really interesting before it and maybe there was a footbridge across the creek. A poster on the bulletin board mentions warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. I've had no vireos, one Yellow-rumped Warbler, and one or two Olive-sided Flycatchers and Western Wood-Pewees in the campground. One chickadee, a Black-capped, hangs out in the pines. A Bald Eagle flies over occasionally. Sandhill Cranes are heard in the distance off and on.

Oh, I almost forgot the pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers that I saw yesterday flycatching out of a tall Lodgepole Pine in the site farthest from ours. I enjoyed them, then went on with my walk, not thinking that I should hang around and see if I could record them; they're notoriously quiet for woodpeckers. When I came back, they were nowhere to be found. I've been back a couple of times since and haven't seen them then either.

Both afternoons have been almost unbearable. Yesterday, despite drinking plenty of water and eating a handful of salted almonds, I felt sort of sick, so today I draped a wet washcloth over my head and anchored it to my temples with my glasses frames. Every so often I'd remoisten the wash cloth. This really helped. Also, we moved to a different site—a shadier one. When we arrived originally, we could have had this site (#23), but the weather was nice and cool and we always want some sun for the solar panels. Unfortunately, I failed to check the compass and thought we'd have afternoon shade from a row of pine trees. Instead, the pine trees were on the south, and we had full sun most of the day. Yesterday I went into the trailer and sprayed poor Toby, who hasn't been clipped since we left home, with water every so often. But he didn't seem to be particularly bothered by the heat and only panted occasionally. The

heat certainly didn't cool his desire to bark at all the squirrels outside at Jim's feeder. The new site was shady except right around noonday, so the trailer didn't get any hotter than the outdoors and cooled off faster, too.

I've been doing lots of reading in the afternoons, but Jim says it's just too hot to read the difficult book he has going, so he just sat in his chair outside and shared peanuts with the Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels. He soon had them climbing up his pantlegs and jumping on the arms of his chair. Of course, he loves it. He's a pushover for squirrels. Unfortunately the squirrels soon decided I was fair game, too, but I'd prefer not to have them climbing all over me. I moved my chair far from the squirrel-feeding concession.

Since we'd really accomplished all we could in this campground, we really didn't have to stay here this last day, but I calculated it will take us three days to get home and we can't get there on Tuesday afternoon because of street sweeping, so that's why we stayed over. We debated going somewhere with electrical hookups, but it was cloudy this morning, so we hoped it'd be cooler. Besides, this place is so beautiful, and we discovered the view from our new site is even nicer than from the other one. We can see Middle and South Sister, Broken Top, and Mt. Bachelor in the distance to the north and Maiden Peak to the west. The sun sets behind the latter. This afternoon the four mountains to the north played hide-and-seek. Broken clouds hung over them, but sometimes one mountain would be in brilliant view, sometimes another, and once in a while all of them.

Monday, June 30, 2008

Honey Lake RV Park, Milford (ca. 15-20 miles south of Susanville on US 395), CA

No entry.

5:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 1, 2008

Brown's Town RV Park, Bishop, CA

I discovered that we were about 900 miles from home at Davis Lake in Oregon. Dividing that into 300-mile segments, stops in Susanville and Bishop seemed in order. Towing the trailer, drives of more than 300 miles are pretty arduous. We got up early each morning and completed each day's drive by early afternoon. I selected campgrounds that I knew were shady from stops at them on previous trips.

Yesterday we completed the southbound drive on the Cascades Lakes Highway, then cut east to US 97 and followed it south to Klamath Falls. From there we angled over to US 395 in Alturas. There is a shorter route to Susanville, but I remembered it as a winding, up-and-down-hill road, so we went via Alturas. We stopped for groceries at the grocery store in downtown Merrill, OR (just before the California border crossing), simply because it seemed handy. I found it had wonderfully fresh produce, which was what I especially wanted. I also bought a jar of Tulelake horseradish. They grow lots of the stuff there. [Later: After we got home, we tried it with some prime rib we brought home from Black Angus, and it had almost no bite, so I threw it out and bought some of my usual brand at the grocery store.]

After a quick lunch stop in Alturas, we arrived at our destination around 1:30 or 2:00 p.m. The Honey Lake RV Park is no longer listed in Trailer Life Guide, and I can see why. Its dirt access roads are full of potholes and the dirt sites aren't packed dirt, but instead are covered with several inches of loose, sandy dirt. Jim didn't use the rest

rooms, so I can't say how they were, but the place is sort of run-down looking. So, why did we stay there? Trees! Big, beautiful Jeffrey Pines and somewhat smaller and younger cottonwoods. We weren't able to get a completely shady site, but later in the afternoon the sun went behind the trees. The temperature was in the low 90s and our A/C doesn't work very well unless we have shade. There is a recommended RV park in the area, but it's totally sunny.

After dinner when it had cooled down to the upper 70s, I took Toby for a walk. And Toby discovered the pine cones! He picked up one and tossed it around a bit, but it was too small. He tried a big, hunky six-incher and it was too big for his mouth to hold very well. Then he found a four-incher—on the small side for a Jeffrey—and had an absolute ball tossing it around, chasing it, scuffling in the sandy dirt with it, then toting it with him for a while and repeating the performance all over again. He made a total mess of himself, but I knew we'd be home in a couple of days, so I didn't stop him. I just laughed out loud at his performance. These pine cones were "gentle Jeffreys" with inward pointing spines. Everywhere else we've been, we've had "prickly Ponderosas" with the prickles pointing out—or else tiny hemlock, spruce, or Douglas-Firs.

On the news last night—the first we've heard in a week—we learned that over a thousand lightning-caused fires are burning in northern California. I don't know where the fire was, but a pall of yellow smoke hung over the Honey Lake valley where we were, and the smell of smoke was noticeable whenever we stepped outside. We wondered if we'd encounter more smoke, or even fires themselves, as we drove south today, but we didn't, although it was very hazy just about everywhere.

This morning we continued on south. We hoped gasoline would be cheaper in Nevada than in California and it was. We paid \$4.089 a gallon at an Arco in Carson City and for once we picked the very cheapest price along that stretch of road. Elsewhere in the area it was up to \$4.149. After we crossed the border into California at Topaz Lake, it jumped to \$4.999. We thought that was bad until we got to Bridgeport, where it was \$5.299! Lee Vining at \$5.199 wasn't much better. On the TV a little while ago, we learned that the national average is \$4.09, just what we paid in Carson City. Most places in Washington and Oregon we paid around \$4.39 to \$4.49. Tomorrow we'll pay \$4.69 to top off our tank in Bishop and hope for a better price in Adelanto to get us home. (Our friends from Huntington Beach have been telling us of how bad the prices are even at home.)

Gasoline has been by far the biggest expense on this trip. We've paid almost nothing in camping fees because we've used our Golden Age pass in all sorts of national campgrounds—and stayed mostly in them. With it we've paid from \$4 to \$6 a night. Commercial RV parks and state parks with hookups have mostly been between \$25 and \$30, with a few over that.

Today we started a bit later than yesterday, but had only about 260 miles to drive. We stopped for lunch in the trailer at a high-elevation roadside rest south of Mammoth Lakes junction. Tonight we're in Bishop and have a nice site with several huge cottonwood trees providing almost total afternoon shade. The A/C is working beautifully, despite the temperature in the mid-90s outside. Tomorrow we'll get up early and drive home.

5:00 p.m., Friday, July 4, 2008
Home.

We got home about 1:30 p.m., Wed after driving the last 300 miles. Have been busy bringing in stuff and doing laundry yesterday and today.

We were less than pleased with Brown's Town RV park by the end of our stay. First, the voltage became very low in the very late afternoon after I wrote the precious installment. Lots of other RVs had arrived. The temperature was in the mid-90s, but their own brochure says the average summer high is 97°, so that's nothing new. The voltage fluctuated so badly (we have a voltmeter) that it even blew the circuit breaker in our trailer that runs the air-conditioning. The second problem was that they charge for the use of their dump station—even by people staying there (very unusual). There are no sewer hookups either, so everyone has to use it or carry their waste water with them. Jim paid the \$3.00 when we registered, but they didn't tell him that the dump was gated off from use when the office wasn't open. We don't know when it opens, but it certainly wasn't open when we left at 6:30. So we carried our waste with us. I recalled that there was a dump at the roadside rest south of Lone Pine, but when we got there, we found the state had removed it. So we're home and we still have tankfuls of both black and gray, which Jim will have to figure out where to dump.

10:00 a.m., Tuesday, July 8, 2008

Home.

On the good side, all is fine at home. The peach tree is loaded and a few are ripe and delicious. The strawberry plants are still bearing. A few tomatoes are ripe already. And, despite an inland heat wave, the weather here has been nice and cool with foggy mornings nearly every day.