

SUNDOG CONVERGENCE

EXPEDITIONS

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WHAT IS THAT?

Recognizing birds overhead

Turkey vulture vs. Golden eagle

Vultures: tippy flight, wings held in slight vee, two-tone underwings (light/dark), small heads.

Eagles: steady flight with wings held flat, black under wings, larger heads. (Juvenile goldens have distinct white patches on their underwings).

Prairie falcons

Pale overall, dark pointy wings with dark wing pits.

Common raven

Easily mistaken for a hawk, but tail is wedge-shaped.

Northern harrier (Marsh hawk)

Harriers are slim hawks with long tails, long wings, fly low over the ground

Unlike most raptors, males and female harriers look different

Male: bright white below, conspicuous black wing tips

Female: brown, streaky

Black-billed magpie

Long tail, flashy white patches in wings

A great place to practice figuring out who's who up in the sky is to visit the Snake River Birds of Prey area south of Boise before your Owyhee float. For waterfowl enthusiasts, Malheur National Refuge in Oregon is 50 miles west of the Owyhee. Both have excellent visitor centers and viewing opportunities for learning more about Owyhee birds.

A good reference is *Hawks in Flight* by Pete Dunn, David Sibley and Clay Sutton.

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Raptors and Rafters: Who's Watching Whom in the Owyhee River Canyon?

By Sarah Walker



Photo by Larry Ridenhour, BLM

The majestic Golden Eagle watches rafters float the Owyhee River.

three-inch eggs, the shady canyon all to herself. Then we come along. She swivels her powerful neck, tracking our passage on the green water below her. I feel like her eagle eyes might peer right down the tubes of my binoculars and into my pupils.

Floating from Rome to Leslie Gulch in spring is a wonderful way to get a peek at the wildlife in this remote and hard-to-reach place, and Owyhee Canyon's 300- to 900-foot cliffs are where the action is. Birds of prey use high rimrock perches as vantage points for surveying surrounding sagelands for jackrabbits, marmots and ground squirrels. Smaller birds ride the updrafts along the sheer walls to chase insects caught in the same updrafts. Cavity nesters use crevices, slots and caves for secure nurseries out of reach to predators like coyotes.

Trip geologist Sandy Lilligren explains how the different colors of cliffs are different expressions of material that once oozed, squirted or exploded, from ancient volcanoes. In general, the pale crumbly rock with lots of crevices and ledges is rhyolite and the darker rock with neat hexagonal columns is basalt. The combination of good nest sites next to rich foraging habitat brings so many birds together in these narrow canyons, where floaters and birds are confined to the same corridor. Sometimes it seems crowded with birds as they swoop for insects around the boats or flutter around nests on the rock walls.

A little farther downstream we spot a second eagle nest, again on river left. This one is empty. Near the end of this section of cliffs, we spot a third eagle nest, also empty. The same pair probably maintains all three. Golden eagles are known to build and maintain more than one nest and use them in alternate years. Since it takes three to four months for eaglets to gain the strength and coordination to become independent, a nest is used for a long time. If insects and parasites infect one nest, parents might raise next year's brood in another.

Most of the birds we see among the cliffs don't build eagle-sized nests, and most don't conduct their family life out in the open. Instead, they raise their families within the rock walls.

Vultures hide their eggs in a dark cave. Canyon wrens and Violet-green swallows build small nests with soft linings inside secure holes in the cliff walls. Even Flickers, who nest in snags, seem interested in the Owyhee cliffs. I am surprised when I see Flickers investigating cracks and openings in rock, until I remember that there are hardly any trees here. Pigeons and starlings nest here too. The Owyhee cliffs are more like the habitats they occupied in the Mediterranean, before they adapted to our towns and farms.

White-throated swifts are cavity nesters in these rocks, but they take on an extra challenge: they nest right on vertical walls by gluing sticks to rock with saliva. These tiny birds, with six-inch bodies and fifteen-inch

"Golden Eagle!" Harold whispers, pointing toward the cliff wall on river left. It's a cool April morning and we're floating through one of the deep secluded canyons of the Lower Owyhee River in southeastern Oregon. Thirty feet above us on the rough tan cliff, an eagle sits on her nest, silent.

The nest looks precarious on its narrow ledge against the vertical cliff—but also sturdy. It's made of thick branches and sticks and has to be four feet deep, three feet across. The eagle scrutinizes us. It feels like a private moment, her sitting on her pair of

STORY Continued on page 6



WHAT'S NEW . . .

NIZINA/CHITINA TRIP IN 2007 • Spend nine days in Alaska on our June 2 - 10, 2007 Nizina/Chitina raft trip. The price includes two nights accommodation in the historic mining town of McCarthy, a scenic air flight to the Nizina Glacier, an evening of camping on Nizina Lake, and a six day 104 mile float to O'Brien Creek on the Copper River. This is a Class III trip with whitewater and large hydraulics. The group size is limited to eight guests.

WINETASTING IN ALASKA • Rafting doesn't get any better than this! Terry Eckwright, wine expert and co-owner of The Wine Company of Moscow, joins Sundog Expeditions for our June 13 -19 trip on the spectacular Copper River. All you need to bring is an adventurous spirit. We'll bring the gear, the guides, and the food and Terry will bring the wine. Call for more information 888.455.5077.

SUNDOG AND ELDERHOSTEL IN ALASKA • Sundog Expeditions is a member of the Elderhostel team providing trips on Alaska's Copper River. The dates for this years 9-day 8-night rafting adventure are June 23 - July 1 and July 3 - 11 and include one evening each of pre and post trip accommodations. Educational sessions will cover natural, geologic, and human history, Dutch oven cooking, and animal track casting lessons. For more information visit www.elderhostel.org. To register contact Elderhostel at (877)426-8056 and request program #13711ZU.



Welcome to the second edition of **Convergence**, a newsletter reflecting individual interests and issues connected to the world of rivers. Our editorial policy is to provide an open forum for our contributors. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Sundog Expeditions. Sundog Expeditions is an equal opportunity service provider.

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Leading and Learning on Rivers

It brings us great happiness to share the summers with our guides, both on the river and between trips. They are incredible people and we would like to acknowledge them and say thank you.

The spectacular rivers we run at Sundog Expeditions - the Owyhee, Grande Ronde, Copper, Nizina, and Salmon - are selected for their varied and distinctive qualities. But our Sundog crew makes each trip truly memorable. They take us safely down the river. They set up camp and teach camping skills. They prepare gourmet meals and divine desserts. They entertain, play music, conduct martial arts demonstrations, read stories, tell good jokes and bad ones too. They bandage wounds and tape up sprains. They listen, encourage, reassure, and are quick to lend a helping hand. They lead hikes and adventure swims. They play games and always love a good waterfight!

This year our guides have been honing their interpretive skills. Appreciation for each river canyon is enhanced by learning about its natural, geologic, and human history. Sundog Expeditions is working with Elderhostel to provide Copper River raft trips in Alaska. With our educational mission now at the forefront, this has been a great opportunity for everyone to dig deep and really learn about their particular areas of interest. Our Alaska guide and professional educator, Colby Hawkinson, led the project. Colby recently earned his master's in education from the University of Idaho and works as the special education teacher at Troy (Idaho) Elementary School. Between all of us we now know a great deal about glaciers, bears, wolves, salmon, Alaska history, Dutch ovens, Chinese herbal medicine, damns (*&!), the environment, botany, vineyards, wine, remedies (as you will read in this issue), and the list goes on. So, the next time you join us on a trip you can expect to learn something new from the crew!

Sincerely,

Lonnie and Gail
Lonnie and Gail

GUIDE ABOUTS...

Many of you have asked about Jesse Weeks, who we missed in Idaho this summer. We celebrate his new membership in the exceptional and elite group of full-time Grand Canyon guides. He continues to work during winter as a professional ski patroller at Alta, in Utah. We look forward to his future guest appearances with Sundog Expeditions. Next season we anticipate that Peter Robertson and Kelly Neu will both be stepping into new rolls as trip leaders. Kelly and Sundog boatman Helmut Floss both earned their Wilderness First Response Certifications in May. Pete Gross, of course, remains the role model for sustainable and healthy living. Meredith Redmon spent her entire annual vacation from her job in Seattle, working and playing with us on the Salmon River. Leanne Miller is living the California dream in Los Angeles and Ed Jodice is getting ready for another brrrrr...cold Vermont winter. Charles Lilly, who is a sophomore at Stanford University and the son of a retired Grand Canyon guide, came out to Idaho for one trip and ended up staying for the rest of the summer to complete his training. We did manage to send him back in time for school by declining his generous offer to join Lonnie in the Grand Canyon in September! We will look forward to his return next summer along with trainees Hadley Robertson, Ken Olsen, and Kenny Hutson. This season guest geologist Sandy Lilligren brought her exuberance for rocks and life in general to us on the Owyhee River and wine expert Terry Eckright brought vintage great grapes to the Salmon. Our fantastic roster of guest guides included, Martin Litton, Kimberly Richardson, Scott and Susan Chambers, and of course Mr. T! Thanks to all - you are the best! ♦



Some guide pics from left to right: Colby Hawkinson (Gail behind), Peter and Hadley Robertson, Jesse Weeks and Helmut Floss, Meredith Redmon (behind) and Kelly Neu.



Shattering the Solitude By Pete Gross

My brain rejected the image relayed by my eyes. We had just entered Blue Canyon on the Lower Salmon River, bounced through the first set of roller coaster rapids, and were quietly drifting through a calm stretch with acoustics and beauty that match any cathedral on the planet. And like entering a cathedral, people lowered their voices to a whisper – if they spoke at all. As we rounded the bend approaching our favorite, secret camp, I glimpsed the rotor blades of a helicopter before the image disappeared behind an outcrop. Like a dog that sniffs the air to verify what she sees, I listened for a sound that might confirm what I knew I couldn't have seen.

Yet, seconds later, as the beach came into full view, so did the helicopter. The only time I'd ever been on a trip where our special camp was already occupied wasn't even another river party but a group of five in a helicopter. Moments after we floated by to find another place to camp, the pilot fired it up, filling the canyon with the whine of the engine and shattering the silence with the wop wop wop of the rotor blades.

On another occasion, I was guiding a coed group of high school students from Santa Monica, California on a five-day canoe trip through Labyrinth Canyon on the Green River. The kids were so involved in social interactions that they seemed oblivious to the surroundings. The chatter began the moment they awoke and didn't cease until the last one fell asleep at night.

On day two we stopped at Trin Alcove to hike to an amphitheater. Weary of the incessant talking, I lingered behind. I had issued myself a challenge. I pulled out my recorder – the flutelike instrument, not the electronic kind for playing tapes – and played Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. I paused to listen. Then, I played another song. Now, the voices were muted and they seemed to be trying to figure out where the music was coming from. One more song and without any prompting, a couple of dozen high school kids fell

absolutely silent. For another 15 minutes I played with lengthy pauses between songs and heard only silence from the alcove.

As the kids began to file back down the canyon, speaking in hushed tones, many of them still had no idea where the music originated until they saw me holding my recorder. One boy, who had probably never been beyond the constant din of urban motor vehicle traffic in his life walked up, reached out to me and said, "I just want to shake your hand. That's the most incredible thing I've ever heard."

The last night of the trip, each kid took a turn describing his or her experiences the past four days. Some of them spoke with more eloquence, wisdom, and insight than I've ever heard in 30 seasons of guiding river trips in Utah, Idaho, Alaska, and the Grand Canyon.

The same boy who shook my hand at Trin Alcove spoke about how profoundly moved he was by the incredible silence of the canyons and the music that seemed to emanate from the canyon walls. He spoke about how violated he felt by the noise of a solitary motorcycle roaring up and down a dirt road paralleling the river as we floated between Hey Joe and Spring Canyons. He could see himself riding such a motorcycle at home in the city, proclaiming to everyone within earshot how "cool" he was. Now, the irritating whine of one motorcycle echoing off the canyon walls drove him to anger bordering on rage. He likened it to listening to a chainsaw in a cathedral.

As we parted ways at the end of the trip, it was my turn to shake his hand for his profound commentary. Yet, what he said that night was not a rare reaction to the incredible silence of the canyons. Others may not state it so eloquently, but for almost 30 years, I've heard people speak as frequently about the sounds as they do of the stunning scenery. Many are amazed when they can hear a conversation one-quarter mile away. And, they express their

SOLITUDE Continued on page 4

Sundog Expeditions supports...



SAVE OUR WILD SALMON is a nationwide coalition of conservation organizations, commercial and sport fishing associations, businesses, river groups, and taxpayer advocates - all joined in a commitment to restore Pacific Northwest wild salmon and the communities that depend on them. www.wildsalmon.org

IDAHO RIVERS UNITED's mission is to protect, restore and improve the rivers of Idaho and the communities that depend on them. Our focus is the ecological integrity of our rivers, but the lens we look through is citizen involvement. www.idahorivers.org



HELLS CANYON PRESERVATION COUNCIL, works to protect and restore Hells Canyon - Wallowa and Blue Mountain ecosystems for all times. www.hellscanyon.org

THE COPPER RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT provides residents with a forum to consider and implement innovative approaches for achieving balance between a diverse economy and healthy ecosystems while maintaining our quality of life and our cultural heritage. copperriver.org



THE SEQUOIA FORESTKEEPER is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enhancing forest ecosystems including the Sequoia National Forest, the Giant Sequoia National Monument and their related watersheds. www.sequoiaforestkeeper.org

WASHINGTON WATER TRUST is a private, nonprofit organization established in 1998 to restore instream flows in Washington's rivers and streams. WWT works to benefit water quality, fisheries and recreation in Washington's rivers and streams by acquiring existing water rights from willing sellers through purchase, lease or gift. www.thewatertrust.org



2007 BENEFIT TRIPS with SUNDOG EXPEDITIONS

Sundog Expeditions is donating the profits from each of the following trips to the sponsoring organization.



Photo by Gail Siegel © 2006

From left to right: Martin Litton, Sequoia ForestKeeper; Sam Mace, Save Our Wild Salmon; and Lonnie Hutson, Sundog Expeditions

Sequoia ForestKeeper

Grande Ronde River – 5 days

May 20 - 24, 2007

Guest boatman & legendary environmentalist
Martin Litton

Trip is based out of Lewiston, ID

Trip price: \$1,115 per person

www.sequoiaforestkeeper.org

Save Our Wild Salmon

Salmon River Canyons – 5 days

August 29 - September 2, 2007

Trip is based out of Moscow, ID

Trip price: \$1,115 per person

www.wildsalmon.org

For trip information contact us at 888.455.5077 or
spot@sundogexpeditions.com

YOU CAN HELP

The growing momentum for dam removal and real salmon recovery is the result of diverse businesses and citizens from around the country working together on behalf of wild salmon and steelhead. The Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition (SOS) includes more than 50 conservation groups, commercial fishing associations, sportfishing groups and businesses, taxpayer advocates and other interests from around the nation.

You can help. Write and call your Members of Congress and send a letter to your local newspaper calling for removal of the four lower Snake River dams. Come to Washington, DC for an SOS-sponsored salmon shuttle. Invite an SOS representative to speak to your community group. Visit www.wildsalmon.org to receive regular issue updates and for general information. If you have any questions, contact Sam Mace at 509-747-2030 or sam@wildsalmon.org.

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dismay when motorcycles, ATVs, jet boats, and helicopters shatter the solitude.

My adopted state of Utah was one of the first to recognize and protect its citizens from the harmful effects of second hand cigarette smoke with the Clean Indoor Air Act. Similarly, the harmful effects of "second hand" noise are well known and well documented. Noise increases stress, which contributes to hypertension and a host of related maladies. The healing effects of soothing sounds are also well documented. Medical studies show that patients who listen to soothing music immediately prior to surgery recover faster and better than those who receive the same preoperative care without music. Students who listen to classical music before an exam score better than those in a control group.

It's difficult to overstate the importance of sound. Movie producers literally set the tone for a movie with the sound track. Simply by changing the background music, the same scene can be lighthearted, dramatic, or suspenseful. Nearly everyone recognizes the irritation of a dog that won't stop barking, a screaming baby in a movie theater, or the racket from machinery of a nearby construction zone. We expect to leave those nuisances behind when we venture into the backcountry.

It's good public policy and plain common sense that activities that create the greatest public nuisance and health hazard face the greatest restrictions. Smoking is prohibited in work place environments, restaurants, airports, enclosed public places, and even some outdoor public areas for these reasons. Cities, campgrounds, and other public places regulate noise. Congress even passed a law restricting overflights of the Grand Canyon to protect the "natural quiet." One of the most common reasons people call the police is to complain about a noisy neighbor.

I've never heard anyone complain about the appearance of a helicopter flying over the Grand Canyon. Sometimes with an almost detached amusement, people comment about how out of place a jet boat looks crammed with a couple of dozen people whisking past on the Snake River. But, the one thing that universally irritates everyone, the one thing that only a deaf person can ignore, is the crescendo of noise that drowns out the sounds of birds and cicadas and gurgling water until it fades into the distance and the sounds of the canyon return to fill the void.

At any given time in midsummer, a couple of dozen groups comprised of several hundred people might be floating the Lower Salmon River, separated from each other by days and miles and scarcely aware of each other's presence, sometimes even when floating past another group in camp. By contrast, a single jet boat with just a couple of people can roar past and leave its unwelcome audio imprint upon literally hundreds of people within a matter of hours.

Whenever federal land management agencies raise the possibility of restricting motorized use, whether it's overflights in the Grand Canyon, snowmobiles in Yellowstone, jet boats in Hells Canyon, or off-road vehicles just about anywhere, groups representing these motorized users make almost as much noise in the halls of the land management agencies as they do in the backcountry. Invariably, they argue for shared "multiple" use, equal access for everyone, and claim to bring economic benefits to surrounding communities. These arguments are appealing because they are clear and simple.

One acre of an interstate highway can handle about 30 to 40 strictly regulated cars. By contrast, an acre of bike lane can accommodate hundreds of attentive bicyclists, and an acre of sidewalk can handle more than a couple thousand wandering pedestrians. Whether in the city or in the backcountry, the faster someone moves, the more space they "occupy." Where it's unregulated, motorized use literally drives away non-motorized use as the few expel the many, and the concept of multiple-use allows the achievement of the lowest common denominator.

Ironically, the failure to restrict motorized use probably has a greater negative economic impact on surrounding communities. When California banned smoking in bars, bar owners anticipated significant loss of business, but found that business actually increased. Just as responsible smokers can appreciate smoke-free environments as much as nonsmokers, responsible motorized boat and vehicle operators appreciate places where they can enjoy quiet and solitude.

We can build more cathedrals, but as the late Dave Brower commented, we can't make another Stanislaus River or another Grand Canyon. We ought to treat these places with at least the same respect and reverence that we treat a cathedral.



Pete Gross lives in Moab, Utah where he seeks quiet and solitude in the surrounding canyon country with his border collie/lab mix who tries to teach him to quiet the noise in his head.



River Rx: Dr. Turvy's guide to a carefree ride By Kelly Neu

Chi LeMa! NiHao.

Common greetings and good tidings of the Chinese language come to mind as I sit on the lichen-covered walls of a homestead within Idaho's Lower Salmon River Gorge. On this riverside slope, the remnants of a stone dwelling inhabited by Chinese miners lies open to the powerful rays of the noontime sun. A lazy breeze carries the sound of dry, shaking grasses and crickets crying out to cool themselves. Under the rocking shadows of chokecherry branches, one can gaze down on the bouncing current of the Salmon River as it drinks the libations of Packers Creek.

Our dories, nestled in the eddy below these 1860s Chinese homesteads, silently wait for the coming thrill of Cougar Canyon Rapids and beyond. Carefully stowed inside the hull of one of these Dories rests a legacy passed from these Chinese pioneers to the modern day adventurer. Within a sealed ammo can, a small pharmacy of Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine takes its place as an

essential health restorative on any journey. These medicines are perfect for long river journeys because they are specifically formulated for the many kinds of environmental and mental influences that one might encounter on such a trip. These affordable little packages of pills have saved my bum -um, literally – many a time. (See below.)

Chinese herbal formulas can prevent illness by counteracting the body's tendency to overreact to changes in temperature, barometric pressure, time zones, and other stressors. They can hone the immune system onto a specific area of the body to create an incompatible environment for infectious agents. They are powerful, effective, safe and available over the counter. Having spent five years studying Chinese Medicine in both the U.S. and China and six years of private practice; there are a few Traditional Chinese Herbal formulas that I never leave home – or the boathouse – without. ✦

Huang Lian Su Wan — This is the formula referenced above. (see "saved my bum.") If you have been a far too frequent user of the "unit," due to eating that wrinkled month-old hot dog at the gas station a ways back, this is the formula for you. These small pills will kill almost any bug messing with your gut – whether it is due to the mystery bacteria noted above, giardia, amoebic or bacterial dysentery. Why would you take this instead of antibiotics you ask? First, Huang Lian Su Wan kills off not just bacteria, but yeasts as well. Unlike antibiotic treatment, you are highly unlikely to get post treatment digestive problems or yeast infections that could make the rest of your trip miserable. Second, Huang Lian Su Wan boosts your immune system and decreases the fever and pain that may come along with the "gut trouble." Third, it has a longer shelf life and more resistance to extremes of temperature than antibiotics. Fourth, it is inexpensive and available over the counter.

Ma Zi Ren Wan — On the other end of the spectrum, whether you haven't taken enough time to partake of the sweeping river views that the "unit" provides, or you've been a little overheated by high temperatures, stressed by a lengthy scout at Bunghole Rapids or just tend to get your britches in a bunch when you travel, this formula will keep your boat floating. The medical condition Ma Zi Ren Wan treats, in case you need a hint, is constipation. This formula is gentle – it won't suddenly take effect at Bunghole Rapid – and it restores the moisture of the intestines making things pleasant once again.

Huo Xiang Zheng Qi Wan — This is the perfect road-trip remedy. It is for those times when you've spent days eating greasy fast-food on your way to Lee's Ferry put-in on the Colorado River, or have eaten enormous amounts of Aunt So and So's famous home cookin' or overindulged in Dr. Turvy's. (See below.) Symptoms may include feeling a little queasy, with a bit of a headache. Or maybe you've gone over the side of the boat with the last meal's cookies and feel the runs coming on. Huo Xiang Zheng Qi Wan will halt those horses. Everything from overeating and overdrinking to mild food poisoning can be treated with this formula. (For severe food poisoning use Huang Lian Su Wan mentioned above.)

Yunnan Bai Yao — This is a little miracle that comes in the shape of a pill. It stops bleeding. It doesn't take the place of well aimed direct pressure or good common sense but it has tipped the scales in favor of the patient many a time. I keep a dose of this in my car's glove box and, of course, in my ammo can for emergencies.

Dr. Turvy's Special Formula — This one comes not from China but the African desert. Dr. Turvy was a famous – or at least a notorious and possibly imaginary – physician of the early 1900's whose prescriptive authorities would today be likened to a sommelier. Or, more accurately, a frontier barkeep. Today Dr. Turvy's Special Formula has taken on the acronym of G.I.N. It is often dispensed with sparkling quinine water and lime. The proper dosage is derived by the following equation where:

d= Dories gH= Goofy Hats s= Sunshine

$$\text{Therefore: } \left[\frac{(d+gH) \times s}{(H:O)} \right]^\infty = \text{proper dosage}$$



All of these remedies are easy to obtain and pack perfectly into the corner of an ammo can. With the exception of Dr. Turvy's which should be given to your boatman for safekeeping.

For any questions about indications, ingredients, dosages, or quality control testing of your Dr. Turvy's, please feel free to contact kneu@bastyr.edu



Kelly Neu is Licensed Acupuncturist, Herbalist and River Guide for Sundog Expeditions who is board certified in Dr. Turvy's Medicinal Cures.. Her studies of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture have taken her to Japan, China and Dharamsala, India most notably with the physicians to H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Lam Family gong fu practitioners from Hong Kong. She can be occasionally spotted at her practice in Seattle. However, she ardently believes that the best preventive medicine is a journey down the river.

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Photo by Gail Siegel ©2003

BIRDS OF THE OWYHEE

Owyhee Bird List

Rome to Leslie Gulch

Sarah Walker and Betsy Janeway, April 2006

(R) Owyhee Reservoir

Blue-winged teal	Short-eared owl
Cinnamon teal	Great-horned owl
Western grebe (R)	Belted kingfisher
Canada goose	Mourning dove
Killdeer	Rock dove (feral pigeon)
Spotted sandpiper	Flicker
American white pelican (R)	Say's phoebe
Curlew (R)	White-throated swift
American avocet	Barn swallow
Black-necked stilt	Cliff swallow
Seagull	Northern rough-winged swallow
Tern (R)	
Great blue heron	Violet-green swallow
Black-crowned night-heron	Common raven
Chukar	Black-billed magpie
California quail	Canyon wren
Red-tailed hawk, dark morph	Rock wren
Golden Eagle	Dipper
Swainson's hawk	Townsend's solitaire
Northern harrier	American robin
Prairie falcon	European starling
American kestrel	Red-winged blackbird
Turkey vulture	Brewer's blackbird
	Western meadowlark

RAPTORS Continued from page 1

wingspans, have strong claws for crawling deep inside crevices. Their Latin name, *Aeronautes saxitalis*, translates as airships of the rocks, and swifts spend most of their lives airborne – they eat, drink and mate in the air. We hear them twittering and see their flashy black-and-white pattern among the towers across from Greeley Bar – “swooping and acrobatic” boatman Peter Robertson aptly describes them. Their markings remind me of the bold patterns of killer whales, sort of an “orca” look.

Cliff swallows also glue nests to vertical walls, but they are made of mud, not sticks. Dense clusters of their round mud-huts cover entire rock walls all along the Owyhee, and we start seeing them soon after putting in at Rome. Each nest represents between 900 and 1,200 globs of mud, each piece of squishy building material fetched separately. Inside is a soft lining of fine grass and feathers. For all this work, Cliff swallows may not reuse their colonies. These swallows don't return to the Owyhee in spring until river flows drop enough to expose mud for their nest building and maintenance needs. We might see swarms of Cliff swallows on an April trip, or they may not be back yet. Last year we noticed House sparrows at the colonies, sneaking in ahead of the swallows.

After our rewarding morning craning our necks to search for the spectacular eagle nests, we drift into more open country. Our view widens to gentle slopes covered with sage and wildflowers. In the shallows along the shore, pink, tan and gold willow stems, bare and not yet leafed out, vibrate with the current. Wads of small sticks are plastered against the upstream side of the willows. They look like bird nests, but they're remnants of floating debris left by the higher spring flows before our trip.

In the willow, thickets gangs of noisy male Red-winged blackbirds flare their scarlet epaulettes. They are preoccupied with their nesting territories and trill incessantly. Male Red-wings are the busybodies of the river. Females rest quietly in groups or fly along the shore with nesting materials in their beaks. A few mallards paddle by. We can hear music from the sage slopes – meadowlarks and rock wrens.

Swallows dart and swoop all around our boats, their wide mouths agape, scooping up insects too small for us to see. Their flashy white rump patches and iridescent green color say they're Violet-green swallows.

Fluffy white feathers near shore turn out to be a signal that a Canada goose nest is hidden nearby. All we see is her black face with its white chinstrap as she stretches her long neck to peer at us. To her, we must appear as pale faces atop bulky life jackets.

Geese build big nests on the ground near water and line them with white goose down. Their babies are born with eyes open and legs ready to travel, so each year's nest isn't needed for long. On the Owyhee we sometimes see geese up in the cliffs! They look odd – like wannabe raptors – but geese are known to occasionally nest on ledges or even use old raptor nests.

Canada geese are noisy and their racket is amplified in the narrow canyons. Small groups regularly honk and flap over our heads, heading up or downstream on some important geosely mission. Our group votes Canada geese, along with killdeer, “first birds heard every morning.”

After lunch, the river takes us into another section of cliffs. There are more eagle nests, but nobody's home. We figure out which one is active by checking for fresh sticks or recent whitewash on the rock below.

Floating is the only way one can get to these Owyhee Cliffs when the birds are carrying out their spring rituals. Even then, much of what happens here remains a mystery. No one knows the details of the nesting phase of the curious swifts or the melodious canyon wrens, whose private lives take place in inaccessible crevices.

After our trip we'll return to our homes far from the wild Owyhee. In winter, while we're skiing and shoveling snow, the birds we've met along the river will be somewhere in South America feeding up for the Big Flight north, to the Owyhee canyon breeding cliffs.



Photo by Gail Siegel ©2005

Sarah Walker is a naturalist from Moscow, Idaho. She thanks her sister Betsy for identifying the Short-eared owl that flew across the Owyhee one April night carrying a mouse and settling in by the unit, much to everyone's excitement and inconvenience.

2007 Schedule and Rates

OREGON - OWYHEE RIVER - 5 Days

This spectacular 67 mile desert river raft trip will put-in at Rome, Oregon and take out at Leslie Gulch on the Owyhee Reservoir. Trips base out of Boise Idaho. Requirements: All Experience levels and an eye for beauty.

OREGON - WALLOWA/GRANDE RONDE RIVER - 5 Days

Join us for an early summer trip on Northeast Oregon's beautiful Grande Ronde River, designated as "National Wild and Scenic" by Congress in 1988. Trips base out of Lewiston, Idaho. Requirements: All experience levels and an appreciation for nature.

OREGON	Dates	Price Adult/Youth	Per Person Deposit
Owyhee River	April 14 - 18, 2007	\$1,050/\$875	\$300
Owyhee River	May 1 - 5, 2007	\$1,050/\$875	\$300
Grande Ronde River*	May 20 - 24, 2007	\$1,115	\$300



ALASKA - COPPER RIVER - 7 DAYS

An unforgettable 7 day Alaska adventure. Experience spectacular mountains, waterfalls, glaciers, icebergs, and wildlife as you float for 100 miles through the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve on your way to the Copper River Delta. Trips begin in Valdez, Alaska and conclude in Cordova, AK. Requirements: No experience necessary, an adventurous spirit a must!

ALASKA	Dates	Price (Adult Prices Only)	Per Person Deposit
Nizina River	June 2-10	\$2,400	\$400
Copper River	June 13 - 19	\$1,650	\$400
Copper River	June 24 - 30	Elderhostel Program #13711	To register call 888.426.8056
Copper River	July 4 - 10	Elderhostel Program #13711	To register call 888.426.8056
Tazlina/Copper River	July 14 - 18	Charter Trip	Full

IDAHO - LOWER SALMON RIVER by DORY- 5 DAYS

70 Miles of exciting whitewater, pristine beach camping, kayaking, swimming, fun in the sun. Trips begin and end in Moscow, "Heart of the Arts," Idaho. Requirements: All experience levels, a great family trip!



IDAHO	Dates	Price - Adult/Youth	Per Person Deposit
Lower Salmon River	July 8 - 12	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River	July 15 - 19	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River	July 23 - 27	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River	July 30 - August 3	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River	August 6 - 10	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River	August 14 - 18	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River	August 21 - 25	\$1,025/\$850	\$300
Lower Salmon River**	August 29 - Sept. 2	\$1,115	\$300

*Sequoia ForestKeeper Fundraiser with guest boatman Martin Litton. **Save Our Wild Salmon Fundraiser. No discounts on benefit trips. Fees, and taxes are not included in trip prices and will be charged additionally. Prices and trip dates are subject to change.

10% Early booking discount for deposits received by January 31, 2007 (Available on most trips)

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SUNDOG BOOK REVIEW

Ordinary Wolves by Seth Kantner

322 pages, Milkweed Editions

Books about places like Alaska tend to range from fawning to gushing. Indeed, the 49th state is so vast and mythical that writers seem unable to resist page after page laden with overwrought adjectives.

It's understandable, given that a single raft trip down the Copper River imbues a person with Alaska's stunning landscape and Far North mystique. (Now I've fallen into that trap). And yet such books are a bit like a steady diet of chocolate-filled croissants and triple espressos. Seth Kantner's semi-autobiographical novel, *Ordinary Wolves*, is notable for delivering both the grandeur and the grueling aspects of Alaska without leaving the reader recovering from the literary equivalent of a caffeine-sugar crash.

Ordinary Wolves tells the story of a white boy named Cutuk Hawcly who lives in a dirt igloo in northeastern Alaska with his father, brother and sister. Cutuk's father, Abe, moved the family here from the Lower 48 and supports them by subsistence hunting, making furniture and selling the occasional painting. His mother has long-since fled.

Cutuk is a white boy who longs to be an Eskimo – and tends to measure his self-worth in this regard. Early in the book, for example, Abe leaves Cutuk to guard a moose carcass while he hauls a dog-sled load of fresh meat home. Wolves are drawn to the fresh kill after dark. Ten-year-old Cutuk wants to shoot one to prove himself to natives living in the nearest Inuplaq village. In the end, he cannot – and part of Cutuk feels ashamed because he knows that Eruk, an Eskimo he admires, could easily have pulled the trigger.

Kantner's authoritative voice, informed by the fact that he was raised in an igloo in the Alaska wilderness before the proliferation of satellite telephones and GPS, disputes any Walt Disney notions about the Far North. Readers will feel cold and solitary thanks to the strength of Kantner's prose:

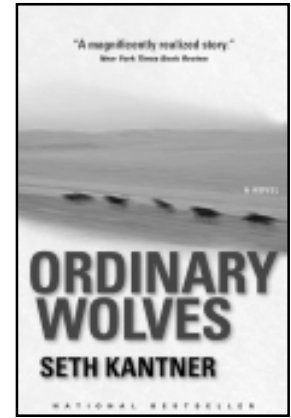
"I felt as cumbersome and alone as a moon traveler, peering out the fur tunnel of my caribou hood, beaver hat, and wolf ruff . . . The walls of blackness grew and leaned close over my head and joined. An icy east breeze thinned the smoke. The night cold was a monster now, merciless, pinching my face with pliers, sneaking fingers under my parka. It didn't seem possible to keep my cheeks thawed, and they froze over and over again."

Along the way, readers will feel awestruck, again because of Kantner's skill:

"Above, aurora wavered, green smoke ghosting in the dark, quick pale brush strokes, the bottoms tinted pink, twinging up in the black."

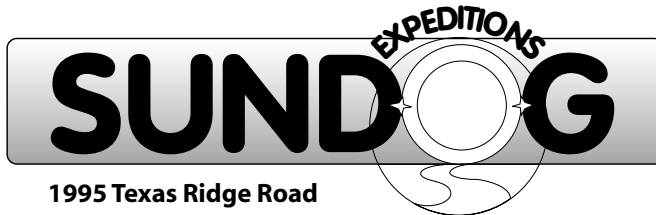
More than just a wilderness tale, *Ordinary Wolves* also brings tragedy, conflict, and human failing to the page. Overall, it's a fine read, worthy of anyone who wants substance about Alaska instead of superlatives. ♦

— Luke Keisling



Do you have a favorite book?

Send your suggestions for the Sundog reading list to spot@sundogexpeditions.com



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