

Volume 28 Issue 5 January 2020

# Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be: Wednesday, January 8th at 7:00 p.m.

Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Bldg 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue

# Galapagos - Islands in Flux

**Presented by Lindell Haggin** 

Enjoy pictures of the native inhabitants as you learn about the changes that man has wrought to the islands over the centuries. This is the place where Darwin visited and the theory of evolution began to formulated. These isolated islands have wildlife seemingly unconcerned about the presence of humans, but humans have certainly left their mark on the islands and the wildlife. Lindell Haggin, a long-time birder and member of Spokane Audubon Society, recently visited the Galapagos Islands and their home country, Ecuador. Lindell will share her photos along with the photos and insights of Ann Brinly, Jenny Michaels and Mary Marsh.

**Short-eared Owl** 



**Blue-footed Booby** 

**Great Frigatebird** 

All photos by Lindell Haggin

Land Iguana

#### The Pygmy Owl

Volume 28 Issue 5 Jan. 2020

*The Pygmy Owl*, the newsletter of the Spokane Audubon Society, is published monthly, September through June.

Spokane Audubon Society P.O. Box 9820 Spokane, WA 99209-9820

Owl illustrations on pg. 1 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



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February Pygmy Owl Deadline January 20th

## **Membership Report**

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Nesting through December 18, 2019.

Welcome to our new nesters: Nan Berger, Joseph Conaty and Renee LaRocca.

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Michael and Pam Dixson, Russell and Marian Frobe, Jane Beaven and Dan Finn, Carla Joyal, Liz Deniro and Paul Swetik, Therese Nielsen, Pearl and Howard Bouchard, Chris Flanagan, Michael and Crystal Atamian, Steven Thompson, Jonathan Isacoff, Marlene and Bob Cashen, and Steven Siegfried.

You can help us reduce our costs and energy use and save paper by switching to our electronic, full-color publication. Please send your email address to me, Alan McCoy at <a href="mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com">ahm2352@gmail.com</a> and I will make sure you that get the Pygmy Owl in your email inbox. Another way to get the Pygmy Owl is to go to our website: <a href="https://www.audubonspokane.org/the-pygmy-owl">https://www.audubonspokane.org/the-pygmy-owl</a>.

## Thank you!

Thank you to all who generously donated in exchange for bird books, photos, feeders, and other items at our December meeting. We raised a total of \$187 to offset ongoing chapter costs (like field trip insurance, etc.) and to support our conservation efforts.

Happy New Year!

## **Field Notes**

#### Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

We are in winter and that means winter birding with icy roads, snow, wind, and all the other good stuff! Promisingly there have been continued Pine Grosbeak sightings as well as a couple of Common Redpoll reports in the region. While not a massive irruption as in years past, hopefully we'll continue to see more as winter progresses. Some of the noteworthy loons from the last report have lingered around and of course, winter birding means looking for rare arctic gulls on the big regional lakes. Especially rare sightings are in CAPS.

Ross's Goose: Kettle Falls (12/13-TL)

Snow Goose: Coeur D'Alene (11/28-BB); Sprague (12/8-JI)

Greater White-fronted Goose: University of Idaho (11/24-BB)

Long-tailed Duck: Coeur D'Alene (11/24-MW); Electric City (11/24-RM); Hayden Lake (12/4-CC)

White-winged Scoter: Central Premix Pond (11/24-MW)

Mew Gull: Blackwell Island (12/10-JI); Heyburn State Park (12/13-JI); Wolf Lodge Bay (12/16-JI)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Colville Flats (11/20-MW); Coeur D'Alene (11/24-MW); Blackwell Island (12/6-DY); Harrison (12/16-JI)

"Kumlien's" Iceland Gull: Harrison (12/16-JI)

Glaucous-winged Gull: Harrison (12/16-JI)

Glaucous Gull: Coeur D'Alene (11/24-MW); Lake Pend Oreille (12/8-JR)

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: Wolf Lodge Bay (12/10-JI)

Pacific Loon: Heyburn SP (12/13-JI)

Northern Goshawk: Mill Canyon (11/24-JI); Moscow (11/24-CS); University of Idaho (11/28-NP); Potlatch (11/30-NP and JE)

Blue Jay: Coeur D'Alene (11/24-DA); Spokane Valley (11/28-LS); Lenville (12/6-SC); Bonner's Ferry (12/9-JR); Potlatch (12/18-RB); University of Idaho (MOB)

Pine Grosbeak: Mill Canyon (11/22-TL and JP); Paradise Ridge (11/22-NP); Hawk Creek Canyon (11/22-TL and JP);

Schweitzer Mountain (12/1-CL); Moose Creek Reservoir (12/7-NP)

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch: Paradise Ridge (11/22-NP); Sprague (12/14-TL)

PURPLE FINCH: University of Idaho (12/14-CL)

White-winged Crossbill: Mt. Spokane State Park (11/23-TL)

Common Redpoll: Duncan (12/12-MC); Cheney (12/15-JI)

White-throated Sparrow: University of Idaho (11/23-DG); Pullman (11/26-JW)

Brown-headed Cowbird: Spangle (12/2-MW)

Rusty Blackbird: Spangle (12/2-MW); Heyburn State Park (12/13-JI)



#### Purple Finch © Wendy Hogan

Observers: DA-Dan Audet; RB-R.J. Baltierra; BB-Ben Bright; MaC-Marlene Cashen; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; CC-Chris Claudill; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JoE-Johnna Eilers; JE-Jacob Elonen; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; DG-David Griffin; LH-Lindell Haggin; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DL-Dabvid Lambeth; TLa-Terry Lane; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; BL-Becky Lyle; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Mason Maron; AM-Alan McCoy; BM-Ben Meredyk; NM-Nancy Miller; RM-Roy Meyers; TO-Tim O'Brien; PO-Peter Olsoy; JP-Jonathan Pafford; NP-Neil Paprocki; ER-Eric Rassmussen; SC-Stacy Crist; SS-Sandy Schreven; LS-Leonard Selvaggio; KS-Katie Sorenson; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; DW-Doug Ward; JW-John Wolff; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney

#### **Board Profiles:**

# Lisa Langelier

by Madonna Luers



Lisa Langelier, our current vice-president, has been on the Spokane Audubon Society board since 2016. She has been a chapter member since 1994 and involved with other Audubon chapters throughout the West for over 30 years.

"I wanted to contribute to a functioning chapter," she says about joining the board at a time when the chapter needed additional leadership. Her contribution, other board members say, has been particularly valuable because of her experience as a professional wildlife manager.

Lisa started serious birding in the late '70's when she was studying wildlife at the University of Idaho. After graduation with a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Resources, she worked on bird surveys on the Okanogan National Forest in northcentral Washington. On that project she and other wildlife researchers teamed up with the "bug people" (Forest Science lab entomologists) who were looking at spruce budworm outbreaks. Lisa's group looked at forest bird predation on budworm. They captured birds in mist nets and kept them in enclosures to precisely observe their foraging on insects. Among the birds she handled were evening grosbeaks, pine siskins, black-capped and mountain chickadees, red-breasted, white-breasted and pygmy nuthatches, chipping sparrows, and "the best forager of them all," western tanagers. A study of habitat selection of these species became her Master's degree thesis, with additional research at sites near LaGrande, Oregon, McCall, Idaho, and Seeley Lake, Montana.

A life-long animal lover, Lisa was born in 1955 in Nashua, New Hampshire. After high school she moved to Boston, working for a year to establish

residency so she could attend the University of Massachusetts' veterinary science program. While studying to be a veterinarian, she participated in an exchange program with the University of Idaho, where she eventually transferred and changed her major to wildlife.

Lisa first worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a six-month temporary biologist in Moses Lake, assessing the wildlife impacts of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. She worked as a habitat biologist for the Washington Department of Game out of the Walla Walla and Burbank offices. She moved to Boise where her future husband Bruce Kessler worked, and developed a volunteer program as an education specialist for The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey. When her husband transferred to Boulder, Colorado, Lisa started a wild-life education program for the Rocky Mountain Arsenal as it was becoming a new national wildlife refuge, for which she later served as assistant manager.

Lisa became manager of the USFWS' Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge in northeast Washington in 1994. By 2008, USFWS combined the refuge into a management complex with Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge in North Idaho and Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge near Cheney, and Lisa was transferred to Turnbull as complex manager. She retired from that position in 2013 when a cancer diagnosis had her re-thinking how she wanted to spend her time.

Neither her husband nor daughter are serious birders, but Lisa has taken opportunities to look for birds in family travels to Africa, Australia, and other places. During her career travels to conferences, she often squeezed in birding. She's participated in birding trips to Texas, Mexico, California, and her favorite, Costa Rica, where she and other retired USFWS employees saw at least 320 species.

It's difficult for Lisa to pick a favorite bird species, but she's always been fond of nuthatches and loves that Eastern Washington has all three species of them.

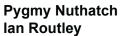
(cont on page 5)

White-Breasted Nuthatch Nick Saunders





Red-Breasted Nuthatch Gerri Vyn







Her tip for new birders is to practice getting the "whole gestalt of a bird" – look at the size, shape, darkness and lightness to help identify it. Go with people who know birds and listen to bird song tapes

Lisa says the most important issue for birds and birding is how habitat change and climate change are so inextricably linked. She's also not very hopeful about the current federal administration addressing that.

"A lot of what I devoted my career to is being undone now by greed," she said. That's why, she agrees, the awareness-raising efforts of organizations like Spokane Audubon are more important now than ever.







# The Great Backyard Bird Count



Mid-February is the time of year when the world's hourglass flips over and birds slowly start to reverse direction—toward their spring (or, in the Southern Hemisphere, autumn) haunts again. The Great Backyard Bird Count is designed to capture that moment of stillness and give scientists a picture of bird populations at one extreme of the year. It's one long weekend that's perfectly situated as a good excuse to get out your binoculars and not put them back down again for 4 whole days. Here's how to make the most of it—for you and for the birds.

Go to your favorite spot—or any spot. It doesn't have to be your backyard, it can be anywhere

It all starts with just 3 easy rules:

- 1. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on Feb 14, 15, 16, and 17, 2020
- 2. Keep track of how long you counted and how far you walked
- Start a new count for each new place or day/time

Get ready to enter your sightings. You'll need a free eBird account, or if you have a Project FeederWatch or NestWatch account, you can use that. This allows all your data to go smoothly into the central eBird database, where they're available for scientists to analyze.

See the <u>official GBBC FAQ page</u>, and the <u>Participant Toolkit</u> for more explanations and examples.





# Birds Sing to Their Eggs, and This Song Might Help Their Babies Survive Climate Change

Embryonic learning—things birds pick up from their parents while still in the egg—may play a bigger role than imagined.



#### A male zebra finch. (Graeme Chapman)

Birds feeling the heat from warming weather may be able give their offspring an early weather advisory right through the eggshell—which could in turn help baby birds prepare for the forecast.

A new study shows that the songs zebra finches sing to their eggs late in development may give the young a head start in dealing with warm weather once they hatch.

Researchers have long known that birds like chickens or quails, which hatch fully capable of fending for themselves, can hear through their eggs—allowing them to imprint things like who their mother is. But nobody believed anything happened inside the egg with birds that hatch dependent on their parents.

A new study published today in Science upends that wisdom, showing that certain zebra finch calls can change their young's growth and behavior in adulthood.

"This acoustic signal is potentially being used to program the development of offspring," says Kate Buchanan, an associate professor of animal ecology at Deakin University in Australia and the senior author of the new paper. "Hearing the call affects your rate of growth relative to the temperature that you experience.

"Animals have very subtle ways of inferring how the environment is likely to change, and (being able) to develop and adapt accordingly," she added. "We're only looking at the tip of the iceberg in terms of what we recognize so far... It is quite paradigm-shifting."

While researchers are just starting to understand this behavior, the implications may provide a rare instance of good news in terms of the ways animals can subtly adapt to a changing climate, she says.

Zebra finches live in the harsh, dry scrub environment of the Australian Outback. The females do most of the incubation, and the birds often mate for life, Buchanan says. The males are brightly colored, and the zebra finches are notorious songsters, a trait that makes them popular with pet owners and researchers, who have studied the pear-sized birds' speech patterns ad nauseam.

But despite so much attention, post-doctoral researcher at Deakin and lead author Mylene Mariette managed to find a new sound that nobody else had noticed before—probably due to the fact that it only pops up during the last few days of egg incubation when the conditions are right. Mariette had heard of incubation calling from previous research and believed what she was hearing might be related. Under Buchanan's supervision, she set about creating an experiment to test her theory.

Since researchers still aren't sure whether the male or female does the incubation call, they recorded the sounds of 61 male and 61 female zebra finches nesting in outdoor bird cages under natural temperatures. Strangely, the birds only seemed to make this special noise when the temperature climbed above 78 F.

Researchers then took finch eggs into an incubation chamber at a constant temperature (they replaced the ones in the nest with false eggs) and played back different sounds to two different groups of eggs during the last three to five days of incubation. Once the birds hatched, they placed them back in the outdoor finch nests, and found that their growth and development differed based on whether or not they had heard the sounds while still in the egg.

When the temperature in the nest after hatching was higher, nestlings exposed to the incubation calls while in the egg tended to be smaller on average than hatchlings exposed to normal socialization sounds. Warmer temperatures have been correlated with smaller birds in many other species; being smaller may

give them an advantage, because body size impacts thermoregulation and can reduce damage to the bird's molecules.

That isn't all. Buchanan says that the birds who heard the incubation call continued to show effects even into adulthood, choosing nests that were hotter on average than the zebra finches that didn't hear the special call. "Hearing that call before you even hatch affects your development, affects your growth rate, probably affects your vocalization and it affects your behavior and choice 100 or 200 days later when you go to nest yourself," she says.

Mark Hauber, a professor of animal behavior at the City University of New York, says that the paper is shocking, with major implications on how we understand early embryonic development and auditory learning in birds. "It's so novel. It's going to open up a brand new field of research," he says.

Hauber contributed to some of the only other research on incubation calling, in which the authors found that fairy wrens train their chicks to make certain sounds when born so the parents can distinguish them from cuckoos, a parasitic bird that lays eggs in other birds' nests before skipping out on the childcare struggle. Cuckoos don't have the brain mechanism to learn to identify a song, so fairy wrens use incubation calling as a strategy to avoid raising the parasitic cuckoos.

"What was important about some of the more recent work is it showed that much of this learning already takes place inside the egg," Hauber says.

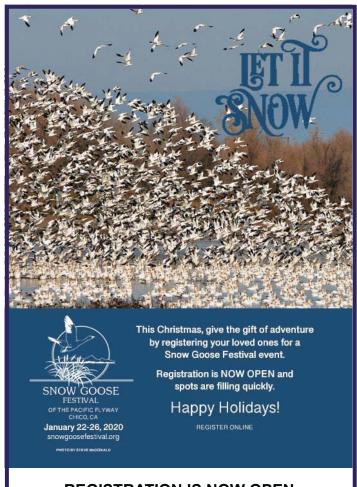
Buchanan says that there are wide implications for the new research that go beyond zebra finches in terms of what kinds of information parents can pass onto their offspring in the embryonic stage. "It makes me wonder what signal babies are picking up before they are born, whether they are hearing their parents arguing or loud noises," she says.

In terms of zebra finches, she notes that the birds breed opportunistically with regards to their unpredictable environment, laying eggs when conditions are right and possibly using this incubation call as a way to acclimatize to the shifting weather. She says that while the recent study shows how zebra finches may be able to cope with the changing climate, the birds wouldn't be able to cope with more extreme and sustained temperature increases.

Hauber says that more investigation is needed to understand how they might be able to adapt to climate change, but he finds the research that Buchanan and Mariette made is intriguing. "What it tells us is that a species that we've used as a model is still full of surprises," he says.

Joshua Rapp Learn smithsonianmag.com August 18, 2016

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/birds-talk-their-eggsand-song-might-helptheir-babies-deal-climate-change-180960168/?fbclid=lwAR3s\_cCDbVhm6qFDAu6ci6hMe62atS3Mu7pyP-AAHtHgKjhrRlzWGS8fVCo#37h6XeE5iIL8dbUC.99



REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

We have a new registration system, SignUpMaster, for the Snow Goose Festival
Please click here to learn more.
Wild Adventures, Wild Birds!
Altacal Audubon Society
21st Annual Snow Goose Festival
of the Pacific Flyway
January 22 – 26, 2020 Chico, CA
Chico Masonic Family Center
Festival Headquarters & Welcome Center
1110 W. East Ave. Chico, CA

# Flocking Together

By Lisa Langelier

Finding food is a common challenge for wintering wildlife. Several bird species solve this problem by heading south. "Braver" birds adapted to a northern life. Some birds, including chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, kinglets, and creepers, join mixed species flocks. Flocking increases the number of eyes and ears searching for food and avoiding predators. Many flocking species are either acrobatic - hanging beneath branches to feed on insect eggs or larvae, spiders, and seeds, or very small - allowing them to reach the tips of branches and other hard-to-reach places.

The flock ringleaders are the black-capped chickadees. Recognize these plump, tame birds by their solid black cap and chin, gray back, and buffy sides. Incessantly active, they hop, hang, cling to branches, and flit here and there. At bird feeders, chickadees are the seed snipers. They grab a tasty looking seed and fly to cover to eat or store it. Chickadees eat as much as they can during winter days, gaining roughly 10 percent of their body weight, and then burning this added weight each night. Chickadees cache seeds, insects, and other food into tree bark and crannies during fall. When winter's cold makes food less abundant, they return to feed at these scattered caches.

While the mixed species flocks are loose associations that come and go through the day, chickadee flocks, with up to 12 birds, have their own stable social structure. A dominant mated pair, juveniles, and other paired and single adults comprise the flock. They protect their feeding territories against neighboring flocks. A high-pitched "tseet- tseet" call keeps the flock together.

In contrast to busy, boisterous chickadees, brown creepers are mottled brown, inconspicuous, and often alone. Their long curved claws allow them to cling to the bark of tree trunks, using their long stiff tail as a prop. They spiral up tree trunks, searching bark crevices for wintering insects then dig these out with their thin, curved bill. When finished searching one trunk, they fly to the base of a new tree and work their way up.

Nuthatches, one of my favorite birds, often join feeding flocks. Their headfirst feeding strategy allows them to find food that other birds miss. Nuthatches are small, stocky birds with short tails and long bills for probing bark crevices. Three species of nuthatches claim northeastern Washington as home — red-breasted, white-breasted, and pygmy. Red-breasted nuthatches call regularly - "yank, yank, yank" - a sound resembling a nasal tinhorn.

Listen during your winter woods excursions. If your hearing is particularly good, you may hear the high-pitched thin notes of the golden-crowned kinglets, the tiniest winter residents. Listen for the "dee-deedee" of the chickadee or "yank" of the nuthatches. Enjoy the tiny persistent winter symphony in a forest near you

# Golden-crowned Kinglet Ryan Schain



# The Butcher Watchman

by Thomas Bancroft

Movement caught my eye, and I glanced up through the windshield. The flight seemed labored, heavy, something a little different, unusual in this robin-sized bird. The individual was 15 feet above the ground and flew across the grass field along Rawlins Road. It came right over the car. Maybe, it was headed for a large bush behind me. I stopped in the middle of this dead-end road on Fir Island, jumping out.

Sitting on a top of the bare bush was the unmistakable silhouette of a Northern Shrike, a plump body, a big head, upward stance. It glared out across the fields, moving its head back and forth. Last week, my birding group had found a juvenile individual along the dikes, not a quarter-mile from this location. I moseyed back along the road, keeping my eyes

averted.

Sure enough, dark eye mask, the bill with a stout hook and a large tooth, black wings, scalloped cream breast feather, this was a perfect plumage juvenile. It was alert, hunting, but seemed to be ignoring me. This was my fifth trip to the Skagit in two weeks, and on each trip, we had spotted a Northern Shrike. On one trip, it was at Wiley Slough, on another at Hayton Reserve, once in the Samish Flats, and then here. These were probably four different individuals, and all had been juvenile birds. Possibly, this was turning into an irruptive year for shrikes.

These birds nest across Northern Canada and Alaska, coming south in winter. Most winters a few can be found in Washington, but in some years, vast numbers will come south. Perhaps, this happens when they have had an exceptionally successful nesting year or when northern winters become particularly hard, or food supplies low.

These are voracious predators, capable of taking small birds and mammals. They store prey by sticking it on thorns or barbedwire, coming back later to eat more of it. Often, they sit and wait for a prey item to show itself before darting off the perch. This species occurs in Europe and Asia, too.

The bird bolted from the branch, dropping down to just above the field and flying rapidly away from me. I couldn't tell if it was chasing something or just heading to another hunting spot. It probably makes the rounds of a series of good lookouts. Their scientific name is Lanius excubitor, which translates as "Butcher Watchman."





## 2020 Field Trips at a Glance

# January 25, 2020, Saturday LC Valley Banana Belt Trip

Leaders: Keith Carlson and Rick Welle

This all-day trip is geared toward all levels of birders. The Lewiston/Clarkston (LC) Valley often has slightly more moderate temperatures in winter, which can make for some great winter birding. We will meet in Lewiston at 8:00AM at the Dyna Mart at the traffic light just past the bottom of the Lewiston Grade. Come prepared for winter weather; bring snacks, water, and lunch. Contact Alan McCoy at <a href="mailto:ahm2352@gmail">ahm2352@gmail</a>.com or by phone at 509-999-9512 by January 22 to register for the trip. Keith's cell number is 208-413-2071

Note: This trip will be dependent on weather and road conditions.

**Target Species:** A variety of waterfowl (hopeful target: Long-tailed Duck), winter gulls including possible Lesser Black-backed and Thayer's (now Iceland Gull), Black-crowned Night-Herons, chase-able Snowy Owl and/or Gyrfalcon (if reported), owls, wintering warblers, sparrows, and finches, including Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches.

Details of the field trips will be found on our website <a href="https://www.audubonspokane.org/upcoming-events">https://www.audubonspokane.org/upcoming-events</a>.

#### Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual Membership:	
Student (under 21): \$10 per year	
Individual: \$20 per year	
Family: \$30 per year	
Supporting: \$50 per year	
Contributing: \$100 per year	
Lifetime: \$500	
Other:	
Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational activities.	
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our many conservation and educational activities.  □ Joining □ Renewing  Name:  Address:	



Please make check payable to: Spokane Audubon Society

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To:

January 2020

The Spokane Audubon Society advocates for birds and their habitats in the Inland Northwest and connects people with nature.

## Visit our website: <a href="https://audubonspokane.org">https://audubonspokane.org</a>

#### **Directions to the General Meeting**

Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Bldg 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue

#### From West Spokane & South Hill

- 1-90 East to Exit 281 toward US-1 E/US-395 N (Newport/Colville)
- Follow US-2 E/US-395 to E. Mission Ave
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

#### From Spokane Valley

- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Dr.

#### From North Spokane

- Take US-395 S to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Dr.



#### Once you're on E. Upriver Drive (see map below)

- Follow E. Upriver Drive to N. Crestline Street
- Turn Left on N. Crestline Street
- Turn Right on E. North Crescent Drive
- Proceed to entry on left showing numbers 2015-2145



Limited parking is available by the Village Community Building. Overflow parking is along E. North Crescent Ave.

BirdNote can also be heard on KEWU 89.5 FM 8 a.m. daily







