

Volume 23  
Issue 2  
October 2015

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## October 14th Meeting:

### Climate Change: Controversy/Consensus, Denialism/Despair, Birds/Backyards, and the Contributions of Citizen Science, with Kittitas Audubon Society's Barry Brunson, Jim Briggs and Judy Hallisey

*Climate change is controversial! Global warming is just a hoax!*

*Scientists will say anything to get research funds! The Earth's climate has always been changing!*

*Maybe the Earth is warming, but humans didn't cause it!*

*The climate is changing, but there's nothing we can do about it!*

Have you faced any (or all?!) of these statements, in headlines, magazine articles, radio programs, fundraising appeals, or one-to-one conversations? Did they come from pundits, politicians, neighbors or friends?

Context matters. Depending on the context, the reply to the first statement can be "You bet!" or "Not a bit!"

We will provide some context for these and other assertions, and for their particular relevance to what unites everyone in Audubon: birds—the ones we can see in our backyards, and those we have to go way out of our way to see.

The National Audubon Society spent six years studying the issues, utilizing over a hundred years of citizen science data, along with many other sources of information.

We will examine some of the conclusions they reached, and some of the implications for all of us. We also will discuss some of the things we can do as individuals, and as part of a larger community, with an eye toward water conservation, avoiding invasive species, fire-wise practices and promoting bird habitat.

Barry Brunson is a retired math professor and Chair of the Kittitas Audubon Society Climate Change Committee. He promises to restrain his inclination to solve equations and give quizzes. Jim Briggs is a long time member of Audubon who says he never met an



*photo courtesy of Kittitas Audubon Society*

equation that didn't terrify him. Judy Hallisey has been involved with Audubon for decades, and has extensive experience with wildland firefighting.

*Spokane Audubon's October program will be held at the  
Riverview Retirement Community,  
Village Community Building  
(Directions on page 8.)*

*Please join us at 7 p.m. for refreshments and  
friendly conversation.*

*The program will begin at about 7:30 p.m.,  
after announcements.*

# The Pygmy Owl

Volume 23, Issue 2 ~ October 2015

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

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



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## Board Report

by Ed Reynolds

The big news is that the Presidency has been filled. Tom Light, our Field Trip chair, volunteered and was elected by the Board in accordance with our bylaws.

That leaves the position of Field Trip chair open, as is the Vice President's position. Volunteers are welcome.

Fran and Brad Haywood have left the Board after many years of dedicated service. Our thanks and best wishes go with them.

The WDFW will meet at their office in the Spokane Valley on September 30. This is a listening session asking what the Department can do to better serve the people of the state. Because the WDFW gets its funding largely from sales of fishing and hunting licenses, it hears most often from hunters and fishers even though it does have an active non-game program. This might be a good opportunity for birders and wildlife photographers to stress the importance of attention to non-game species and habitats.

There will be cleanups of the addition to the Reardan Lakes property (Deep Creek Preserve) on October 31 and November 7. The Inland Northwest Land Conservancy is coordinating. See page 6 for more details.

Spokane Audubon's annual holiday sale and swap will be held at the November meeting this year (instead of December). Please plan to bring some bird or nature-related items to donate to our \$1, \$3 and \$5 tables, and some cash for your purchases. And then shop 'til you drop! Any proceeds will go to the SAS general fund. (This event was fun, and a success, last year, generating more than \$125 to help pay our bills.)

Finally, Spokane Audubon's Conservation Chair, Greg Gordon, has been nominated for a Washington State Book Award for his work, *When Money Grew on Trees: A. B. Hammond and the Age of the Timber Baron*. Congratulations to Greg!

The deadline for the November issue is

**Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Please send any materials for the newsletter to

***carmen@floreo.com***

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# The Greater Sage Grouse Decision



photo courtesy of Kim Thorburn

by Kim Thorburn

“Not warranted” ushered in my autumn. It is what I expected. Pragmatism told me it was what had to be. Nonetheless, I found myself grieving at this punch-in-the-gut reminder of the fragility of this wonderful bird.

Make no mistake: the Greater Sage Grouse is critically endangered. At just three percent of its peak population across its range, and even worse off in Washington, it's easy to be fatalistic about its chances for survival. More than half of its sagebrush-steppe habitat is destroyed and the rest is under stress.

The Sage Grouse can survive nowhere else. And the competition—energy, grazing, agriculture, urban development—is fierce and powerful.

A listing decision under the Endangered Species Act is not about the status of a species. It is a process and really represents the failure of our environmental laws to protect the earth and its inhabitants. The only hope for the survival of the Greater Sage Grouse is survival of unmarred shrub-steppe in the Western United States. If we want this beautiful bird's breath-taking strutting dance to continue in future springs, we must be strong advocates for unfettered protection of our public lands and programs to engage landowners in habitat protection.

*Kim is a past president of Spokane Audubon Society. She has worked with WDFW and BLM on sage-grouse recovery since 2009, and has represented Spokane Audubon on the state's sage-grouse working group since 2010.*

## ***Greater Sage Grouse Will Not Be Listed as an Endangered Species***

On Tuesday, September 22nd, 2015, officials from the Obama Administration announced that the Greater Sage Grouse will not be listed as an endangered species.

Instead, they described “the most complex and complete land conservation plan ever developed,” designed to reverse the decline of the grouse. The plan includes mapping nesting sites and migration corridors for protection from development/electrical lines, firefighting measures to protect sage habitat, and instructing oil and gas companies to avoid sensitive nest sites.

*The New York Times* quoted Brian Rutledge, an Audubon Society vice president, as saying the effort is “an unprecedented cooperation of the states, the federal government and environmental groups. We have gotten attention paid to an ecosystem that was at best forgotten and at worst being destroyed by the way it was being managed, and we are seeing that turned about.”\*

Sage Grouse recovery is a complex issue, and there is opposition to the plan by both environmentalists and oil/gas lobbyists. Conservationists say it doesn't go far enough to protect the birds or grouse habitat; oil lobbyists see any effort to regulate exploration and/or drilling as unacceptably oppressive to commerce.

Both sides are planning appeals. In the meantime, Greater Sage Grouse advocates are left to wonder if dwindling populations of the bird in increasingly fragmented habitats can survive our political process.

\* Krauss, Clifford, U.S. *Trying to Protect Sage Grouse Without Listing It as an Endangered Species*, *The New York Times*, published September 22, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1Ouv1H4>

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# 2016 Spokane Audubon Society Calendar: Birds of Eastern Washington

**\$10**



*Stilts, by Bea Harrison*

*Birds of Eastern Washington* features photographs by Spokane Audubon members. Proceeds from the sale of calendars help fund Spokane Audubon's conservation and education initiatives.

Calendars cost \$10 each, and are available for purchase at general meetings, through mail order or through the website, [spokaneaudubon.org](http://spokaneaudubon.org) (using PayPal).

Note: Shipping charges apply for all mail/online orders:

1 calendar: \$10 + \$3 s&H = \$13

2 calendars: \$20 + \$4 s&H = \$24

3 - 6 calendars: \$30 + \$7 s&H = \$37

Contact Spokane Audubon for shipping costs for 7+ calendars.

To order by mail, send check to:

Spokane Audubon Society  
15418 Little Spokane Drive  
Spokane, WA 99208

Make checks payable to *Spokane Audubon*.



*Ruby-crowned Kinglet, by Marlene Cashen*

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## Hog Island Audubon Camp

by Mary Jokela

Our mid-September destination was verdant Acadia National Park for several days, acquainting ourselves with eastern seaboard land forms and life spawned by, and attuned to, Atlantic tidal activity. Lobster boats, thousands of lobster trap buoys, east coast birds, lush vegetation and abundant flowers, skin-caressing humidity: a study in contrasts with eastern Washington's wildfire smoke, incessant wind, tawny landscape.

Remember childhood summer camp? Welcome (home) to Maine, to Hog Island Audubon Camp, *Living on the Wind: Fall Migration and Monhegan Island!* Snow Goose III delivered us from the mainland to Hog Island's dock. The camp is perched at Muscongus Bay, and has offered environmental programs for adults, teens, families and conservation leaders since 1936. Seabird restoration also began in 1973, including puffins and terns previously decimated by hunting and feather gathering.

Foresighted folks rescued unique Hog Island (named for early farming activity and livestock grazing) with its farmstead and hundred-plus year-old buildings from likely relative oblivion. Hog Island, interlaced with many trails along the shoreline and through bogs, has continued as a launching facility for naturalists, conservationists and bird enthusiast campers of all ages and skills.

But it couldn't thus flourish without the spirited Friends of Hog Island whose volunteer gift is the housekeeping, kitchen help and all-around maintenance of the camp. Exceptional meals, including accommodated dietary restrictions, were family style, prepared with fresh local produce and sustainably raised meats as well as fresh fish and lobster.

Renowned expert instructors and guides for the Fall Migration session included Scott Weidensaul, Stephen Kress, Peter Vickery, Tom Johnson, Drew Weber, and Eric Snyder who enriched and enlightened even the most seasoned birders in evening and hiking/birding sessions with island, geologic, astronomical and seabird restoration history, technological migration tracking and physiological facts. For example, did you know that Tim and Janet Williams, now retired from Swarthmore College, calculated that blackpoll warblers crossing the western Atlantic would get 720,000 miles to the gallon if they were burning gasoline instead of fat. And

that the bar-tailed godwit is the one whose digestive system largely atrophies before migration, while many fruit-eating passerines like thrushes, catbirds and tanagers undergo a lengthening of the intestines in autumn; so do several species of ptarmigan. The godwits, at the same time their guts are shrinking, see a 30-50 percent increase in pectoral and heart muscle mass.\*

We tallied about 135 species on Hog Island, Monhegan Island, other islands, and on the mainland during camp-time migration. Common Eiders (molting and resembling tiny pintos); Surf, White-winged and Black Scoters; loons; gannets; Yellow-crowned Night Heron; 19 warbler species; and Blue Grosbeak!

Campers savored a day and night on Monhegan Island 2 ½ hours via boat from Hog Island--also home to harbor and



*Common Eiders, Hog Island, Maine, by Flickr user Fyn Kynd Photography, available under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY-2.0) license.*

gray seals whose vocalizations were startling and mysterious—half husky howl, half Banshee—reverberating through the island village, wafting ghostlike to the knoll where 25 birders scanned the dawn horizon.

Maine's weather was unusually warm, about 15 degrees above average throughout the region; nights were mild and seas were astonishingly calm. An initially tantalizing prospect, this trip to Hog Island; now a verified enriching and broadening adventure!

Meanwhile, if you haven't read Scott Weidensaul's *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*, a Pulitzer finalist, please do so.

*For more information about next year's workshops and offerings, visit Hog Island's web site:*

<http://hogisland.audubon.org/>



THE POWER OF PRESERVATION

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**  
**Deep Creek Preserve Clean-Up**

Spokane Audubon was instrumental in the initial acquisition of the Deep Creek Preserve. Inland Northwest Land Conservancy invites Spokane Audubon members and friends to participate in clean-up of the site.

Over the decades, people have illegally dumped about 250 tons of mostly household debris on the southeast corner of our preserve. There is also construction debris, ductwork, old fencing and so on.

We want to make the place better than we got it, so INLC is going to clean up, recycle, and dispose of the whole mess. We're hiring a heavy equipment contractor the week of November 2nd to do the heavy lifting and hauling, but we need your volunteer help beforehand to clump things into piles, and afterward to gather all the leftovers and fill a dumpster or two. We also plan to re-seed the disturbed areas with native plants.

Please sign up to help with the prep work on Saturday, October 31st and the final clean-up and reseeding on Saturday, November 7th. Rain or shine. We'll provide lunch and a Preserve tour afterward.

**Clean-Up Phase I**  
**Saturday, October 31st**  
**9 am to noon**  
**Deep Creek Preserve, Reardan**

We need 20 strong and physically fit volunteers to lift, drag, pull and push heavy trash into centrally located piles. Your costume this Halloween morning will include: sturdy long pants, long-sleeve shirt, boots, work gloves and eye protection.

RSVP: [juddman@inlandnwland.org](mailto:juddman@inlandnwland.org)

**Clean-Up Phase II**  
**Saturday November 7th**  
**9 am to noon**  
**Deep Creek Preserve, Reardan**

We need 20 volunteers to police and search out any remaining waste left on the Deep Creek Preserve following the contracted clean up. Please wear the following: sturdy long pants, long-sleeve shirt, boots, work gloves and eye protection.

RSVP: [juddman@inlandnwland.org](mailto:juddman@inlandnwland.org)

Inland Northwest Land Conservancy has a number of other events and short-term volunteer projects. For more information, check their website at <http://www.inlandnwland.org/>.

## Spokane Audubon Field Trips October & November

**October 24, 2015, Saturday**  
**Grant County Late Fall Migrant Trip**  
**Leader: Gary Blevins**

This is a beginning, intermediate and advanced birder-oriented trip to look for specialty birds, such as Arctic Gulls, Lapland Longspurs, and other hard to find and see northern visitors. There may be some down time with little action in between bird sightings but potential for rarities is high. It is a full-day trip from sunrise to sunset. Contact Gary Blevins (533-3661 or [GaryB@spokanefalls.edu](mailto:GaryB@spokanefalls.edu)) by October 18<sup>th</sup> if you plan to attend.

**November 21, 2015, Saturday**  
**Douglas Plateau Northern**  
**Visitors Trip**  
**Leader: Kim Thorburn**

The Waterville Plateau is a challenging but high-quality destination for rarities during the late fall and winter months. We will work the rolling steppe of the Plateau in search of unusual raptors, owls, and passerines and also bird along the Columbia River in hopes of finding rare Arctic Gulls and saltwater waterfowl, such as scoters, Long-tailed Duck, and Pacific Loon. We will spend the night of November 20 in Brewster for an earlier start with the birds during this short daylight season. Contact Kim Thorburn (465-3025 or [kthorburn@msn.com](mailto:kthorburn@msn.com)) by November 15 if you plan to attend.

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

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## Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) Annual Meeting

Date: Saturday, October 24, 2015

Location: Best Western Plus, Skagit Valley Inn, 2300 Market Street, Mount Vernon, WA

Agenda and Information: <http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-meetings>

Registration: \$40 at <http://ow.ly/QSS6w>

Register now for the 2015 annual meeting of the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW), hosted by Skagit Audubon Society and the NW I Chapters!

ACOW is our annual state-wide meeting where members from all Audubon Chapters in Washington gather for a weekend of information sharing, knowledge exchange, and fellowship. This year's meeting will focus on state and federal level policy actions around Audubon's climate initia-

tive, as well as showcase chapter work being done to educate communities about the impact of climate change on birds.

Presentations from Kittitas Audubon Society and Black Hills Audubon Society will highlight just some of the exciting work being done by chapters on behalf of birds in Washington State. Take home tips and tricks on how to engage reluctant audiences in climate action, and how to transform your neighborhoods into a true bird-friendly community, one backyard at a time.

Expect a dynamic day of discussion and collaboration around meaningful actions we can take together to augment our conservation impact, creating places where birds and people prosper.

All meeting information, including the agenda, accommodations, and weekend logistics may be found on the Audubon Washington website at <http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-meetings>. See you there!

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### Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Local Membership Dues:

Individual: \$20/year \_\_\_\_\_

Couple & Family: \$25/year \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \$10/year \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime: \$300 \_\_\_\_\_

National Membership Dues: \$35/year \_\_\_\_\_

Individual + National Dues: \$55/year \_\_\_\_\_

Couple + National Dues: \$60/year \_\_\_\_\_

**Your local membership provides you with *The Pygmy Owl* and supports your local chapter's many conservation and education activities. You will also be eligible for website privileges.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



Please make check payable to:  
**Spokane Audubon Society**  
Send this form and your check to:

Audubon Membership  
Attn: Dave Plemons  
1224 W. Riverside #1101  
Spokane, WA 99201

Current members may renew memberships from our web site::

<http://spokaneaudubon.org>

Receiving duplicate newsletters?  
Errors or other changes needed on your mailing label? Contact Dave Plemons at [davep\\_nublado@me.com](mailto:davep_nublado@me.com), or 413-1524.



The Pygmy Owl  
**Spokane Audubon Society**  
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October 14<sup>th</sup> Program:  
**Climate Change Presentation**  
 by Kittitas Audubon Society  
 7:30 p.m.

**To:**

*The Spokane Audubon Society provides resources and services to educate people about birds, wildlife, and the importance of habitats, and to advocate and support public policies and actions that conserve and restore wildlife habitats.*

**Visit our website: <http://spokaneaudubon.org>**

**Directions to the General Meeting:**

*Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Building  
 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue*

**To get to Riverview Retirement Community:**

**From West Spokane & South Hill**

- I-90 East to Exit 281 toward US-2 E/US-395 N/ Newport/Colville
- Follow US-2 E/US-395 N 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 Drive

**From North Spokane**

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

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

- Follow E. Upriver Drive to N. Crestline Street
- Turn Left at N. Crestline Street
- Turn Right on E. North Crescent Drive
- Proceed to entry on left showing numbers 2105-2145

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

