

Volume 21  
Issue 4  
December 2013

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## ***December 11th Program: Preparing for the 2013 Christmas Bird Count, with Gary Blevins***

Join us on December 11th for a program with our resident researcher, Gary Blevins. Gary will discuss changing trends learned from CBC data, and give us some bird identification pointers to refresh our knowledge of local birds!

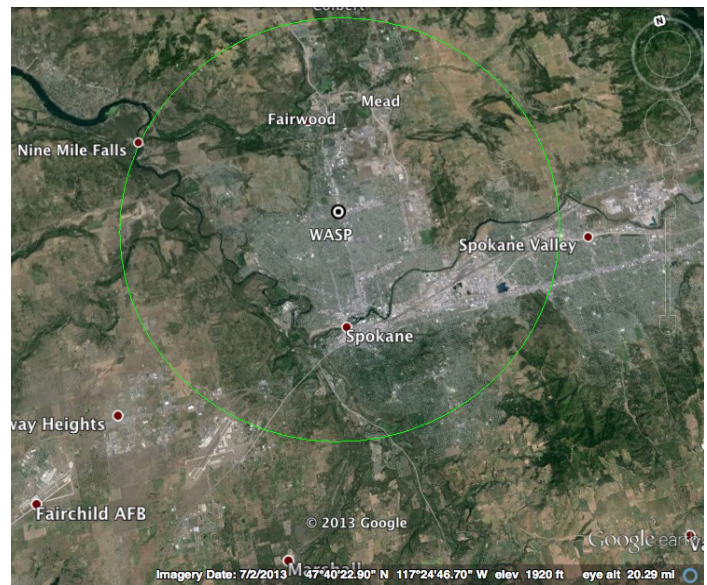
*Ten Things We Have Learned  
from Audubon's Christmas Bird Count  
(from [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org))*

The Christmas Bird Count has provided an abundance of data to scientists and researchers. Some of the conclusions drawn from the study of CBC data include:

1. Birds are not climate skeptics, having spoken with their wings. (Many North American species' winter ranges have moved northward and inland.)
2. The Bald Eagle is back; the Endangered Species Act works.
3. Many of America's most familiar and beloved birds are in serious decline, including Evening Grosbeak, Field and Grasshopper Sparrows, Snow Buntings and Ruffed Grouse.
4. Eurasian Collared-Doves have invaded the US.
5. Peregrine Falcons are reclaiming territory they had disappeared from in the 1950s-60s.
6. Sage-grouse are in deep trouble.
7. More and more hummingbirds are staying in the USA and Canada for winter.
8. "Eastern" House Finches having been moving west for 60 years.
9. How fast and how far West Nile virus has spread.
10. Birds are early indicators of environmental problems that can affect people (see #1).

## ***Spokane Audubon 2013 Christmas Bird Count: Sunday, December 29, 2013***

Spokane Audubon Society  
invites members  
(and new birders!)  
to join the 2013  
Christmas Bird Count,  
which encompasses the  
Spokane Count Circle Center:



47° 43' N by 117° 25' W  
(approximately Division St.  
and Francis Avenue).

Please contact Alan McCoy  
(509-448-3123 or  
[ahm2352@gmail.com](mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com))  
for more information  
about the Spokane CBC.

*Spokane Audubon's December program will be held at the  
Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Building (see page 8 for directions),*

*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 21, Issue 4 ~ December 2013

*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.



### Officers

#### President

Fran Haywood                      birders13@gmail.com

#### Vice President

Tim O'Brien                      kertim7179@yahoo.com

#### Treasurer

Lindell Haggins                      lindell4118@comcast.net

#### Secretary

Ed Reynolds                      edndaisy@aol.com

### Elected Board of Directors

Joyce Alonso	jbalonso3@msn.com
Bob Cashen	mjaycashen@aol.com
Marlene Cashen	mjcashen@aol.com
Brad Haywood	birders13@gmail.com
Gary Lee	bird_fan@aol.com
Jan Reynolds	edndaisy@aol.com

### Committee Chairs

#### Field Trips

Jon Isacoff                      isacoff@gonzaga.edu

#### Programs

VACANT

#### Education

Joyce Alonso	jbalonso3@msn.com
Lindell Haggins	lindell4118@comcast.net

#### Conservation

Greg Gordon                      fightingbull63@gmail.com

#### Hospitality

Jan Strobeck                      jandeerpark@aol.com

#### Membership

Dave Plemons                      davep\_nublado@me.com

#### Publication

John English                      jhe230@yahoo.com

#### Publicity

Kim Thorburn                      kthorburn@msn.com

#### Pygmy Owl

Carmen Yount                      carmen@floreo.com

#### Volunteer Coordinator

Joyce Alonso                      jbalonso3@msn.com

#### Website

Alan McCoy                      spokaneaudubon.org

## President's Message

by Fran Haywood

As we move into the holiday season, I am really counting my blessings. Last month, I asked for volunteers to serve on the board and our wonderful membership stepped up.

Tim O'Brien offered to serve as VP and he will be a wonderful addition, especially since he is not a "Q-tip" like many of us. (He actually has young children in training to be the next generation of environmentalists and birders!)

We particularly appreciate having busy members who are still working, with families and other commitments, volunteer. Our organization and even our country are founded on dedicated people like you.

Not only did we gain Tim, but Marlene Cashen has joined her husband, Bob on the board. Our good fortune continued when Joyce Alonso, our most recent past Vice President, rejoined the board.

I am really excited about all of our board members who work in the background to keep us together.

Now I have one more request; we really need a program chairperson; someone who will follow up on suggestions for programs and pin down speakers to a set date for when they can give us a presentation. By the way, if anyone has an idea for a program that they would like to see at our meetings, please tell one of the board members. We welcome new ideas!

It's December, which means we are all looking forward to the upcoming Christmas Bird Count! This month's program will give more information. *Everyone is welcome to participate!* You don't have to be a great birder, just sharp-eyed, and you can come for as much time as you are willing to spend.

The Christmas Bird Count offers another opportunity as well. If you live in the count area, we also need feeder counters. To do this, you spend as much time as you want looking at your feeders from a warm house and keep track of all the birds you see and how many minutes or hours you watched.

With Christmas sneaking up fast, we would like to remind everyone that our beautiful calendars, featuring photos from our members, make wonderful Christmas gifts. So do Spokane Audubon Society memberships.

Have a happy and safe holiday season!

~ Frant

---

Time is running out to get your copy of the 2014 Spokane Audubon Calendar!



*Black-capped Chickadee, by Alexandra Mueller*



*Great Gray Owl, by Buck Domitrovich*



*Calliope Hummingbird, by Marlene Cashen*

## *Birds of Eastern Washington*

featuring photos by  
Spokane Audubon members.

The SAS calendar  
contains examples of some  
of the finest bird  
photography *anywhere*.  
Proceeds from the sale of the  
calendar support Spokane  
Audubon's conservation and  
education initiatives.

If you purchase them  
at the meeting, they're

# \$10 each

That's the same price as last year!

Calendars are available  
at meetings, by mail  
or through [spokaneaudubon.org](http://spokaneaudubon.org)  
(using PayPal).

Shipping charges apply for all mail/  
online orders:

1 calendar: \$10 + \$2 s&H = \$12  
2 calendars: \$20 + \$4 s&H = \$24  
3 - 6 calendars: \$30 + \$6 s&H = \$36

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*.

## December Bird Forecast:

*Cloudy,  
with a chance of Juncos!*

### Winter

is a great time to watch birds in our yards. If you choose to feed the winter birds, here what some of our more common backyard visitors prefer to eat:

#### Chickadees

**(Black-capped, Mountain)**  
Black-oil Sunflower seeds

#### Dark-Eyed Juncos

Black-oil Sunflower seeds

#### Goldfinches

Nyjer seed

#### Nuthatches

**(Pygmy, Red-Breasted,  
White-Breasted)**  
peanuts, sunflower seeds,  
suet-type treats

#### Woodpeckers

**(Downy, Hairy, Northern Flickers)**  
Suet-type treats, peanuts

#### Note:

If you have feeders, you will attract House Sparrows, House Finches and European Starlings.

Most of us would rather see native birds than the House Sparrows. One way to encourage natives is to avoid or minimize favorite sparrow foods, like millet and wheat (and bread). House Sparrows have a fondness for cracked corn, but so do many other (more welcome) species.

Feeling ambitious?

Provide some winter shelter for your backyard birds in the form of a roosting box. (Check out pages 6 - 7 for tips and plans.)

## These Ornaments are For the Birds

### Birdseed Ornaments

You will need:

3/4 c flour  
1/2 c water  
1 envelope of unflavored gelatin  
3 Tbsp corn syrup  
4 c seed (or mixture) of your choice

cookie cutters  
twine or ribbon

#### Step 1:

In a large bowl, mix together flour, water, gelatin and corn syrup until gelatin begins to set up.

#### Step 2:

Thoroughly mix birdseed with flour mixture.

#### Step 3:

Line a cookie sheet with parchment. Spray the inside of your cookie cutter with cooking spray. Spoon seed mixture into the cookie cutter and press to make sure you have a dense layer of the seed mixture. Use a chopstick or drinking straw to make a hole for the twine. (*Hint: don't make the hole too close to the edge of your ornament. Placing the hole closer to the center will make the ornament sturdier when it's outside.*) Carefully lift the cookie cutter off of the ornament.

#### Step 4:

Let ornaments dry for 12 - 24 hours, turning the ornaments once so that both sides dry evenly.

#### Step 5:

Use a ribbon or twine to make a hanger for your ornaments. Hang outside in trees or for the birds!

### One-cup Suet-style Pinecone Ornaments

You will need:

1 c. peanut butter  
1 c. shortening or lard  
1 c. flour  
1 c. cornmeal or oats, or chick starter

Add-ins of your choice: seeds or mealworms

#### Step 1:

Combine peanut butter and shortening in a saucepan. Heat over medium heat until melted.

#### Step 2:

Stir in flour and cornmeal to combine. Add optional add-ins.

#### Step 3:

Let mixture cool until it can be handled. Spread mixture in a container, stuff a Ponderosa Pinecone with it. Put in the freezer until firm.

#### Step 4:

Put frozen mixture in a suet cage or hang the cones from trees.

---

# Holiday Gift Ideas for Bird Enthusiasts

## Give the Gift of a Membership:

Spokane Audubon Society (use the membership form on the next page or go to <http://spokaneaudubon.org>)

National Audubon Society  
(<http://www.audubon.org>)

Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
(<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>)

The Birds of North America Online,  
in-depth species accounts  
(<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/>)

## Magazine Subscriptions:

Bird Watcher's Digest  
(<http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/>)

Birds & Blooms  
(<http://www.birdsandblooms.com/>)

## Field Guide Apps:

Audubon Field Guides (<http://www.audubonguides.com/field-guides/mobile-apps.html>). Birds, insects, mammals, wildflowers, mushrooms, fishes and more — no matter what your interest, Audubon Field Guides has an app for that. (For Apple, Android devices, Kindle and Nook devices)

iBird Pro (<http://ibird.com/>). Species accounts for 938 North American birds include illustrations, photos, range maps and songs. (For Apple devices, Android, Kindle and Windows 8)

## Adopt a Bird:

Inland Northwest Nature Connection, the non-profit organization that supports the West Valley Outdoor Learning Center in Spokane Valley, has a new program to adopt one of the OLC's raptors. Adoption fees help to feed the birds and keep the mews in tip-top shape. (<http://wvolc.weebly.com/>)

If birds of prey aren't your style, National Audubon has a program to adopt your loved one's favorite bird, or one that Audubon says best represents our flyway (<http://tinyurl.com/kuquhkl>, or go to <http://www.audubon.org> and look for the gift guide).

## Books: For New Birders:

**Sibley's Birding Basics**, by David Allen Sibley

"Whether you can identify six birds or six hundred, you'll be a better birder if you have a grounding in the real nuts and bolts of what birds look like, and your skills will be even sharper if you know exactly what to look for and how to record what you see." —David Allen Sibley

## For Intermediate Birders

Suggestions for birders who have discovered how marvelously complex the little brown jobs can be... or that they can spot a peep from 50 yards, but don't know how to tell what kind of peep it is:

**Sparrows of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide**, by Daved Beadle and James Rising

**The Warbler Guide**, by Tom Stephenson and Scott Wittle

**The Shorebird Guide**, by Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley and Kevin Karlson

**The Crossley ID Guide to Raptors**, by Richard Crossley, Jerry Liguori and Brian Sullivan

## For Artists (or Artists in Training):

**The Laws Guide to Drawing Birds**, by John Muir Laws

California artist and naturalist John Muir Laws wrote this basic guide to drawing birds, with special emphasis on drawing from life. **The Laws Guide to Drawing Birds** is an Audubon book and contains a forward by David Allen Sibley. Laws says that the exercise of drawing birds "opens you to the beauty of the world."

## For Aspiring Bird Photographers:

**The Handbook of Bird Photography**, by Markus Varesvuo, Jari Peltomaki and Bence Mate

Written by three Finnish bird photographers, **The Handbook of Bird Photography** opens with an appeal to photographers to learn their subject, including behavior and birding by ear.

## For the Coffee Table:

**Bird**, by Andrew Zuckerman

Stunning photographs of 75 birds, all taken against a white backdrop.

**Birds & People**, by Mark Cocker and David Tipling

BBC Wildlife Magazine raved, "Plenty of books tell us how birds live and what they look and sound like, but none has ever told us as well or so beautifully how we have co-evolved with them or what those birds have meant and mean to us. . . . It is, indeed, an astonishing achievement."

# December Field Trips and Events

## December 7, Saturday Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Winter Festival Refuge Tour begins at 9 a.m.

The Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge annual Winter Festival will kick off with the popular refuge tour at 9:00 a.m. Register early as trips fill up fast. Our program this year, *Meet the Wolves*, will be presented by Nancy Taylor of Wolf People from 11 am-12 noon. After that you can feast on chili, corn bread, pot luck side dishes, cookies, hot chocolate, coffee or tea while you support The Friends of Turnbull.

The Refuge Tour will fill up fast so call 509-999-2090 or email [jopowell39@aol.com](mailto:jopowell39@aol.com) to pre-register.

The Friends of Turnbull store will be open, and we have a great selection of Christmas gifts!

Directions: Take WA Route 904 south through Cheney, turn onto Cheney Plaza Rd, then Smith Rd at the sign for Turnbull NWR. After the entrance fee station, drive another 2+ miles to the Refuge Headquarters.

Entrance to the Refuge is \$3.00 per car or Refuge Annual Pass, Annual Federal Duck Stamp, and Interagency Access, Senior, and Volunteer Passes.

## December 14, Saturday Winter Lake and Wetbelt Trip Leader: Joyce Alonso

This trip takes us around Beauty Bay on Lake Coeur d'Alene, where the Bald Eagles feeding on spawned-out salmon are always a sight to behold. Weather permitting, those interested may drive down to the Thompson Lake/Harrison region where a variety of birds winter in a slightly warmer zone. Probable particulars: 8:00 am start at Liberty Lake Albertson's parking lot. Contact Joyce Alonso (448-2447) by December 11 if you plan to attend.

*Note: This trip is dependent on weather and road conditions.*

Target Species: Bald Eagles, several duck and grebe species, American Dipper, Pacific Wren, Pileated Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Tundra Swans, N. Pygmy Owl

# Looking for a Project? Build a Chickadee Roost Box

Roost boxes differ from nest boxes in some significant ways. First, the entrance hole on a roost box is placed low on the front or side, so the warmth generated by the birds rises and can't escape. Second, roost boxes contain dowels inside for perching. Birds that nest in boxes during the spring may be attracted to roost boxes in the winter.

The following plans are from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Nestwatch. Construction instructions by Shaw Creek Bird Supply ([http://www.shawcreekbirdsupply.com/plans\\_roost\\_box.htm](http://www.shawcreekbirdsupply.com/plans_roost_box.htm)).

### Materials:

One rough-cut board (cedar, pine, or fir), 12 feet by 1 foot by 1/2 inch

One 3 1/2-foot hardwood dowel, 3/8-inch diameter

Wood glue

Wood screws

One brass hinge

One small hook and eye screw

### Tools:

Table or circular saw (with tilt blade)

Drill with 3/8" bit

1 1/8" hole saw or drill bit

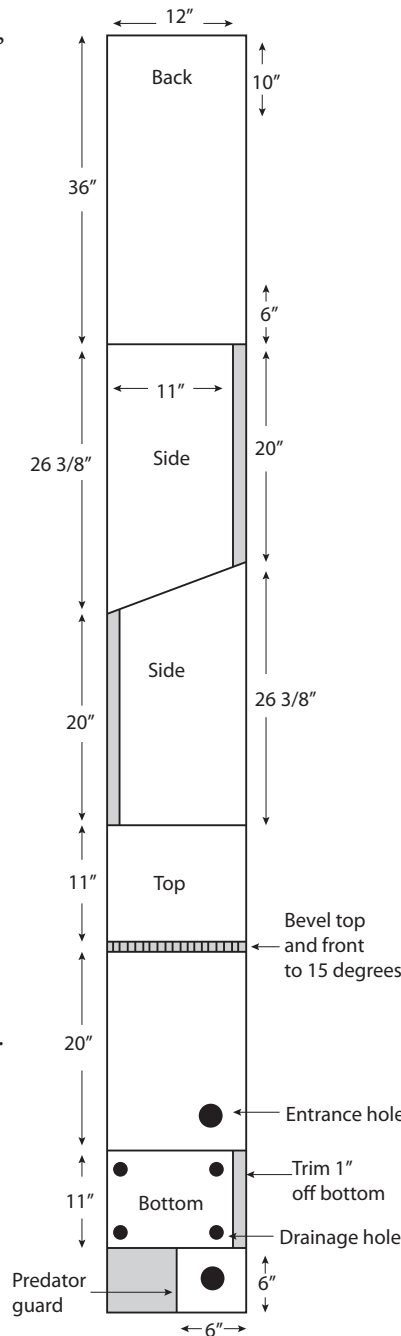
Ruler

Square

### Roost box assembly

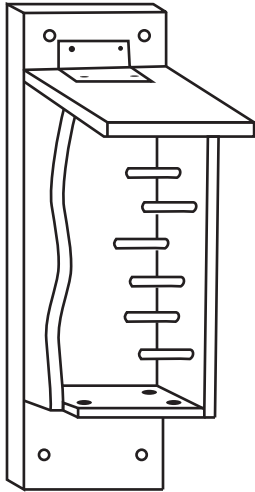
Obtain one 1/2" thick, rough-cut board, 12 inches wide and 12 feet long. Cedar is best, but pine or fir also work well—they just won't last as long.

Measure and then cut out each piece as shown in the diagram at right. When you cut the front and top pieces, make a 15 degree bevel edge by tilting the blade of your circular or table saw to that angle.



Label each piece in pencil.

Next drill a 1 1/8" entrance hole that has its bottom edge 1 1/2 inches from the bottom of the front piece. Finally glue the predator guard onto the outside surface of the front so the holes line up. This will prevent squirrels and raccoons from reaching inside the box.



Saw 1 inch off the short side of each of the two side pieces, as shown in the main diagram. Drill six 3/8-inch pilot holes, 1/4 inch deep, on the inside of each side piece. **DO NOT DRILL THROUGH THE BOARD.** These holes will hold dowels for perches. Stagger the holes so that the perches are not directly over or under each other as shown in the cutaway diagram at right.

Cut the dowel into 3-inch sections. Glue six perches into each side.

Drill four drainage holes into the bottom, as shown in the diagram.

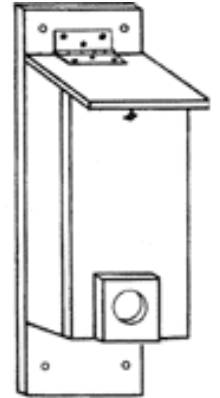
Screw the two sides to the back. Insert the bottom (slightly recessed) and screw it into place. Screw the front into place, making sure the beveled edge is at the top, facing forward.

Line up the top with the beveled edge flush against the back. Mount the hinge as shown in the diagram of the completed box at right.

Attach the hook under the front edge of the lid and the eye at the top of the front piece.

Drill any holes needed for mounting, as shown.

If you leave your box untreated it will weather naturally and be more attractive to birds. A coat of linseed oil on the outside of the box will make it last longer, however. But never paint or oil the inside of the box.



### 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**  
 P.O. Box 9820  
 Spokane, WA 99209-9820  
 (509) 838-5828

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit  
 Organization  
 Spokane, WA  
 US Postage  
 PAID  
 Permit No. 34

December 11th Program:  
 Preparing for the 2013  
 Christmas Bird Count,  
 with Gary Blevins  
 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**

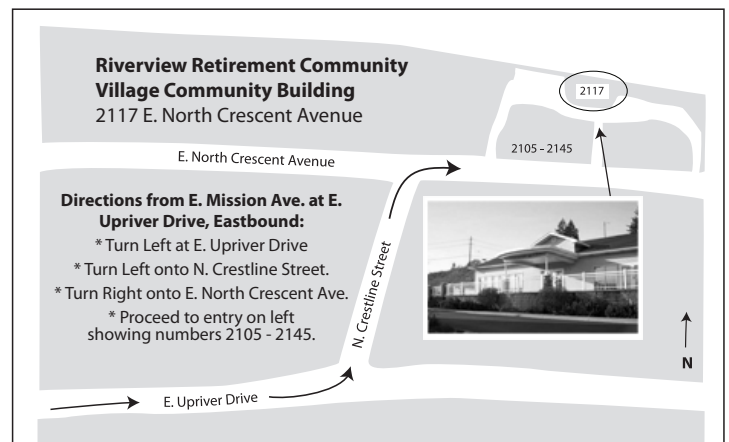
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

**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.