

Volume 20  
Issue 6  
February 2013

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



**February 13th Program:**

## **I Hunt Therefore I Am (what?)**

featuring *The Spokesman-Review's* Rich Landers

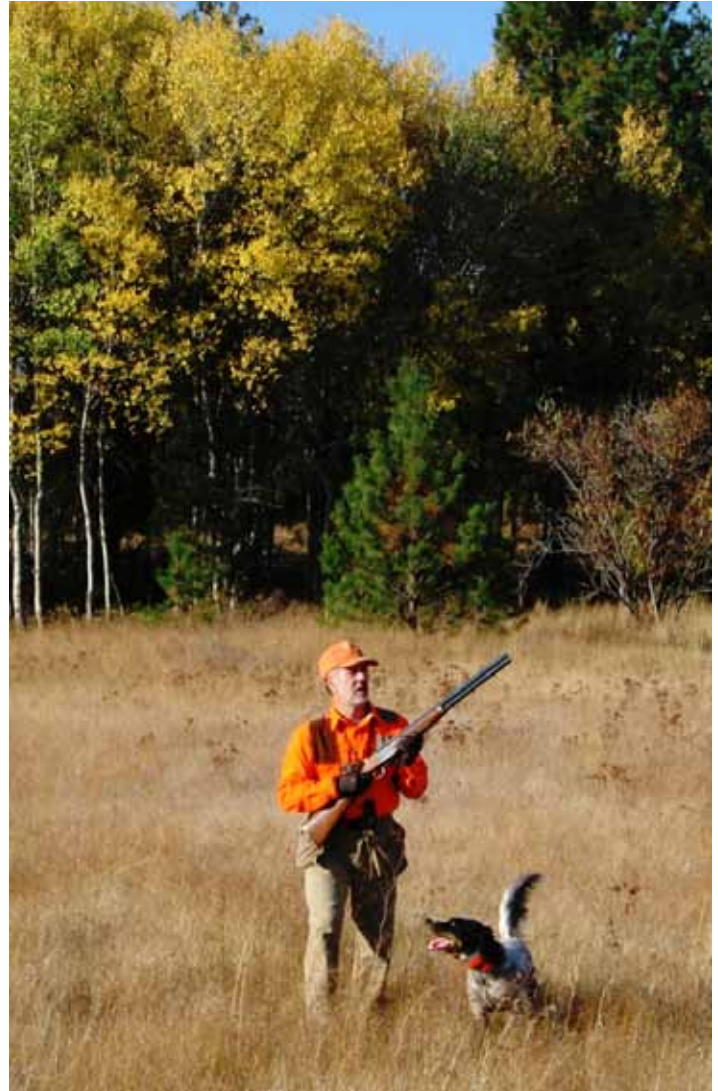
Condemnable, capable, cold-hearted, complete—you fill in the blank, but not before you hear Rich Landers explain why an animal lover and wildlife enthusiast would choose to be a hunter. Landers says sportsmen are among the most ardent year-round wildlife watchers and they contribute generously to wildlife conservation. “Animals are delicious,” he says. But that’s just one of many reasons he hunts.



*Rich Landers started his 35-year career as the outdoors writer/photographer for The Spokesman-Review in 1977, after interning with Field & Stream Magazine in New York and riding his bicycle across the United States.*

*He's an outdoor writing pioneer who broadened the tradition of newspaper hook-and-bullet writing to include muscle-powered "life sports" and underlying emphasis on wildlife appreciation and conservation.*

*Landers is a Montana native and a lifelong hunter and angler who studied journalism and wildlife management at the University of Montana. Being active is one of his passions. He's one of the few "perennials" who've finished every Bloomsday Run. (Photos courtesy of Rich Landers.)*



Spokane Audubon's February program will be held at the Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Building,

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

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

**2013 Great Backyard Bird Count  
February 15 - 18**

See page 6 for more information!

## The Pygmy Owl

Volume 20, Issue 6 ~ February 2013

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

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## President's Message

by Kim Thorburn

Are your bird feeders busy? The season has been harsh. It seems as if wild things are working harder than usual to meet their energy needs. Even the neighborhood white-tailed deer have included the feeder ground spill on their nightly rounds.

Of course, I don't feed birds to get them through the winter. It's because I enjoy watching what will come, the little inter- and intra-species struggles, the constant chatter. I know that our human impact on the ecosystems is far more threatening to wildlife than the benefit of a little seed I place out for hard-foraging winter birds.

We have pushed most wildlife into smaller and smaller spaces. Consequently, many species' populations plummet and it takes "management" to ensure their survival. For some people, often those whose livelihoods or avocations seem affected by the wildlife protection strategies, wildlife management is controversial, even unwanted. The comeback of wolves in the lower 48 is a highly visible example.

We belong to Spokane Audubon because we understand the pleasure and benefits that birds and other wildlife bring to us and the earth. As we enjoy the birds, we also have a responsibility to carry the message about the importance of protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, which we do with education and advocacy. Thank you for being a messenger about the significance of wildlife.



*Red-breasted Sapsucker as a yard bird at Mt. Spokane (see next page). Photo by Ron Dexter.*



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# Sights & Sounds

## Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest by Cindy McCormack

We have been so lucky to have our new year begin as a winter finch-fest! It's not often we have frequent reports of Pine Grosbeak as yard birds; even White-winged Crossbills have made appearances in a few yards in the area! It also has been a good month for numerous sightings of Cassin's Finch, Bohemian Waxwings and Varied Thrush.

Red-winged Blackbirds should be arriving on territory soon and the Great Horned Owl should have youngsters to feed anytime now (keep your cats and small dogs inside if you have a nest nearby)!

### TRUMPETER SWAN

- 16 birds on open water SE of headquarters on Turnbull NWR (TO); 14 reported later in the month (LB)
- Two in Beauty Bay, Lake Coeur d'Alene (TL)

### EURASIAN WIGEON

- Kiwanis Park, Lewiston, ID (TL/KC)
- Swallows Park, Clarkston – one Eurasian/American Hybrid, one pure Eurasian.

### RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

- Four spotted from The Cedars Restaurant, Lake Coeur d'Alene, ID (TL)

### LONG-TAILED DUCK

- Cashmere, WA (RT)

### SURF SCOTER

- Spokane Pre-mix pond (Thiermann Rd, Spokane Valley) (NT)

### RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

- Wintering in Yakima, near the Parker Bridge (KL)

### RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER

- Visiting a yard at the base of Mt. Spokane (RD/BG)
- Two hanging out in Hood Park (Walla Walla)

### WESTERN SCREECH-OWL

- Base of Mt. Spokane (RD)
- Hells Gate State Park (RW)
- Asotin

### SNOWY OWL

- Spangle, near the 195 & Cheney-Spangle intersection (TC)
- Rathdrum Prairie (DW)

### BARRED OWL

- Mt. Spokane area
- Lewiston Wildlife Habitat Area (JH)
- Lewiston—perched on a bird feeder. (KC)



*Barred Owl, by Cindy McCormack*

### SHORT-EARED OWL

- Patrolling the wetlands of Peone Prairie/Feryn Ranch (MB)

### NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL

- Perched atop a feeder! In Moscow, ID (TG)

### BOHEMIAN WAXWING

- Several roving flocks have been reported, including from West Plains, Mt. Spokane, Pullman, Moscow, Spokane's South Hill, Spokane Valley, Coeur d'Alene, Harrison.

### Western Tanager

- A lone wintering bird was photographed in the Russian Olives of Hells Gate State Park

### HARRIS'S SPARROW

- Two in the small Palouse town of St. John, WA (RB)
- Two in Hells Gate State Park (JC)

### WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

- Ewan, WA
- Lewiston area: 3 in Hells Gate State Park (JH); at least three at Spalding Site (GL, CM); one near the feeders at the Lewiston Wildlife Habitat Area (GL, CM)
- Moscow feeder (CS)
- Wawawai River Road (MC)
- Hood Park, Walla Walla Co. (MW)

### GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW

- Wawawai River Rd. (MC)

### AMERICAN TREE SPARROW

- These pretty sparrows love to hang out in the weedy areas of open land (such as the West Plains, Peone Wetland, Rathdrum Prairie).

*Continued, next page*

## SNOW BUNTING



About 80 birds in a flock along Spinning Rd and one bird along Old Sunset Hwy (CM, GL); one along Cottonwood Canyon Rd (MC); along SR 23 outside of Davenport (RK); along SR 23 (KB).

*Snow Buntings by Kim Thorburn.*

## LAPLAND LONGSPUR

- One bird among many Horned Larks west of Clyde, WA. (MMD)

## BULLOCK'S ORIOLE

- An unusual bird to be wintering over! This bird was reported in a yard of College Place, WA. (MMD)

## PINE GROSBEAK

- Numerous reports throughout the region!
- Riverside State Park (FH/BH)
- Usk (JS)
- Palouse region: Moscow, Palouse (CS), Pullman/WSU Campus (TB)
- Tubbs Hill
- Hayden
- Spokane: Mt. Spokane, Mt. Spokane Foothills, Little Spokane NA, north Spokane neighborhood (MF), several areas of South Hill
- North of Airway Heights (AW)
- Hawk Creek Canyon (JI, TL)
- Electric City (RM)
- Spalding Site (Lapwai, ID) (SAS field trip)

## WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL

- Mt. Spokane
- Davenport Cemetery
- Hawk Creek Canyon (MC)
- Spokane's South Hill (SS)
- Coeur d'Alene

## COMMON REDPOLL

These delightful little birds continue to be observed all over the place! Observations in areas such as Spokane, Mead, Peone Prairie, the Palouse region, Lincoln County (West Plains), Channeled Scablands, Waterville Plateau, Sandpoint, Pend Oreille Co., Moscow, Harrison, Coeur d'Alene, Turnbull/Cheney, LC Valley, and Airway Heights.

BC is the place to be! Very special rarities:

- As of January 13th, the **CITRINE WAGTAIL** was still being seen in the Comox Valley, BC.
- On January 13th, Colin McKenzie found an interesting bird in Queens Park (New Westminster, SE of Vancouver, BC). It was later identified as a **RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL**! Wow!
- At least two **BRAMBLING** are visiting feeders in Vancouver & Victoria, BC.

Thanks to everyone for your reports! Joyce Alonso, Richard Baltierra, Libby Beck, Tom Besser, Kevin Black, Mike Britton, Jay Carlisle, Keith Carlson, Marlene Cashen, Mike Clarke, Jim Christiansen, Tom Crabtree, Melissa Cummins, Warren Current, Mike & MerryLynn Denny, Bob Derting, Ron Dexter, Tim Durnell, Greg Falco, Marian Frobe, Becky Goldner, Terry Gray, Mike Haldeman, John Hanna, Lisa Hardy, Brad & Fran Haywood, Mark Houston, Carrie Hugo, Jon Isacoff, Chris Janett, Dick Johnson, Lee Johnson, Russ Koppendrayner, Gary Lee, Terry Little, Kevin Lucas, Garrett MacDonald, Bud & Roxanne McCormack, Cindy McCormack, Brian Miller, Roy Myers, Tim O'Brien, Grace & Ollie Oliver, Sue Orlovski, Terri Pieper, Ed & Jan Reynolds, Tim Smith, Sandy Sollie, Erik Stauber, John Stuart, Charles Swift, Rick Taylor, Catherine Temple, Kim Thorburn, Norma Trefry, Warren Walker, Andre Wamsley, Doug Ward, Diane Weber, Rick Welle, Michael Woodruff, Roger Woodruff, Matt Yawney.

## Mt. Spokane Snowy Owl Pellet



Late last year, Ron Dexter captured photos of the Mt. Spokane Snowy regurgitating a pellet. Ron said,

"This is the Snowy Owl that is still hunting early morning and late afternoon at the Mt. Spokane High School on HWY 206. I captured these images of it as it regurgitated the large pellet from its stomach after acids had eaten all of the meat and blood, leaving just the fur and bones to be expelled. I collected the pellet and dissected it at home and found five rodent skulls and skeletons. Two of the skulls were twice the size of the other three. School students sometimes using charts can identify the exact type of rodent. I suspect the large ones are voles and the smaller ones, mice. Lots of fun!"



# Field Trip Report: Lewiston/Clarkston (LC) Valley Banana Belt Trip

by Cindy McCormack

Some very optimistic birders decided to brave the frigid temperatures of our annual “Banana Belt Trip.” I think we definitely need to discontinue using that phrase. It was, however, at least a few degrees warmer than Spokane, even though I understand Spokane actually had some sun that day!



We headed down 195 at 6am in the dark, but with fair road conditions. We did spot at least two Great Horned Owls flying in the darkness and had to avoid a flock of suicidal Eurasian Collared-Doves in the highway lane just as we started getting some light. We had to avoid even more doves on the road near the grain elevators on the Clearwater River. (Remember when they used to be a rarity?)

The duck numbers were a bit lower at the grain elevators than usual, but there were several hundred Common and Barrow's Goldeneye with their funny little nasal calls. There were also plenty of other divers and dabblers, but no Long-tailed Ducks.

On the way to Spalding, we stopped to check the gulls and waterfowl near the pulp mill. It started snowing on our group by the time we arrived at Spalding. We did locate the resident Great Horned Owls, one of which was perched in the same area a Barn Owl was roosting in the previous week—hoping that Barn Owl wasn't breakfast! A big surprise was the single Pine Grosbeak calling in the park, but we only got a brief view of it flying away. We couldn't locate any of the White-throated Sparrows that were hanging out with the other sparrows the previous week, but we did hear Chukar and we found plenty of Song Sparrows and Spotted Towhees. The Golden-crowned Kinglets gave us a fantastic show near the cemetery—making the entire stop worthwhile!

We dallied a bit long in the park and the conditions up higher looked poor, so we bypassed the Lapwai & Brevard Canyon route, instead headed directly to the Lewiston Wildlife Area. This little gem is a treat to visit, even when it's snowing heavily! Unfortunately, we couldn't locate the Barred Owl in the previous roosting area. The area was being heavily patrolled by avian predators while

we were there, but the viewing blind still provided some great views of the feeder birds. Fun!

We decided to stop for some hot drinks on the way back down to the lower valley to help us warm up (ahhh!). Our next stop was at the Kiwanis Park for the Black-crowned Night-Herons and Eurasian Wigeon. A family passing by was delighted with the views of the herons, a drake Hooded Merganser, and an American Kestrel through our spotting scopes—always a treat to share such great birds in the scope.

The Peregrine Falcon pair was missing from their usual patrol of palisades area outside of Clarkston, probably to the relief of the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches in the area. Since it was already starting to get a bit late, we decided to head to Asotin to see if we could get lucky with the nest boxes. The ponds were completely frozen over, but a little patience and quiet paid off—just after a California Quail called in the area, the Western Screech-Owl popped up in the opening of the nest box. He seemed sleepy, but was very cooperative! What could be better than a piece of bark with yellow eyes?



With the snow and gloomy skies, darkness seemed to fall more quickly than usual. We ended our visit by stopping for dinner in Clarkston (Clam Chowder after a bitter cold day? Mmmmm!). Even though we had some major misses on this cold, snowy day, I still had a great time with such fantastic company!

*Photos by Bud McCormack.*

## 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count February 15 - 18

After 15 years of success in North America, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will open up to the entire world for the first time in 2013. Anyone, from anywhere on earth, can participate by visiting [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) and reporting the kinds and numbers of birds they see during the 16th annual count.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with partner Bird Studies Canada, the four-day count typically receives sightings from tens of thousands of people reporting more than 600 bird species in the United States and Canada alone.

During the 2012 count, participants reported 17.4 million bird observations on 104,000 checklists. In 2013, scientists predict that U.S. and Canadian bird watchers will see an influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches and winter finches (such as Pine Siskins) because of scarce food supplies on their northern wintering grounds.

Participating is easy:

**1. Create a GBBC account.** Beginning in 2013, the GBBC will be integrated with eBird. The change means you must create a free GBBC account in order to enter your bird checklists, even if you have participated in the GBBC before. It also means you will be able to access all your GBBC observations and eBird observations under a single account. If you're already registered with eBird, you can use the same login information.

**2. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC.** You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day for each new location or even from the same location. Estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period.

**3. Enter your results on the GBBC website (or eBird).** You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the GBBC website home page beginning at 7:00 AM Eastern time (U.S.) on the first day of the count. If you already use eBird, please continue using eBird to submit your sightings but be sure to enter at least one checklist during the GBBC weekend!

For more detailed participation information, FAQs and photo contest rules, visit the GBBC website:

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html>



*Red-breasted Nuthatch from the 2012 GBBC, by Christine Haines*

## SAS Field Trips, February & March

February 9, 2013, Saturday

**Snowy Owl Trip**

**Leaders: Joyce Alonso and Fran Haywood**

This trip is for all levels of birders. We'll spend most of the day exploring the area around Reardan and Davenport. We will meet at Spokane's Coeur d'Alene Park at 7:30 am. Contact Joyce Alonso (448-2447) by February 6 if you plan to attend.

Target Species: Rough-legged & Red-tailed Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, N. Shrike, Snow Buntings,

February 24, 2013, Sunday

**Scotchman's Winter Highlights**

**Leader: Jon Isacoff**

**Limit: 7 Participants**

This is an all-day trip to the northeast corner of Bonner County and the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Area, co-sponsored with Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness and the Washington Ornithological Society (WOS). For details about the Friends and the region, see [www.scotchmanpeaks.org](http://www.scotchmanpeaks.org). The trip will focus on waterfowl on Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho's largest and deepest lake, as well as upland winter birds and rarities in the Lightning Creek area. Be prepared to drive five hours round-trip and to walk on gravel roads about two miles. Bring **WARM** clothes as it can be brutally cold in this area in winter. Bring lunch, snacks, and water as there will be very limited services except in Sandpoint on the way to and from the trip. Tentatively, we will meet at Liberty Lake Albertson's (just off I-90, Exit 296) at 7:00 am. Contact Jon Isacoff ([isacoff@gonzaga.edu](mailto:isacoff@gonzaga.edu) or 509-448-2629) by February 17 to reserve a spot.

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

Target Species: Common and Pacific Loons; Surf and White-winged Scoters; Long-tailed Duck; Northern Goshawk; Thayer's, Glaucous, Lesser Black-backed, and Mew Gulls; Northern Pygmy Owl; Pine Grosbeak; White-winged Crossbill; Common Redpoll. (Though not to be counted on,) Yellow-billed Loon and Iceland Gull are possible.

March 16, 2013, Saturday

**Bluebird Trip**

**Leader: Marian Frobe**

This is a family friendly half-day trip and a great way to greet spring. We will drive a route on Paradise Prairie to see returning favorite birds. We'll probably end up at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. The trip usually ends around 2 pm. Meet at Spokane's Coeur d'Alene Park at 7:00 am. Call leader Marian Frobe at 328-0621 by March 12 if you plan to attend.

Target Species: Migrant ducks and geese, raptors, woodpeckers, Say's Phoebe, Western Bluebird

March 23, 2013, Saturday  
Turnbull NWR Beginning Birder  
Basics Trip  
Leader: Fran Haywood

This is a half-day driving and walking trip for all levels of birders. Meet at the refuge headquarters near Cheney at 7 am. Contact leader Fran Haywood, 484-8666, birders13@aol.com by March 16 if you plan to attend.

Note: A \$3 entrance fee is required.

Target Species: Breeding waterfowl; Tundra and Trumpeter Swans; Great Blue Heron; Red-tailed Hawk; woodpeckers; Pygmy, Red-breasted, and White-breasted Nuthatch; Western Bluebird; Song Sparrow; Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbird; Red Crossbill

March Newsletter Deadline:  
Tuesday, February 19  
Send material to  
carmen@floreo.com

The March 13th general meeting  
will feature a program on

## Great Gray Owls

by Michael Munts,  
from Little Pend Oreille NWR.

We hope to see you there!

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_



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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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February 13th Program:  
**I Hunt, Therefore I Am (what?),**  
 with Rich Landers  
 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**

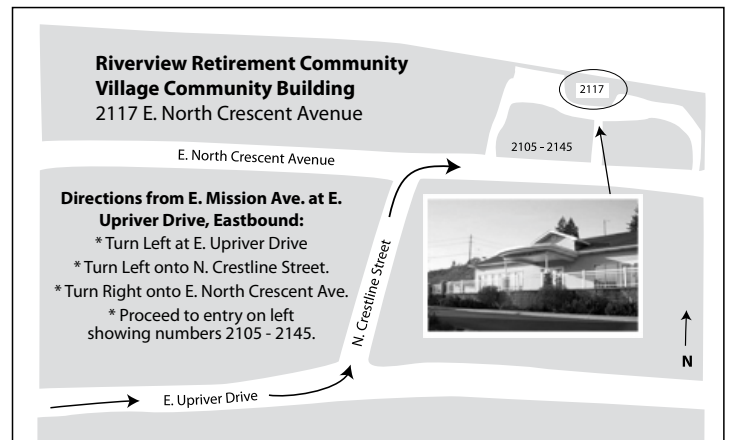
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

**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.