

Volume 21
Issue 6
February 2014

The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



February 12th Program: *Of Wolves and Warblers: The Cascading Impacts of Yellowstone's Wolf Restoration*



Photo by Barry O'Neill, courtesy of Yellowstone National Park

Join Greg Gordon, Gonzaga professor of environmental studies, in examining the ecological impacts of wolf restoration in Yellowstone National Park.

After a 75-year long absence from Yellowstone, the federal government reintroduced wolves, the top predator, to the ecosystem. Long-term ecological studies both before and after the wolf reintroduction provide a unique opportunity to observe the tropic cascades of both the presence and absence of a keystone species.

Now, nearly two decades after the initial reintroduction, the wolf population has stabilized and ecologists can assess the ecological effects this has had. While some impacts, such as reducing and stabilizing the elk population, were expected, other ecological effects have been more surprising.

Drawing upon his experience working as a naturalist in Yellowstone and his own research, Greg will provide some background to the wolf restoration program, discuss current ecological studies and long term prospects.

*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.*

March Newsletter Deadline:

Friday, February 21

Please send material to:
carmen@floreo.com

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 21, Issue 6 ~ February 2014

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

Spokane Audubon Society
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Owl illustrations on pg. 1 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



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President's Message

by Fran Haywood

WOW! Here we are into the second month of the New Year: 2014. The holidays are over and I hope you all enjoyed time with loved ones. We start the new year with many things on our plate, enjoyable activities like field trips and programs, and some problematic, but very important issues. We'll be partnering with the Friends of Turnbull group, teaching basic birding skills. Some of us are involved in environmental education in local schools and at the Refuge. Many of you plan to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, and more and more of us are learning to use eBird to record bird sightings. These are just a few things that we can do to help protect species by tracking changes over time.

Now we really have to pay attention to the hard issues. First, we are working to keep the last remaining old growth forest on Mt Spokane from being logged off to make new ski runs on the backside of the mountain. We feel that there is plenty of room to make new runs without destroying this rare, remaining forest.

Then there are coal trains rumbling through downtown Spokane and the County, headed to coastal ports, where the cargo will be loaded onto ships bound for China. One concern is that coal dust from the open cars is toxic, shedding particulates associated with respiratory ailments. Also, coal may be treated with hazardous chemicals, which can cause major problems (e.g. the recent incident in West Virginia which resulted in the pollution of drinking water for thousands of people). Furthermore, burning this coal creates major air pollution in China, which doesn't stay there, but may drift all over the world. We have to ask, do we want to expose ourselves to these hazards?

Crude oil is shipped on other trains. This practice presents major hazards, both to the environment and to human health and safety. Many of you have read about incidents in which these trains have caught fire (four of them in six months), with toxic fumes causing evacuations and loss of life in a small town in Canada.

We are called to inform ourselves about these issues, and work together to help solve the problems. Audubon must be an environmental organization as well as a bird-watching one. We do love birds, but if their habitats are degraded on our watch, the birds may vanish.

What can you do? Start by trying to use less energy and campaign for sustainable energy practices; every little bit helps. Learn the basics of an issue and write letters to appropriate officials. It is a small world. We are all connected; people, animals and plants.

To end on a happy note, I want to welcome our new Program Chairperson, Gary Lee, who is doing a terrific job lining up entertaining and informative programs for our meetings. Thank-you, Gary for stepping up.

Sights & Sounds

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest by Tim O'Brien

Welcome to the new Spokane Audubon *Sights & Sounds* column! I have been honored with taking over the role of writing the column and hope that I can help everyone know what birds are around the Spokane area. Thanks to the past authors who have laid the framework for this great column! I will be focusing our attention on the birds that have been seen in Spokane County. However, if something truly special arrives in the region, then it will be duly noted.

First off, a little bit about me... I have been living in the Spokane area near Cheney for just over five years now. I am a Washington native, born and raised in Olympia. I have been seriously birding for 10 years. I am very active in the Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) where I organize and lead field trips in eastern Washington. I have also led birding trips for Grays Harbor Audubon and the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival. I am a strong supporter of eBird and will be heavily relying on it for this column.

Now onto the birds!

Through January 22nd, in Spokane County, 87 species of birds have been recorded so far. This winter is being dubbed "finch-less" due to the lack of certain species such as Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, and Common Redpoll, which are nearly absent from the area. Such a contrast to the past year, when Redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks were widespread!

Luckily, in the Reardan-Davenport area, at least two different **SNOWY OWLS** have been reported this winter. So this unusually dry winter hasn't been totally free from our winter visitors.

Most of us eagerly await the New Year to wipe the slate clean and see what and how many different birds we can find in one year, whether it be in our yard, neighborhood, local park, county, state, or ABA area. A few of us hit the ground running on January 1. Five species of owl were found on that day near Mount Spokane including **GREAT HORNED**, **WESTERN-SCREECH**, **NORTHERN SAW-WHET**, **NORTHERN PYGMY**, and **BARN OWL**. Perhaps this will be the year of the owl!

An **AMERICAN DIPPER** has been frequenting Riverside State Park at the confluence of the Little Spokane and Spokane rivers. If you go, check the canoe take-out site, as this is where the bird has been seen.

A lone **TRUMPETER SWAN** has been visiting private land on the Little Spokane River near the Fish Hatchery. As most of Turnbull NWR is frozen, one does wonder where the swans from there go...this could be one of them!

Also on January 1, an adult **GOLDEN EAGLE** was spotted on roadkill in the southwest part of the County.

Two **PRAIRIE FALCONS** have been reported in the County with one at Peone Prairie on January 8 and the other along the north part of Coulee Hite Road on January 5.

BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS and **AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS** are in the County, with the sparrows concentrated at the Feryn Ranch parking area at the Peone Prairie Wetland. Waxwings have been seen all over where there is decent food for them.

An unusual **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** was found at Riverfront Park on January 18. Must be warm down there!



Northern Hawk-owl, by Tim O'Brien

It is a battle for the bird of the month – with the gull-fests going on in Clarkston and at Lake Coeur d'Alene. As good as **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS** and **ICELAND GULLS** are...the bird of the month goes to the **NORTHERN HAWK-OWL** that had been persisting in Moscow. Sadly, this northern visitor was found severely injured and later died at WSU a few days ago. A big thank you to Terry Gray from Moscow, who kept us all updated on the owl through the Inland Northwest Birders listserv and on Facebook. He is the one who raced the owl to WSU to try to save it.

Thanks to the following birders for the reports used in this column: Ryan Shaw, Terry and Joshua Little, Jon Isacoff, James Acton, Greg Falco, Roger and Michael Woodruff, Norma Trefry, and Fran Haywood.

Prairie Grouse Get Generous Christmas Present

by Lindell Haggin

One of the major goals the board of Spokane Audubon set at our annual retreat was to support the reintroduction of Greater Sage-Grouse and the stabilization of the populations of Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse in Eastern Washington. This fall we were approached by a representative of the William A. Crosetto Charitable Foundation because the person who established this foundation was hoping to find some way to enhance or support upland game birds and/or waterfowl.

After making contacts with Washington Fish and Wildlife Department, (WDFW), we determined that the program most in need at this time was in the Okanagon area where they intend to augment their fragile Sharp-tailed Grouse population. Ideally, when birds are trans-located in an augmentation program, they are radio-marked and telemetry tracked.

Radio collars cost about \$200 each and a good radio receiver for tracking costs about \$2000. Mr. Crosetto graciously offered to provide \$2000 dollars for collars, \$2000 for a receiver, and \$200 for volunteer mileage costs. He also is providing \$500 for native grass and forbs seed to supplement a WDFW Lincoln County grant to improve prairie grouse habitat.

We are also currently in discussions with Mr. Crosetto about the possibility of adding additional property adjacent to Audubon Lake in Reardan, WA.

Spokane Audubon and WDFW are thrilled and can't thank Mr. Crosetto enough for his generous donation. Members and friends of Spokane Audubon can participate in this project by making donations for additional native plant seed to enhance even more habitat in Lincoln County. Stressed public lands agency budgets have seen the cost of native plant seeds increase recently due to the frequent need for habitat restoration following the many wildland fires throughout the West. Inability to purchase seed compromises wildlife restoration and protection. Your contribution can make a difference.

If you wish to make a donation to help purchase native plant seed, you can send a check to:

*Spokane Audubon Society
c/o Lindell Haggin
P.O. Box 9820
Spokane, WA 99209-9820*

Please indicate that your donation should be used for this project on your check's "For" line.

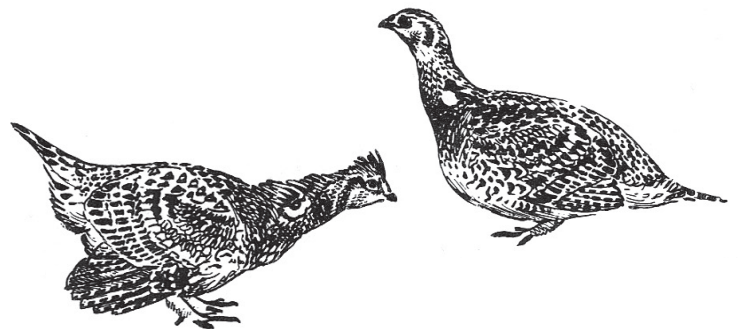
Spokand Audubon Society Board Report

by Ed Reynolds

As secretary of your Spokane Audubon Board, I'll try to make this column a monthly feature to keep our membership more fully up to date on SAS activities.

The most significant news from November, December and January is the possibility of a large grant from the foundation of a donor interested in wildlife and habitat in our area. Through the Inland Northwest Land Trust (INLT), we are discussing the possibility of money for materials and travel costs associated with our continuing efforts to preserve sage and sharp-tailed grouse on the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Refuge. The amount for that is a bit under \$5,000. More significantly, we are also discussing money toward the purchase of land near Audubon Lake in Reardan. Initially, we were informed that one hundred fifty acres were available for \$75,000, and the potential donor may be willing to give \$10,000 per year for five years. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is willing to apply for a grant, and your Board has voted to use up to \$25,000 for a down payment, should a satisfactory deal come together. However, as we pursued the deal, the price doubled and Board members balked. Further discussions with the INLT and WDFW have persuaded us not to abandon the issue but to continue exploring possibilities. We are hopeful that we can make an important addition to the shrub steppe land that we have already helped to protect. We will keep you posted.

In a related move, in December we voted to contribute \$1,000 the Dishman Hills to aid in their efforts to purchase adjacent properties that will otherwise be developed. We are agreed that preserving property for wildlife habitat and for the public understanding and enjoyment of wildlife is some of the most important work we can do.



Sharp-tailed Grouse illustrations by wildlife artist Bob Hines (1912 - 1994), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Unsung Hero: Greg Gordon



by Jon Isacoff

It is a treat to celebrate this month's unsung hero: Greg Gordon, our new Conservation Committee Chair (and the presenter of our February program!). Greg has leapt into his new role with zest. From drafting letters to shedding insights at meetings, we are lucky to have Greg as our Conservation Chair. It's a role that has been vacant often in the past and takes a truly dedicated spirit to fulfill.

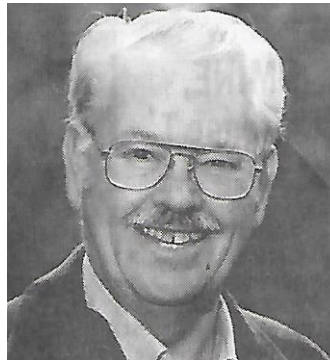
Greg is no stranger to conservation work; he teaches environmental studies at Gonzaga and previously has worked for the National Park and National Forest Services. He even ran once for the Montana State Assembly on the Green Party ticket (he didn't win, but it's the effort that counts)!

Since arriving in Spokane, Greg has been immersed in local conservation issues. Greg has drafted letters and helped Spokane Audubon articulate its positions on many of these, including proposed removal of Caspian Terns on the lower Columbia, genetically-modified (GMO) food Labeling, the Conservation Futures Purchase of Tuscan Ridge, the Longview Coal Terminal, and the effort to limit ski development on Mt. Spokane. When he's not busily drafting letters, Greg has been working to protect the Spokane Bluff's trail, where he can often be found with his trusty canine friend Sancho.

How Greg finds the time to do all these things with four kids at home is anyone's guess. But we're all thankful.

Thanks Greg!

Remembering an Unsung Hero: Ambrose Priestley



by Fran Haywood

On Jan. 14 Spokane Audubon lost a longtime member at age 94. Amby led field trips, participated in the Christmas Bird Count Valley sector with Tom Rogers, and as age caught up to him, did a feeder count for many more years.

He was a fixture in the organization many years before I discovered Spokane Audubon. He and Jan Reynolds conducted an owl study at Turnbull Wildlife Refuge and he worked on a coordinated study with Coeur d'Alene Audubon.

The year he decided he could no longer lead the popular Blue Bird field trip in March, I was drafted to take over; Amby came with maps and took me around the route, showing infinite patience to a beginning leader. That trip is still one of Audubon's most popular field trips. Now led by Marian Frobe, it happens at the beginning of spring and usually heralds the arrival of many species from their southern wintering grounds.

Back in the days when Brad and I were mailing the newsletter, we had a folding party at our home, and Amby and Willene were almost always among the volunteers.

Of course, Ambrose not only freely gave of his time to Audubon, he worked tirelessly to establish Dishman Hills Natural Area with Tom Rogers.

We all will miss Ambrose. He leaves a large hole in Spokane Audubon.

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Call for Donations: Friends of Turnbull Spring Auction

Spokane Audubon frequently partners with our local wildlife refuge for many activities. Because the Federal Government does not fund an educational staff person, it is up to the Friends of Turnbull organization to raise funds every year to pay for an Americorps volunteer to teach environmental classes both at the Refuge and at local schools.

YOU can help... with a donation. Cash is always welcome, but if you have something (from a beautiful wildlife print to a new, unused bird feeder, a set of roller skates, tickets to a sporting event, a cabin you'd loan out for the weekend) that you'd be willing to donate to the spring auction on March 29th, please contact Joyce Alonso (939-0120) or Kellisa Owens (629-1826) soon. In some cases, we can arrange to pick up the item, so **all you have to do is call.**

2014 Great Backyard Bird Count: February 14 - 17



*Downy Woodpecker, by Ella Clem.
Used with permission.*

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17, 2014. Anyone anywhere in the world can count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations on a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada.

Last year's Great Backyard Bird Count shattered records after going global for the first time, thanks to integration with the eBird online checklist program launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab and Audubon. Participants reported their bird sightings from all 7 continents, including 111 countries and independent territories. More than 34.5 million birds and 3,610 species were recorded—nearly one-third of the world's total bird species documented in just four days.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature and make a difference for birds. It's free and easy.

HOW TO COUNT THE BIRDS: Easy as 1-2-3!

1. Count birds anywhere you like for at LEAST 15 minutes—or even longer if you wish. Keep track of the kinds of birds you see and how long you watched.
2. Make your best estimate of how many birds you saw of each species. For example, 5 Northern Cardinals, 3 American Crows. Huge flocks may be a challenge, but your best guess is still valuable.
3. Enter your list(s) online at www.BirdCount.org. Put in a new checklist:
 - for each new day
 - or each different location
 - for the same location, same day, if you counted at a different time of day.

Note: Look for the “Submit Observations” tab on the Great Backyard Bird Count (or eBird) website. You can start entering bird lists at 7:00 AM Eastern time (U.S.) on the first day of the count.

If you already have an account for the eBird, Project Feederwatch, Nestwatch, or YardMap projects, you can simply use that login information.

For more detailed instructions about how to participate, visit <http://www.bird-source.org/gbbc>.

Field Trips and Events: February & March

February 6, 2014, Thursday
WDFW Public Planning Workshop
5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Eastern Region Office
2315 North Discovery Place
Spokane Valley

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will hold a public workshop Feb. 6 to discuss the development of a new management plan for the Swanson Lakes, Reardan, and Revere wildlife areas.

According to Juli Anderson, the WDFW manager for the three wildlife areas, the management plan will address the status of wildlife species and their habitat, the progress of restoration efforts, and public recreation opportunities.

At the meeting, WDFW staff will review the planning process, the areas' history, and current restoration activities and ask for public comments on future management strategies.

Anderson said WDFW will also seek candidates for an advisory committee that will meet two to three times through the nine-month planning process to help shape the plan. Those interested in serving on the committee can contact Juli Anderson at 509-636-2344 or juli.anderson@dfw.wa.gov.

Clay Sprague, WDFW Lands Division Manager, said Swanson Lakes, Reardan, and Revere are the first of WDFW's 33 wildlife areas to revise their management plans. The plans are revised every six to eight years to reflect current conditions and progress of past activities, and to identify new management priorities and initiatives.

February 8, 2014, Saturday
Snowy Owl Trip
Leaders: Joyce Alonso and
Fran Haywood

This trip is geared toward 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 1 if you plan to attend.

Target Species: Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Northern Shrike, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspur

March 22, 2014, 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. We will meet at Spokane's Coeur d'Alene Park at 7:00 am. Call leader Marian Frobe at 328-0621 by March 15 if you plan to attend.

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

March 29, 2014, 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 small refuge 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

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, or 413-1524.



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February 12th Program:
**Of Wolves and Warblers:
 The Cascading Impacts of
 Yellowstone's Wolf Restoration**
 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.

