

Volume 21  
Issue 7  
March 2014

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## March 12th Program:

## 23 years of Bird Monitoring at Turnbull NWR, with Wildlife Biologist Mike Rule



Willow Flycatcher at Turnbull NWR, by Dan Dzurisin (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0), via Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ndomer73/1069159060/sizes//>.

With the help of numerous volunteers, many of whom are Audubon members, Turnbull NWR has been able to maintain, for over two decades, a monitoring program that covers nearly the entire refuge bird community. Waterfowl-pair surveys, marshbird call/response surveys, landbird point-count surveys, raptor/shorebird surveys, nest-box monitoring and a constant effort bird banding station have all provided a wealth of data on bird population trends and their response to both climate and habitat changes on the refuge. Mike Rule, Turnbull NWR biologist, will share some of the findings from these surveys.

For the past 23 years, Mike has been the lead biologist at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge where he has been responsible for developing and implementing a monitoring plan for refuge wildlife populations (waterfowl, songbirds, raptors, marshbirds, small mammals, big game, amphibians and reptiles) and habitats (wetlands, riparian areas, ponderosa pine forests and shrub steppe). Mike received his B.S. in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University in Northern California and his M.S. in Wildlife Management from the University of Nevada Reno.

*Photo courtesy of Mike Rule.*



*Spokane Audubon's March 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.*

## The Pygmy Owl

Volume 21, Issue 7 ~ March 2014

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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

As you read this, we are really starting to see signs of spring. Red-winged Blackbird males have returned and are singing to announce their territories. Swans and more and more species of ducks have arrived wherever they can find open water. Robins are appearing, as are waxwings. We are expecting bluebirds any day. Soon the first buttercups and crocuses will bloom.

Now is the time to go outside and enjoy the bounties of our wonderful state, and especially Spokane County. We are privileged to have many wild and natural areas to enjoy -- lots of lakes, and a beautiful river, Mt Spokane, Turnbull Wildlife Refuge, many conservation futures areas, Riverside State Park, and the amazing centennial trail system, and our magical Audubon Lakes in Reardan.

While you are enjoying yourself, think of how easily it can all be destroyed, by air pollution, a toxic spill into the river, or just over-development that eliminates a wild area forever. We are so blessed here. Our Parks Department has seen fit to protect natural areas with the conservation futures, and the Land Trust is working with landowners to save their property from being turned into more inaccessible, habitat-destroying developments. We all owe a big thanks to the Dishman Hills organization for protecting that pocket of wildlife habitat, which is surrounded by development. We also are working to save the last stand of old growth timber on the backside of Mt Spokane. We each need to be vigilant and help to protect what we have now and make sure it will be here for our children and grandchildren, and their children after them.

It is also time to volunteer. We can always use help with environmental education programs, bird counts and, of course attending meetings or writing letters. Every little bit helps, even a small donation to an environmental cause, if you are short of time. Contact the Education and Conservation Chairs (see sidebar) for suggestions.

It was exciting to see so many young people at our last meeting. It is encouraging to think that the future of conservation is in such good hands. This month's meeting features Mike Rule, wildlife biologist from Turnbull Wildlife Refuge with a program on activities there. In April, students from Gonzaga University will update us on what they are doing in their environmental studies.

Just for fun, you might tune into FM radio 88.1 or 92.3 on Saturday mornings at 8:30 am for "Bird Note." Spokane Audubon is a sponsor of this program and it is truly a breath of fresh air. You will enjoy it!

April Newsletter Deadline:

**Friday, March 21**

Please send material to:

*carmen@floreo.com*



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# Sights & Sounds

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest by Tim O'Brien

Greetings, fellow birders! February is drawing to a close and Spring is right around the corner. Winter weather is still with us, but signs of the new season are upon us. Reports of singing male **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS** and **SONG SPARROWS** can only mean one thing: bring on the warblers!

The end of January and two thirds of February only added eight new species to our Spokane County total. As of February 20, we have found 94 species of birds so far in the county. Not too bad for just two months of the year, as we normally will add about 140 more species in next 10 months!

To the reports!

On January 20, the first reported **RUFFED GROUSE** was found in a yard south of Cheney. "Yard" is subjective here as this yard is very large with mixed habitats!

Two **CACKLING GEESE** were reported from the Confluence area of Riverside State Park on January 30.

**VARIED THRUSH** sightings increased in late January into early February, with the first being seen south of Cheney on January 31.

When the fields of the West Plains get covered in snow like they did on January 31, it makes finding the "huns" so much easier. Eight **GRAY PARTRIDGE** were found in the Coulee Hite and Stroup Roads area on this date.

A very hard to find bird for the county was seen from across the river at Tum Tum sitting on the ice edge of the water with **RING-BILLED GULLS** on February 8. The pale mantle, black wing tips, pink legs, and light iris of the **HERRING GULL** roused the county listers from their seats for a chance to add it to their own private year lists, thanks to Terry Little who found it first.

The first **KILLDEER** of the year was reported north of Spokane on February 17.

**GREATER SCAUP** are tough birds to identify and not very common in our area, but two were found on Wandemere Lake on February 19.



*photo by Tim O'Brien*

Hope for our "finch-less" winter was found on February 20 in the Little Spokane Natural Area, as 15 **EVENING GROSBEAKS** flew over the area near the Fish Hatchery and Painted Rocks.

Out of the area, **SNOW GEESE** and **SANDHILL CRANES** have been reported from the Walla Walla River delta area. Also, the "gull-fest" continues in Clarkston at Swallows Park with the continuing **ICELAND GULL** and others still present.

The Okanogan Highlands around Havillah have had reports in the past two weeks of massive flocks of **SNOW BUNTINGS** and at least one **GREAT GRAY OWL**.

The bird of the month for February is our lovely Turnbull **TRUMPETER SWANS**! Thirteen Trumpeter Swans returned to the refuge with the opening of the water around the headquarters area. Mike Rule, refuge biologist, reported 8 adults and 5 cygnets flying down from the office toward Pine Lake on February 19. Last year, two confirmed nests were found and with more adults present this year already, let us hope for at least one additional nest!

Special thanks to the following birders for their reports that were used for this column: Tina Wynecoop, Mike and MerryLynn Denny, Mike Clarke, Keith Carlson, Greg Falco, Terry Little, Fran Haywood, and Nancy Williams.

## Field Work Opportunity: Looking for a Melodic Spring?

Join us for a songbird survey, have fun and contribute to avian science to boot. Audubon Washington and eastern Washington chapters are developing a new conservation program focused on the shrub steppe ecosystem and its bird life.



*Sage Sparrow by Denny Granstrand.*

The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society chapter, Audubon Washington and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) are partnering on a pilot project to count sagebrush songbirds on WDFW and DNR lands near the Tri-Cities of Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco in 2014. For this community science project, we selected Sage Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrasher as priority

songbird species. We invite members from other chapters to participate in the pilot with us. We hope to expand the survey to more eastern Washington chapters next year.

The data we collect will be used to validate the Western Governors Association Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool distribution models for these species in Washington as well as to update the WDFW Priority Habitat Species data base. These applications of our field work will incorporate wildlife values into multi-state land use, transportation, and energy planning, as well as large-scale conservation projects.

Two training sessions will be in the Tri-cities. There will be a classroom session March 21, 2014, 7:00-9:00pm to teach observers how to identify our critical species and to use eBird to record observations online. The following day, March 22nd, 8:30 - 11:00am, WDFW will conduct field training, using the GPS and forms for recording observations.

We will conduct point counts at 14 sites, three times each this spring. The first round of field work will be April 17-19, the second May 15-17, and the third June 5-8.

Come look and listen with us!

For more information, schedules, and signup: Please email Christi Norman at Audubon Washington, [cnorman@audubon.org](mailto:cnorman@audubon.org) or Kevin Black at the Lower Columbia Basin chapter at [kevblack787@gmail.com](mailto:kevblack787@gmail.com). Updates at [wa.audubon.org](http://wa.audubon.org).

## February 2014 Board Report

by Ed Reynolds

We're continuing to look into the property adjoining Audubon Lake. We're working closely with the people at the Inland Northwest Land Trust, but if there's an Audubon member who has some expertise in real estate transactions and would like to help out, please contact Lindell Haggin.

As is always the case, there are other volunteer opportunities. If you're a good birder and would like to do some point counts, contact Fran Haywood. If you'd like to help organize a birding festival for the spring of 2015, Fran would like to hear from you. If you'd like to help out with our conservation and education efforts at Turnbull Wildlife Refuge, Joyce Alonso would like to hear from you. (For more about Spokane Audubon's education initiatives, see next page!)

In any event, plan to take in the birding festival at Turnbull in May. It's a great experience, especially for kids and grandkids.

## Barn Owl Recovery Volunteers Wanted



Spokane Audubon's resident owl researcher is looking for someone to monitor existing nests in the West Plains area from Airway Heights south and west to include the Cheney and Turnbull areas. Two people would be best to work together.

For full details, contact Ron at [ronpatdexter@msn.com](mailto:ronpatdexter@msn.com)



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# Spokane Audubon Spotlight on Education

## Spokane Audubon at the 2014 Balde Eagle Festival

by Kim Thorburn

Students from schools in the Lake Roosevelt drainage have an opportunity to practice citizen science and conservation in The River Mile Program sponsored by the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area of the National Park Service. Teachers elect to enter their classes in this innovative environmental education program coordinated by Janice Eldridge, the Recreation Area's Environmental Educator. The program provides teacher training and hands-on science and conservation activities at the classes' adopted river miles.



*Lindell Haggin teaching at the 2014 Balde Eagle Festival. Photo courtesy of Kim Thorburn.*

Spokane Audubon participates in The River Mile Program by providing classes about bird watching and conservation at the annual Balde Eagle Festival held in Grand Coulee each February and the symposium held at Gonzaga University each May. On February 21, 2014, Lindell Haggin and Kim Thorburn held Balde Eagle Festival classes for about 170 students from Grand Coulee Dam Middle School, Bridgeport Middle School, Keller Elementary School, Davenport Elementary School, and Nespelem Elementary School. Enthusiastic students learned about local birds in their habitats and how to find birds in a field guide.

*Note:* For those not intimately familiar with “Olde English,” *balde* (with an e) an old English word meaning “white.” Bald Eagles have never been bald, in the hairless/featherless sense, but they have always been “balde.”



*Joyce Alonso at an area Science Night.*

## Environmental Education Opportunities

by Joyce Alonso

If you've read far enough down the Pygmy Owl published list of “Who's Who” in our organization, you may have noticed the Education listing. Though only Lindell Haggin and I are named there, a number of our members quietly participate in our efforts to educate the public, from the seniors in retirement centers to garden club members to the smallest grade-school children, on things environmental, especially bird-related.

One increasingly popular endeavor is to staff an interactive booth at the “Science Night” gatherings at local elementary schools. The longest running one is at Sunrise in the Spokane Valley; the most recent, at Holmes on the near north side. We use visual displays, activities, and our taxidermy mounts to engage the children and their parents. The most popular items lately have been our Great Horned Owl mount (whose head moves a little spookily when sufficient numbers of people tromp on the gym floor) and the Calliope Hummingbird and nest, which bring up close proof that birds really can be that small!

Thanks for assistance with these programs go to Ed and Jan Reynolds, John and Sally English, Brad and Fran Haywood, Carmen Yount, Cheri Ferguson, and Donna Burt. A special note of appreciation is due to Harry Borland, whose donations of copies of his bird photos are used to reward students who complete whatever activity is featured that night. The most frequently chosen pictures are of the Snowy or Great Horned Owls and of the Turnbull Trumpeter Swans and their cygnets.

Those of us involved in these ongoing projects get a good deal of enjoyment from doing them; however, we welcome any others who would like to participate. You need not be an expert in anything to help, just willing to listen and share what information you/we have in order to increase public awareness and interest.



**FRIENDS OF TURNBULL  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
CHENEY, WASHINGTON

**You are cordially invited  
to the 8th Annual  
Friends of Turnbull  
Wild Refuge  
Fundraiser Dinner & Auction  
Saturday, March 29, 2014  
6 p.m. to 10 p.m.**

Friends of Turnbull is dedicated to environmental education and outreach activities at the Refuge and in the community. This event is the primary source of funding to support Friends of Turnbull and the mandate of the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge.

The Dinner and Auction will be held at the Wren Pierson Community Center, 615 4th Street, in Cheney.

Tickets are \$35/person (includes dinner and music).

Onsite childcare is available for children ages 0-10 for \$9. Please register your children with Cheney Parks & Recreation by March 28th to take advantage of child care: 509-498-9250.

Tickets may be purchased online at:  
[wildrefuge2014.brownpapertickets.com/](http://wildrefuge2014.brownpapertickets.com/)

There is a \$5 discount for tickets purchased through the web site.

#### **Door Prizes!**

Donate new work gloves, shovels or pliers at the door for a chance to win something exciting!

For questions, auction donations, or to RSVP, contact Katherine at 509-993-6505, or [FriendsofTurnbull@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofTurnbull@gmail.com).

## **Field Trips and Events: March & April**

**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](mailto: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

**April 19, 2014, Saturday**

**Sprague Lake Field Trip**

**Leader: Fran Haywood**

This is an all-day trip to the Sprague Lake area, open to all birders. We will look for migrating and early resident species, especially ducks. We hope to find Swainson's Hawks, American White Pelicans, and if we get lucky, Long-billed Curlew. We will meet at Spokane's Coeur d'Alene Park at 6:30 am. Contact Fran Haywood (484-8666, [birders13@aol.com](mailto:birders13@aol.com))

Target Species: Migrant ducks and geese, American White Pelican, Swainson's Hawk, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Caspian Tern, Say's Phoebe, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-crowned and Savannah Sparrows

**April 24-29, 2014,**

**Thursday-Tuesday**

**Point Reyes, California Field Trip**

**Leader: Kim Thorburn**

**Limit: 6 Birders**

This six-day trip is for intermediate and advanced birders. Kim Thorburn will provide lodging for up to six participants and lead field trips on Bolinas Lagoon and beach, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Point Reyes National Seashore, Mt. Tamalpais State Park, and the Marin Headlands. This region is a year-round birding hot spot, site of the filming of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds," and home of elite birder and artist Keith Hansen. There is a variety of pelagic and other waterfowl,

migrating shorebirds and warblers, and lots of land natives that we don't often see here. Participants will be responsible for their own air travel to Oakland and we'll split the cost of land transportation and food. We'll need to coordinate arrival and departure in Oakland. Contact Kim Thorburn by April 1 if you're interested in learning more. 465-3025, [kthorburn@msn.com](mailto:kthorburn@msn.com).

Target Species (examples): Acorn Woodpecker, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wrentit, Allen's Hummingbird, Whimbrel, Snowy Plover, Western Gull, Common Murre, Red-throated Loon, Red-shouldered Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

**April 27, 2014, Sunday**  
**West Plains Early Migrant Trip**  
**Leader: Alan McCoy**  
**Limit: 15 Birders**

This all-day trip is for all levels of birders. We'll stop at Reardan's Audubon Lake where we will look for waterfowl

and shorebirds. We will check out the Davenport Cemetery, which can be great for migrants. Then we'll go north to the Little Falls Dam, follow the Spokane River upstream and finish up at the Indian Canyon Springs area. We will meet at 6:00 am at the Rosauer's parking lot in Browne's Addition (near 2nd Avenue and Sunset Highway) and plan to return about 6:00 pm. Contact leader Alan McCoy at 448-3123, 448-8861 or [ahm2352@gmail.com](mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com) by April 20 to reserve your place.

Target Species: Migrant ducks, raptors, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Bewick's Wren, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Red-necked Grebe, Calliope Hummingbird, Orange-crowned, Nashville and Yellow warblers, Say's Phoebe, Western and Mountain Bluebirds

*Note: Field trip participants are invited (and encouraged!) to submit field trip reports for publication in The Pygmy Owl. We can't all get to every field trip, but reading about a great trip gives us all a chance to enjoy it!*

**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

Non-Profit  
 Organization  
 Spokane, WA  
 US Postage  
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March 12<sup>th</sup> Program:  
**23 Years of Bird Monitoring  
 at Turnbull NWR**  
 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.

