

# The Pygmy Owl



Volume 30  
Issue 7  
Mar. 2022

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society

**March 9, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**

This meeting is only via Zoom on-line since pandemic conditions and prevention restrictions continue to keep us from meeting in person. To join the Zoom meeting

(Meeting ID: 871 9552 6209, Passcode: 528491), link to

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87195526209?pwd=Uk1kVWpiUEQ4ZzZJS2ZFZE9UNm01QT09>

## *It's Not Rocket Science, It's Citizen Science!*

presented by Julia K. Parrish



Citizen science is a fast-growing phenomenon allowing the non-science public access to data collection, monitoring, and research projects across the spectrum of science.

At its best, citizen science promises high-quality data that are relevant to a range of environmental issues impacting birds, including climate forcing, invasive species, pollution, and development. Unlike formal science education, citizen science is "free choice learning," where participants can pick the project, location and team members that suit their needs. With literally dozens of programs to choose from, people need only decide what drives their passion.

The Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) is a 22-year-old citizen science program operating from California to Alaska. At ~85,000 birds of >200 species found, COASST data have been used for science and resource management, and have empowered thousands of coastal residents to participate in citizen science.

Julia K. Parrish is a Lowell A. and Frankie L. Wakefield Professor of Ocean Fishery Sciences, and the Associate Dean of the College of the Environment, at

the University of Washington. She is also the Executive Director of the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST), the largest beach bird program in the world. Julia has been honored as a NOAA Year of the Oceans Environmental Hero, and has received a Champions of Change award at the White House for her leadership in coastal citizen science. COASST has received a USFWS partner of the year award for ongoing work in Alaskan coastal communities

<https://fish.uw.edu/faculty/julia-parish/>

<https://coasst.org/about/our-story/>

<https://www.washington.edu/uaa/academic-resources/2020-the-course/julia-parrish/>



**COASST**

# The Pygmy Owl

Volume 30 Issue 7 Mar. 2022

*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, 11 and 12 © Jan Reynolds.



## Officers

### President

Alan McCoy

### Vice President

Lisa Langelier

### Treasurer

Lindell Haggin

### Secretary

Madonna Luers

## Elected Board of Directors

Bob Cashen  
Marlene Cashen  
Bea Harrison  
Jim Harrison  
Gary Lee  
Jenny Michaels

### Field Trips

Alan McCoy

### Programs

Gary Lee

### Education

Lindell Haggin

### Conservation

Greg Gordon

### Hospitality

Jan Strobeck

### Membership

Alan McCoy

### Publicity

Madonna Luers

### Pygmy Owl

Joanne Powell

### Website

Jenny Michaels

## Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

### Update of Members' Status January 21, 2022 through February 20, 2022:

Welcome and thanks to our **new members**:

**Individual:** Carol Johansen, Charles Matthews, Laura McDonald, Roger Rouleau

**Family:** Joanne Swierzy, Susan Terjeson

**Lifetime:** Anita Carr

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

**Individual:** Lois Johnson, Bill McMillan, Dean Chapman, Norma Trefry, Steven Thompson, Terry Ottosen, Robin Crain, Mary Jo Stauner

**Family:** Richard & Sandy Sollie, Michael & Crystal Atamian, Sherry & Craig Lee, Megan & John Bastow

**Supporting:** Jim Acton, Bill & M'Lou Safranek, Susan Millies, Nan Berger, Thomas Anderson, Jim & Bea Harrison

**Contributing:** Cindy Cilyo & Brian Aut, Merry Fougere

If you change your email address, please send your new email address to me, Alan McCoy, at [ahm2352@gmail.com](mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com) and I will make sure you get the Pygmy Owl in your email inbox. Another way to get the Pygmy Owl is to go to our website: <https://www.audubonspokane.org/the-pygmy-owl>

## Demonstration of Solutions to Bird Collisions

As a follow-up to Jim Cubie's presentation on the issue of birds flying into windows and injuring themselves or dying, Spokane Audubon will be demonstrating some solutions at two events in April. On April 23rd, an event called Hope for Creation Conference will be hosted by the Cathedral of St John and the very next day, on April 24th, another event called Caring for Creation will be hosted by Saint Aloysius Church.

We don't have all the details for these days, but if you want to see some of these solutions and get more information on preventing bird collisions, please mark your calendars now.

# Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: April 15 – May 15, 2022

Submit photos to: [sauduboncalendar@gmail.com](mailto:sauduboncalendar@gmail.com)

## Requirements

- All photographs must be submitted by a Spokane Audubon Society member in good standing (i.e., a current member).
- A maximum of four photographs can be submitted per person.
- Photographs must be submitted electronically via email to [sauduboncalendar@gmail.com](mailto:sauduboncalendar@gmail.com).
- Each photograph must be submitted in jpeg format, be in landscape orientation with dimensions of 9.25" wide by 6.75" high, have a resolution of at least 300 pixels per inch, and be no larger than 10MB in size.
- Submitted photographs shall not have the © symbol with the photographer's name or other inserted script.
- For images selected for the calendar, the photographer maintains copyright and agrees to provide perpetual use of the photograph(s) to Spokane Audubon Society for the calendar and other promotional and educational purposes.
- All photos must be of wild birds and must be taken in Eastern Washington or Northern Idaho. Please include the species name(s) and location where each photograph was taken.

## Call for Entries

Photographers may submit entries starting Friday, April 15th. The deadline is Sunday, May 15th; no entries will be accepted after that date.

## Judging and Selection

- Selection will be made by a panel of three to five impartial judges, at least one of whom is a Spokane Audubon Society board member. At least some panel members will have moderately advanced bird identification skills and experience with bird photography.
- Photographers who submit entries will not be judges.
- The bird in a natural setting must be the focus of the photograph. Preference is given to interesting behaviors, unusual or hard-to-see species, and eye-catching compositions. Habitat and artificial features should not overpower nor draw attention away from the bird(s).
- Judging criteria are photo composition, technical excellence, artistic merit, and overall impact. Normal processing is allowed but over-processed or altered photos will be rejected.
- Submissions must comply with the specified size requirements.
- Following selection, all entrants will be notified of the decisions.

## Publication

Each photograph will be published with the common name of the bird species and © with the name of the photographer.

**Special Note:** Photographers whose images are selected for the calendar may need to provide a TIFF version of the photograph for printing purposes.



# Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Is Spring around the corner? The first few Killdeer, have been sighted around the region. Will Bluebirds and Swallows be next? Mild, dry weather the past few weeks has been pleasant for people but probably not led to much excitement for birds. It seems many winter birds that got pushed South with the extreme cold at New Year's haven't returned and bird movement is in a holding pattern until early Spring migration gets underway in a month or so. But, as always, nice birds are still being seen. Here they are:

Snow Goose: Gifford Campground (2/13-TD)

Long-tailed Duck: Ellisport Bay (1/29-RDC)

Red-breasted Merganser: Sunnyside Road (2/5-JI)

Anna's Hummingbird: Moscow (2/15-NP); Pullman (2/17-eBird); Spokane Valley (2/18-MC)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: North Idaho College Beach (2/6-RyB)

Glaucous Gull: Kettle Falls (1/22-eBird); Blackwell Island (1/29-RyB); Little Goose Dam (2/4-eBird)

RED-THROATED LOON: Hawkins Point (1/21-TL)

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: Sunnyside Road (1/24-RDC)

Northern Goshawk: Moscow (1/20-eBird); Elmira (1/23-DR); Long Canyon (1/29-SE); Sandpoint (2/17-FC and RC)

Williamson's Sapsucker: University of Idaho (2/2-DK)

Blue Jay: Bonner's Ferry (1/20-JR and SE); Deep Creek (1/29-MC)

Pine Grosbeak: Kellogg Peak (1/21-WY); 2/12 (Chewelah-eBird)

Gray-crowned Rosy-finch: Davenport (1/28-LJ); West Plains (2/5-AT); Davenport (2/9-MC)

White-winged Crossbill: Silver Mountain (1/21-eBird); Mt Spokane SP (1/25-NE)

Harris's Sparrow: Kaniksu Shores (1/25-RDC)

White-throated Sparrow: Bonner's Ferry (2/1-SE and JR)



**Yellow-billed Loon**  
© Andy Bankert



**Red-throated Loon**  
© Andrew Spencer

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; RyB-Ryan Bart; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; MC-Marlene Cashen; FC-Forest Corcoran; RC-River Corcoran; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JE-Jacob Elon; NE-Norm Engeland; DG-Don Goodwin; CG-Cierra Gove; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; CH-Cameron Heusser; JI-Jon Isacoff; LF-Louise Johnson; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-Dave Koehler; GL-Greg Lambeth; TL-Terry Little; AM-Alan McCoy; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Mason Maron; BM-Ben Meredyk; NM-Nancy Miller; WM-Will Merg; TO-Tim O'Brien; NP-Neil Paprocki; DR-Diana Roberts; JR-Jethro Runco; SS-Sandy Schreven; MS-Mark Selle; KS-Katie Sorenson; CS-Charles Swift; NT-Norma Trefry; AT-Andrew Thomas; DW-Doug Ward; MW-Michael Woodruff; WY-Will Young



## Member Profile:

# Don and Theo Goodwin

By Madonna Luers

One of Spokane Audubon Society's youngest members and his father are some of the chapter's newest, having joined just about two years ago.

Don Goodwin and his 13-year-old son Theo say they wanted to learn more about birds and birding and to support a local organization that they knew does great work for bird habitat and the birding community.



**Theo & Don Goodwin**

Both got started in birding because of what they now consider their number one tip for new birders – having a mentor. “I used to drive back and forth from Seattle to Spokane a lot back in 2005, and while I wasn’t a birder yet, and didn’t really know what I was looking at, I would count

how many ‘hawks’ I saw along the way,” Don recalls. “Not knowing what kind they were, I think I was just enamored with raptors. Then sometime later, my sister-in-law Mary, who is a very skilled birder, took us hiking in Seattle. I remember her stopping to point out the sound of a black-chinned hummingbird, and sure enough, after searching for a few seconds, she found it about 50 yards away. I was amazed that she could find and identify such a small bird just by the sound that it made.”

Theo recalls Aunt Mary’s mentorship, but also his dad’s. “In 2017 our family took a vacation down in San Diego,” he said, “and I remember going to a restaurant that had a pond area where we saw a pair of Black-crowned Night-Herons up close. That was my ‘spark bird’, and for Christmas that year I got a camera, which got me started in bird photography.”

Theo, who is an eighth grader at Spokane’s Sacajawea Middle School, has had several bird photographs selected for use in the chapter’s last two annual calendars.

Both have participated in the Spokane Christmas Bird Count for the last four years and now lead the South Hill portion of the count. They also conduct two Winter Raptor Survey routes, Fairfield West and South Spokane.

Don is a music professor at Eastern Washington University, where he serves as the Director of Bands, and is the Musical Director of the Spokane Jazz Orchestra. He was born in 1972 in Spokane where his mother was a public-school teacher until she started a home piano studio while raising four children. “She taught piano to all of us kids, all the neighborhood kids, and many of our friends growing up,” he said, “so I was kind of surrounded by music from an early age.”

He attended Eastern Washington University (EWU) and received his Doctorate in Band Conducting from the University of Kentucky in Lexington. He met his wife, Sarah, when they were both working at the Art Institute of Seattle; she, in the registrar’s office, he, teaching Music Theory classes.

Sarah loves nature, too, and goes birding with Don and Theo when she can. Don believes his training as a jazz musician, playing piano and bassoon, has made it easier for him to recognize patterns in the songs and calls of birds. “But I still struggle with remembering which bird call is which compared to Theo,” Don said. “His young brain is so much more malleable than mine -- he seems to remember everything!”

Theo has both a music and birding ear, too. One of his favorite school subjects is band, where he plays the trombone and piano in the jazz band. He has lots of different interests beyond music, including juggling, Taekwondo, acting, and photography, so he’s not quite sure what he’ll end up doing for a living. “But I would like to focus my work on birds and conservation,” he said, “maybe as a bird photographer for a career.”

The Goodwins love to take vacations to see birds in other areas, traveling to California, North Dakota, Minnesota, Alaska, Utah, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia. This Spring they’ll head for Texas and this summer, to Costa Rica.

Don's favorite birding experience was last summer in Alaska. "We saw so many different habitats," he said, "but my favorite was our pelagic tour in Resurrection Bay. We saw Horned and Tufted Puffins, Common and Thick-billed Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, Black-legged Kittiwakes, as well as porpoises, sea lions, coastal mountain goats, and orcas and humpback whales."



### The Goodwins in Alaska

Theo's favorite birding experience was in Utah. "We went to the Bear River Migratory Bird Route and saw tons of different shorebirds, waterfowl and wading birds," he said. "I remember driving through the first half of the auto loop and all of the water was dried up. I thought we wouldn't see much of anything when all of a sudden we were surrounded by a huge flock of American White Pelicans, Bonaparte's Gulls, American Avocets, and Black-necked Stilts! There were also White-faced Ibises, Snowy Egrets, and Western and Clark's Grebes! Eventually we turned the corner and found a Long-billed Curlew, which was a lifer for both of us. All in all, it was a great birding experience."

Don's favorite bird is the Canada Jay because he doesn't get to see them very often. "They're extremely social birds," he said; "they allow us to view them up close and enjoy their fun and quirky character."

Theo's favorite bird is the Evening Grosbeak. "I like them because the breeding males have a vibrant yellow color, an interesting white patch on the wings, and conical greenish bill," he said, "and you can find huge flocks of them right in your own backyard."

The Goodwins' first tip for beginning birdwatchers is to find a mentor. "There's nothing that speeds up your identification skills faster than being around

someone who's better and more experienced than you," Don said. "For me, it started with my sister-in-law, and then it was a process of working closely with Alan McCoy (SAS president and recently retired piano tuner at EWU). We would talk birds every moment we could at Eastern."

At his young age, Theo may already have played a bit of a mentoring role. When asked if he knew others his age who are into birding, he said his two best friends are both birders and photographers, having become interested a bit after he did.

Their second tip for birding newcomers is to get some fundamental necessities such as field guides, apps, and binoculars. "Ideally, you or someone you're with also has a camera so you can revisit questionable sightings that you may not have been able to identify with binoculars," Don said.

Last, but certainly not least for these two musician/birders, they recommend that new birders spend as much time listening and tuning their ears to the songs and calls of the birds as they spend learning the visual features of the birds.

Don and Theo believe climate change and habitat loss are definitely the biggest threats to birds and birdwatching. "The more time we spend outside, the more aware we are of the threats of global warming and what it means for the future of birds," Theo said. "We need to do all we can to preserve the green spaces we have and improve the ecology of our planet so future generations of birders can enjoy and benefit from the birds that we have the privilege to see today."

Those future generations of birders depend, too, on early interest. "More kids could get excited about birds and birding if they spent more time outside," Theo said.



**Canada Jay**  
© Alix d'Entremont



**Evening Grosbeak**  
© bellemare celine





All photos by Theo Goodwin

American White Pelican  
Horned Puffins  
Clark's Grebe  
Long-billed Curlew

# Saving birds through reducing our use of plastics

by Shenandoah R Marr

Anyone reading this newsletter knows the depressing facts about birds and plastics. Large pieces of plastic are ingested by birds and cause painful deaths. Birds are entangled in plastics that immobilize them. Plastics never truly break down – they are degraded into microplastics, which contaminate both ocean and freshwater. These microplastics then are ingested by wildlife and ourselves. When I start going down the rabbit hole of hopelessness and despair, I think of all of the people who truly care about preserving wildlife and the individuals who inspire me to take more action. We know the facts; we can use them as an opportunity to make a difference. One of my personal heroes, Jane Goodall, says “you cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

One of the most effective things we can do is refuse. Refuse promotional freebies unless you’ll really use them. Refuse single use plastics at restaurants. Send a message with your wallet by refusing to spend money on products that are overpackaged. If you want to take it a step further, let the company know why you aren’t buying their product and suggest a change. Most companies have a “contact” section on their website, making it fast, easy, and convenient to communicate with them.

When we really want or need something, we can still make a difference by reducing our use of plastics. If you have a choice of products, choose the one that uses less plastic. For example, use an old-fashioned paper coffee filter instead of reaching for the plastic pod. If you are a tea drinker, buy loose leaf tea or look for bags that are not individually wrapped in plastic. When I started really inspecting my purchases, I was surprised to see how much plastic I hadn’t been noticing – and how I could make small and painless changes to reduce my personal use of plastics.

We are lucky here in Spokane to have several options for re-using containers. Friends of Manito will take unwanted flower pots for use at their plant

sales. Bulk foods, including grains, nuts, spices, oils, vinegars, and pasta, can be purchased locally at the Main Market Co-op, Winco, and Huckleberrys. Locally grown lentils, split peas, wheat berries, flour, and beans are sold in plastic-free packaging through Linc Foods (<http://www.lincfoods.com>) or directly from Palouse Brand (<https://www.palousebrand.com>). Plastic-free cosmetics are sold at Bee You Organics in the Perry district. Opening next to Hotel Indigo in March, the Spokane Refillery will offer cleaning products, hand soaps, laundry detergents, and plastic-free shampoo and conditioner bars. Simply bring in a clean container, and they will fill it up for you.

Sadly, recycling is not the panacea we think it is. Most of the plastics put into the recycle bins in Spokane end up incinerated at the city’s Waste-to-Energy plant. However, some plastics are turned into new things and we should recycle whenever possible. Purchasing products made of recycled plastics rather than virgin plastics is a step towards producing a market for recycled goods.

Feeling talkative? Start a conversation with friends or family about plastic waste and its effect on birds and other wildlife. A conversation centered around hope and positive action is uplifting and empowering. Let’s be proactive in this battle and make a positive impact today!



Vanessa Garrison/Greenpeace





# Tree Swallows

BIRD OF THE WEEK

American Bird Conservancy

The elegant, eye-catching Tree Swallow is a welcome sign of spring in much of North America. Although named for its habit of nesting in tree cavities, this medium-sized swallow is most often seen in open spaces such as wetlands or farm fields.



Tree Swallow - Male  
© Max Nootbarr

Male Tree Swallows have shining blue-green plumage on their backs, contrasting gleaming white underparts. Females are less colorful, their backs ranging from dull greenish brown to almost as shining as the males'.

Immatures are flat gray-brown above, with little or no iridescence. Tree Swallows show less white on the face and sides than is seen on the closely related Violet-green Swallow.

This sleek feathered aerialist leaves its breeding grounds later in the year than do its relatives the Barn Swallow and Purple Martin, and it returns earlier.

## Dietary Versatility

Although Tree Swallows feed heavily on flying insects, they also eat more berries and seeds than do other swallows. This dietary versatility allows them to linger longer on their breeding grounds, migrate shorter distances, and return to nest sooner.

The habit of switching from insects to fruit as the seasons change is also noted in unrelated species such as the Yellow-rumped Warbler and Hermit Thrush, for the same reason.

## Avian Tornadoes

Before migration, Tree Swallows congregate along shorelines in large flocks that can number in the hundreds of thousands. They migrate during the day in smaller groups, but re-gather every evening, forming dense, swirling tornadoes of birds, before descending upon a marsh or tree grove to roost for the night.

The Tree Swallow is a chatty species, constantly vocalizing with bubbly, liquid twitters and chatters, while perched and in flight.

The Tree Swallow is a secondary cavity nester, laying eggs and raising its young in spaces excavated by other animals — often woodpeckers. There are many cavity-nesters in the bird world, including other swallows, like the Purple Martin, and various others birds, including the Red-masked Parakeet, Mountain Bluebird, Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, and Resplendent Quetzal.

Tree Swallows are also quick to adopt artificial nest boxes when available, and efforts to help the Eastern Bluebird, Western Bluebird, and Mountain Bluebird by providing nest boxes inadvertently have helped the Tree Swallow as well. Many people now put up boxes in pairs — one for Tree Swallows and one for bluebirds. The arrangement seems to work well, with each species able to successfully raise young in close proximity to the other.



Tree Swallow Chicks  
© Steve Byland

The nest, built mostly by the female Tree Swallow within the cavity, is made of grasses, straw, and other vegetation, and is lined with other birds' feathers, which both birds bring to the nest. Both female and male Tree Swallows show a marked preference for white feathers, and may often be observed "playing" with one, dropping and retrieving it in mid-air, as they carry it to the nest.

Female Tree Swallows incubate the four to seven white eggs, brooding the young after they hatch. While the chicks are in the nest, usually two to three-and-a-half weeks, both parents feed them. Once they leave the nest, the parental "meal plan" lasts at least another three days before the young birds are on their own.

## Pygmy Owl Contributions

Spokane Audubon Society members who want to contribute to the Pygmy Owl newsletter can submit articles on, and photos of, birds and bird conservation issues to [info@spokaneaudubon.org](mailto:info@spokaneaudubon.org) for publishing consideration.

The newsletter deadline is the 20th of the month for the next month's edition.

Details of the field trips will be found on our website <https://www.audubonspokane.org/upcoming-events>.



The Pygmy Owl  
**Spokane Audubon Society**  
P.O. Box 9820  
Spokane, WA 99209-9820

**The Spokane Audubon Society advocates for birds and their habitats in the Inland Northwest and connects people with nature.**

**Visit our website:**

**<https://audubonspokane.org>**

### Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual Membership and Donation:

Student (under 21): \$10 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Individual: \$20 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \$30 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting: \$50 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Contributing: \$100 per year \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime: \$500 \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational activities.**

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: Alan McCoy  
615 W Paradise Rd  
Spokane WA 99224

Join us, or renew your membership, online at our website:

<https://www.audubonspokane.org>.

Click "Support Us" or "Join Us" We accept PayPal, credit/debit cards or Apple Pay. Receiving duplicate newsletters? Errors or other changes to your email address? Contact Alan McCoy at [ahm2352@gmail.com](mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com) or (509) 999-9512.