

Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday, April 10th at 7:30 p.m. Social get-together at 7:00

Volume 27
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April 2019

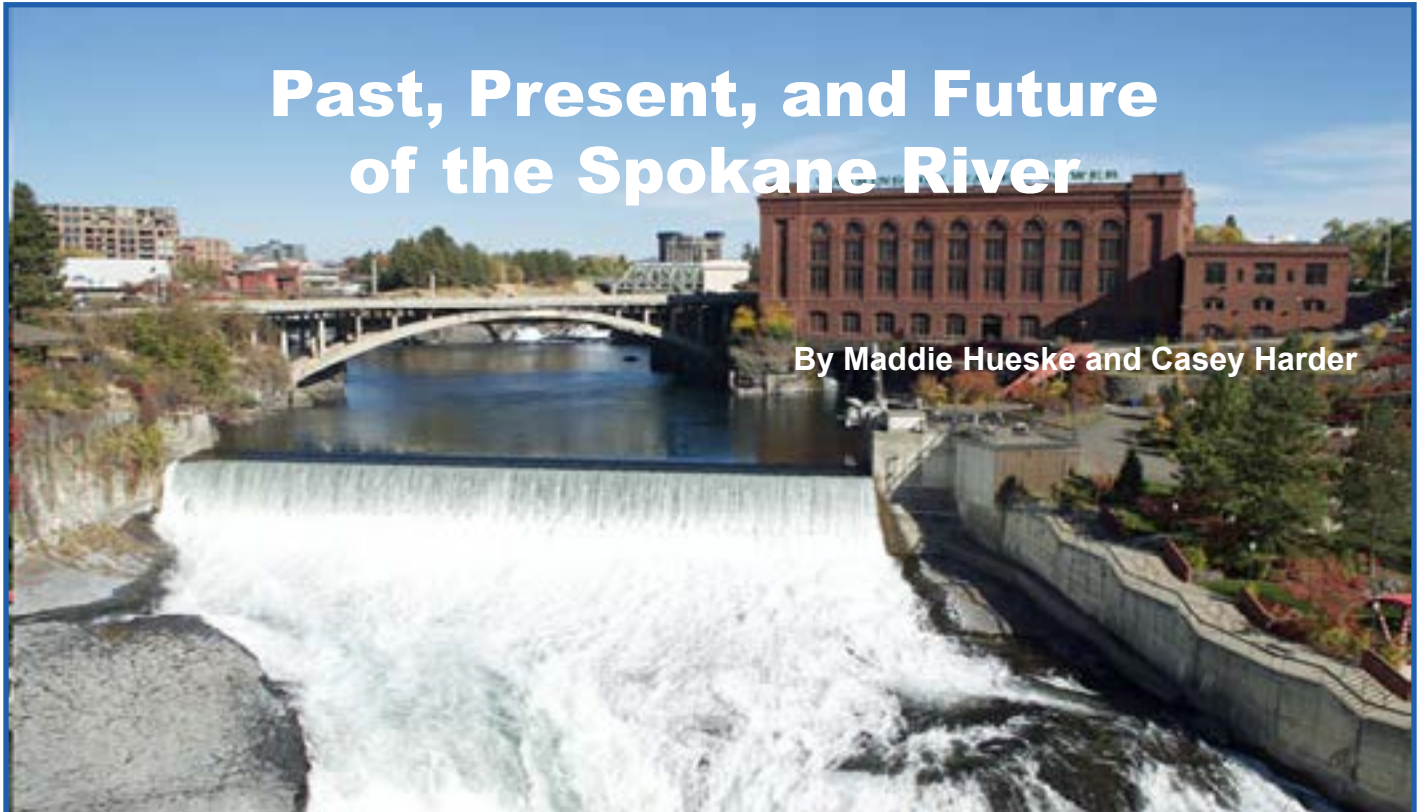
The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Past, Present, and Future of the Spokane River

By Maddie Hueske and Casey Harder



This month we depart from our usual speaker series to host a group of Gonzaga University students who will present their senior projects as part of their environmental studies capstone course

The Spokane River is an iconic component of the city. Running right through the center of downtown, culminating in a dramatic set of falls, the river is a part of what makes Spokane special. We are lucky on Gonzaga's campus to be able to interact with the river daily; however, not all residents of Spokane are this fortunate. Many low-income and marginalized communities lack access to and connection with the river, making it more of an inconvenience or an easily ignored resource.

The Gonzaga Environmental Studies senior class seeks to provide ways for all members of the Spokane community to engage with the river and the natural

beauty surrounding the Spokane area. Students envision a new and revitalized Spokane, one that boasts healthy habitat for wildlife, recreation opportunities for adventurers, education and playtime for local students, and full of stunning natural resources for the people who call it home.

Gonzaga students will present their projects in a variety of areas:

- The Zone Project - Providing summer programming for underserved students in Northeast Spokane, focusing on building connections to the river and to the natural environment.
- Interpretive Signage for Lake Arthur - Connecting community members and students to the history and ecology of Lake Arthur via signs and a walking trail .

Photo by Jed Brown, ENVS student

(cont on page 2)

The Pygmy Owl

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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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- Gardens for Growth - Tackling food insecurity at local elementary schools while creating youth educational gardening opportunities.
- Spokane River Walk - Publishing a physical and online interactive walking guide that provides community members with options to interact safely with the river .
- Spokane River Habitat Management Planning – Researching habitat management plans in order to establish a standard for new developments and the duties they are expected to uphold in protecting the river throughout construction and development.
- Friends of Fish – Engaging in a dialogue on restoring salmon populations on the Spokane River, along with the cultural and economic advantages and disadvantages to reintroduction.
- Spokane River for All – An environmental justice study that includes collecting data on neighborhoods without access to the river and addressing homeless camps, resulting in a more equitable response to environmental inequalities to be considered in the Spokane River Vision Plan.

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through March 18, 2019:

Welcome to our new nesters: Craig Brown & Family, Heather Brown, Patricia Ediger, Lorna Emerich & Family, and Connie Fugitt-Smith.

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Mike Rule & Sandra Rancourt, Jim Hudlow, Beatrice Lackaff, Nancy Curry, and David Smith

Many nesters chose to not receive a hard copy of the Pygmy Owl. If you could help us to reduce costs and save paper and energy by switching to our electronic full-color publication, please contact me. You already have access to the newsletter on the Spokane Audubon WebSite on the Pygmy Owl page. To receive a personal PDF copy for your own file, we will need your Email address. Mine is davep_acer@msn.com. Legibility is critical. Occasionally I cannot clearly make out some Email addresses.

May Pygmy Owl
Deadline April 20th

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Well, from frozen to spring in a week! An arctic February has given way to an unseasonably warm, dry March. Birds are starting their northward movements on schedule. Look for waterfowl, followed by other more long-distance migrants, to be moving in and through during the next month.

Snow Goose: Spokane River (2/23-TL)

Trumpeter Swan: Calispell Lake (3/2-TL); Spokane River (3/14-TL)

Long-tailed Duck: Seven Bays (2/23-JI)

Red-breasted Merganser: Coeur D'Alene (3/2-CL)

Mew Gull: Coeur D'Alene (3/2-CL)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Coeur D'Alene (3/2-CL)

Kumlien's Iceland Gull: Coeur D'Alene (3/2-CL)

RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER: Moscow (2/28-NaP)

White-winged Crossbill: Smith Creek (3/2-NP and JoE); Mullan (3/9-BK)

Lesser Goldfinch: Seven Bays (2/23-JI)

Snow Bunting: Reardan (2/22-TL); Martinson Road (3/9-KS and BB); Wilbur (3/10-RM); Darby Road (3/13-NP)

Lapland Longspur: Wilbur (3/10-RM)

Fox Sparrow: Saltese (2/22-JI)

Harris's Sparrow: Moscow Mountain (2/27-KD)

White-throated Sparrow: Saltese (2/22-JI); Little Spokane River (2/24-LH); Calispell Lake (3/2-TL); Bonner's Ferry (3/3-NP and JoE)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Browne's Mountain (2/28-JI)

Swamp Sparrow: Hawk Creek Canyon (2/23-JI); Little Spokane River (3/1-TL)



Red-Breasted Sapsucker

©Dan Magneson / USFWS - Pacific Region

Observers: DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra;; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; TB-Travis Brakefield; SC-Shay Caflin; MaC-Marlene Cashen; WC-Warren Current; MMLD-Mike and MerryLynn Denny; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; JoE-Johnna Eilers; JE-Jacob Elonen; JF-Judy Ferguson; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Bea Harrison; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; SL-Sherry Lee; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; TM-Theresa Mathis; RM-Roy Meyers; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O'Brien; NaP-Nathan Palmer; NP-Neil Paprocki; ER-Eric Rassmussen; NR-Nick Risch; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; JS-John Stuart; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; DW-Doug Ward; NW-Nancy Williams; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney

Gangsters of the Bird World

by Lisa Langelier



American crows and common ravens have reputations as the gangsters of the bird world. The cartoon magpies “Heckle and Jeckle” – cousins of crows, and Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven” contribute to this notoriety. They are noisy, gregarious, opportunistic scavengers. Both stoutly built, solid black birds, they exhibit complex and interesting behaviors. Although categorized

as songbirds, their raucous calls are anything but melodious. From calls to size, distinguishing between crows and ravens takes practice.

Ravens weigh about three pounds and measure 21 to 27 inches from beak to tail. In contrast, crows only weigh about one pound and measure between 17 and 21 inches from beak to tail. The beak of a raven is heavier and more powerful than a crow’s beak. In fact, the scientific name of the American crow is *Corvus brachyrhynchos* or “short beak” in Greek. No songsters, the vocalizations of crows and ravens are harsh yet distinct. The crow, well known for its oft-used “caw,” makes up to 23 different sounds, while the raven utters a variety of guttural croaks, gurgles, and metallic sounds. The scientific name for the common raven is *Corvus corax* or “croaker” in Greek.

In flight, a raven’s tail is wedge-shaped while the crow’s is shaped like a fan. Crows are strong fliers with regular flapping or rowing wing beats. Ravens are aerial acrobats, soaring and gliding like hawks, rolling and tumbling and even locking feet in flight.

While many songbirds breed during their second year, corvids breed at three to five years of age. Compared to smaller birds, they are relatively long-lived. Although few studies have evaluated their longevity, a captive raven at the National Zoo lived 24 years and crows live 20 or more years in captivity.

When it comes to the bird-brained, crows and ravens are among the most intelligent. Good at solving puzzles, they learn to associate symbols and noises with food, and are keen and wary. Henry Ward Beecher, minister, social reformer, and speaker from the 1880s, was so impressed with the intelligence of crows he said, “If men had wings and bore black feathers, few of them would be clever enough to be crows.”

Crows are infamous for eating sprouting seeds, much to the dismay of farmers and gardeners. They tend to forage in open fields while ravens often feed in forested habitats. In addition to seeds, the eclectic diet of crows includes carrion, fruit, insects, bird eggs and nestlings,

small rodents, and garbage. Ravens shun crows and favor road-killed animals but are unable to penetrate a freshly-killed carcass and rely on other scavengers to rip into the flesh. Ravens even bury their food for later. Eating carrion does not help the reputation of ravens and crows.

Crows are social, family-oriented and forage in groups. They often live in close proximity to humans and tolerate disturbance. Their breeding strategy allows non-breeding young from the previous year to stay in their parents’ territory and help protect and care for the new brood. An American crow family group may include 15 individuals. During fall and winter, crows roost in huge groups of as many as 200,000 birds; these groups are known as a “murder.”

Ravens are more solitary and when paired, keep to themselves. Unlike crows, they have little to do with their young once they leave the nest. Ravens are very secretive and do not tolerate being disturbed. Young, unpaired ravens form groups or “gangs” with their own hierarchy, based on age and experience. A legend that ravens push their young out of the nest to fend for themselves earned groups of ravens the title “an unkindness.” In some cultures ravens are symbols of death, darkness, and depression.

Like their cousins – magpies, jays, and nutcrackers – ravens and crows can be quarrelsome, playful, aggressive, and wary. In the 1941 Disney movie *Dumbo*, five jive-talking, cigar-smoking crows even teach *Dumbo* to fly. Scrappy and tough, feared and misunderstood, these intelligent hooligans deserve a closer look.

The original version of this essay appeared in *The Wild Eye: Field Notes from a Wildlife Refuge*, ©2016 by Lisa Langelier.

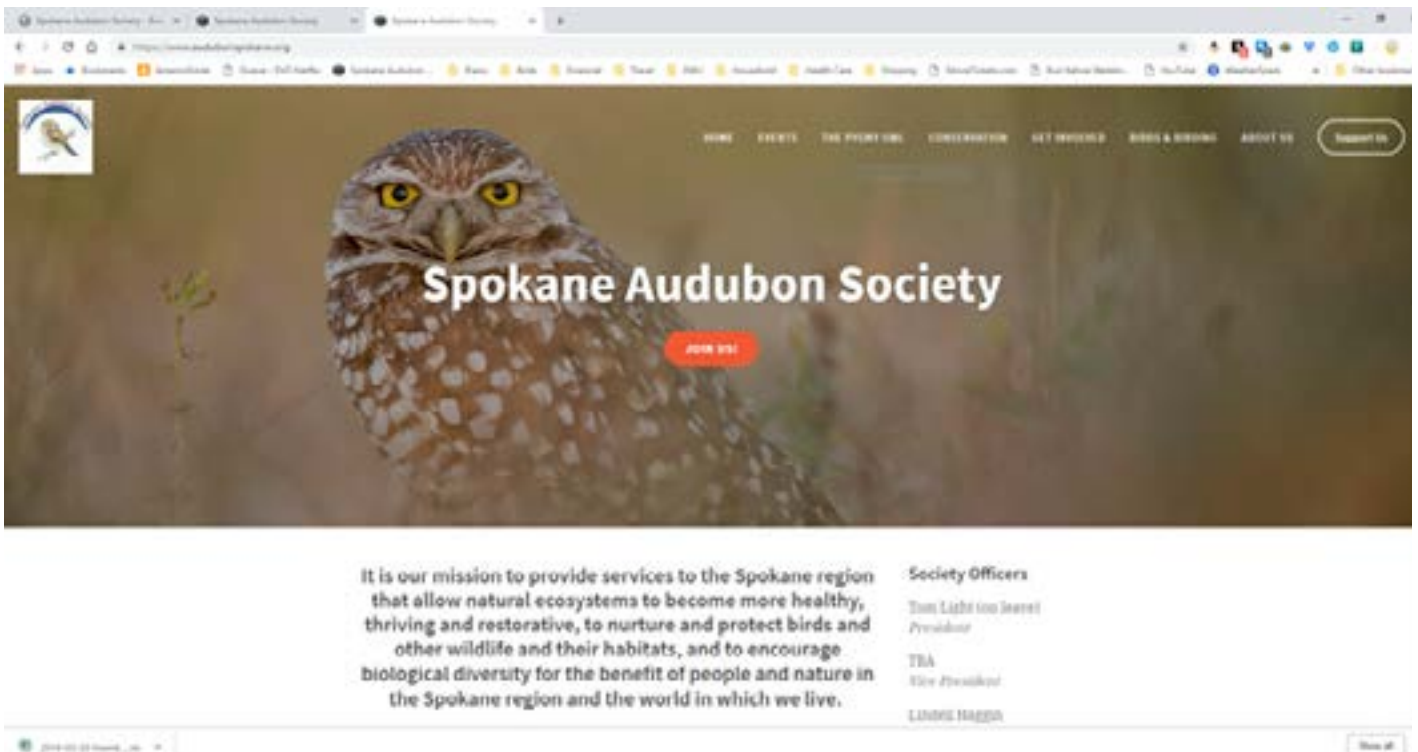


Crows vs. Ravens
©Phillip Krzeminski.

Our New Website is Live!

by Alan McCoy

We invite Spokane Audubon members to view our new website. Type www.spokaneaudubon.org into your browser to visit. The photo gallery on the front page has some cool photos and members are welcome to send photos to be added to the gallery. There are other pages to explore as well. This website will format automatically to whatever device you are using – desktop, laptop, tablet and phone. We hope that you find it useful and easy to navigate. Please contact us at webmaster@audubonspokane.org with your comments or questions.



NEED HELP WITH SPRING CLEANING?

Sorry! We're NOT offering to wield a vacuum or a scrub brush...but we ARE willing and eager to take off your hands any new or gently used items related to birds and nature. You see, our stock of "prizes" for our monthly raffle is running a bit low. We need attractive things that will motivate our monthly meeting attendees to acquire some tickets.

(\$1. for 1 ticket; \$5. for 6 tickets)

Winners go home with a prize and the monthly phone bill gets paid.



So, when cleaning out your closets, etc., consider donating:

- 1) a baseball cap with a cool bird logo;
- 2) a book about birds--scientific, anecdotal, or fictional;
- 3) a print of a hummingbird....or an albatross.... that has hung on the wall in the hall for too long;
- 4) the unneeded bird feeder that Aunt Sue gave you for Christmas (only if it's bird-friendly) etcetera!

Bring your donation to the next meeting or call Joyce at 939-0120 for possible pick-up.

Return of the Wood Frog

Video Link

<https://www.biographic.com/posts/sto/invisible-nature-return-of-the-wood-frog>

The common wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*) has an unusual strategy for coping with the cold. While most terrestrial frogs and toads burrow deep underground to escape freezing temperatures when they hibernate, the wood frog spends its winters at the surface. The frog tucks itself into shallow depressions, covered only by a blanket of leaf litter. There it undergoes a transformation that would kill most other vertebrates: It freezes solid.

The wood frog possesses a chemical secret that enables it to survive this seemingly traumatic experience. As temperatures plummet, a complex sugar called glycogen circulates throughout the frog's body. This syrupy fluid prevents ice crystals from forming inside the wood frog's cells, and keeps them from rupturing when the frog's internal temperature drops below freezing. By mid-winter, it's as if the frog is clinically dead. Its heart has stopped beating; its brain activity has ceased; and its body is completely frozen.

When spring arrives and temperatures rise, the frog begins to thaw from the inside out. In a matter of a day or two, the wood frog is able to leap back to life—well before its hibernating neighbors have emerged. This head start gives the species an advantage, providing the wood frog its pick of sites in which to lay its eggs.

Researchers are now looking for ways to use this adaptation in medical applications. If they can find a way to mimic how wood frogs undergo these freezing events without suffering permanent cell and tissue damage, they could potentially use this mechanism in human organ transplantation. Currently, hearts, livers, kidneys, and other organs must be transplanted within hours after they're harvested. If the organs could instead be frozen and stored for later use, the odds of successful transplantation would improve, as would the availability of viable organs.



Nest Boxes and Native Plants

This April some members of the SAS educational team will be working with the West Valley City School and the Hutton Settlement in projects to involve students in habitat enhancement. We could use donations of some new or near-new nest boxes of varying sizes and/or some wildlife-friendly plants for students to place and plant at the Hutton property. **If interested, please call Joyce (929-0120) within the next two weeks.**

Dungeness River Audubon Center An Invitation to help “Inspire Wonder”

The Dungeness River Audubon Center is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year with a capital campaign to expand the building and create better access to the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's Railroad Bridge Park near Sequim. Thanks to the partnership between the Center, Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, we're more than halfway to our fundraising goal of \$3M.

We recently were awarded a “last-in” \$300K grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust – which means we won't get the money if we can't complete the rest of the campaign. If you've been one of the thousands of people who have visited the Center and Park, for BirdFest or otherwise, we hope you'll consider making a gift to help us meet this challenge.

View a video to see the Center and Park and how they interact with visitors...and contribute through the website at dungenessrivercenter.org. For more specific questions, please contact Center Director Powell Jones at 360-681-4076.



Spokane Audubon Society Elections

Our annual meeting, as outlined in the Spokane Audubon Society bylaws, is usually in May. In addition to our monthly program, we will vote for our board of directors and officers. Directors and officers serve a two-year term. On May 8, 2019 members of SAS will vote for these positions in person. If unable to attend they may send a written proxy to <https://www.audubonspokane.org/contact-us> or to PO Box 9820 Spokane, WA 99209-9820.

The preliminary slate of officers and board members follow:

President: Alan McCoy
Vice President: Lisa Langelier
Treasurer: Lindell Haggin
Secretary: Dave Plemons

Directors: We will vote for no fewer than six members
Bob Cashen
Marlene Cashen
Mary Jokela
Gary Lee
Madonna Luers
Jenny Michaels

Nominations will also be considered from the floor at the meeting

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Local Membership Dues:

Individual: \$20/year _____

Couple & Family: \$25/year _____

Student: \$10/year _____

Lifetime: \$300 _____

Donation _____

Your local membership provides you with *The Pygmy Owl* and supports your local chapter's many conservation and education 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: 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_acer@msn.com, or 413-1524.



The Pygmy Owl
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April 2019

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 Bldg
 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue

From West Spokane & South Hill

- 1-90 East to Exit 281 toward US-1 E/US-395 N (Newport/Colville)
- Follow US-2 E/US-395 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 Dr.

From North Spokane

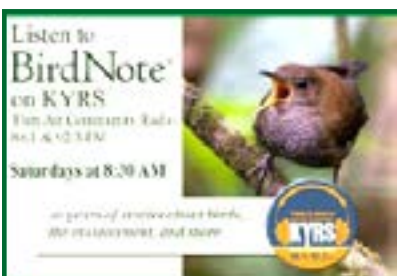
- Take US-395 S to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Dr.

Once you're on E. Upriver Drive (see map below)

- Follow E. Upriver Drive to N. Crestline Street
- Turn Left on N. Crestline Street
- Turn Right on E. North Crescent Drive
- Proceed to entry on left showing numbers 2015-2145



Limited parking is available by the Village Community Building. Overflow parking is along E. North Crescent Ave.



BirdNote can also be heard on KEWU 89.5 FM 8 a.m. daily

