gmy Owl Volume 30 The Newsletter of the Spokane Audubon Society

April 13, 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: 833 2619 6040, Passcode: 127107), link to

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83326196040?pwd=bjhGb2pkZ2ZETXlzUGNXRm15TVkzdz09

From Mountain Tops to Backyards: Cougar Ecology and Behavior in the Pacific Northwest

presented by Brian Kertson

The cougar is one of the most adaptable and successful large carnivores on the planet. With a range that extends from northern British Columbia to the southern tip of South America, cougars inhabit a diverse array of ecosystems, including those with an extensive human presence. In Washington, cougars employ their trademark adaptability in both wild and developed landscapes to fulfill their role as an apex predator, sometimes close to people.



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> Please join WDFW carnivore research scientist, Brian Kertson, for an informative presentation on the ecology and behavior of cougars in an increasingly urban world. You will learn how Washington's cougars navigate both wildlands and residential development, what they eat, how their populations function,

how they compete with other large carnivores, how much time they spend close to people, and tips for coexistence where you live and recreate.

Brian Kertson is a wildlife research scientist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, responsible for conducting carnivore investigations. In his role as the agency's principal carnivore researcher,



Brian has led studies of cougar wildland-urban ecology in western Washington and the predator-prey dynamics of cougars, wolves, and their ungulate prey in managed landscapes of eastern Washington. Prior to joining WDFW, Brian researched the predator-prey dynamics of wolves and elk in Idaho as a senior wildlife research biologist for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and cougar wildland-urban ecology in Washington as a post-doctoral researcher with the University of Washington. Brian has more than 20 years of cougar research experience and holds B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in Forest Resources (Wildlife Science) from the University of Washington where he is also an affiliate assistant professor in the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, working with graduate students on a variety of carnivore research projects throughout Washington.

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 30 Issue 8 Apr. 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.



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Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status February 21, 2022 through March 15, 2022:

Welcome and thanks to our new member:

Family: Guy Gifford

Many thanks to our returning members:

Individual: Richard Waldt, Wes Schneider,

Theresa Jones

Family: David Smith, Chris & Wilma Flanagan, Charlene & Jerry Michael, Conn & Julie Wittwer, Rich & Sharon Leon, Bill Mizell, Pamela Smith

Supporting: Michael & Simone McKay **Contributing:** Sallye & Tom Prenger



Black-chinned Hummingbird ©Tanner Martin

Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: April 15 - May 15, 2022

Submit photos to: 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 <u>sauduboncalendar@gmail.com</u>.
- 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

Our first Spring arrivals (swallows, bluebirds, phoebes, etc.) are here and providing fun for local birders. Weather has been temperate, with a little rain, a little sun. Waterfowl are moving through the region at present by the thousands, including large flocks of swans seen in various locations. A BEWICK'S TUNDRA SWAN is present at Saltese, a very neat bird to observe. Some other notable sightings since last month are as follows:

Greater White-fronted Goose: McLellan Conservation Area (2/27-NE); Bonner's Ferry (3/5-RC)

BEWICK'S TUNDRA SWAN: Saltese Flats (3/11-TO)

Red-breasted Merganser: McLellan Conservation Area (2/23-MS)

Dusky Grouse: Latour Peak (3/6-JE)

Anna's Hummingbird: Spokane Valley (3/10-MC);

Moscow (3/11-NP)

Short-billed Gull: McLellan Conservation Area (2/26-

CM)

White-headed Woodpecker: McLellan Conservation

Area (2/25-MS); Hawk Creek Canyon (3/4-TL)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Hawk Creek Canyon (3/4-

TL); Mt. Spokane SP (3/7-TO)

Peregrine Falcon: Tensed (3/5-KD)

Blue Jay: Bonner's Ferry (2/27-JR and SE); Sandpoint

(3/7-eBird)

Gray-crowned Rosy-finch: Davenport (3/4-TL)

White-winged Crossbill: Sandpoint (3/1-RC)

White-throated Sparrow: Priest River (2/27-eBird);

Spokane Valley (3/7-MC)

Rusty Blackbird: Clark Fork (2/24-eBird)

The Eurasian subspecies of the Tundra Swan is known as Bewick's Swan. It is slightly smaller than the North American Tundra Swan and has more yellow on the bill. Individuals are occasionally found in western North America, usually in flocks of Tundra Swans.



Bewick Swan ©Marianne-Bevis



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 Elonen; NE-Norm Engeland; DG-Don Goodwin; CG-Cierra Gove; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; CH-Cameron Heusser; I-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: Dave Kreft by Madonna Luers

If you've got a copy of our 2022 calendar, you know Dave Kreft's work – his memorable shot of Hooded Mergansers mirrored in the water grace the cover and the month of June page.



Dave's bird photography is part of the reason he joined Spokane Audubon Society a couple of years ago. "I had just retired and was looking for connections with the birding community," he said, "but I also wanted to enter the chapter's

annual calendar photo contest and membership is a requirement."

He's been interested in photography since his early teens, taking landscape shots with point-and-shoot cameras. But about the time his birding picked up several years ago, and he had a "small windfall of cash," he bought better equipment. Reading Tim Boyer's book *Bird Photography* gave him lots of pointers and over time he refined his technique, learning more about post-processing of digital images through online tutorials. His camera body is a Canon 80D and his primary birding lens is the Canon EF100-400mm 4.5-5.6L IS II USM. He uses Topaz DeNoise and Topaz AI Sharpen software and Photoshop Elements to finish his photos.

Dave was born in 1957 in Sac City, Iowa, where his family had farmed for a couple of generations. He says his dad had "itchy feet" and the future of farming was not looking great so the family moved to Washington in 1963. Dave grew up in Edmonds, WA, graduating from Woodway Senior High School in 1976, then earning a Bachelor of Science in Range Management from Washington State University in 1980.

After a few seasonal U.S. Forest Service jobs, Dave worked as a Range Conservationist and multi-county team supervisor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

in several Eastern Washington locations. The last seven of his total 40 years of federal service were as the State Conservation Easement Program coordinator for NRCS, working to acquire wetland easements with private landowners and coordinating the restoration work done on them. He worked extensively with various land trusts across the state on the preservation of important farmlands and grasslands of special significance through conservation easements. By the time he retired in 2020, he had worked in almost every county in Washington.

Dave has lived in Kettle Falls with his wife Shawn since 1999. Neither she nor their two grown sons share his serious interest in birds – they're "more birdwatchers than birders" he says – but he hopes to get his 15-year-old grandson interested when he sees him this summer.

"My interest in birds started in high school," Dave recalls. "I began watching birds in what is now referred to as the Edmonds marsh, long before the pavement and roof tops encroached to where they are now. I had great science teachers who encouraged my curiosity in the outdoors and ecosystems, flora and fauna. I bought my first birding guide then and I still have it, the Golden Field Guide to Birds of North America. I studied that rascal, wondering if I would ever learn all the names and identification characteristics. I still haven't."

Dave recalls that what really hooked him on birds was a weekend field trip near the end of his senior year in high school. His biology class traveled with another school's biology class to "a strange little place called Wenas Creek in central Washington," he said. "We stayed at the Wenas Creek campground and I've been looking for and identifying birds wherever I go ever since."

Dave has participated in both the Colville and Chewelah Christmas Bird Counts for the past seven or eight years, and helped with the Sagebrush Songbird Survey in 2019. Those two activities allowed him to get to know a few of the Spokane chapter members. He also belongs to the Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge (LPO), and

founded and administers the Northeast Washington Birders group on Facebook, which he invites all Facebook users to check out. He is currently on the board of the Washington Ornithological Society (WOS), which is hosting its annual conference in Spokane Valley June 9-12 (see story on page 7).

Dave doesn't travel to exotic places just to see birds, but looks for them wherever he goes. One of his most rewarding experiences was just last summer when he guided a couple from Tennessee who wanted to pick up some "lifers" in northeast Washington. They wanted to visit Salmo Pass, but no "target species" were found there. Dave led them to the LPO where they saw some nesting Red-naped Sapsuckers and Snowshoe Hares, and Big Meadow Lake where they saw Golden-crowned Kinglets, but still nothing on their list. Finally, at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area in Ferry County, despite hot weather, they found a lifer — a Cassin's Finch.

His own favorite life bird experience was seeing a Rusty Blackbird for the first time in February of 2020. A friend and birding mentor invited him to see the species at his home outside Colville, but when Dave arrived, they were nowhere to be found. He waited without luck, then left to bird elsewhere. An hour later he got a message that the birds were back, so he made an hour drive in 45 minutes just to miss them again. He waited for awhile, then started to head out, discouraged and tired from bird chasing. Suddenly two birds lit in a tree about 50 feet in front of him and his quick check with binoculars confirmed that they were male and female Rusty Blackbirds. He quietly got his camera gear ready and started clicking off frames.



Dave's favorite bird is the American Dipper or Ouzel. "They are the coolest of birds in what they do," he said, "and they're generally not too shy of humans.

John Muir wrote a specific chapter about the Ouzel in his book, *The Mountains of California*. He wrote, 'He is the mountain streams' own darling, the humming-bird of blooming waters, loving rocky ripple-slopes and sheets of foam as a bee loves flowers, as a lark loves sunshine and meadows. Among all the mountain birds, none has cheered me so much in my lonely wanderings, none so unfailingly.' I must agree."

Dave's tips for new birders: 1) Get a quality field guide and study it. Then study some more. 2) Get outside and start noting everything you see. Avoid getting frustrated, you'll get the hang of it. Don't forget to enjoy the day itself. 3) Go with experienced birders whenever you can and ask questions about key field marks for bird ID, good field guides for your area, eBird and other online resources, binoculars and spotting scopes and cameras. 4) Study your field guides some more. 5) Keep a life list. You'll be amazed at how fast you can accumulate a few hundred species.

Dave believes that the most important issue for the future of birds and birdwatching is the next generation. "What are we doing to recruit younger individuals, families, and school classes?" he asked. "I think of my high school biology teachers, and I realize that they were the key influence for me. I think of the more experienced birders who have mentored me over the years and what irreplaceable value they gave me. The most important issue is not money, or policy, or law. It's spending time with people and helping them make the connection that leads them to informed action."

He's looking forward to spending time with that grandson this summer!

American Dipper (Ouzel)



WOS Conference in Spokane Valley June 9-12

The Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) annual conference will be held in Spokane Valley at the CenterPlace Regional Event Center, 2426 N. Discovery Place, June 9 – 12, and help with local area field trips may still be needed.

Cindy McCormack (nwbirder@gmail.com) is organizing field trips for conference participants in several birding hotspots throughout the chapter area, including Pend Oreille, Stevens, Spokane, Lincoln and Whitman counties. Back-up leaders and assistants who know the local landscape for some trips may still be needed.

Registration for the conference opens April 17 through June 1. Field trip leaders/co-leaders can waive registration fees. Non-WOS members can register as non-member attendees. For more information about the conference, see https://wos.org/annual-conference/current-year/.



CenterPlace Regional Event Center

Spokane Audubon celebrates Earth Day

Spokane Audubon Society members will celebrate the 52nd Earth Day, April 22, 2022, at events throughout the weekend of April 22-24.

On Friday, April 22, we'll conduct a tabletop display on bird-window collision solutions and other information in downtown Spokane's Riverfront Park Pavilion from 2 – 4 p.m. during the Earth Day March sponsored by 350 Spokane.

On Sunday, April 24, we'll conduct the display outside St. Aloysius Church on the Gonzaga University campus for its "Caring for Creation Fair" from 9 a.m to 1 p.m.

If you're interested in helping with any of these events as a member, or introducing family or friends to our chapter, please stop by.



Bird Rehab Assistance Committee is Gearing Up

by Madonna Luers

Last year's extreme heat and wildfire smoke led to many more e-mails than usual through our website about birds potentially in need of care. The committee is gearing up for what could be another busy spring and summer of inquiries about injured, sick or orphaned birds.

Last year's extreme heat and wildfire smoke lead to many more e-mails through our website about birds potentially in need of care than usual. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Spokane office also experienced an increase in such calls.

Board members Madonna Luers, Bea Harrison and Jim Harrison solicited volunteers from chapter members and the committee formed with Mary Marsh, Alice Moravec, Therese Nielsen, Tina Penny, and Margo Wolf. They met with WDFW staff about the need to transport animals in true need of care to the WSU rehab center in Pullman since the only Spokane County rehabber (Dr. Jerry Ponti) has retired. Local veterinarian-tech Shenandoah Marr and bat rescue volunteer Joyce Schlachter will also be joining the team.

The committee plans to contact local veterinarians to assist since state law allows any licensed veterinarian to provide stabilizing care for wildlife without becoming a fully-licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Although a "Good Samaritan" law allows anyone who encounters wildlife in need of care to transport, the chapter committee is applying for a federal group transport permit for ongoing work under the state's auspices.

Tina Penny, who has worked with Northwest Raptor Center in St. Marie's, Idaho, and West Valley School District Outdoor Learning Center in Spokane Valley, recently provided large bird handling training for the group, using a Harris Hawk. Bea and Jim Harrison, who have handled many small birds for research banding, also showed the group how to work with small birds.

Stay tuned for updates on the committee's work.



Tina Penny addressing the group.



Tina showing how to capture a bird.



Bea Harrison talks to "Stan"



Alice Moravec holds "Stan" the Harris Hawk

The Fallacy of "10 Good Things for Birds"

by Jim Cubie

A two-packs-per-day smoker visits his doctor. His doctor will tell him that he should eat right, exercise, and take his blood pressure medicine, but "If you don't stop smoking, nothing else you do will really matter. The other good things cannot make up for the deadly consequences of smoking."

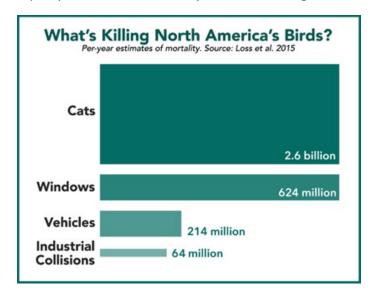
Bird organizations do the opposite. They give homeowners a list of "Ten good things to do for birds." They should say, "Stop killing birds in your yard – control cats and prevent window collisions. All the other 'good things for birds' cannot make up for 1.25 billion bird deaths caused by cats and home windows." (2-6 per home annually.)

The typical advice to homeowners listing "good things for birds" — such as installing a nest box, providing water and cover, counting birds, buying shade grown coffee - will do little or nothing to increase bird populations as long as the yard is killing birds.

As the graph below makes clear there are only two steps we can take in our backyards that really will save birds:

- 1. control cats
- 2. prevent window collisions (a yard includes the home's windows)

Even if the list of "good things for birds" includes "prevent window collisions," a list delivers the false message that all of these "good things for birds" are equally effective. In fact only two, controlling cats



and preventing window collisions, will prevent bird deaths. Very few lists even mention controlling cats and preventing window collisions.

Doing something is not better than nothing. Promoting "participation" instead of preventing bird deaths undermines the very mission of bird organizations. If bird clubs offer easy options to their members, they will choose them -- instead of controlling their beloved cats and or spending \$50 to prevent window collisions. It is infinitely more important to save birds than to make members happy.

Like the smoker's doctor, we must deliver the blunt message – "First of all, control cats and prevent window collsions. Nothing else you do will make any real difference."

A yard that kills birds cannot be "bird friendly" no matter what else is done in the yard. Homeowners must start by preventing bird deaths.

So how do we prevent window collisions and control cats?

By Madonna Luers

Our February program speaker Jim Cubie may be right about this "fallacy of 10 good things," but what can we bird-loving homeowners do to prevent window collisions and control cats?

As Cubie told us in his presentation, we need to either prevent birds from reaching our windows, or make the bird think that it can't fly through them. Many of us who provide feed for birds at least part of the year tend to place those feeders where we can watch birds easily from our windows. So short of moving those feeders far away from the house or right up against the window itself, or not feeding at all, we need to interrupt those birds' line of vision to avoid those deadly window collisions.

Cubie told us research has shown that line of vision needs interruption every two inches. Birds of many sizes can easily fly between wider spaces. So placement of bird silhouette window decals here and there doesn't cut it. Nor does closing inside blinds or shades, which just increases the mirror effect of a window.

Obviously, we still want to be able to see out our windows, so we need to place something very fine – like monofilament (fishing) line, parachute cord, or translucent adhesive dots – on the OUTSIDE of windows in rows just two inches apart. Window screens can work, too, and garden netting as long as it's placed taut enough to avoid trapping birds.



If you missed his presentation in February, Cubie has lots of do-it-yourself and commercial ideas in his various "bird friendly yards consumer guides," which you can find links to through our meeting program video archive at https://www.audubonspokane.org/meeting-videos (where, as noted, his actual presentation to our chapter is not available due to technical difficulties.)

Domestic cats are a far greater problem for birds so controlling them is even more important. Many birds that, stunned by a window collision, may have survived given enough recovery time, are scooped up by cats.

Extensive studies of the feeding habits of free-roaming domestic cats have been conducted throughout the world for many decades. They show that about 60 percent of the wildlife cats kill are small mammals, about 30 percent are birds, and about 10 percent are amphibians, reptiles and insects. Some

free-roaming cats kill more than 100 animals each year. Birds that nest or feed on the ground, such as California quail, are the most susceptible to cat predations, as are nestlings and fledglings of many other species.



About one-fifth of injured wildlife brought to wild-life rehabilitation centers were harmed by cats, and most of them die. Cats carry many types of bacteria and viruses in their mouths, some of which can be transmitted to their victims. A victim that looks healthy may die from internal hemorrhaging or injury to vital organs.

Well-fed cats kill birds and other wildlife because the hunting instinct is independent of the urge to eat. In one study, six cats were presented with a small live rat while eating their preferred food. All six cats stopped eating the food, killed the rat, and then resumed eating the food. Well-fed cats become "super predators" of wildlife because they are in such healthy condition.

Other studies have shown that bells on collars are not effective in preventing cats from killing birds or other wildlife. Birds do not necessarily associate the sound of a bell with danger, and cats with bells can learn to silently stalk their prey.

Keeping your pet cat indoors not only helps the birds in your neighborhood; it's healthier for the cat. The lives of free-ranging pet cats are often cut short by vehicle collision, disease, poisoning, parasites, territorial fighting, and predation by coyotes and other animals. According to the Humane Society, indoor cats, and those confined or controlled when outdoors, average at least three times the lifespan of free-ranging cats.

Cat owners can provide plenty of stimulation for indoor cats with the use of climbing and scratching posts, poles and other devices, catnip and other grass patches, toys, and time spent with them.

Many responsible cat owners have installed outdoor enclosures adjacent to their homes that allow cats to come and go through "cat doors." Some have even trained their cats to walk outdoors on a leash like a pet dog. More information about keeping cats indoors is available from the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) "Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats" at https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds/

If you're not a cat owner but like to help homeless animals, be aware that feral cat colonies are just as deadly on wildlife as domestic pets. The idea of trapping, neutering, and releasing ("TNR") and leaving food out for feral cats is misguided. The theory is that TNR programs eventually reduce feral cat colonies, but such claims are not substantiated.

Cats are solitary animals, but groups of feral cats often form around an artificial feeding source, such as garbage dumps or food put out for them by well-meaning but uninformed people. Contrary to TNR proponents, colony cats do not keep other cats from joining. And many individuals become too wary to be caught for neutering/spaying. These populations grow very quickly because it only takes two intact cats to start multiplying, with up to three litters of four to six kittens each year. Feral cat colonies grow because they often become a dumping ground for other unwanted cats.

These feral cat colonies can have significant impacts on wildlife populations and feeding doesn't prevent them from following predatory instincts. Feral cat colonies also can cause significant health risks to other cats and humans.



Trying to maintain a feral cat colony often overwhelms the ability of well-meaning people who genuinely want to help animals. It also undermines efforts by responsible pet owners who keep their cats indoors to help birds and other wildlife.



https://catiospaces.com/catios-cat-enclosures/ cat-behavior-enrichment/build-diy-catio-plan-foryour-cat/



https://www.wayfair.com/keyword. php?keyword=outside+cat+enclosures



https://www.digsdigs.com/26-safe-and-smartly-organized-outdoor-cat-areas/pictures/89477/

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 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.

Annual Membership and Donation:



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

| Student (under 21): \$10 per year |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Individual: \$20 per year |
| Family: \$30 per year |
| Supporting: \$50 per year |
| Contributing: \$100 per year |
| Lifetime: \$500 |
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| |
| Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational activities. |
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