

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 28
Issue 64
Dec. 2018

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Touring Chile

Presented by Mike McFadden

While working in Utah we had several conversations with a young Mormon who had performed his 2-year mission in Chile. He enthusiastically recommended that we tour Chile. As simple as that, we started looking. A friend recommended Alvaro's Adventures. After a quick look at the proposed tour of Chile, we contacted Alvaro Jaramillo and signed up for his tour. Our party included 10 customers, Alvaro, and Ricardo Matus. Ricardo was the second guide and a well-known wildlife artist.

We, for the purpose of having a diary of our trips, document our tour experiences in the form of PowerPoint shows. In our future old age, we can sit in our rocking chairs and enjoy!



Home of the Ancient Cave Bear (Eileen McFadden)

We arrived in Santiago a day early on 30 October 16 to have a day of recovery. Our tour began on 31 October 16 up north to the Peruvian Border around Villa Del Mar and in the ski areas above Santiago, ending on 10 November 18. Due to time constraints, we will not be able to look at our PowerPoint show covering those fantastic areas.

We will view our PowerPoint show addressing areas south of Santiago, which we visited from 10 November through 21 November 16, primarily Chiloe Island and the Pantanal. Torres del Paine is the most scenic national park we have seen and the Magellanic Woodpeckers are outstanding. We'll throw in lots of swans and penguins, too. This should whet your interest!

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

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Owl illustrations on pg. 1 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



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January Pygmy Owl
Deadline December 20th

Holiday Gift Giving

Holiday gift-giving is a long-standing tradition for many of us. The Spokane Audubon shopping opportunity is of recent origin, but fun and rewarding. At the up-coming DECEMBER meeting we'll gather a bit early to participate in an activity that has had many satisfied customers and benefited our group's bottom line the past three years. Here's how you can be part of the process:

- 1) Bring and donate something bird or nature-related to be sold, thus making more space in your closets: Examples: T-shirts, hats, books, prints, puzzles, vases, etc. (It needs to be in new or near-new condition for this event)
- 2) Make a mental list of people you need to shop for, bring some cash or your checkbook, and get some shopping done without braving the Mall!
- 3) Watch the process while munching cookies and encourage others to buy out the place.

If you want to bring any items for the auction, give them to Joyce Alonso or another board member to place on the appropriate table.

Also, please bring holiday treats to share.

Questions: Call Joyce Alonso at 939 0120.
Pick-up of items might be arranged if you can't attend the meeting or drive a small sports car

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through November 18, 2018:

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Jane Beaven & Dan Finn, Cynthia Cilyo & Brian Aut, Edward Gibb, Ann Hurst, Jerry & Jennifer King, John & Amy Roberson, John Scott & Kaye Batholomew, and Conn & Julie Wittwer.

Many nesters chose to not receive a hard copy of the Pygmy Owl. If you could help us reduce costs and save paper and energy by switching to our electronic full color publication, please contact me. You already have access on the Spokane Audubon WebSite on the Pygmy Owl page of the website. 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. I cannot make out correctly some Email addresses.

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

We're in the in-between time. Just about everything that wants to migrate has moved out of or through the region. Our winter visitors are just arriving, or, as the case may be, not coming at all. It remains to be seen if we will be having a good winter finch year. Given the complete lack of regulars such as Pine Siskins, it doesn't look good; but cone failures further North may yet push our lovely winter finches our way. As the weather dips ever colder, look for birds of all types to be congregating in or near unfrozen water and mud. Especially rare sightings in all caps below:

Greater White-fronted Goose: Philleo Lake (10/28-JE); Slavin Ranch (11/17-JI)

Trumpeter Swan: Mondovi (11/8-TL); Hatch Lake (11/16-JA); Mill Canyon (11/20-JI)

LONG-TAILED DUCK: Sprague (11/21-TL)

Surf Scoter: Sprague (11/11-TL)

White-winged Scoter: Spokane Premix (11/1-MW); Riverbend (11/2-TL)

Mew Gull: Spokane Premix (11/5-MW)

Iceland Gull: Spokane Premix (10/28-JI)

Pacific Loon: Wolf Lodge Bay (11/8-TL)

Northern Goshawk: Dreary (11/1-JF)

American Three-toed Woodpecker: Priest River (11/11-JK)

Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker: Little Spokane River (11/12-LH)

Blue Jay: Coeur D'Alene (10/28-DY); Steptoe Butte (11/10-CO)

Pine Grosbeak: Little Pend Oreille NWR (11/13-JA)

PURPLE FINCH: Paradise Prairie (11/3-MW)

Harris's Sparrow: Colville (11/8-WC); West Plains (11/9-CM); Moscow Mountain (11/18)

White-throated Sparrow: Viola (10/25-NM); Mullan (11/12-BK)

Swamp Sparrow: Slavin Ranch (10/25-MW); Little Spokane River (11/4-LH); Reardan (TL); Little Spokane Confluence (11/11-TL)

Observers: JA-Jon Anderson; 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; ED-Evan Dalton; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; Jacob Elonen; JF-Judy Ferguson; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; MH-Michael Hobbs; CH-Carrie Hugo; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; JK-Jaan Kolts; RK-Russ Koppendrayner; RL-Richard Laubach; SL-Sherry Lee; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Cindy McCormack; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O'Brien; CO-Charlotte Omoto; ER-Eric Rasmussen; JR-Jan Reynolds; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; JV-Joe Veverka DW-Doug Ward; NW-Nancy Williams; LW-Linca Woodard; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney; PZ-Peter Zika



Purple Finch

Photo by MDC Staff, courtesy Missouri Department of Conservation

Make Your Own Suet

By Avery Cullinan

With this easy vegetarian recipe, you can attract insect lovers like woodpeckers and nuthatches.

With this vegetarian version of suet (traditionally it's made from rendered animal fat) you can provide the perfect winter substitute for birds that normally feast on insects. This lipid-rich treat can help prepare year-round residents for the long winter and is quite the draw for birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. Check out this recipe, inspired by "The Misfit Baker" blog.

Materials:

- 1 1/2 cups shortening (look for palm oil free options)
- 3/4 cups nut butter (any kind)
- 3 1/2 cups wild bird seed
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1/2 cup corn meal
- Ice cube tray

Steps:

1. Mix the dry ingredients of bird seed, oats, and corn meal together and set aside.
2. Combine the shortening and nut butter in a separate bowl and melt. Stir until completely combined.
3. Pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients and stir until combined.
4. Spoon mixture into the ice cube tray.
5. Freeze for one to two hours and place in your suet feeder!

Note: Not recommended for outdoor temperatures above 50 degrees.

Upcoming Events



20TH ANNUAL
Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway
January 23-27, 2019
CHICO, CA
snowgoosefestival.org

Let Us Take You Under Our Wing & Show You the Magic of the Pacific Flyway!

Wildlife Education • Exploration & Birding Adventures
Informative & Hands-on Workshops • Wildlife Art Show
Free Nature Activities for the Entire Family
Special Saturday night silent auction & banquet with keynote: "Point Reyes & the Farallon Islands: A Mecca for Birds and Birders" by Naturalist & Birding Guide David Wimpfheimer.

PHOTO BY MIKE PETERS



Klamath Basin Audubon's 40th Anniversary
WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL
Save the dates!
February 14-17, 2019
4 days of field trips, workshops,
& presentations for
birders, photographers, & families
WinterWingsFest.org

SAVE THE DATE: The 40th Annual Klamath Basin Winter Wings Festival, February 14-17, 2019. Enjoy over 50 guided birding and photography field trips, workshops, receptions, keynotes, and more throughout the Klamath Basin in Oregon and California. Our featured speakers are Pepper Trail, George Lepp and Julie Zickefoose. To learn more visit www.WinterWingsFest.org. Registration opens December 15th at 9 am PST.

Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*)

by Lisa Langelier

I am especially fond of birds of prey. And why not? They soar on magnificent wings, see with the keenest vision, and are laser-focused hunters. They inspire and symbolize freedom. Any cold winter day gets better when seeing an eagle, hawk, or falcon.

Winter draws a favorite raptor to our region – the Rough-legged Hawk. A resident of the tundra habitats in North America and Eurasia during summer, the rough-leg winters in the northern U.S. and Canada, where it may be found perched on the highest, slenderest branches, on poles and fence posts, or hovering over open ground searching for small rodents.

One of the most common raptors in the arctic, the Rough-legged Hawk's summer diet features mostly lemmings. During winter, voles, mice, and shrews dominate their meals. For a relatively large buteo, rough-legs have a small beak and feet – adaptations for hunting small mammals.

The feathers on the Rough-legged Hawk's legs extend all the way to its toes – a useful heat-conserving characteristic for arctic life – and a clue to the rough-leg's scientific name. The species name, *lagopus*, comes from the Greek *lago*, meaning "hare" and *pous*, meaning "foot." Only the Ferruginous Hawk and Golden Eagle share this feathered-leg trait.

Rough-legged Hawks exhibit a wide variety of plumages, ranging from all dark to light morphs, and varying between males and females, and adults and juveniles. Light morphs outnumber dark especially in the west (only 10% of wintering population). Helpful field traits include long wings spanning 47 to 60 inches, a long white tail with one or more sub-terminal bands and a light-colored head. When seen from below, look for dark carpal or wrist patches, and pale flight feathers with a dark band on the trailing edge. Light morphs often have a dark belly band, usually larger and darker in females and juveniles.

Now that winter is here, look for this handsome hawk in open fields, marshes, and prairie habitats. If you see a hawk that sits on the top of impossibly small branches, chances are it is a rough-leg. And do not forget to look for another favorite winter visitor – bald eagles are back on Coeur d'Alene Lake.



Rough-legged Hawk landing
©Jeff Bryant



Rough-legged Hawk Soaring
©Tom Munson

New Smithsonian Study Links Declines in Suburban Backyard Birds to Presence of Non-native Plants

Submitted by Alan McCoy

Findings Give Landowners a Simple Roadmap to Provide Essential Habitat for Breeding Birds

Insect-eating birds that depend on the availability of high-calorie, high-protein cuisine—namely caterpillars and spiders—during the breeding season to feed their young are finding the menu severely lacking in backyards landscaped with even a small proportion of non-native plants, according to a new study from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. This reduction of food availability has led to a decline in the breeding success and population growth of the Carolina chickadee, the study found.

“Landowners are using nonnative plants in their yards because they’re pretty and exotic, they’re easy to maintain, and they tend to have fewer pests on them,” said Desirée Narango, a graduate student researcher at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and first author of the study published October 22 in PNAS. “But it turns out that a lot of those insects they see as pests are actually critical food resources for our breeding birds. For landowners who want to make a difference, our study shows that a simple change they make in their yards can be profoundly helpful for bird conservation.”

The study is the first to directly link the decline of a common resident bird species to the lack of insect prey that results from the use of nonnative plants in landscaping. Narango and colleagues placed nest boxes in more than 160 yards in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and collected data from homeowners monitoring the nest boxes weekly for Carolina chickadee nests, eggs and nestlings. In those same yards, they also studied adult and juvenile survival by gathering data from the homeowners on individually marked birds they had resighted.

The researchers found that the only yards that were able to produce enough chickadees to sustain a stable population were those with a plant composition made up of more than 70 percent of native plants. Because more than 90 percent of herbivorous insects will only eat one or a few native plants, the

use of these plants in landscaping is essential to ensure breeding birds have enough insect prey to eat. For the same reason, native plants are also likely critical for other resident birds, endangered species and migratory species.

“These novel, artificial suburban landscapes are found across the country,” Narango said. “But a ginkgo that you plant in D.C. and a ginkgo that you plant in L.A. are doing the same thing for bird conservation—nothing. By using native plants, we can provide food not for only our common North American species; we’re also providing vital stopover habitat and resources for migratory birds during their perilous journeys.”

Because more than 80 percent of land in the contiguous United States is privately managed, conservationists are trying to get a handle on the ways these human-dominated landscapes threaten wildlife—and how they can be managed in a way that can help. The study’s authors will continue to guide landowners in their landscaping decisions by next looking at whether some native plant species are disproportionately important for supporting insect prey to breeding birds.



Christmas Bird Count

by Alan McCoy



Depressed? Angry? Worried? Don't let politics get to you! There is an easy fix for all your troubles, or at least some of them. Join us this year and count birds on our Christmas Bird Count! It is FREE and this year there are two local count circles (Cheney and Spokane) where you will get to enjoy some of nature's finest creatures with others who share your interest. You don't have to be an expert to participate. Although it is a dawn to dusk affair, you don't even have to stay the whole day – part-timers are welcome, too. If you live within either count circle you can count the birds at your home also. The brand new Cheney Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday December 15, 2018. To be involved in the Cheney CBC please contact Sandy Schreven at (509) 624-6801 or sschreven@hotmail.com. The Spokane CBC will take place on Saturday December 29, 2018. Please contact Alan McCoy (448-3123 or ahm2352@gmail.com) to join this count.

More information can be found on our website: <http://www.spokaneaudubon.org/Default.aspx?page-Id=280298>

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Local Membership Dues:

Individual: \$20/year _____

Couple & Family: \$25/year _____

Student: \$10/year _____

Lifetime: \$300 _____

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_acer@msn.com, or 413-1524.



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December 2018

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

