

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 27
Issue 6
Feb. 2019

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Sagebrush Songbird Survey

By Christi Norman and Lindell Haggin

Christi Norman, Audubon Washington's Eastern WA Program Director, has coordinated statewide wetland habitat conservation programs through the Growth Management Act implementation and promoted avian tourism through the creation of the Great Washington State Birding Trail. Christi's talk will focus on the 2018 accomplishments of the [Sagebrush Songbird Survey](#), a partnership among Audubon WA, local chapters, and Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife as a collaborative, community science research program. The survey's goal is to test and improve knowledge of Columbia Plateau shrub-steppe bird distribution models and to build a framework for monitoring these species over time. Now in its 6th year, over 200 volunteers have collected field data and posted that data to eBird. The data is incorporated into the WDFW Priority Habitats and Species database, a legally-recognized source for best available science in our state.

Lindell Haggin, the Spokane Audubon chair, will highlight Sagebrush Songbird Survey training and field participation opportunities for members as part of Spokane's contribution to the larger project. Both Christi and Lindell look forward to engaging Spokane members as essential contributors to this far-reaching and groundbreaking study to inform long-range conservation strategies for these shrub-steppe birds and their habitat.

See Survey Opportunities, pg 2



SSS Team
Lindell in front (pink jacket) and
Christi just behind her.



Sage Thrasher
© Lindell Haggin

**Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday, February 13th at 7:30 p.m. Social get-together at 7:00**

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March Pygmy Owl
Deadline February 20th

Survey Opportunities

Opportunities abound for survey participation. Now that the Christmas Count is over, you can keep those binoculars and your skills in good working order by helping with one or both of the surveys described below.

Waterfowl surveys will start the first full week of February and continue through the end of April. Brush up on your waterfowl ID skills and help provide data that will assist in the protection of the pothole habitat that is essential during migration. Spokane Audubon Society is responsible for counting the waterfowl at Reardan Audubon Lake. It takes about a half day of your time. You do not need to get up at the crack of dawn for these surveys. If you are interested in exploring other areas of Eastern Washington, that can be arranged as well. Contact Lindell Haggin by email at lindell4118@comcast.net for further information.

The weekend of April 6th training will be held in Moses Coulee for those interested in participating in the Sagebrush Songbird Survey. Surveys start in mid-April and will end the first week of June. We are hoping to finish the project this year so will need some additional help to cover all the sites that need to be completed. This is a great opportunity to explore some fascinating habitat and work together with others who treasure those early morning songs. Contact Lindell Haggin by email for further information and/or attend the February meeting. lindell4118@comcast.net



Ruddy Duck
© Lindell Haggin

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

This winter has been a dud for winter finches and allies. However, the mild temperatures and large amounts of open water have allowed lots of nice waterfowl to remain close to home. As usual, Bald Eagles and Arctic Gulls have entertained birders (and non-birders alike) around the Coeur D'Alene Lake basin. If temperatures remain as such, look for early arriving Killdeer, Bluebirds and Swallows soon!

Snow Goose: Granite Lake (1/1-MW and SS); Saltese Flats (1/5-TO)

Trumpeter Swan: Calispell Lake (12/31); Wolf Lodge Bay (1/2-JE); Medimont (1/10-DW); St. Maries (1/12-KD); Heyburn State Park (1/14-KD)

Long-tailed Duck: Electric City (12/30-RM)

Red-breasted Merganser: Sprague (12/28-TL); Silver Lake (12/31-TO); Mica Bay (1/2-JE); Post Falls (1/3-WY); Liberty Lake (1/5-TO); Wolf Lodge Bay (1/14-JE)

Anna's Hummingbird: Hayden (1/1-DW)

Mew Gull: Hayden (1/1-DW)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Coeur D'Alene (1/2-JE)

Pacific Loon: Gotham Bay (12/29-BK)

Northern Goshawk: Rosalia (12/20-JI)

White-headed Woodpecker: Chewelah (12/21-TL)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Kettle Falls (12/21-TL)

Peregrine Falcon: Sandpoint (12/22-FF); Penawawa HMU (1/4-JoE and NP)

Blue Jay: Coeur D'Alene (1/13-DY)

Pine Grosbeak: Stevens Creek (12/24-JI)

White-winged Crossbill: Palouse Divide (12/31-NP)

Snow Bunting: Ritzville (12/28-TL); Oden Bay (1/5-FF)

Harris's Sparrow: West Plains (1/5-TO); Moscow Mountain (1/18-KD)

White-throated Sparrow: Saltese Flats (1/5-TO) Heyburn SP (1/14-KD)

Swamp Sparrow: Heyburn SP (1/12-JI); Potlatch (1/12-JoE and NP); Liberty Lake (1/14-TO)

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Saltese Flats (1/1-MC)

Orange-crowned Warbler: Lind Coulee (12/30-TM)

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; ED-Evan Dalton; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; JoE-Johnna Eilers; Jacob Elonen; JF-Judy Ferguson; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marrian 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; NP-Neil Paprocki; ER-Eric Rasmussen; 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



Black-backed Woodpecker - Male
© Audubon



Black-backed Woodpecker - Female
© Audubon

Bewick's Wren

from Wild Bird Unlimited Bird of the Month

If you encounter a noisy, hyperactive little bird with bold white eyebrows, flicking its long tail as it hops nimbly from branch to branch, you may have spotted a Bewick's Wren (pronounced "buick's", like the car).

The Bewick's Wren is a medium-sized bird with a slender body and a strikingly long tail, often held upright. Its slender bill is slightly down curved. The bird is brown and gray, with a long white stripe over each eye. The back and wings are plain brown, underparts are gray-white and the tail is barred with black and tipped with white spots. The male and female look the same.

The Bewick's Wren is a master vocalist and can belt out a string of short whistles, warbles, burrs and trills or scold visitors with raspy calls.

As it skulks through tangles of branches and leaves looking for insects, the wren cocks its long tail up over its back often flicking it from side to side or fanning it.

The Bewick's Wren favors dry brush areas, chaparral, scrub thickets in open country and open woodlands near rivers and streams, but is equally at home in gardens, residential areas, cities and suburbs. Although the Bewick's Wren primarily eats insects, it will come to suet, shelled peanuts and shelled sunflower seed.

The Bewick's Wren builds its nest in a cavity or on a ledge within 30 feet of the ground. The nest is cup-shaped and made with grasses, rootlets, leaves, moss or other plant materials. Some contain spider egg cases. The inside may be lined with feathers, wool, hair or plant down, with a final inner lining of snakeskin. The male initiates the nest building and then the female helps out. The female will lay 3 - 8 eggs which will hatch in 14 - 16 days. The babies will fledge in 14 - 16 days.

Other cool facts about the Bewick's Wren:

* The species is named after British engraver Thomas Bewick who was a friend of pioneering bird artist John James Audubon.

* A young male Bewick's Wren learns to sing from neighboring adult males while growing up in his parents' territory. The songs he develops differ from his father's, with a note changed here, a syllable there. The melodious signature he acquires between the

ages of about 30 and 60 days will be his for life.

* Courting Bewick's Wrens normally form monogamous pairs and the male and female often forage together.

* At the sound of approaching humans, a female Bewick's Wren incubating eggs usually flushes quietly from her nest cavity but remains nearby and scolds. Some females, however, sit tightly on their eggs even when disturbed.

* The Bewick's Wren population in the eastern United States has greatly declined mainly due to the expansion in range of the House Wren. The House Wren is suspect in the decline because they will frequently remove eggs from nests in cavities.

* The oldest recorded Bewick's Wren was at least 8 years old when it was recaptured and rereleased during banding operations in California.

* In his 1889 Ornithology of Illinois, Robert Ridgway attested that "No bird more deserves the protection of man than Bewick's Wren. He does not need man's encouragement, for he comes of his own accord and installs himself as a member of the community, wherever it suits his taste. He is found about the cowshed and barn along with the Pewee and Barn Swallow; he investigates the pig-sty, then explores the garden fence, and finally mounts to the roof and pours forth one of the sweetest songs that ever was heard."



Bewick's Wren
©Wild Birds Unlimited

Tundra vs. Trumpeter Swans

By Cindy McCormack

This article was contributed by Cindy McCormick, one of SAS's former members who now lives on the West Side. Although the two swan species on that side of the state winter and migrate in somewhat different patterns than here in Eastern Washington, we do encounter both species. Therefore, her observations are equally useful to us.

Tundra and Trumpeter swans can be difficult to differentiate by sight without some good views (or optics!), especially when not seen side-by-side. However, if you can hear them, they have quite distinctive voices. Here are some of the field marks I look for when identifying our swans by sight:

- In Trumpeters, the black skin on the face includes the eye, so the eye seems to blend with the black of the facial skin. The eye appears more visible on a Tundra, since the facial skin at the lores tapers to a point in front of the eye.
- The bill on a Trumpeter slopes very straight down to the tip from the forehead, while a Tundra will have a slightly concave slope.
- Tundra Swans often have a yellow spot on the lores (the skin in front of the eye).
- The forehead feathering extends further on a Trumpeter, creating a white "V" shape on the forehead. A Tundra Swan's forehead appears more straight across. (I think of Tundra Swan forehead being like a toddler that tried to cut her own bangs.)
- Trumpeter Swans are larger than Tundra Swans. However, this can be very difficult to judge unless you can see the two species together.
- Young (juvenile) swans can be tricky, especially earlier in the season. It can be difficult to see the borders of the facial skin, and bill shape may not be as straight as in adults. Trumpeters do retain their darker juvenile plumage through their first spring, while young Tundras will molt earlier, appearing whiter by late winter. Tundra juveniles do tend to have more extensive pinkish-orange on the bill than Trumpeters.

Fun swan facts: Trumpeter Swans are the heaviest flying bird in North America. They need approximately 100m of open water to take off! The North American Tundra Swan is also known as the "Whistling" Swan. The Eurasian counterpart of this species is known as "Bewick's" Swan. The Bewick's Swan has more extensive yellow on the facial skin and base of the bill. The orange coloration seen frequently on a swan's head and neck is not pigmentation, but is feather staining from the iron in the mud in which they feed.



Trumpeter Swan

©BirdEden Staff



Tundra Swan

© Dominic Sherony

The Great Backyard Bird Count February 15-18, 2019

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 15-18, 2019, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account <https://secure.birds.cornell.edu/cassso/login> to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.



Wild Birds Unlimited, founding sponsor
of the Great Backyard Bird Count!

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through January 18, 2019:

Welcome to our new nesters: Cecil & Gretchen Crain

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Megan & John Bastow, Ron & Pat Dexter, Sharon & Norman Genung, Jim & Bea Harrison, Kelly Jones & Family, Susan Millies, Mike & Lynn Noel, Sallye & Tom Prenger and Bill & Mary Lou Safranek.

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.

Olympic BirdFest 2019 Come Bird With Us Sequim, Washington, April 12-14, 2019

Grab your binoculars and join the 16th annual Olympic BirdFest 2019 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, April 12-14, 2019

Precede your BirdFest weekend with a three-day, two night birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 9-11, 2019. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort.

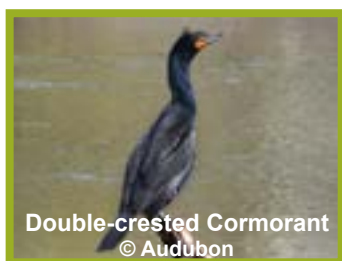
Extend your Birdfest weekend with the Neah Bay post-trip, April 14-16, 2019: two and one-half days exploring northwest coastal Washington, a region rarely seen by birders.

Contact us by phone, at 360-681-4076,
E-mail us at info@olympicbirdfest.org,
Or write to us at:
Dungeness River Audubon Center
P.O. Box 2450
Sequim, WA 98382

2018 Christmas Bird Counts

Spokane CBC

Sixty-five field participants turned out for the Spokane CBC this year and 14 feeder watchers submitted their data as well. Last year we recorded very few American Robins. This year we nearly set a new high count (4064) for them. The high count of 4284 was set in 1976. Their abundance correlates well with the Mountain Ash berry crop. Other notable sightings were a Golden Eagle up in the Little Spokane area seen by Mike Cliff and the Mandarin Duck that has been spotted around the area for the last month was seen again by Mike Fulton at the sewage treatment facility. The waterfowl numbers were way down this year, probably due to the large amount of open water available to them. One exception to this were the record number of Double-crested Cormorants seen.



Double-crested Cormorant
© Audubon

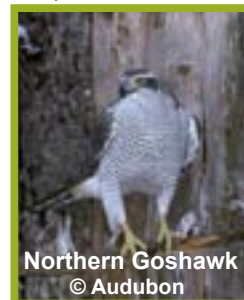


Male ©Phil Kahler



Female ©David Trescak

Red-winged Blackbirds



Northern Goshawk
© Audubon

Cheney CBC

Thirty birders were in the field on December 15, 2018 to count birds on the newly revived Cheney Christmas Bird Count. It was a wonderful day for birding and there were some great sightings. Sandy Schreven and Michael Woodruff found a Red-breasted Merganser and a Greater White-fronted Goose on Silver Lake. A couple of Cackling Geese were spotted by Jon Isacoff at Philleo Lake. The Domitrovich team saw a snow goose and one Western Bluebird while a couple of Killdeer were heard flying over Slavin Ranch. A Northern Goshawk was found by Jim and Bea Harrison. Over 700 Red-winged Blackbirds were seen. It was a great day for raptors and nearly all of the likely species were seen. In all 71 species were recorded on that day.

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. 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.



The Pygmy Owl
Spokane Audubon Society
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 (509) 838-5828

February 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

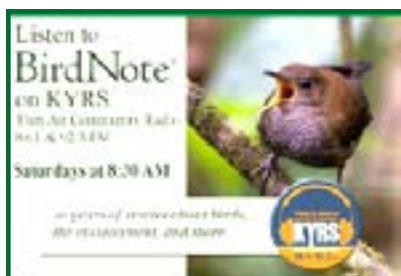
- Take US-395 S to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Dr.

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

