

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26
Issue 57
March 2018

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Life and Times at the Outdoor Learning Center's Raptor Sanctuary

by Carmen Yount

There's a Harris's Hawk on my Head, That Rough-Legged Hawk has a Wicked Left Hook, and Watch out for the Cute One (the Barred Owl): Life and Times at the Outdoor Learning Center's Raptor Sanctuary with OLC Raptor Docents Emily Simmons and Carmen Yount

"I've made a hawk a part of human life, and a human life part of a hawk's, and it has made the hawk a million times more complicated and full of wonder to me." ~ Helen Macdonald, H is for Hawk

The West Valley Outdoor Learning Center in Spokane Valley has eight permanent resident education birds: one falcon, four owls and three hawks. Along with OLC staff, a steady group of about 15 volunteer raptor docents takes care of the daily needs of the birds.

On March 14, please join us (OLC raptor docents Emily Simmons and Carmen Yount) as we go behind the scenes of the OLC's raptor sanctuary. We'll talk a little bit about the ins and outs of care and management of our birds, starting with the permits and some of the regulations (federal and state) that allow us to keep unreleaseable birds of prey.

Most birds of prey aren't just wild, they're solitary creatures who have no use for humans. That's just one consideration that makes caring for education raptors a unique experience. It also requires some knowledge of avian biology, the needs of species in your care (including their life cycles, habitat and dietary preferences), and a willingness to get to know the individual birds. The former is essential to the birds' survival; the latter is just plain fun.

We will introduce you to our birds, and talk about the work we do to facilitate their health and well-being. Working in the sanctuary is mostly about hauling water and scooping poop, but raptor docents participate in the modification of the enclosures (mews) to adjust for age

or injury (or add some enrichment), handling the birds on a regular basis, weekly weigh-ins and monthly health checks (including the coping of beaks and trimming of talons).

In addition, we will talk about the birds as individual characters with unique personalities and quirks, some of which are hilarious, and some of which require special considerations to keep everyone healthy and safe.

We'll round out the discussion with highlights of how the birds participate in the OLC's environmental education and outreach programs, and why we think they do important work as wildlife ambassadors.

Two -- maybe three -- of the OLC's education birds will accompany us for the presentation.

(Bit of a warning: Raptors are obligate carnivores, and we will include a brief discussion about what we feed the birds, including a photo or two of food items. We'll keep it as bloodless as possible, and we'll announce that it's coming.)

Sadie, American Kestrel
Photo by Carmen Yount



Pantalones, Rough-legged Hawk
Photo by Emily Simmons

**Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday March 14 at 7:30 p.m. Social get-together at 7:00**

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

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P.O. Box 9820
Spokane, WA 99209-9820

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



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The Pygmy Owl deadline:
March 23, 2018

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Welcome to our new nesters, Michael & Barbara Hixon. Many thanks to our returning nesters: Michael & Crystal Atamian, Rachel Brabeck, Doris & Rodney Butler, Robin Crain, Nancy Curry, Nita & Clarke Hamilton, Jim Hoffman & Family, Bethany Hughes & Family, Claudia Kroll, Brian & Beth Miller, Thomas & Myriam Munson, Joanne Powell, David Smith, Richard Sollie, & Jeanette Zellmer.

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

Sagebrush Songbird Survey Training

by Lindell Haggin

Spring is just around the corner. The Sagebrush Sparrow and Sage Thrasher will soon be singing from the tops of sage and we need to be ready for them. Come to the training for the Sagebrush Songbird Survey to be held on Saturday, March 31. It will be held at the North Spokane Library starting at 11:30 am. and finishing at 3:30 pm. Songs and field marks for the target species will be reviewed as well as training in the use of GPS units and submitting observations to eBird. A CD of the songs of target species will be provided. If you don't have a GPS unit, we can provide one for your use during the surveys. A field trip to prime sagebrush habitat will occur on April 7.

Can't wait to get out into the beauty of Spring sagebrush. Contact Lindell Haggin (lindell4118@comcast.net) if you would like to attend.



Sage Thrasher
Photo by Lindell Haggin

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

What a bizarre winter! With record high temperatures through much of February, many winter visitors seemed to have moved North and some species, such as Killdeer and Mountain Bluebirds showed up a little bit early. Yet as this is written we've had snow for several days and forecast temperature to go near 0! Maybe winter birds will come back. It's certainly a confusing time and all bets are off as to what might be seen where and when!

Snow Goose: Reardan (2/15-TL)

Greater White-fronted Goose: Nine Mile Falls (2/16-TL)

Red-breasted Merganser: Clark Fork (2/4-ShS); Heyburn SP (2/6-JI); Killarney Lake (2/8-JW)

Northern Goshawk: Bonner's Ferry (1/24-MT); University of Idaho (2/4-TS)

Mew Gull: Seven Bays (1/26-TL)

Snowy Owl: Davenport (2/13-DB)

Anna's Hummingbird: Hayden (2/11-DW)

Gyr Falcon: Sprague (1/25-JI)

Mountain Bluebird: Philleo Lake (1/30-TO)

Snow Bunting: Peone Prairie (1/18-TL)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Spokane (1/29-CB)

White-winged Crossbill: Pine Bluff (1/25-LT)

Pine Grosbeak: Kellogg (1/28-WY)

Lesser Goldfinch: Sprague (1/25-TL); Seven Bays (2/13-DB)

Common Redpoll: Too many sightings to count!

Observers: CKA-CK Anderson; DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MaB-Matt Bartels; CB-Carl Barrentine; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; MaC-Marlene Cashen; JC-Jonathan Creel; SC-Stacy Crist; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; RD-Roger Doucet; MF-Marian Frobe; MiF-Michael Fulton; Kiandra Haaf; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; SH-Stratton Hatfield; FH-Fran Haywood; BH-Bettie Hoff; RH-Ray Hoff; DH-Dave Holick; MH-Marcus Hooker; JI-Jon Isacoff; CJ-Chris Jannett; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; JK-Jeff Kleitzmann; RK-Robby Kohley; LL-Linda Lamb; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; KL-Kevin Lucas; CL-Carl Lundblad; TM-Travis Mangione; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Marcia Marine; NM-Nancy Miller; JM-Julie Monroe; SM-Steve Mulgrew; TO-Tim O'Brien; JP-Jonathan Pafford; ER-Eric Rassmussen; JR-Jan Reynolds; JR-Jethro Runco; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; TS-Tyrell Styhl; MT-Michael Teems; LT-Luke Thomas; NT-Norma Trefry; DW-Doug Ward; JW-Jackson Whitman; MW-Michael Woodruff; RW-Rob Woods; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young



Snowy Owls (male/female)
Photos by Kimi Thorburn



Snowy Owl (imm.)
Photo by Lindell Haggin

Lewiston-Clarkston Valley Field Trip

by Alan McCoy

Lewiston-Clarkston Valley Field Trip

January 20, 2018

Leaders: Keith Carlson and Rick Welle

13 participants

53 species

It was a beautiful drive down to the LC Valley with clear blue skies and the possibility of a warm sunny day of birding. We do refer to this trip as the Banana Belt trip after all. But as we crested the plateau and descended the Lewiston grade we encountered an increasingly dense fog. So much for bananas!

Once the two parties found each other (don't ask) we clambered into 4 cars and headed towards our first destination, West Pond. As might be expected we saw ducks, lots of ducks. The early morning fog had lifted a bit and the fresh plumage of the waterfowl was brilliantly illuminated by the sun at our backs.

It was here at West Pond that we observed a solitary Red-necked Grebe, which at the end of the day Keith exclaimed was for him the "bird of the day," because they are not all that common in the L-C Valley.

Next stop was a short hop down the road to Confluence Park to spot a very cooperative Black-crowned Night Heron.

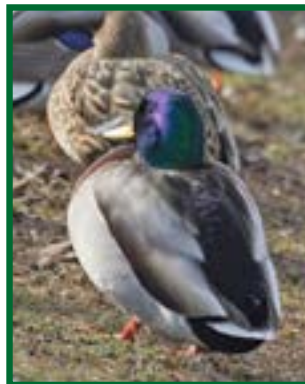


American Wigeon by Curtis Mahon

Will the real Mallard please stand up?!



Mallard by Alan McCoy



Mallard by Lindell Haggin

Rick Welle, when he is not tying flies or guiding fishing trips in Montana, is very adept at spotting owls. In Bryden Canyon he showed us a small, shallow cave where a Great Horned Owl was roosting for the day. Later at Hell's Gate State Park he knew where we could find a tame Northern Saw-whet that on this day was buried only 5 feet off the ground but well hidden in a small conifer. After everyone had a good look Rick led us just a few dozen feet from the smaller owl's roost to another conifer where a skittish Barn Owl abruptly flew off in haste. Several of us got photos of the cute little Saw-whet, but it was so hidden in the tree that none of the pictures turned out quite as well as this one that Keith took the next day.



Northern Saw-whet Owl by Keith Carlson

BIG DAY/BIG SIT AUDUBON ACTIVITY

The last stop of the day was Clarkston Cliffs. The setting sun was behind the cliff so we were in the cold shadow of the cliff. We pulled off the road and within seconds someone spotted a Peregrine Falcon, no wait, a pair of Peregrines providing an aerial show.... That is until they landed. Then they were playing "Where's Waldo" with us. Can you find that gray & light-buff raptor perched on the cliff amongst the gray and light-buff splotches? Now lower your binoculars and just try to find the bird in your scope! Higher on the cliff above the falcons were a dozen or two Gray-crowned Rosy Finches enjoying a feeding frenzy of grass seed.

It turned out that the fog did eventually burn completely off but it never did get warm enough for growing bananas. It was however, a fine day for birding and keeping the company of others who share a passion for feathered creatures, large and small.



DC Cormorant by Alan McCoy

Spokane Audubon is continuing an activity for members (including new members) to increase awareness and enjoyment of local birding.

Big Day: Go birding anywhere in the SAS area (NE WA) for several hours or all day.

Big Sit: Get comfortable in your own home/yard. Watch as much as possible on the chosen day. Report your species list as explained below.

Here's how you participate:

- 1) Make sure that your membership is up to date (at least, by the submission deadline)
- 2) Choose a day between April 21 and April 28th (Earth Day Week)
- 3) Choose a category for your participation:
 - A) Adult Individual Big Day
 - B) Adult Group Big Day
 - C) Adult Big Sit
 - D) Child (6-13) either Big Day or Big Sit
 - E) Teen (14-18) Big Day
- 4) On or before May 5, 2018 submit a list of species seen, in a Word document or in the body of an email.
 - A) Include the date of your Big Day / Big Sit
 - B) Include the category of participation
 - C) Include your name and contact information and the names of all who participated with you
 - D) Total the number of species. You don't have to count the individual birds, just the species.
- 5) Submit it to: jemichaels1955@gmail.com with Big Day or Big Sit in the subject line. Optional: We encourage you to also submit the list to eBird, but it's not mandatory.

Results will be announced at the May 9th Audubon meeting. Modest prizes will be awarded to the winner of each category.

Say's Phoebe

by Kim Thorburn

A haunting, sibilant phee-ur floated from my brain's temporal lobe slowly into consciousness. Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). I scanned the corral fence. There it was on the top rung in the far corner. As I watched, the robin-colored bird flew to the snow-patched late March ground and came up again to its fence perch with an insect in its bill.

This tyrant flycatcher ranges open dry habitats that are distinct from those of its close cousins, the Black Phoebe (*S. nigricans*) and the Eastern Phoebe (*S. phoebe*). Even in migration, it avoids dense forests and heavily farmed areas. The Say's Phoebe has one of the largest breeding ranges of all North American flycatchers from the arctic tundra of Alaska to central Mexico. There is little documented breeding along the Pacific coast although its winter range extends to the ocean from the northern California Bay Area to Baja California.

Its early spring arrival to its northern breeding range, including Eastern Washington, is probably explained by its cosmopolitan diet and foraging habits. While many studies indicate that the Say's Phoebe prefers hymenoptera species, including wild bees and wasps (but not honey bees), almost any insect or larva will do and its dietary pallet seems to change with the season. Its hunting preference is aerial, chasing and consuming bugs mid-air. However, the Say's phoebe also has effective hawking and hover strategies that are assumed to allow its early arrival to its northern breeding grounds. It can glean insect fare from the ground before it's insect-flying weather with the latter techniques.

The Say's Phoebe is monogamous. The male finds the nest site and performs an aerial nest-showing display that is joined by the female. Nests are built on cliff ledges or under the roofs of human

structures. Say's Phoebe nests have even been found in old mine shafts. Strong territorial behavior is not common.

Two clutches per season is the rule for *Sayornis* species. The female Say's phoebe chases fledges from her nest and performs aerial nest-showing display to attract her errant partner. It is my observation that second broods of insectivorous species, including the cavity-nesting Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), tend to be less successful as our drier months limit the flying insects that feed the earlier broods.

The Say's Phoebe is a solitary bird. Even in migration, flocks will be loose and spread out at best. Its most frequent vocalization is the phee-ur call, which is used throughout the day. It's a comforting background sound as a lone Say's Phoebe hunts alongside me while I trek through our Eastern Washington sage-steppe or hike in the Southwestern Sonoran desert.



Say's Phoebe
Photo by Kim Thorburn

SAS Programs 2018

2018	Speaker	Topic
11-Apr	Catherine Temple	Wildlife Photographer/Artist
9-May	Ron Force	Birding & Travels in Ethiopia
12-Sep	Lisa Langelier	TBA

Spiva Butte Shrub-Steppe

by Lindell Haggin

The Spiva Butte area in Douglas County consists of some of the most pristine shrub-steppe habitat left in Washington, providing critical habitat for one of the last two viable sage grouse populations remaining in the state. With its three springs and miles of riparian corridors, the healthy habitat of the Preserve is home to an amazing diversity of birds and wildlife and a host of the obligate species that depend on shrub-steppe vegetation communities. The geographic envelope of this project lies at the heart of both state-wide grouse populations, serving as a connectivity bridge between concentrations to the north, east and south. If sage grouse populations are to recover, these Mansfield Plateau and Moses Coulee Management Units must remain the core habitat driving that recovery. Similarly, for sharp-tailed grouse to recover in Washington, building and maintaining a habitat link between the East Foster Creek and West Foster Creek Recovery Units is paramount.

While doing our Sagebrush Songbird Surveys it is all too evident that the sagebrush habitat is disappearing. If we want to save the Sage Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse we need to take advantage of every opportunity that we can to save the habitat essential to their survival.

Spokane Audubon Society is supporting the effort to preserve this habitat with a financial donation to the Chelan Douglas Land Trust. The immediate objective is to purchase 1400 acres at Spiva Butte which is currently available. If you would like to assist in this effort you can send donations to:

Mickey Fleming, Lands Project Manager
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
P.O. Box 4461
Wenatchee, WA 98807

Be sure to specify that the donation is for the Spiva Butte acquisition.



Male Sage Grouse
Photo by Lindell Haggin



Male Sharp-tailed Grouse
Photo by Lindell Haggin

Upcoming Field Trips

For times, meeting places, etc. please go to our website: spokaneaudubon.org

March 23-25, 2018 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival
<https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

April 22, 2018, Sunday Reardan & Mill Canyon
Leader: Jon Isacoff

April 28, 2018, Saturday Owens Lake-Bear Lake
Leader: Curtis Mahon

May 19, 2018, Saturday Turnbull Wildlife Refuge Family Trip
Leaders: Sandy & Richard Sollie



Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Local Membership Dues:

Individual: \$20/year _____

Couple & Family: \$25/year _____

Student: \$10/year _____

Lifetime: \$300 _____

National Membership Dues: \$35/year _____

Individual + National Dues: \$55/year _____

Couple + National Dues: \$60/year _____

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
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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_nublado@me.com, or 413-1524.



The Pygmy Owl
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March 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 Building
 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue*

To get to Riverview Retirement Community:

From West Spokane & South Hill

- I-90 East to Exit 281 toward US-2 E/US-395 N/Newport/Colville
- Follow US-2 E/US-395 N to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

From Spokane Valley

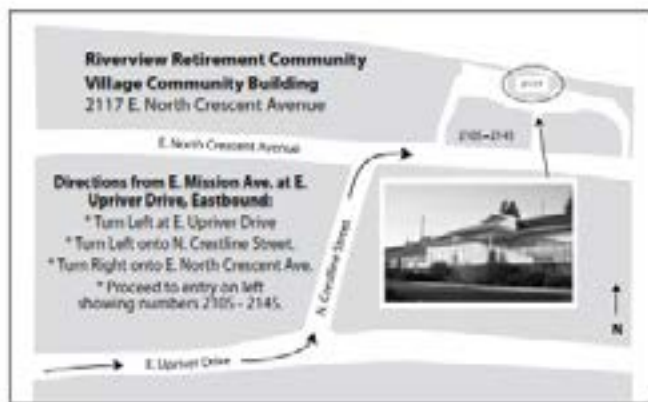
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

From North Spokane

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

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

- Follow E. Upriver Drive to N. Crestline Street
- Turn Left at N. Crestline Street
- Turn Right on E. North Crescent Drive
- Proceed to entry on left showing numbers 2105-2145



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

