

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 27
Issue 63
Nov. 2018

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



ELEGANCE AND WONDER

Presented by Carlene Hardt

Recognized around the world for their beauty, swans are the epitome of grace. The Trumpeter Swans of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge are all that and more. Their placid lives, not merely “Kodak Moments,” but filled with the wonders of courtship, raising a family, playing, defending and traveling on their annual migration.

Combining photos and videos, Carlene Hardt’s “Elegance & Wonder” is an intimate look at the life of the locally famous swan named Solo, his mate, and the joys of their cygnets coming of age. On November 14th come to enjoy the essence of eight years of observing swan behaviors that few have ever seen.



Solo
© Carlene Hardt



Solo and family
© Carlene Hardt

Carlene is a native of Spokane, Washington, whose intriguing life began on a nearby dairy farm and who graduated from Cheney High School in 1973. Later, her mother gave her a camera, which started her on photography. She is a member of the Valley Camera Club. Carlene has received numerous ribbons and awards from the Club, the West Plains fair and the Spokane Interstate Fair for her work. She’s also a member of the Friends of Turnbull and has postcards and books for sale at the Friends’ Nature Store.



The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26 Issue 63~ Nov. 2018

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 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



Officers

President

Tom Light tlight3@gmail.com

Vice President

OPEN

Treasurer

Lindell Haggin lindell4118@comcast.net

Secretary

Ed Reynolds edndaisy@aol.com

Elected Board of Directors

Joyce Alonso jbalonso3@msn.com
Bob Cashen mjaycashen@aol.com
Marlene Cashen mjaycashen@aol.com
Gary Lee bird_fan@aol.com
Jan Reynolds edndaisy@aol.com
Lisa Langelier langelier.lisa@gmail.com
Mary Jokela bmjokela@msn.com

Committee Chairs

Field Trips

Alan McCoy ahm2352@gmail.com

Programs

Gary Lee bird_fan@aol.com

Education

Joyce Alonso jbalonso3@msn.com
Lindell Haggin lindell4118@comcast.net

Conservation

Greg Gordon fightingbull63@gmail.com

Hospitality

Jan Strobeck jandeerpark@aol.com

Membership

Dave Plemons davep_nublado@me.com

Publicity

Kim Thorburn kthorburn@msn.com

Pygmy Owl

Joanne Powell jopowell39@aol.com

Volunteer Coordinator

Joyce Alonso jbalonso3@msn.com

Website

Alan McCoy spokaneaudubon.org

December Pygmy Owl
Deadline November 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

WinterFest Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge December 1, 2018

Pollution in the Spokane River. Riverkeeper presentation by Lee First. 11:00 to 12:00

5th Annual WinterFest Chili Contest. Bring your favorite chili and list the major ingredients on a 3 x 5 card. The prize? A gift certificate for the Turnbull Nature Store and bragging rights to the best chili at Turnbull.

Wildlife Tours

Two tours (9:00 and 1:00) to Refuge areas Reservations can be made through eventbrite.com. Go to our website (FOTNWR) for the link to register for the WinterFest Tours on the Activities page. If you don't have access to the internet please call Joanne at 509-999-2090.

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

The peak of migration is behind us and the forests and fields are sadly quiet. Of course, waterfowl are now moving into area waters in massive numbers. It's moving on to swan, goose, and gull season! And, of course, lovely year-round birds like chickadees and finches can keep our feeders busy. Especially rare sightings are noted below in CAPS.

Greater White-fronted Goose: West Plains Spokane (10/5-SS)

Surf Scoter: Sprague Lake (10/4-JI); Silver Lake (10/5-MW); Sandpoint (10/7-ER); Priest Lake (10/8-SL); Wandermere Lake (10/10-TL); Waitts Lake (10/12-TL); Diamond Lake (10/16)

White-winged Scoter: Medical Lake (10/18-TL)

Black-necked Stilt (late): Soap Lake (10/10-MY); Slavin Ranch (10/18-JI)

Black-bellied Plover: Sandpoint (9/22-ER)

Semipalmated Plover: Mill Canyon (9/22-JI)

Common Tern: Sandpoint (9/22-DY); Soap Lake (9/22-MY); Sprague (9/25-JI); Usk (9/28-TL); Heyburn SP (10/14-CL)

Great Egret: Usk (9/28-TL)

WHITE-FACED IBIS: Philleo Lake (10/8-MW)

Pacific Loon: Silver Lake (10/5-MW)

Northern Goshawk: Kettle Falls (10/10-DB); Albion Hill (10/11-TL); Mt. Spokane SP (10/12-SS); Horseshoe Lake (10/14-JV)

Lewis's Woodpecker (late): Turnbull NWR (10/8-MW)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Colville (9/22-TL); Big Meadow Lake (10/16-PZ)

American Three-toed Woodpecker: Reeder Bay (10/6-ER); Bunchgrass Meadows (10/14-ED); Salmo Pass (10/15-PZ); Big Meadow Lake (10/16-PZ)

Black-capped x Mountain Chickadee Hybrid: Mill Canyon (10/7-JI)

White-winged Crossbill: Bunchgrass Meadows (10/14-ED)

Pine Grosbeak: Colburn (10/15-RDC)

Lesser Goldfinch: Spokane (10/12-LW); Saltese Wetlands (10/3-TO)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Colburn (10/1-RDC); Kettle Falls (10/2-DB); Little Spokane NA (10/3-NP); Davenport (10/9-JE)

White-throated Sparrow: Kettle Falls (10/2-DB); Granite Lake (10/6-MW); Lower Gold Creek (10/10-WC); Colburn (10/14-FF)

Swamp Sparrow: Mill Canyon (10/2-JI); Cottonwood (10/6-CL)

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER: Hayden (10/4-DW)

Lazuli Bunting (late): Mill Canyon (10/10-MH)

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; TD-Tim Durnell; Jacob Elonen; 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; RK-Russ Koppendrayner; RL-Richard Laubach; SL-Sherry Lee; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Curtis Mahon; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O'Brien; NP-Neil Paprocki; ER-Eric Rassmussen; 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



White-faced Ibis
© Patrick Monney



Available for purchase from July through mid-February each year.

Spokane Audubon is now offering Duck Stamps! While these stamps can be purchased at many locations, we decided to make them available at our meetings and on our website as a convenience to our members and others who want to contribute to the conservation of wetlands.

Why Do Duck Stamps Matter?

Produced annually since 1934 by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Duck Stamps are vital tools for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar generated by the sale of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to buy or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Besides serving as a waterfowl hunting license and a conservation tool, a current year's Federal Duck Stamp also serves as an entrance pass (for the whole year) for national wildlife refuges where admission is charged.

Our Pricing

\$25: Stamps purchased at our meetings (cash or check) or by arrangement. Contact Alan McCoy.

\$30: Stamps purchased online via PayPal at our website. The online price includes a \$5 convenience fee for USPS mailing.

Our Website is Changing

by Alan McCoy

Within the last year National Audubon has created a website template for Audubon chapters. The new template offers a consistent look and feel among those chapters who use it. We have decided to move our website over to the new template. This project will take a few months but we believe it will be a very nice change. The new platform is much more mobile friendly for all of you who rely on your phone or tablet as much or more than your lap/desktop machine.

Another change is that while we will still be able to accept dues payments, and other transactions online, the website itself will not keep a database of members. Our membership chair Dave Plemons has actually been duplicating that database capability all these years. Switching to the new website will simplify his work. Last but not least is that we will save about 50% in lower costs by making this change.

Stay tuned.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

by JOYCE ALONSO

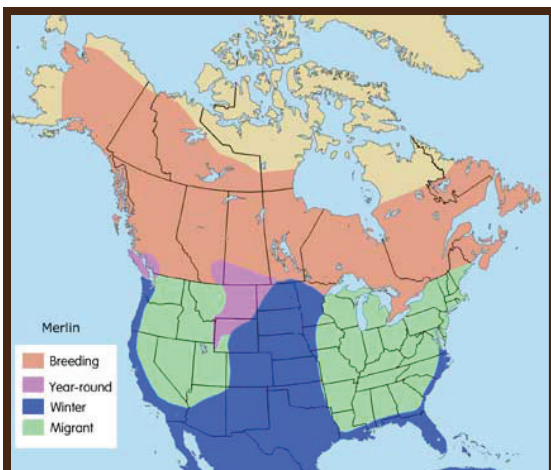
The Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) is the second-smallest of the North American falcons, but makes up for its small size with its aggressive personality. The average Merlin is about 10 inches (I-Bird Pro lists 9-13), with a 24-inch wingspan, and weighs less than half a pound. The three subspecies (Pacific, Taiga, and Prairie or Richardson) show distinct color differences, the Pacific being very dark, and the Prairie, quite light. The most common, the Taiga, is the one we most often see in this area.

Like other falcons, Merlins have special physical features that equip them for survival, especially in regards to food procurement. Their bodies are compact; their wings, relatively long and pointed. Their speed and maneuverability in flight enable them to seize their prey, usually small birds and insects like dragonflies, in mid-air. Their talons are long and sharp, with great power to grasp their victim. A special "tooth" on the upper jaw serves to dispatch their prey with a bite to the neck, severing the spinal cord.

Found throughout North America, Merlins are generally migratory, preferring to spend the cold months in places like California, Florida, and Texas, although some of the Prairie birds remain in the same area all year. Returning to the northern states in the spring, they pair off, then choose a nesting site, likely a cliff in rural areas, a crow's nest in the city. (They do not build their own nests.) The eggs, usually 4-5, are incubated for about a month, mostly by the female. Altricial young are fed and supervised, even after they first fledge.

Having recovered from the decline caused by DDT poisoning, Merlins are considered a stable species of "Least Concern." Historically used for sport hunting by the nobles in Europe, their Merlins can be found wintering in parts of Asia and even the northern rim of the African continent.

(Info from Sibley, Stokes, I-Bird Pro-Cornell, etc.-)



Merlin range map
Cascades Raptor Center

Black (Pacific NW)
© Ryan Merrill



Taiga
© Tony Kurz

Prairie
© Steve Mlodinow



BALANCE OF AVIAN POWER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

by Joyce Alonso

Having lived at the same address on the upper South Hill for 40+ years, I haven't had recently a new "yard" or "neighborhood" bird...until this summer. Out walking in May, I heard overhead what is best described as a scream! At the top of a nearby ever-green perched a Merlin, the first I've noticed on our block, loudly declaring sovereignty over the area.

The aggressive falcon pair soon took over our neighborhood. Sandy Sollie, a few doors down, with an office window giving her a front-row seat to observe them in the crow's nest they had appropriated, documented their presence for weeks. I had been apprehensive about their potential impact on our resident song birds; but, while they probably snacked on a few, they performed a valuable service by driving away a sizable murder of crows that yearly predated their nests. Furthermore, the merlin presence resulted in cowbird absence. Our Song Sparrow got to raise its own young this year!

Sandy also witnessed the Merlin attacking our resident Cooper's Hawk, which I hadn't seen since it got one of my chickadees in the spring. I know, I know! We birders are not supposed to take sides and should allow Nature to operate at will...but, for winter company, I prefer chickadees to crows...no question!

The Merlins finished nesting around the end of July and departed soon afterward. We'll see if they show up here again next year. Merlins have been reported in various parts of the Spokane area this year by several SAS members. Apparently, their numbers are increasing, at least locally.

Spokane Audubon Board Notes

Migration time - birds seem to fall out of the sky! If you happen to be in the right place at the right time you may get some great sights, maybe even add to your life list. However, migrations are ephemeral, they don't last long; just a step in the long-term.

People migrate too. We all know "snowbirds" who are preparing to head south at this time of year. Organizations such as the Spokane Audubon Society are impacted by the human migration as people move into and then out of the organizational structure. We have been extremely fortunate to have several people who have served SAS for the long-term, some since the very beginning. But, we do need to continually bring in new people with new energy and new ideas.

Now's your chance. We have several openings on the Board of Directors and several committees. If you've ever thought, "Why don't they do this?" or "Why do they do it that way?" then it's now your turn to test out your ideas. SAS is a multi-faceted organization. Several people wear multiple hats and would appreciate help. In addition to the Board, areas in which we have specific needs are:

- Programs
- Field Trips
- Outreach
- Education
- Conservation
- Membership
- Publicity

If you have talents or interest in the above areas, please contact any Board member. SAS runs on volunteers, and we need your help!! Remember, Programs and Activities do not fall out of the sky!

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

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through October 18, 2018:

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Dan & Donna Burt, Jennine Harris, Fran & Brad Haywood, Jeff Hedge, Steve Joyce, Jenny Michaels, Mary Jean Porter, Larry Schroeder, & Darcy Varona & Family.

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.

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.



The Pygmy Owl
Spokane Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 9820
 Spokane, WA 99209-9820
 (509) 838-5828

To:

November 2018

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

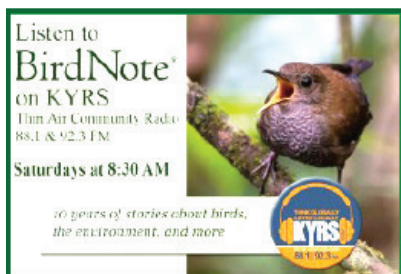
- Take US-395 S to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Dr.

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

