

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26
Issue 58
April 2018

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



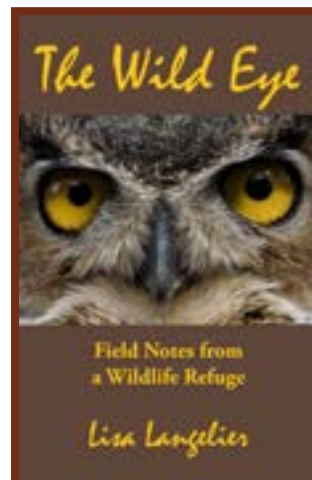
Wild- Eyed and Bushy-Tailed

By Lisa Langelier

Do you think I meant to write bright-eyed and bushy-tailed? Perhaps, but in our April program I'll share some of my delights and dilemmas managing national wildlife refuges in eastern Washington and northern Idaho. I'll also share a few essays from my book, *The Wild Eye: Field Notes from a Wildlife Refuge*, published by Gray Dog Press in 2016.

For 25 years I worked for the 115-year old National Wildlife Refuge System, the largest, most diverse system of lands dedicated to conserving fish, wildlife, and plants and providing unique opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife. I managed Little Pend Oreille NWR for 14 years, through a transition from 28 years of state management back into the federal Refuge System. In 2008, I transferred to Turnbull to lead the Inland Northwest National Wildlife Refuge Complex that combined LPO, Turnbull, and northern Idaho's Kootenai refuges administratively.

Along the way I learned from the wildlife and people connected to these lands. For five years, while managing LPO, I wrote a monthly column called *The Wild Eye* for the North Columbia Monthly. After my 2013 retirement I combined many of the Monthly and new essays into my book about wild-eyed and bushy-tailed residents.



Wildlife photos © Tom Munson

Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday April 11 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.

Spokane Audubon Society
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Owl illustrations on pg. 1 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



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The Pygmy Owl deadline:
April 23, 2018

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

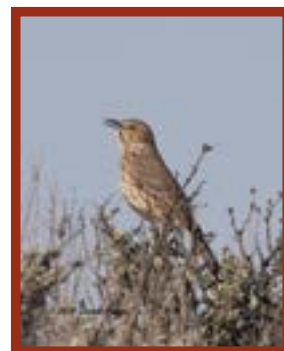
Many thanks to our returning nesters: Rachel Brabeck, Robin Crain, Nancy Curry, Michael & Pam Dixson, Jim Hoffman & family, Brian & Beth Miller, Thomas & Myriam Munson, Joanne Powell, David Smith, Richard Sollie, Peggy Goodner Tan, and Jeanette A Zellmer.

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 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. Legibility is critical as I cannot make out correctly some Email addresses.

Sagebrush Songbird Survey - April

We are finally there! Surveys start on April 12. We actually get to go out to that beautiful habitat and start gathering data at 10 new sites. We have been doing this now for four years. The pilot program began a year before that. Each year we gather more data to give insight as to the habitat and the birds found in eastern Washington. Not surprisingly, habitat is disappearing and so are the birds that are associated with it. With the data we are collecting we can make a case for protecting what we have.

This project would not be possible without the help and coordination of Christi Norman. She is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the eastern Washington Chapters of the Audubon Society with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources and the Bureau of Land Management and the National Audubon Society's GIS department. Until this point, there have been sufficient grants available to pay for her part-time salary. That is not the case now. A request has been made to each of the participating chapters to provide \$1,000 to \$2000 to help sustain this program and Christi's important role in this program. At this time, I'm asking that people donate money towards this vital program. Please send your donations to Spokane Audubon, % Lindell Haggin, 15418 N. Little Spokane Dr., Spokane, WA 99208.



Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Spring is finally here! After an unpleasant February cold spell, moderate temperatures and the typical mixture of sun and showers are prevailing. All the usual first round of spring migrants have shown up: Killdeer, Phoebe's, swallows, and bluebirds. Massive amounts of waterfowl are migrating through the region. Robins are singing! Some good birds from the winter are still lingering and soon more cool sightings will surely be on the way soon!

Snow Goose: Saltese (3/15-TO); Spangle (3/18-JI); Cusick (3/18-DB); Sandpoint (3/18-RDC)

Ross's Goose: Spangle (3/18-JI)

Greater White-fronted Goose: North Spokane (2/23-LH); Ewan (3/9-RB); Sprague (3/10-LM); Deer Park (3/22-CM)

Red-breasted Merganser: Rock Lake (3/9-RB)

Northern Goshawk: Paradise Prairie (3/1-JI); Sagle (3/4-RH); Medicine Lake (3/20-BK)

Greater Yellowlegs (early): Peone (3/20-TL)

Snowy Owl: Davenport (3/3-FH)

Long-eared Owl: N. Whitman County (3/18-RB)

Blue Jay: University of Idaho (3/3-GL); Viola (3/15-NM)

Snow Bunting: Reardan (2/21-JI); West Plains Spokane (2/22-SJ); Davenport (2/23-MC); St. John (3/3-RB)

White-throated Sparrow: Mullan (3/16-BK)

Harris's Sparrow: Colville (3/16-WC); Benge (3/17-RK)

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; RH-Randy Hammersburg; DH-Dave Holick; MH-Marcus Hooker; JI-Jon Isacoff; CJ-Chris Jannett; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; JK-Jeff Kleitzmann; RK-Russ Koppendrayner; GL-Greg Lambeth; 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 Rasmussen; 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



Wenas Audubon Campout

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

The annual Wenas Audubon Campout takes place on Memorial Day Weekend (May 26-28) at the Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg).

This casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, wildflower walks, field sketching, owl prowls, and campfire presentations. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website (www.wenasaudubon.org) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information (2018 program coming soon). Pre-registration is not required. The campout is free and open to all ages; however, donations are encouraged. Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass (<http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/>).



Wenas Wildlife Area
courtesy WDFW

BIG DAY/BIG SIT AUDUBON ACTIVITY April 21-April 28

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.

2019 Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: May 1 – May 31, 2018

Beginning May 1st submit photos to:

sauduboncalendar@gmail.com



Northern Pygmy Owl, from the 2015 calendar
Tom Munson photographer



Black-necked Stilts, from the 2016 calendar
Bea Harrison photographer

Eligibility Requirements

- Spokane Audubon Society member in good standing.
- Submit electronically up to three 9.25" wide by 6.75" height photographs. The photographs shall not have the © symbol with the photographer's name or other inserted script.
- Submissions should be 96 ppi. Those selected will need to resubmit (on CD) at 300ppi.
- If the photographer has photograph(s) selected, she/he 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.
- Photos must be of birds which can be found in Eastern Washington but the photo does not have to have been taken in Eastern Washington.

Call for entries

- Photographers may submit entries starting Monday, May 1st. The deadline is Wednesday May 31st.
- No entries will be accepted after May 31st.
- Unselected photographs from previous years will not be submitted automatically for future years' calendars. The photographer may resubmit photos not previously selected.

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 or committee chair. It is preferred that some panel members have moderately advanced bird identification skills and experience with bird photography.
- Photographers who submit entries cannot be judges.
- The bird must be the focus of the photograph. Preference is given to unusual species and hard-to-see species or behaviors.
- Judging criteria are photo composition and quality.
- Submissions must comply with size requirements.
- The panel will select 14 photographs for each calendar month and additional photographs which may be used in smaller form on the pages.
- Following selection, 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.
- Please include the location where the photograph was taken.

Turnbull NWR/Cheney MayFest

May 12, 2018



Floods, Flowers, and Feathers

MayFest Activities-Cheney

Booths and Displays: (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Ducks Unlimited
EWU - snyamncut Residence Hall
EWU Biology Dept.
Friends of Turnbull
Ice Age Floods Institute,
Cheney-Spokane Chapter
Spokane County Public Works
Turnbull NWR Animal Tracks
West Plains Beekeepers
...and many more!

Turnbull NWR Activities (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Bird & Wildflower Walks
Bird Banding Demonstration
Bluebird Nest Box - Walk & Talk
Can You Find That Bird? Scavenger Hunt
EWU - mosquito/tick activity
Fire Fighting Demonstration
Ice Age Floods Institute Geology Tour
Live Birds of Prey
Nature walk with EWU Biologists
Photography Talk
Pond Life

All activities are free
Details/Times: www.fws.gov/refuge/turnbull

Reardan's Audubon Lake - A Rich Refuge for Birds

Catherine Henze, Volunteer

Swanson Lakes, Reardan Audubon Lake

The following is an excerpt from the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy newsletter.

Imagine... you are a migrating tundra swan flying north, desperately searching for a place to land. Below you are miles and miles of dry, dusty wheat fields. Your energy is fading, you're hungry, and you're exhausted. Then, miraculously, you spot a beautiful, lush 600-acre sanctuary. Your paradise is replete with marshy wetlands, vernal ponds, year-long lakes, an upland prairie, and inviting vegetation, including your favorite sedges and grasses. After you land, you realize that there is plenty to go around, so you don't mind sharing with red-tailed hawks, great horned owls, bald eagles, or even the red heads, coots, mallards, and ruddy ducks—over 144 species in all. You are surrounded by the mellifluous symphony of pacific chorus frogs punctuated by the light staccato of scampering deer mice, yellow pine chipmunks, montane voles, and northern pocket gophers.

How can this be, in the midst of eastern Washington's agricultural land? It all happened, not with the greatest of ease, but with the greatest of dedication and many years of very hard work from the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy as well as our partners in conservation. The Conservancy is delighted to announce that the Reardan's Audubon Lake wildlife area just expanded with the purchase of the adjacent Mikkelsen property. This 159-acre parcel, with several large ponds and truly abundant wildlife, makes a crucial contribution to the Audubon Lake Wildlife Area just outside of Reardan (20 miles west of Spokane). Owner Vina Mikkelsen asserts that selling the land to the Conservancy is "the most important thing I have done in a long time."

It all began when, back in 2003, the Spokane Audubon Society alerted the Conservancy's Chris DeForest that a "for sale" sign had sprouted at Audubon Lake. Negotiations immediately began to purchase the 277-acre parcel, decades ago dubbed Audubon Lake after bird watchers started flocking to the area. The collaborative efforts of the Conservancy, the Spokane and other Audubon Societies, and the Reardan Chamber of Commerce saved the retreat from development as a refuge for birds and as a watchable wildlife site. Shortly thereafter, in 2006, the Conservancy sold the invaluable parcel at its cost to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Hard-working volunteers and members of organizations, like the Reardan Lions Club, put in incalculable time and effort to help WDFW make Audubon Lake a special, educational place for the community to enjoy birds in

their natural habitat. The addition of blinds, spotting scopes, asphalt trails, parking lots, and a restroom made for an excellent bird spotting destination. Gone were the days of risking one's life on the side of the highway to view the birds. The restoration work with native plants and grasses helped return the land to its natural state.

Then, in 2015, the Conservancy bought adjacent acreage with equally important habitat, the 150-acre Deep Creek Preserve. Just last spring, the Conservancy sold this parcel to WDFW. Finally, in January of 2018, the Conservancy bought the 159-acre Mikkelsen property to round out the incredible haven to nearly 600 acres.

The refuge is treasured not only by our migrating swan, but also by humans. The combined properties—Audubon Lake, Deep Creek Preserve, and Mikkelsen—include the headwaters of Crab Creek, Deep Creek, and Spring Creek. This unique cluster offers lessons on the land, from the effects of the Ice Age floods to the fragility of wetlands, and is a stop on the Palouse to Pines birding trail map, developed by Audubon Washington. It's also a notable feature on the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail.

How do we know these lands are so important? Because we have carefully studied them, with the Deep Creek Preserve Bioassessment funded by the Charlotte Y. Martin Foundation. Beginning in 2016, a collaborative team of faculty and student researchers from local universities, experts from the Spokane Audubon Society, the Spokane Native Plant Society, and WDFW, and other volunteers conducted an in-depth study of the various species that inhabit the preserve. They counted and described birds, waterfowl, small mammals, bats, frogs, grasses, and much more. The initial bioassessment established a baseline, and subsequent studies, including the just-completed 2017 work, track changes on the land. Moving forward, in 2018, local Reardan students will participate in conservation management, including assessing wildlife and water quality for future generations.

Inland Northwest Land Conservancy is thrilled to add yet another 159 acres to the Audubon Lake oasis with this most recent addition of the Mikkelsen property, and we are grateful to our many supporters and agency partners who have helped make this possible. We know that our migrating tundra swan will be pleased, as are the hundreds of fans who flock to the area to see her and her friends.

Slurping

by Tom Bancroft

Eight trumpeter swans stood in the muddy water, their necks bent in an “S” shape curve, and their bills half submerged in the mucky mess. A thin layer of water covered the fallow field, and the temperature hung in the high 30s. Their heads moved sideways, in quick even movements, and their mouths opened and shut rapidly. Four bright white adults fed, not more than fifty yards from me, as well as four equally large, grayish-white young of the year. Their elephantine legs held their bodies above the muddy water as they crept through the quagmire, gradually approaching where I froze, transfixed by their size.



click link #1 below

The slurp-slurp-slurp, followed by a pause then more slurping, put me into a trance. I was standing on the side of Wylie Slough Road with headsets over my ears and a directional microphone pointing across the road. My digital recorder was capturing every nuance, and the headphones emphasized the mesmerizing sound. Weekly for three years, I would visit my daughter at her Georgetown apartment. We would head out someplace: going for a walk, picking up supplies, or hitting a movie, often stopping on the way back for a fortified fruit smoothie. She'd order tropical fruit, and I'd pick raspberry. My daughter would insist they add antioxidants to mine. We'd grab a corner table where we could chat and slowly drink our concoctions. Slurping came when we were trying to get the last few sips from the bottom.

These swans are huge, twenty-five pounds, as much as a beagle, but larger because birds have hollow bones and large air sacks that displace fluids in their body cavities. In spite of their weight, they are graceful, strong fliers that return each winter to the Skagit from breeding grounds in the north. Two pairs -- each with their two full-grown young -- were having breakfast. These two families probably had

flown together from an Alaska wilderness to winter in these agricultural fields.

These swans were pumping the slurry through their mouths, filtering out plant material. The back and forth motion of their heads moved the bills through the brown suspension, continuing to churn up the water. Their bill lamellae acted like a sieve, and occasionally, a green stem or white root disappeared into a mouth. I had watched Trumpeter Swans dig potatoes and graze on grass or growing grains, but never filter plant material from the dirty ooze.

When the cygnets first hatch, the parents take them to good feeding areas, often stirring up the water to make aquatic plants and animals more readily available. The young must eat on their own; the parents don't feed them. These thoughts made me think about my younger days and what we ate at home. We had some variation but often certain nights were specific main courses of chicken, beef, or pork, always with potatoes. The vegetables did change with the seasons. I probably bucked eating beans and spinach. Now, one of the things I enjoyed most was trying new recipes, especially when traveling. Swans had learned to exploit novel foods that weren't part of the environment before Europeans arrived.

It is hard to imagine that the known Trumpeter Swan population was only 69 individuals in 1935. Shooting them for their feathers, skin, and meat had decimated the once widespread species. A few additional unrecorded flocks, however, were hiding at the time in Canada and Alaska. Protection and reintroductions have allowed these swans to recover. In 2005, ornithologists estimated that their numbers had climbed to more than 34,000. Two families, perhaps sisters with their spouses and children, traveling together were right across from me.



click link #2 below

The adults started to honk sporadically and softly. A nervous gesture, so I grabbed my gear to leave them in peace.

<https://soundcloud.com/tom-bancroft-2/trumpeter-swans-feeding1>

<https://soundcloud.com/tom-bancroft-2/trumpeter-swans-feeding2>

Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*)

by Lindell Haggin

In the spring, if you're out in the shrub-steppe and you hear a bird that just won't quit, you are probably hearing a Sage Thrasher. They can sound like a jazz musician playing his best set and go on for as long as 22 minutes. Like other members of the Mimidae family, Sage Thrashers can mimic other birds.

To locate him, find the tallest sage brush plant you can. On top will be a grayish-brown bird, about 7 inches tall with a streaked belly, singing his heart out. The bill will be fairly short, his tail fairly long, and he'll have a yellow eye. At any other time of year they are quite secretive in their movements under the sage.

In just a few short weeks he will be helping his mate incubate and care for the 4 to 5 young that are hatched each spring. The placement of the nest was in the tallest sage under the densest portion. The dense vegetation helps keep the sun off the young as well as provide a shield from the Northern Harriers and Loggerhead Shrikes, which may prey on the young.

Sage Thrashers requires sage, the more the better. While they can survive in the short term in smaller patches of sage, their long term survival requires large patches. Since they spend a lot of time foraging on the ground, they also need some open ground to find the ants, grasshoppers and ground beetles they depend on to survive. In fall and winter they will also eat berries and grapes.

Sage Thrashers can be found in the Great Basin as well as in central Washington. They migrate to the southern border of the U.S. and into Mexico. While

their numbers have decreased by 52% since 1966, they are still considered a species of Least Concern. But with each acre that is lost to grazing, residential development and the conversion of shrub-steppe to agriculture, the chances you'll hear that wonderful, lively song decrease. What a loss for everyone!



Sage Thrasher
© Lindell Haggin

SAS Programs 2018

2018	Speaker	Topic
9-May	Ron Force	Birding & Travels in Ethiopia
Sept.	TBD	

Upcoming Field Trips

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

April 7, 2018 Beginning Bird Watching
Sponsored by Friends of Turnbull & Spokane Audubon
<http://fotnwr.org/activities.html>

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

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

May 5, 2018 Beginning Bird Watching
Sponsored by Friends of Turnbull & Spokane Audubon
<http://fotnwr.org/activities.html>

May 12, 2018, Saturday Slavin Ranch Wetland Trip
Leader: Alan McCoy

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

May 26-28, 2018 Wenas Audubon Campout

June 2, 2018 Beginning Bird Watching
Sponsored by Friends of Turnbull & Spokane Audubon
<http://fotnwr.org/activities.html>

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
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_nublado@me.com,
or 413-1524.



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

April 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

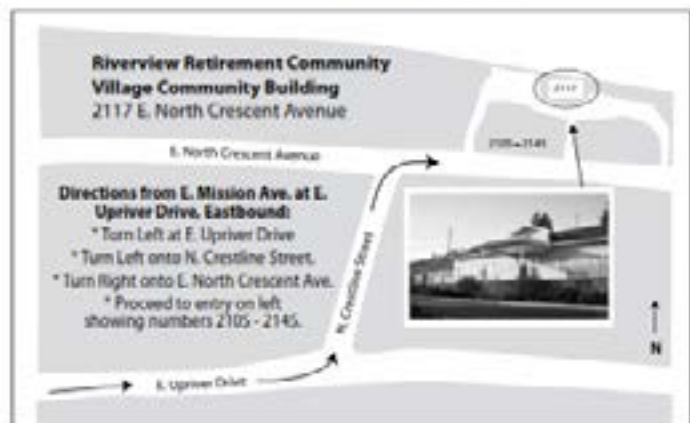
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

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

