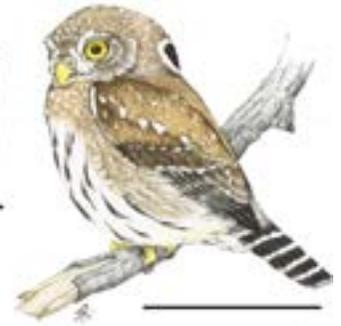


The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26
Issue 56
Feb. 2018

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Self-directed, Self-Catered Western Kalahari Birding Tour with my Non-birder Husband as Guide

by Kim Thorburn

The weird and wonderful biologic adaptations for survival in the harsh conditions of the western Kalahari are a naturalist's dream. Less explored than the tropical and montane forests of the eastern side of southern Africa, the routes off of highways N7 of South Africa and B1 of Namibia have a lower number of animal species than African tropics but present many hot spots of endemicty. The same can't be said of the plant kingdom because it has both phenomenal diversity and endemicty in the region.

Kim Thorburn and her husband Terry Allen camped their way through this region from Cape Town, South Africa, and back again during three weeks in October 2017. During our February program, Kim will present a naturalist's notebook of some of their discoveries, share some camping adventures, and provide a glimpse of some of the stunning scenery.

Kim is a former president of Spokane Audubon who now spends most of her wildlife conservation efforts as a commissioner of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. As a spoiler alert, you need to know that she's wild about prairie grouse.



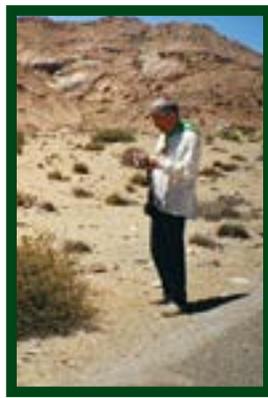
Lilac-breasted Roller
by Kim Thorburn



Hadeda Ibis
by Kim Thorburn



Rehoboth / Terry Allen
by Kim Thorburn



Port Nolloth / Kim Thorburn
by Terry Allen



Protea
by Terry Allen

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

The Pygmy Owl

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Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through Jan 18th:
Welcome to our new nester, Ted Haskell.

Many thanks to our returning nesters:

Ron & Pat Dexter, Chris Flanagan, Sharon Genung, Ken Hayes, Jim Hudlow, Brenda Klohe, Tom & Frances Light, Marilyn Lloyd, Susan Millies, Mike & Lynn Noel, and Sallye & Tom Prenger.

Many nesters chose not to receive a hard copy of the Pygmy Owl. If you could help us reduce costs, 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. BTW I can not correctly make out some Email addresses. Legibility is critical.

Bringing Nature Home – Bees, Butterflies & The Benefits of Bountiful Bugs

The next meeting of the Spokane chapter of the Washington Butterfly Association will be February 21 at 6:00 PM. The featured presentation will be "Bringing Nature Home – Bees, Butterflies & The Benefits of Bountiful Bugs" presented by Bea Harrison. Bea is a Spokane resident, a self-taught naturalist and avid conservationist. She was formerly with The Nature Conservancy and has worked for the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, and Smithsonian Institute. She and her husband, Jim, volunteer for local non-profits and conservation groups such as Spokane Audubon and Inland Northwest Land Conservancy.

The public is invited:
Feb 21 at 6:00 PM
Downtown Spokane Public Library
Room 1B, 906 W. Main Street,
Spokane



The Pygmy Owl deadline:
February 19, 2018

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

It's the slow time following CBC's and before, well, anything really happens. Many of the same winter visitors are still around and with luck some new ones have shown up and/or may start showing up. Our nice little Redpoll irruption continues, with too many sightings to count! In a month we may see Killdeer and other early arrivals just coming in. Especially rare sightings are in bold caps:

Snow Goose: Saltese Wetlands (1/16-TO); Heyburn SP (1/21-JI)

"Common" Teal: Priest Rapids (1/17-KL)

LONG-TAILED DUCK: Sprague (12/22-TL)

Red-breasted Merganser: (1/1-DW); Carlin Bay (1/8-KD); Mill Canyon (1/12-TL); Usk (1/15-TL); Sunnyside Road (1/13-RDC); Sandpoint (1/21-SJ)

Northern Goshawk: West Spokane (12/30-TO); Bonner's Ferry (1/6-RD); Sandpoint (1/10-RDC);

Mew Gull: Wolf Lodge Bay (12/26-DW); Bennett Bay (1/1-DW); TumTum (1/5-TL)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Coeur D'Alene (12/31-KH)

Snowy Owl: Davenport (1/20-CJ)

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

Gyr Falcon: Lacrosse (12/19-RB)

Blue Jay: Hayden (1/1-DW); Moscow (1/1-CS and 1/6-MS); University of Idaho (1/3-KD)

Snow Bunting: Steptoe Butte (12/23-CKA); Davenport (12/27-HD and 1/12-TL); Odessa (12/30-RK); Upper Grand Coulee (1/1-MY); West Plains Spokane (1/13-SS); Peone Prairie (1/18-TL)

Harris's Sparrow: Mead (12/20-12/1-TL)

White-throated Sparrow: Rice (1/1-TD)

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch: Blaine (1/1-KD); Lenville (1/1-SC and 1/11-BB and JH); Kitzmiller (1/14-RB)

White-winged Crossbill: University of Idaho (1/14-CL); West Spokane (1/19-MiF)

PURPLE FINCH: Moscow (12/20-CL and 1/2-BB)

Pine Grosbeak: Mt. Spokane Foothills (12/24-TL); Colville (1/3-WC); Sandpoint (1/13-PB)

Common Redpoll: Too many sightings to count!

Observers: CKA-CK Anderson; DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MaB-Matt Bartels; PB-Phil Bartley; 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; BS-Bill Siems; JS-John Stuart); CS-Charles Swift; KT-Kim Thorburn; NT-Norma Trefry; DW-Doug Ward; TW-Tom Whalen; MW-Michael Woodruff; RW-Rob Woods; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young



Purple Finch
© Lindell Haggin

Sagebrush Songbird Survey Version 2018

We'll be out in the sagebrush looking for the lovely little sparrows as well as the bold Sagebrush Thrasher for the fourth year in a row. We would love to have some new sagebrush enthusiasts help us do surveys, which take place from April through the beginning of June. We've got some great sites plotted out. The data will go to Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife to help plan for this unique habitat and its enchanting inhabitants. This year some private property will be open to us to gather data over a wider range. A chance to go where you may never go again.

Training will be at the beginning of April. You will learn/review identification of target birds by sight and song, as well as the protocol for doing the surveys. We will try to pair experienced surveyors with new volunteers. If interested contact: Lindell Haggin lindell4118@comcast.net

If you would like to see what we've accomplished already, go to this link [community science breeding bird survey](http://communitysciencebreedingbirdsurvey.org)
URL: <http://wa.audubon.org/songbird-survey-eastern-washington-underway>

Thanks to all who have contributed in the past. Hope to see you again this spring.



Sagebrush Thrasher
© Tom Benson

Grave Risk To Alaska's Arctic Coastal Plain And Teshekpuk Lake Special Area

For 40 years, Audubon Alaska has worked to conserve Alaska's natural ecosystems, including the Arctic Coastal Plain and the Teshekpuk Lake wetlands complex, one of the premier breeding and nesting bird sites in the entire circumpolar Arctic.

Last year public lands in Alaska and across the country faced unprecedented political challenges. This year both the Arctic Refuge and Teshekpuk, boasting regional national and global migration connections and hard-won protections, are under grave risk of development. Congressional budgetary processes are being used to try to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling and the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area faces the growing possibility that the Trump administration will kick off a new planning process with the likely intent to open sensitive wildlife areas to oil development.

Audubon Alaska expects intense battles over these issues in the coming weeks, months and years. Audubon Alaska will continue to stand strong in the defense of birds and their habitats, but it needs our support. SAS is considering a generous donation and we suggest that our members individually contemplate donating as well. We can help! Go to [www.AudubonAlaska.org/Alaska Arctic Fund](http://www.AudubonAlaska.org/AlaskaArcticFund).



Teshekpuk area Caribou
© Gary Braasch



Drum Soloist, the Northern Flicker

by Lisa Langelier

As the days lengthen I listen. The breeding great horned owls have been at it for weeks. A few nights ago, I heard four separate owl voices from my piney woods. Another bird will soon join the ensemble. A percussionist. Although they winter here, they've been pretty quiet. Until they are not.

Starting in late February or early March a male northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) proclaims his availability from the power pole on our access road. This pole must be reliable because he's back each spring. Last year he discovered our metal pole barn amplifies his din. His mate also performs a drum solo, answering his plea. Drumming allows flickers to communicate and publicize their territories and is only one of the flickers' sounds. Sometimes a drum roll of 20 or so beats is followed by a loud "wicka, wicka, wicka." Their rattling call resembles that of the pileated woodpecker. A piercing "keer" may be voiced year-round.

Northern flickers are large handsome woodpeckers that live in open forest habitats, yards, and parks. Brownish overall with black bars on their back, flickers wear a black crescent bib above their black-spotted breast. Their coral-colored flight and tail feather shafts and white rump patch, visible during their undulating flight, provide helpful clues to their identity. Their stiff tail feathers are black-tipped and pointed on the ends. Sexes are similar except that males have a red malar mark or mustache extending from their beak along their gray cheek.

Northern flickers occur through much of the Americas, with the red-shafted race dominating the western US, while the yellow-shafted race dominates the east, although they hybridize where their ranges overlap. The two forms are now considered one species by the American Ornithological Society.

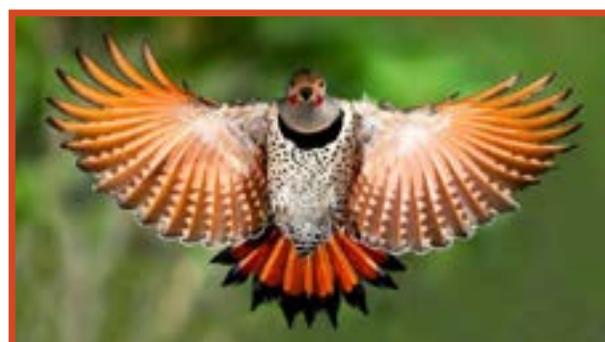
Flickers are important members of woodland communities. They excavate nest holes that other

cavity nesters depend on. You often see flickers on the ground where they forage for ants and other insects. They shift their diet to nuts, seeds, and berries when ants are dormant. They are one of my favorite bird bath visitors. Their size, more than demeanor, frightens off small bathers. First they drink, then plop, wiggle, splash, fluff, and scratch. Ahh, nice to be cool and clean.

Some Native Americans believed that flickers had power over fire. Their stories portray flickers as lucky birds, associated with friendship and happiness. When my friendly favorite drummer returns, I'll be happy too!



Red-shafted Northern Flicker
© Tom Munson



Northern Flicker
© Roy Hancliff

SAS Programs 2018

2018	Speaker	Topic
14-Mar	Carmen Yount (Jami Ostby Marsh)	Raptor Outreach program ANNUAL MEETING
11-Apr	Catherine Temple	Wildlife Photographer/Artist
9-May	Ron Force	Birding & Travels in Ethiopia
12-Sep	Lisa Langelier	TBA

Thoughts on a Christmas Bird Count

by Lindell Haggin

The Christmas Bird Count is a great way to get out on a December day. The weather can be okay or it can be awful, but you go out looking for whatever birds you can find. Some years there is a lot of bird activity, others not. Species present and their abundance vary dramatically from year to year. That's okay. But when you have been seeing a particular species on a regular basis, it can be pretty frustrating not to find it on the day of the CBC.

This year for me, the species of frustration were the Hooded Merganser and the Clark's Nutcrackers.

The Hooded Merganser had been hanging around in the Little Spokane River in front of my house periodically and for the two days prior to the CBC it had been there around the noon hour. On December 30 it did not show up at all. The first bird I saw on the morning of Dec. 31st was a Hooded Merganser. A day late and a dollar short. He did not seem apologetic in the least.

I started seeing Clark's Nutcrackers in mid-November. It was a new yard bird for me and I saw them regularly on my walking route that I take with my dog. One day I saw a flock of at least 70. Their numbers dwindled in the month of December, but I still heard what sounded like their call periodically. I was hopeful. On the day of the count we saw neither hide nor feather of them in our section. The next day I was walking the dog when I thought I heard a call. It was not repeated, but in the shadows of the trees behind the houses, I saw a few birds flying, about the right size. Soon afterward I met a casual acquaintance who mentioned that her feeders were quite active. I asked about Clark's Nutcrackers and she said, yes, they had showed up for the first time that morning! Again, a day late and

The next morning on our walk, I again heard their call and was rewarded with a flock of 27 nutcrackers flying across the road ahead of me. I started to think, "A day late...." when I realized it is never too late to see a good bird. It was January 1st. What a great way to start out the New Year! In addition, before we got home, I saw several Red Crossbills graveling beside the road, and then there was a Common Redpoll mixed in with the House Finches at our feeder. What an outstanding start to my bird list for 2018!



Clark's Nutcracker
© Lindell Haggin



Hooded Merganser
© Lindell Haggin

First bird of 2018



Red Crossbill
by Kim Thorburn

Up and Down CBC 2017

by Alan McCoy

The Spokane Christmas Bird Count took place on December 30, 2017. Seventy three people, 60 in the field and 13 feeder watchers, pitched in to count all the birds they could find. This is the same number of participants as last year but we found 83 species this year compared with only 70 last year. With the exception of Common Mergansers the waterfowl numbers were way above average. For the following percentages and numbers of individuals I am using the data from 1980 to present. We set a new maximum number of individuals for Ring-necked Ducks (453). Many duck species were 2-4 times as abundant as they are on average. In addition 4 Canvasbacks were observed and they have only been seen on 16% of our counts in this time period. Marian Frobe's team got a Western Grebe, which has only been twice since 1980 on the CBC.

The Corvid family (crow, raven, jay) was also seen in higher numbers than usual. The Common Raven set a new maximum with 246 birds. But for some reason

Black-billed Magpie numbers were down. Another oddity is that we saw a record of 7 Pileated Woodpeckers while Downy Woodpeckers were only about 50% of average. The Corvid family (crow, raven, jay) was also seen in higher numbers than usual. The Common Raven set a new maximum with 246 birds. But for some reason Black-billed Magpie numbers were down. Another oddity is that we saw a record of 7 Pileated Woodpeckers while Downy Woodpeckers were only about 50% of average.

Also down this year were sightings of American Robins and waxwings likely due to a paucity of berries. But a small flock of Western Bluebirds was seen during the count week as was a determined and resourceful Anna's Hummingbird reported by Brian Flick. House Finches were hard to come by but Common Redpolls were recorded in numbers 4 times the average and their cousin the American Goldfinch was similarly plentiful. The other rarity reported was a Harris's Sparrow found by Lindell Haggin and Ann Brinly's team. This bird was initially found by Terry Little near a northside church.

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

February 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

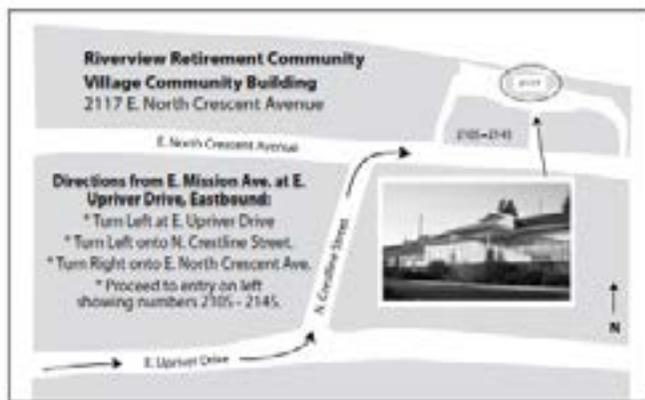
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

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

