

# The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26  
Issue 55  
Jan. 2018

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## Birding Cape May

New Jersey is not known for its natural wonders and most non-birders would never consider this the place to go to enjoy nature. But they would be wrong! Cape May, NJ has been “the mecca” for both birds and expert birders for many decades now. Situated at the Southern tip of the state, Cape May is officially South of the Mason-Dixon line, a fact few know of (and which I wouldn’t believe were it not for the sign on the Garden State Parkway stating as such)! With the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Delaware Bay on the other, Cape May is a geographic choke point for migrating and vagrant birds. In spring, Cape May is often referred to as the “High Island” of the North, where in a single morning at dawn upwards of 100,000 migrating songbirds will make the jump across Delaware Bay and arrive at Higbee Beach. It’s the finest spot in the Eastern US for shorebird and passerine migration during April-May and August-October. No less than 36 species of Warblers are seen annually in Cape May, most in good numbers.

Cape May is also a year-round birding destination. In winter it’s home to hundreds of thousands of wintering geese and ducks, both fresh and saltwater, including sought-after species such as Common and King Eiders. Due to its unique geographical position jutting into the Atlantic, Cape May is, bar none, the finest rarity magnet in the continental US. Rarities have shown up in Cape May from more directions than seems possible. From Eurasia: Pink-footed and Barnacle Geese, Corn Crake, Northern Lapwing, Lesser Sand Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-neck and Little



**King Eider**  
photo Jon Isacoff



**Bell's Vireo**  
photo Jon Isacoff

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**Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:  
Wednesday, January 10 at 7:30 p.m. Social get-together at 7:00**

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Volume 26 Issue 55~ January 2018

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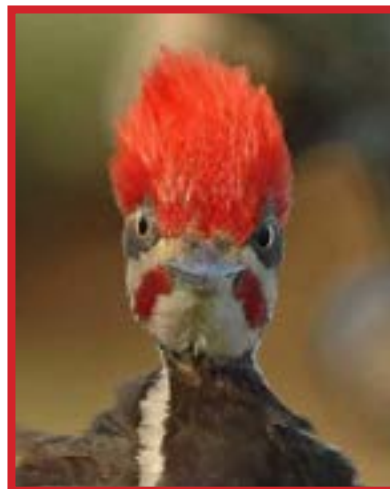
Alan McCoy [spokaneaudubon.org](http://spokaneaudubon.org)

Stints, and Black-headed and Black-tailed Gulls. Or from South America and the tropics: Masked Booby, White-tailed Tropicbird, Bridled, White-winged and Whiskered Terns, Sulphur-bellied and Fork-tailed Flycatchers, and Brown-chested Martin. It's almost boring to note rare visitors from the Western and Midwestern US, such as the lovely Bell's Vireo that over-wintered in 2011!

This presentation will focus on the birding – and, of course, the birds – of Cape May. The presentation will cover when to go, what to look for, some of the best hot-pots, and of course, LOTS of photos of the birds!

Dr. Jonathan B. Isacoff

Jon Isacoff is Professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies at Gonzaga University. Jon was the founding chair of the Environmental Studies Department at Gonzaga and served in that role from 2006 until 2015. He received his B.A. and M.P.A. from Cornell University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. Jon loves animals, with wings or without! He was the Spokane Audubon Field trip chair from 2009 to 2014 and served on the Board of the WA Ornithological Society (WOS) from 2012 to 2014. He is currently a reviewer for Cornell Lab or Ornithology's eBird citizen science project.



Police in Georgia have identified the culprit behind a recent wave of vandalized side-view car mirrors: a Pileated Woodpecker. When more than a dozen drivers in Snellville had their side mirrors smashed, suspicion initially fell on local kids. Police sent out extra patrols to the neighborhood. But then a local resident spotted the woodpecker furiously tapping at her car mirror, apparently because it mistook its reflection for a rival bird. "We suspect this case is solved," police said.

The Pygmy Owl deadline:  
January 22, 2018

# Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

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Snow, CBC's, Snow, winter finches. Tis' the season!  
All our winter birds are in, so go out and enjoy them  
(or find more). Happy holiday birding! Especially rare  
sightings are in bold/caps:

Red-breasted Merganser: Bayview (11/19-DW);  
Sandpoint (11/25-CL); Coeur D'Alene (11/25-CL); Wolf  
Lodge Bay (11/28-BK); Wawawai County Park (12/9-  
RB)

Pacific Loon: Coeur D'Alene (11/18-JC); Boundary  
Creek (11/24-CL)

Northern Goshawk: Steptoe Canyon (11/22-JI)

Mew Gull: Seven Bays (12/8-TL); Wolf Lodge Bay  
(12/18-JI)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Blue Creek Bay (11/25-CL)

Kumlien's Iceland Gull: Wolf Lodge Bay (12/18-JI and  
DW)

Glaucous Gull: Blue Creek Bay (11/25-CL); Wolf Lodge  
Bay (12/18-JI and DW)

Snowy Owl: Davenport (11/27-12/10-MC)

Anna's Hummingbird: Ephrata (11/18-12/17-MY)

Blue Jay: Hayden (11/21-JI and DW); Airway Heights  
(11/25-CM); Thompson Falls (12/2-JG)

Snow Bunting: Rathdrum (11/24-WY); Swanson Lakes  
(11/24-TL); Sprague (11/28-JI); Davenport (11/28-TO);  
Davenport (12/2-JK); Cashup (12/2-RB)

Swamp Sparrow: Moscow (12/2-CL)

Harris's Sparrow: Colville (11/8-11/19-WC); Mead  
(11/18-12/18-TL); Wilma (11/22-JI); Kettle Falls  
(11/22-DB); Harker Canyon (11/24-TL); Sandpoint  
(11/26-LL)

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch: Northrup Canyon (11/24-  
12/9-MY); Harline (12/9-MY); Colton (12/12-JI)

White-winged Crossbill: Mead (12/4-TL); Davenport  
(12/10-JI)

Pine Grosbeak: Steptoe Butte (11/22-RB) Kettle Falls  
(11/27-DB); Mt. Spokane (12/6-TL); Hawk Creek Can-  
yon (12/8-TL); Cusick (12/12-JS)

Common Redpoll: Too many sightings to count!

HOARY REDPOLL: Pullman (12/15-RB)

Observers: PA-Palouse Audubon; DB-Don Baker; MB-Mis-  
sy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MaB-Matt Bartels; 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; JG-Jim Greaves; 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; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; JK-Jeff Kleitzmann);  
RK-Russ Koppendrayer; LL-Linda Lamb; TL-Terry Little;  
CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; TM-Travis Mangi-  
one; 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



Hoary Redpoll  
© Bill McMullen

# Northern Pygmy-Owl

by Mary Jokela

Its tooting voice alerts us to this fierce and swift little owl...mainly single mellow toots with some paired notes monotonously repeated. Series of pattern and rate of delivery vary regionally.....from a two-ounce package!

The 7-inch Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*), our publication's namesake and logo, might not be the ideal feathery neighbor to many small birds. It inhabits open coniferous, mixed woods and wooded canyons with patches of brush. This aggressive predator perches on horizontal branches, hunts for small birds but eats many birds, also ground squirrels and rodents. When finding extra food, the Northern Pygmy-Owl (NPO) often caches its prey in tree cavities, or by hanging the prey on thorns, shrike-style. It has been known to attack and kill prey much larger than itself and to take prey as large as Mourning Doves, even chickens! In response, the small forest birds sound an excited alarm, scolding and mobbing this tiny owl, just as they would any larger owl.

The Interior NPO is grayer-brown overall than the Pacific NPO's dark brown, sports bold dark streaking of underparts, spotted crown, arched light "eyebrow" and distinctive black false eye spots bordered by white on the nape. Completing the ensemble: a relatively long tail with narrow white bars often flicked upwards and sideways when it perches. And its feet are zygodactyl (three toes forward, one back) the outer toe capable of pivoting back and forth, allowing its two feet to create a complete "web" of talons for efficient prey capture.

The NPO is diurnal, foraging most at dawn and dusk, a relatively noisy flier with audible whirring of wings. Silent flight is less important than for most other owls since many are nocturnal hunters and have furry indentations on the leading edge of flight feathers, which cushion the passing air in flight and mute the sound.

Probably solitary when not breeding, during breeding season NPOs likely bond monogamously although

sexual displays of owls generally are poorly known. The NPO nests in a tree cavity, old flicker or woodpecker hole, one clutch of two to seven glossy white eggs probably at one- to two-day intervals. Eggs are incubated 28 days by the female while the male delivers food to her beginning after the first or second egg is laid. At hatching nestlings are covered in white down, eyes closed. Young fledge within 27-28 days although young owls frequently leave the nest while still unable to fly and depend on adults for several weeks after fledging. Both parents provide care.

Northern Pygmy-Owls often move to lower elevations during winter and return upslope in spring. Their numbers are difficult to estimate because the birds are uncommon and hard to count with standardized surveys. Best estimates indicate NPO populations have been fairly constant over the last half-century, with possibly a small decline between 1966 and 2014 according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.



**Northern Pygmy Owl**  
photo Mary Jokela

## Calling all Waterfowl Counters

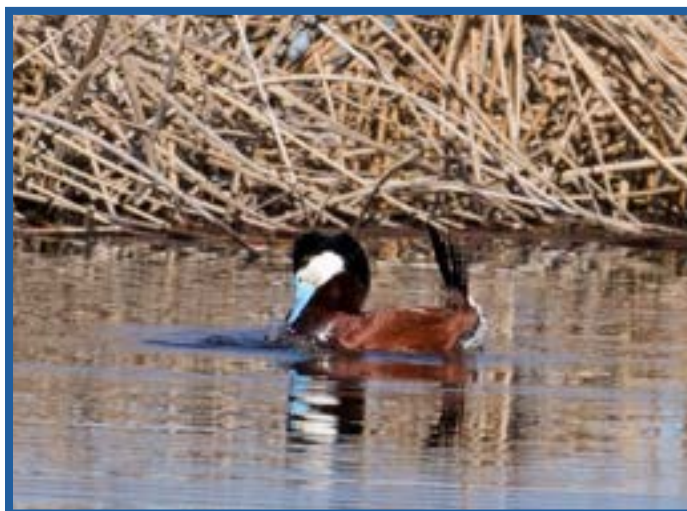
by Lindell Haggin

Become a volunteer counter of waterfowl this spring. Ducks Unlimited and Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife have been conducting waterfowl surveys in Eastern Washington for the past two years. They want to determine the utilization of the lakes and potholes by migrating waterfowl. Spokane Audubon is responsible for Reardan. The counts start in February and continue through April. This area takes about 1 1/2 hours to complete the count.

If you would like to donate more time, there are other count areas that require more time. The counts are done weekly. If you don't have a spotting scope, I can pair you up with someone who does. If you could help with even just a couple, that would be great. A wonderful way to do birding and contribute to our scientific knowledge. Contact Lindell Haggin at [lindell4118@comcast.net](mailto:lindell4118@comcast.net) or call 509-466-4118



**Northern Pintail**



**Ruddy Duck**



**Northern Shoveler**

All photos by Lindell Haggin

### SAS Programs 2018

2018	Speaker	Topic
10-Jan	Jon Isacoff	Birding Cape May
14-Feb	Kim Thorburn	Self-driven, Self-catered Western Kalahari Birding Tour
14-Mar	Carmen Yount (Jami Ostby Marsh)	Raptor Outreach program <b>ANNUAL MEETING</b>
11-Apr	Catherine Temple	Wildlife Photographer/Artist
9-May	Ron Force	Birding & Travels in Ethiopia
12-Sep	Lisa Langelier	TBA

# A Naturalist's Notes on Books: By Thomas Bancroft

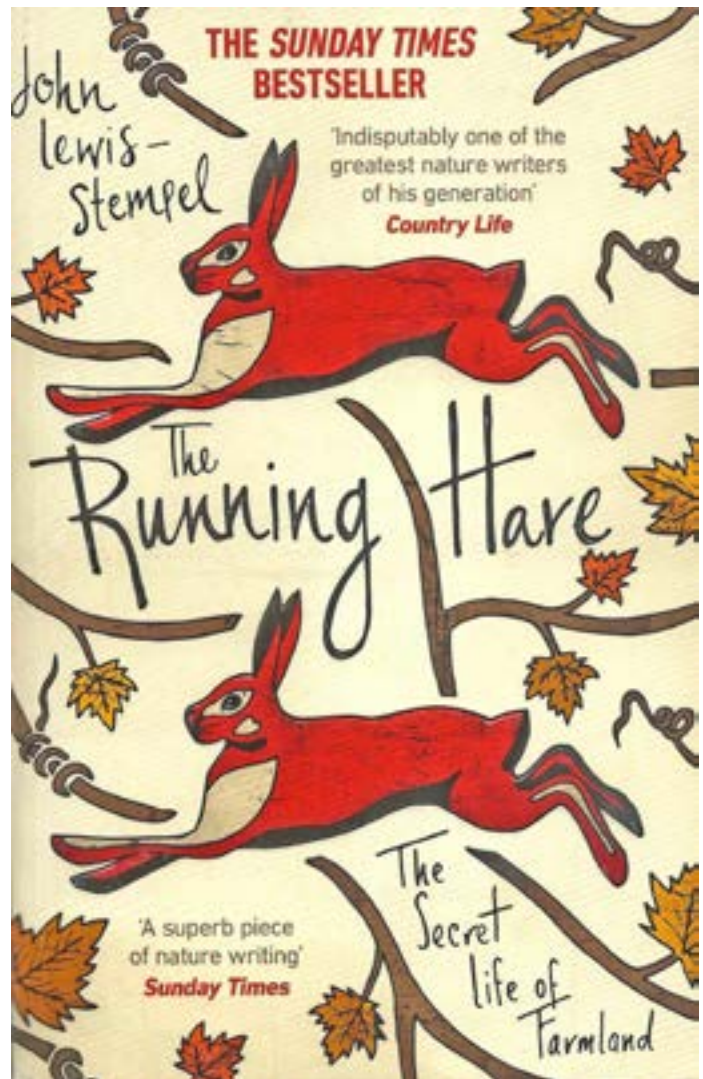
## Thoughts on "The Running Hare: The Secret Life of Farmland" by John Lewis-Stempel

The narrator begins the story by recounting three dreams, in one he comes eye to eye with a corn-crake. Populations of many British birds, wildlife, and flowers have plummeted in recent decades because of the change in agricultural practices, and corn-crakes disappeared entirely from Britain, except for a small reinstruction (sic). He then begins daydreaming about whether he could grow wheat in the old fashion way and see if these depressed species would flourish. John Lewis-Stempel is a writer and farmer but lives in the rocky terrain near the Welsh-England border, an area unsuitable for wheat growing. So he returns to his native and nearby Herefordshire to see if he can lease land. This book is a delightful account of his endeavor.

His first challenge is finding someone willing to rent him an arable field. The local farmers are afraid that he will introduce "Weeds" into their fields. Eventually, he does secure a parcel, and it is known locally as "Flinders." The book begins in January, and it is several months until he can plow and plant wheat. He moves some sheep onto the place and puts out a bird feeder. John then keeps track of the birds on his parcel and in the surrounding "Chemical Brothers" lands. At one point, he spots a covey of red-legged partridges in a field a few miles away and begins to ponder how he can entice these birds to move to his. He plows part of the field with his pony, then the rest with a small old tracker, plants wheat by hand and then wildflowers around the wheat and throughout the field, too. He often calls his crop "corn," and it turns out that in British English, "corn" can mean any type of grain. Later when the wheat has ripened, he rents a reaper-binder to harvest it into sheaves because this technique leaves a lot of seeds in the field. Eventually, he must replant the field into grass before his lease runs out.

Throughout the book, the narrator describes the changes in Flinders as the wheat grows and the flowers bloom. Birds, wildlife (including hares), bees, and toads return to the area, and he attempts, unsuccessfully, to keep foxes out of his wildlife sanctuary. His reflections are delightful; exploring the history of

the Herefordshire, previous farming techniques, and details of the birds and wildlife he observes. He muses about his childhood on a farm in Herefordshire. His writing is poetic, vivid and mesmerizing. If you like nature writing, this is a fascinating story. I felt like I had been to Flinders and recorded a pretty sizable bird list by the time I finished reading.



## Upcoming Field Trips

December 30, 2017, Saturday Christmas Bird Count  
Leader: Alan McCoy

All are invited to participate, including new birders and those living inside the circle who can only watch their feeders at home. So join the Spokane Christmas count! The Spokane Count Circle is a 15 mile diameter circle centered at 47° 43' N and 117° 25' W (approximately Division St. and Francis Avenue). Please contact Alan McCoy (509-448-3123 or ahm2352@gmail.com) for information about the Spokane CBC.

## Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Welcome to our new nester, Kathy Harris. Many thanks to our returning nesters: Jim Acton, Megan & John Bastow, Marlene & Bob Cashen, Chester Caskey, Nona Damiano, Mary Kay Eddy, Earl & Marilyn Elias, Chris Flanagan, Jim & Bea Harrison, Ann Hurst, Carla Joyal & Family, Rymii Kaio, Jerry & Jennifer King, Susan King, Thomas & Frances Light, Christy & Steven Meltzer, John Scott & Kaye Bartholomew, Terry & Linda Vanhoozer, Sylvia Wilson. 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.

### 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  
**Spokane Audubon Society**  
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 Spokane, WA 99209-9820  
 (509) 838-5828

January 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**

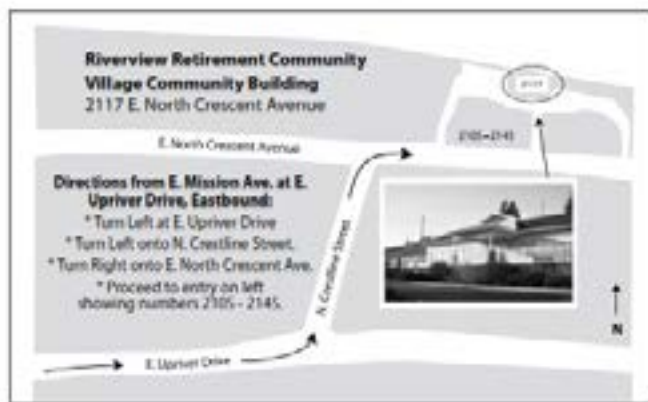
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

**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

