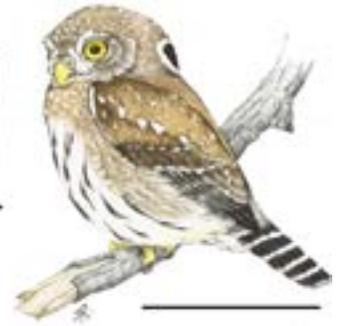


Volume 27  
Issue 61  
Oct. 2018

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## Fire Ecology of Inland Northwest Forests

Presented by Art Zack

As long as vegetation has existed on the surface of the earth, fire has also been present. Every vegetation type has its natural fire regimes. Beginning with the basic fire ecology of Inland Northwest forests, and how native species are adapted to these fire regimes, we'll discuss changing human expectations from our forests and their fire regimes. We'll further discuss how local fire regimes have changed as a result of both natural forces and human action, and we'll introduce ideas about how we might respond to both the historic fire regimes and the changes we've seen.

Proscribed burns rid forests of underbrush which feeds fires. The first picture is from Turnbull NWR (photo by USF&WS). The second is a painting by Frederick Remington showing early Native Americans looking very much like the firecrew.



**Fire in North Idaho**  
photo by Art Zack



Art Zack worked for U.S. Forest Service (1975-2015) as an ecologist, forester, and firefighter. First 2 years were on a Regional Fire Crew; last 10 years were as Forest Ecologist, Forest Silviculturist, and Botany Program Manager for Idaho Panhandle Natl. Forest. Involved in fire management throughout career. Education: 1994: Ph.D. - Forestry, Wildlife, & Range Sciences; University of Idaho (focus on forest ecology with research on fire history and forest succession).

# The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26 Issue 62~ Oct. 2018

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

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### Programs

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### Pygmy Owl

Joanne Powell [jopowell39@aol.com](mailto:jopowell39@aol.com)

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October Pygmy Owl  
Deadline October 20th

# Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Mary Benham, Harold & Karen Cottet, Brent & Vicki Egesdal, Sally English, Russell & Marion Frobe, Patricia & Gerald Johnson, Mary Jokela, Brenda Klohe, Hans & Katie Krauss, Bud & Roxanne McCormack, Mike & Eileen McFadden, Hank Nelson, Mary Porter, James & Mary Prudente, Theresa Puthoff & Larry Deaver, Jan & Ed Reynolds, Dave & Annie Sanders, Pam Wolfrum, and Tina Wynecoop.

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](mailto:davep_acer@msn.com). Legibility is critical. I cannot make out correctly some Email addresses.

## Pygmy Owl Preference

by Mary Jokela

We're pleased to share SAS news about events and issues via both online at our website and/or the hard printed copy, hold-it-in-your-hands newsletter. I confess reading it cover-to-cover mostly when it's on the kitchen counter direct from the roadside mailbox, feels like a personal connection to folks with shared birdy and conservation values.

Still, if we're to equip values with legs, we need to consider ensuring an ever-decreasing carbon footprint: less paper, ink, chemicals, power usage...we acknowledge this. But I further confess my preference for the hard copy, at least partly because of vision issues. Other NGOs express similar footprint concerns, and I'm frankly disappointed to hear it, acknowledging the world's changing "temperature" and that I'd better cope with increased electronic instead of paper newsletters.

Finally, though, we want to know your preference: how are you most likely to read the Pygmy Owl? Online? Or in printed newsletter? We look forward to accommodating either. So please advise Dave at [davep\\_acer@msn.com](mailto:davep_acer@msn.com) if you'd prefer the printed version.

# Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

The peak of migration had a focal point and it was: Potholes State Park, where an incredible showing of rare birds appeared during the first 10 days of September. Several were the first sightings in WA this year and I believe one was a Grant County first! As we move on into latter fall migration, look for BIG numbers of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows. Always check for the rare or late warbler or other less typical sparrows. You never know when the fun rare or unexpected other bird will be in the pack! Soon waterfowl will return to our lakes and ponds in huge numbers. Always fun to see the mass migration of these magnificent flyers. Especially rare sightings are noted below in CAPS.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Boundary Creek WMA (9/8-CL)

Anna's Hummingbird: Moscow (9/18-CL)

Black-bellied Plover: Swanson Lakes (9/1-TL)

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER: Potholes SP (9/9-EP); Kettle Falls (9/18-DB)

Semipalmated Plover: Colville (8/15-TL); Eloika Lake (8/18-TL); Saltese (8/27-TO); Moscow (9/3-CL); Mill Canyon (9/13-JI)

Sanderling: Usk (8/31-TL); Swanson Lakes (9/1-TL); Potholes SP (9/3-MY)

Sabine's Gull: Soap Lake (9/12-MY); Sprague (9/15-TL); Kettle Falls (9/18-DB);

Common Tern: Potholes SP (8/29-SC); Usk (8/31-TL); Sandpoint (9/9-CL); Soap Lake (9/13-MY); Sprague (9/14-JI); Lyons Ferry (9/18-RK); Kettle Falls (9/19-RK)

PARASITIC JAEGER: Potholes SP (9/3-MY)

Northern Goshawk: Mead (8/28-TL)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Kettle Falls (8/22-WC); Diamond Lake (8/25-TB); Colville (9/11-RL)

American Three-toed Woodpecker: Bunchgrass Meadows (8/17-TL); Round Lake SP (8/24-AM)

White-winged Crossbill: Bunchgrass Meadows (8/17-TL); Smith Creek (8/22-FF); Mirror Lake (9/7-CH); Beehive Lake (9/9-CL)

Pine Grosbeak: Bunchgrass Meadows (8/17-TL)

Lesser Goldfinch: Saltese (9/14-JI)

Golden Crowned Sparrow: Sprague (9/14-JI)

TENNESSE WARBLER: Warden (9/14-MY)

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER: Lyons Ferry (9/8-MH); Potholes SP (9/5-MY)

BLACKPOLL WARBLER: Potholes SP (9/5-MY)

MAGNOLIA WARBLER: Potholes SP (9/6-MY)

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER: Potholes SP (9/5-MY)

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; HD-Haley Davis; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; LG-Larry Goodhew; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; FH-Fran Haywood; DH-Dave Holick; MH-Michael Hobbs; CH-Carrie Hugo; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; RK-Russ Koppendrayner; RL-Richard Laubach; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Curtis Mahon; AM-Alan McCoy; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O'Brien; EP-Edward Pullen; JR-Jan Reynolds; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; NT-Norma Trefry; DW-Doug Ward; NW-Nancy Williams; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young



**Black-throated Gray Warbler**  
© Glenn Bartley



**Magnolia Warbler**  
© David Turgeon



**Blackpoll Warbler**  
© Nick Saunders



# The Wings of a Turkey Vulture

Kim Thorburn

Three young Turkey Vultures huddled on the high branches of a Ponderosa pine snag while two adults and another youngster soared lazily above in the thermal eddies off the basalt wall. The hesitants appeared recently fledged. I always imagine a reluctance of fledges of any species to entirely trust their sturdy flight appendages. It often seems that close-by adults are trying to show them the ropes.

The three treed Turkey Vultures were smaller than adults and their faces were black. These features are not easily detected in soaring birds. Even so, adults and juveniles are distinguishable in flight because adults almost always have at least one wing primary that appears missing or shortened. Turkey Vultures depend on long-range flight for foraging and are also long-distance migrants. Intact wing feathers are essential for survival. Feather wear requires replacement through molt. Because birds so reliant on flight cannot afford to miss too many wing feathers at once, Turkey Vultures (and raptors) tend to exchange one primary at a time. Since it can take up to a year to grow a nearly foot-long primary feather, there almost always appears to be a feather missing.

In contrast, the wings of juvenile Turkey Vultures look neat and complete. Wing feathers are spared in the juvenal molt to give the new fliers the advantage of a full set of feathers.



**Turkey Vultures**  
photo by Kim Thorburn



**Juvenile Turkey Vulture**  
photo © Tony Takes

# WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

Jan Reynolds

On Sunday, Sept 6th, Ed and I took a late day ride to Sprague Lake to look for rabbitbrush in bloom and early fall migrants in the grasses and shrubs. As we turned down the boat launch road, we saw bird movement in a hawthorn tree. I was sure they were White-crowned Sparrows, dusky in their first-year plumage and silhouetted in the tangle of foliage. I hoped to get better views. Down by the water white-crowns were busy in the shrubs. Finally, one perched out in the open where I could see his handsome, perky crown of dark chestnut brown and creamy white stripes. His long tail, pinkish yellow bill, pearly gray throat and breast, and buffy flanks were distinctive, and his brown wings had two rows of white dotted wing bars. So good to see them again!

At home the next day I saw white-crowns in our own yard shrubs, about eight immatures and one lovely adult with a bold black and white crown and gray cheeks. White-crowns look for the safety of brush tangles mixed with open grassy areas for foraging. They liked the mock orange and ninebark at the edge of our yard, hopping through the low foliage, then flying to the area by the bird bath where we scatter food for ground feeding birds, chick scratch for the quail, and wild bird seed mix for the sparrows, juncos and finches. White-crowns, like towhees, like to hop-scratch to turn over leaves. In spring they feed their young insects, and during the summer they supplement their grass and weed seed diet with caterpillars, wasps, small berries and grains. Listen for their call, a sharp “peent,” as they forage and feed. Sometimes one will even sing a quiet little winter song! This is most likely a female contesting a winter food source.

Alaskan white-crowns migrate 2,600 miles to winter in southern California, and possibly some of those are our white-crown migrants. Look closely, though. You could also find a near look-alike along woodland edges and in your yard: a white-throated sparrow. About a quarter inch smaller than a white-crown and stockier, this rusty-winged sparrow can have a black and white crown, too, and it also sports a yellow lore spot above the eye and dark bill. It also has a lovely bright white throat contrasting with a deep gray neck and breast. Another color

morph of the white throat is the “tan-stripe,” with tan and black replacing the black and white on the crown. Both of these white-throat color morphs can be found in a flock of white crowns or alone at your feeder. We’ve had two tan-stripes and one white stripe in the many years we’ve lived here. The “white-stripe” gave us the gift of song when he stayed till spring!

One interesting note: At the end of summer, pairs of white-crowned sparrows break up and winter separately, but next spring they will reform on their nesting territory.



Juvenile White-crowned Sparrow  
Adult White-crowned Sparrow  
photos by Lindell Haggin



# Lincoln's Sparrow

by Tom Bancroft

The crisp morning air, maybe in the low 40s, gave the June morning freshness as I hiked along the trail by Lower Tiffany Lake. Tall living lodgepole pines and Engelmann spruce dotted the shoreline while straight skeletons of burnt trees rose above sapling pines and spruce on the slope above the trail. I had not heard an airplane or car motor since my buddy and I left Winthrop early on the previous day to head north into the Okanogan National Forest. This lake was more than an hour drive from any human habitation and quite a ways back from the nearest dirt road. The sun had not yet crested Rock Mountain to the east and the water, flat as glass, reflected the granite ridge on the west side. A bird sang, and my first thought was House Wren, but then I paused to look back and forth across this area, mumbling, "Not the right habitat, too high in altitude and the wrong plant community."

The song was bubbly, a jumble of trills, often husky in nature, lower in pitch, then going up, before coming back down. It was a musical song that seemed to have gurgles, trills, and buzzes. After ten minutes of searching, I found the bird sitting about eight feet up on an Engelmann spruce that grew right along the lake's bank.

<https://soundcloud.com/tom-bancroft-2/lisp810>

A small plump sparrow with crisp streaks, a gray face and buff wash across the breast, and when it moved, its unmarked white belly flashed briefly. A Lincoln's Sparrow was defending its territory with a

beautiful song and sitting prominently in plain sight. I had only seen this species outside of the breeding season, when they tend to be secretive, skulking through thick brush, often by themselves or with just a few other sparrows. The last time I saw one, it appeared at the edge of a brier patch for only a second before disappearing back into the thicket.

I found half dozen more Lincoln's Sparrows along the eastern shore of Tiffany Lake. All of them were in the narrow boggy strip between the trail and the lake. They like wet areas with a thick cover of bushes and small trees. In 1833, John James Audubon discovered this species in Labrador and named it after his traveling buddy, Thomas Lincoln. These birds nest in montane forests of the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains and throughout the boreal forest of Canada and Alaska. Unlike the Song Sparrow, their song repertoire varies little across their range. Humans in the United States seem to have a more diverse dialect than these guys.

It was almost 7 AM when I turned to hurry back to camp, hoping my buddy was starting to stir; we had stayed up until 2 AM watching the half-moon rise over this wilderness valley and set behind the granite cliffs. The shadows, reflections, and winnowing snipe had kept our attention. He would be envious of my discovery. Lincoln's Sparrows are one of the more elusive of North American birds. Audubon had commented, "We found more wildness in this species than in any other inhabiting the same country."



# *Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week*



*with a Community Work Day  
at Turnbull National  
Wildlife Refuge!*



**RAIN or SHINE**



Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, Spokane Audubon Society and Friends of Turnbull will host a community work party on Saturday, October 13, 2018. This is part of an ongoing community effort to restore native riparian habitat to benefit birds and other wildlife species. We have hundreds of native saplings to plant and fencing to erect to protect the trees from deer, elk and moose browsing.

**Attention Groups: Please call in advance to register.** It helps us in our planning if we know how many are coming. The Refuge will also host a “potluck” lunch. Friends of Turnbull will provide hamburgers, hotdogs and vegetarian alternatives. Please feel free to bring your favorite dish. Ask for Sandy (509) 559-3034.

**Planting Time:** 9 am to 12 p.m.

**When:** Saturday, October 13, 2018

**Lunch:** Potluck 12 p.m. (Friends of Turnbull will supply the hamburgers, veggie burgers and hotdogs)

**Where:** Turnbull NWR Headquarters, 5 miles south of Cheney on Cheney-Plaza Road: turn left on Smith Road and drive 2 miles on gravel road to headquarters.

**Clothing:** Long-sleeved shirt, work pants, gloves, sturdy boots or shoes.

**Equipment:** (If you can) shovels and pliers.

*Everyone is Welcome!*



## Fall Activities

### Turnbull NWR Fall Planting Event

Planting Time: 9 am to 12 p.m.

When: Saturday, October 13, 2018

Lunch: Potluck 12 p.m.

(Friends of Turnbull will supply the hamburgers, veggie burgers and hotdogs)

Where: Turnbull NWR Headquarters

Everyone is welcome!



## Audubon Pygmy Owl T-shirts

Last spring I acted on a wish from a few members and set up with Wild Rose Graphics to do a run of SAS t-shirts. I have about 18 orders and could use a few more (more volume = less cost).

Logo: our traditional mascot. Colors available: natural, grey, tan, yellow; short or long-sleeve or sweat-shirt; sizes: S,M,L, or XL. Prices from about \$15 for short-sleeved T to about \$25 for a sweatshirt.

For those who ordered early, I want to get this order out by the Nov. meeting so you have until Oct. 10th to add your name and preferences to my list. My e-mail: jbalonso3@msn.com

### 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\_acer@msn.com, or 413-1524.



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

October 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**

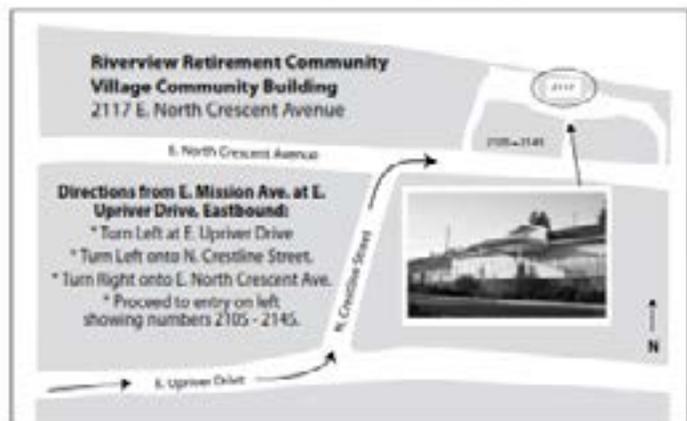
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

**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

