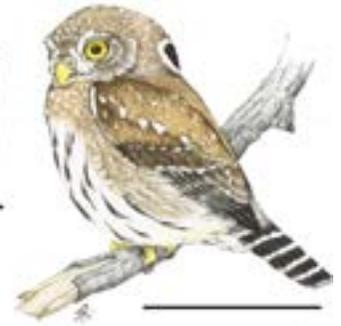


The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26
Issue 61
Sept. 2018

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Toxics in the Spokane River

by Lee First

Toxics in the Spokane River: Where do they come from and what hazards do they pose? What can citizens do to prevent pollution?

This presentation will discuss pollution from legacy mining in the Silver Valley, industrial pollution that caused PCB discharges, storm water pollution and treatment. Information will be provided about which consumer products contain PCBs.



Stormwater outfalls contribute to the PCB load in the Spokane River.

Photo: Spokane Riverkeeper Website

The Waterkeeper movement was started by a band of blue-collar fishermen on New York's Hudson River in 1966 because industrial polluters were destroying their way of life. Their tough, grassroots brand of environmental activism sparked the Hudson's miraculous recovery and inspired others to launch Waterkeeper groups around the world.

Today, Waterkeeper Alliance unites more than 300 Waterkeeper Organizations and Affiliates that are on the frontlines of the global water crisis, patrolling and protecting more than 2.5 million square miles of rivers, lakes and coastal waterways on six continents.



Hecla Mining superfund site

Photo © Samir Arora

By profession, Lee First is a wetland biologist. After spending 25 years climbing mountains, she switched to sea kayaking as many stretches of the Alaska's inside passage as possible. As the former North Sound Baykeeper in northwest Washington, Lee has been involved with the Waterkeeper movement for over 10 years. While working in western Washington, she patrolled all the lowland streams and northern Puget Sound shorelines with canoes and kayaks. Her specialties include storm water management and best management practices to prevent storm water pollution.

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 26 Issue 61~ Sept. 2018

The Pygmy Owl, the newsletter of the Spokane Audubon Society, is published monthly, September through June.

Spokane Audubon Society

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Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through August 20, 2018:

A big welcome to our new nesters: Autumn Denyou, Wanda Peters, Tim Tapley, Rodney Thompson and Family!

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Maria Caprile, Buck and Sandy Domitrovich, Barbara Lindsey, Brian and Beth Miller, Dave Plemons, Delores Schwindt, Debbie Stempf, and Steven Thompson

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. I cannot make out correctly some Email addresses.

Toxic Talks and Tours

brought to you by the Spokane Riverkeeper and the Gonzaga University Environmental Law and Land Use Clinic

Toxic Talk #1: Getting the Lead Out: 30 years of education and remediation in the Silver Valley

When: Noon – 1:30pm, August 28th

Where: Magic Lantern Theater, 25 W Main #125

Toxic Talk #2: Scenic Beauty and Superfund -- the Life and Times of Coeur d'Alene Lake.

When: October 2, noon – 1:30.

Where: TBD

Craig Cooper, a Limnologist for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

Questions? Contact Lee First
Education and Outreach Coordinator
Center for Justice
Spokane Riverkeeper
(509) 835-5211

October Pygmy Owl
Deadline September 20th

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Where did summer go? June had a few nice rarities that showed up. An unprecedented two Alder Flycatchers were present, singing on territory in our region and a 3rd probable individual was also in Skagit Co. in Western Washington. Is there movement of the species or were just more eyes looking in suitable habitats? Joining these were a pair of slightly less rare but no less special Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. As we enter into the 5th season -- "Smoke Season" -- birds are on the move again. Presently, shorebird migration is in full force and passerines will be soon to follow! Especially rare sightings are in all caps.

Ross's Goose: Rock Lake (6/23-RB)

White-faced Ibis: Wilson Creek (6/3-MY); Sprague (6/8-JI)

Great Egret: Nine Mile Falls (7/14-eBird); Philleo Lake (8/8-JI)

Northern Goshawk: Mt. Spokane (7/22-TO)

Semipalmated Plover: Rock Lake (6/9-RB); Swanson Lakes (7/28-KT); Colville (7/30-WC and DB); Turnbull NWR (8/5-eBird)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Mt. Spokane (7/16-HD); Togo Mountain (7/24-JI); Bonner's Ferry (7/30-eBird)

ALDER FLYCATCHER: West Side Road (6/12-AH); Usk (6/18-JI)

Least Flycatcher: West Plains (5/21-TO); Riverside SP (5/27-KT); Turnbull NWR (7/29-eBird)

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER: Bonner's Ferry (6/8-RD)

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER: Ephrata (5/24-MY)

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK: Sandpoint (6/10-8/5-FF); Deer Park (6/22-CM)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE: Sprague (5/29-LG)

Lesser Goldfinch: Spokane Valley (6/20-7/20-MC)



Alder Flycatcher
Audubon

Observers: SA-Spokane Audubon; DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MaB-Matt Butler; CB-Carl Barrentine; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; MaC-Marlene Cashen; JC-Jonathan Creel; SC-Stacy Crist; 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; JI-Jon Isacoff; CJ-Craig Johnson; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; RK-Russ Koppendrayner; GL-Greg Lambeth; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; TM-Travis Mangione; CM-Curtis Mahon; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O'Brien; EP-Eric Pratt; ER-Eric Rassmussen; JR-Jan Reynolds; JR-Jethro Runco; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; RT-Rex Takasugi; NT-Norma Trefry; SW-Sarah Walker; DW-Doug Ward; NW-Nancy Williams; JW-Janis Woolbright; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young

HawkFest 2018
Pateros, WA (City Park), Saturday,
September 15, 2018; 8:00 am – 3:00 p.m.

Join the Chelan and Entiat Ranger Districts, North Central Washington Audubon Society, and Hawkwatch International this fall for the ninth annual HawkFest! This family event combines free activities in Pateros Memorial Park with trips to Chelan Ridge to learn about and celebrate raptors as they journey to winter territories. At the park, participants will find vendors, live raptors, interpretive booths, and projects for kids.

On Thursday night, September 13th in Chelan, and Friday night, September 14th in Pateros, Dr. Dave Oleyar from Hawkwatch International will offer a workshop on raptor migration and field identification. He will also highlight his research on Flammulated Owls.

The trip to and from Chelan Ridge lasts 4 hours and includes seeing banded raptors released.

From 8 AM to noon, there will be a field trip to Wells Wildlife Refuge.

More information and on-line registration for the trip to Chelan Ridge, the Wells Wildlife field trip, and the two workshops is available at www.ncwaudubon.org.



Chelan Ridge
© 2014 HawkWatch International

Spokane Audubon
2019 Calendars



They're here! The 2019 SAS calendars are almost ready and will be available for sale at the Sept. 12th meeting.

Spokane Audubon Society

Robin Nests
Here, there, everywhere!

Here are two pictures of American Robins. They nested on a pronghorn skull outside our workshop and fledged three young.

from Lisa Langelier



Best Bird(s) of the Summer

by Joyce Alonso

Summer? What summer? You know,.. before the smog smothered all birding plans...! I asked some fellow Auduboners...re e-mail...what bird they had most enjoyed seeing during this time of our meeting hiatus. Since I received comparatively few replies, I suspect that some of them (people, not birds) are off vacationing where there is less smoke...maybe on the East Coast somewhere. Oh, no...they're contending with floods! Whatever!

Here are the responses...sometimes in their words, sometimes in mine.

From Ann Brinly: I went to Lindell Haggin's and watched the Vaux Swift show...with Jenny Michaels. We arrived at about 7 pm, their previous "show time" and observed them circling overhead. Finally, at 8:15 the spectacle began. The swifts began diving at an unbelievable speed down into the tiny (8" by 8") chimney of Lindell's home. In about 30 seconds our show ended. We'd counted about 80 birds. We marveled at how they made the descent so incredibly quickly without collisions. What a wonderful way to spend a summer evening!

From Lindell Haggin: My best bird was a pair of Eared Grebes. They both were diving down and gathering tidbits for their three fluffy young. The adults gently touched the beak of the young with the food, and it was transferred quickly to the hungry ball of fluff. When I looked up a few minutes later, the young had climbed up on one parent's back. The other adult continued to dive and bring up goodies for them. The adults were dressed in their best finery, a very handsome family.

Alan McCoy dropped by my house and waxed enthusiastic about his "crop" of Western Bluebirds this summer. He not only puts out and monitors the nest boxes, but provides meals...meal worms, that is. He was pleased to have gotten three successful broods this year. Since W. Bluebirds usually lay a 5-egg clutch, that's 15 new beauties for our area! I wasn't quite so successful. Of the 25 boxes on the two Turnbull trails that I monitor, we had two occupied by Western Bluebirds, the rest, by Tree Swallows. The first batch of babies in both boxes did fine and are now flying around somewhere in the area; however, when I took my granddaughter to check on the second brood (only in one nest), we found them...

almost ready to fledge...but dead. I don't know if a predator got the parents or if it was the heat!

Fran Haywood had a hard time deciding...so I let her tell me about two. First, apparently she and several other local birders, including Curtis Mahon, found one...or more?...Semi-palmated Plovers at Turnbull. I'm not clear about the location...which lake(s)...but it/they were seen and enjoyed by several of our members. Fran also went to Ron Dexter's great bird habitat at his invitation to witness the antics of the baby Soras at his pond. I consider that really special. I have enough trouble just finding the occasional adult Sora!

When I asked Mary Jokela, she was a little hesitant in her reply...."well, the robins"... True, they are one of our most common backyard birds, but I have seen far fewer of them this year and so had she. Apparently, there also was trouble at her place.... seems that the offspring of the local pair in her yard kept falling out of the nest prematurely and being consumed...by cats or other predators.... Then a few days ago she had a brief, but satisfying visit from a flock of about 40 who came to check the grounds for edibles...worms and such. So we'll continue to have some of our favorite thrush variety around in the coming year.

Sally English confirmed what I already suspected from our South Dakota trip. We had a great time and saw quite a few birds, although few of our "target" ones. However, I'd promised her an Upland Sandpiper so I was very pleased when one obligingly posed on a fencepost as we entered the Badlands area and gave us a great look...the only one of the trip! So her "Best Bird" was a lifer.

As for me...I was thinking about the Wilson's Phalarope on the "Dike" pond that I was able to introduce to my Turnbull class...or the group of White Pelicans on Yellowstone Lake that Sally and I saw conducting their fishing circle maneuver to catch lunch. I almost forgot that I had gotten a lifer this summer, too, the first in the Western US in some time! My brother Bob and I spent a week in late May in Yosemite (BF...before the fire). We hunted all week for my target and finally got it the day we were leaving...a beautiful male Hermit Warbler!

I suspect that I may hear some grumbling from those who were out of town or didn't read their e-mail this weekend. So...if you send it to me, I'll include your "Best Bird" in the next edition (Oct.) of the newsletter.

The Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Is Up-listed

Kim Thorburn

The Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*), once the most numerous upland bird game species in Washington, was up-listed to state endangered in August 2018. The Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse is the rarest of six extant subspecies of Sharp-tailed Grouse. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission first listed the bird as threatened in 1998. A recovery plan was adopted in 2012 but recovery efforts long preceded the plan's finalization.

As the state's Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse population declined throughout the 20th century, the state periodically limited and closed hunting seasons. The last season was 1987. However, the reason for the bird's wane is loss of habitat. A shrub-steppe prairie obligate, much of its historic range in the state has been converted to cropland.

Population estimates put the number of Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse in Washington as fewer than 700. They exist in small, isolated pockets of Okanogan, Grant, and Lincoln Counties and the Colville Confederated Tribes reservation. Each sub-population contains fewer than 200 birds, the minimum number projected necessary to be sustainable.

Recovery has focused on population augmentation using birds translocated from healthier out-of-state populations, and habitat restoration using farm bill conservation programs with cooperating private

landowners and grants and mitigation funding on public and reservation lands. The population initially stabilized as recovery work began in the early part of this century. The extensive wild fires of 2015 impacted large swaths of existing habitat and again accelerated the population decline.

The process to up-list the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse began in 2015 with the development of a periodic status report. The report noted that the recovery plan called for up-listing the bird when its state population fell to 450. However, public input, including testimony from Washington Audubon and various Audubon chapters, noted that the grouse only survives in currently unsustainable, isolated population pockets, signifying that it faces imminent threat of extirpation. The testimony influenced the commission's August decision.

The Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse is not federally listed. A state listing does not have the legal weight of the Endangered Species Act. However, federal farm bill conservation and grant programs are essential to protection and recovery of its habitat in the state. The up-listing should bring greater urgency to these programs. Population augmentation remains an essential strategy. The recovery plan is also under review in an attempt to identify additional management activities to support the survival of the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse in Washington.



Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse
photo by Kim Thorburn

Bluebirds Back Home - Nesting 2018

by Alan McCoy

It was mid-March and my bluebirds were back, checking out their old homestead. A pair of Western Bluebirds had settled quickly on the middle of my three bluebird boxes. It was still too early to begin nest building but they at least had staked their claim.

A couple of weeks passed and I noticed an unfriendly chirp as I went out for my morning walk. Looking over, I spotted a male House Sparrow, mortal enemy of bluebirds, sitting on top of the bluebird box that had been claimed already. "Not good," I muttered to myself. Upon opening the box, I found a male bluebird. A very dead bluebird, and likely dead at the beak of the House Sparrow I had just chased off. Not good indeed!

I will not let House Sparrows nest in my yard. I monitored all the boxes and foiled any and all attempts they made. Or so I thought. At some point, after time had apparently gotten away from me and my attention wandered, I opened the north box and discovered a full nest with 5-6 eggs. Brown speckled, definitely not bluebird eggs, nor a bluebird style nest. "Busy little pests!" I muttered (I seem to mutter a lot). A female HOSP was scolding nearby as I dumped her nest out of the box and stepped on it. Like I said, I will not let these birds nest on my property. This ultimately frustrated the little buggers and they did not come back to bother my birds any more this year.

Fast forward to May and I was happy to see that a pair of Tree Swallows had claimed the middle box. This was the first time that I have had any Tree Swallows in one of my boxes on this property. TRES are fierce defenders of their nest. Experts say that you can pair boxes together and Tree Swallows will defend their nest as well as neighboring bluebirds from intruders. I haven't seen that, but I did notice that the swallows were very active and attentive to their home.

About the same time as the swallows were building their nest another bluebird pair started to build a nest in the south box. Both of these nests were successful. I have other boxes scattered around and these too were claimed by House Wren, Pygmy Nuthatches and White-breasted Nuthatches. The bluebird pair raised two successful broods this year. Here they are enjoying some mealworms:



Young Western Bluebirds: Yummy breakfast!
photo by Alan McCoy



Tree Swallows. Photo by Meryl Lorenzo



White-breasted Nuthatch. Where's mine?
photo by Alan McCoy

Upcoming Field Trips

September 15, 2018, Saturday

Mount Spokane Selkirk Lodge Trip

Leader: Halley Davis

This is a 2-4 mile walking trip along a set of groomed trails placed near the Selkirk Lodge. This is an easy to moderate hike. We will be going through a variety of habitat from dense forest to open fields. The Selkirk Lodge is about 30 miles northeast of downtown Spokane. We will meet at the Yokes Fresh Market on E Mt Spokane Park Dr @ 10:00 a.m. We will then proceed to drive to the Selkirk Lodge, where we will begin the hike. Plan to be out from approximately 10:00 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Please call or text Halley Davis at (509) 714-9121. Or email at mountainsnbooks@gmail.com if you have any questions, or would like to sign up.

Target Species: Northern Goshawk, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Pacific Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Red Crossbill, Yellow-Rumped and Townsend's warbler, Western Tanager, Steller's Jay, Nuthatches, and Chickadees.

Leaders Needed

Here are some potential trip locations:

Iller Creek – This is a fantastic birding area. Go early (6 am) before the dogs and bikes crowd the trail.

Liberty Lake County Park – This, too, is a wonderful place for flycatchers, vireos and warblers.

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

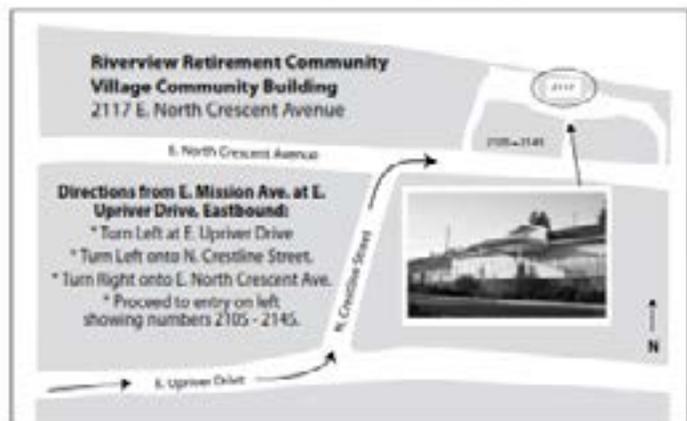
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

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

