

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 32
Issue 4
Dec. 2023

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Dec. 13, 2023 7:00 p.m.

This meeting will be a “hybrid” – you can attend in-person at the Finch Arboretum, 3404 W. Woodland Blvd. (off Sunset Hwy., just west of downtown Spokane), in the Ponderosa Room of the Woodland Center, or you can attend virtually on-line via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87243124261?pwd=NE5GR2lXSTBkSFhXN29lZ3MwTUtvZz09>

Meeting ID: 872 4312 4261 Passcode: 394292

North Central Washington Audubon's American Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring Program

presented by Kent Woodruff, Richard Scranton and Stu Smith

Three members of the North Central Washington (NCW) Audubon chapter will talk about their American Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring Program that currently involves dozens of volunteers and over 180 nest boxes, primarily in the Waterville Plateau area of Douglas County.



Kestrel Box
by Pat Leigh

Kent Woodruff is a retired wildlife biologist who spent most of his 43-year career contributing to public land stewardship in several Western states. His interest in raptors was one way he focused his pursuit of partnerships, mentoring, and environmental education to generate lasting conservation benefit.

Richard Scranton has served on the NCW Audubon Chapter's board for the past 10 years and is the chair for the Community Science and Leavenworth BirdFest projects.

Stu Smith is a bird enthusiast who serves as the kestrel project's data scientist.

The nest box program is officially called the Richard Kendrick Kestrel Conservation Project in memory of local birder Richard Kendrick (1942 – 2020)

who earned the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Volunteer of the Year award in 2006 for his years of work building, installing and maintaining nest boxes for kestrels and wood ducks in Douglas County, and for banding hundreds of baby kestrels and other raptors.

Kent, Richard and Stu will explain more about that history and program goals to contribute to the productivity and population stabilization of kestrels in north central Washington, to engage volunteers in gathering and sharing data useful to science, and to cooperate with researchers in a study of this population of kestrels. Over the next several years they plan to install a total of about 250 nest boxes in the project area, which is mostly treeless but has lots of mice for prey.



Kestrel Chicks
by Pat Leigh

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Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status October 20, 2023 through November 20, 2023:

Welcome and thanks to our **new members**:

Individual: Jodie Buehler, Sarah Duncan, Barbara Nicolai, Barbara Jordan

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

Individual: George Saylor

Family: Liz Deniro & Paul Swetik, Michael Shauvin & Family, Theresa Puthoff & Larry Deaver, Jane Beaven & Dan Finn, Jerry & Jennifer King, Steven Siegfried

Supporting: Vicki Egisdal

Contributing: John Stuart & Carol Mack

If you change your email address, please send your new email address to me, Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com and I will make sure you get the Pygmy Owl in your email inbox. Another way to get the Pygmy Owl is to go to our website: <https://www.audubonspokane.org/the-pygmy-owl>.

Storage Space Needed

By Alan McCoy

For decades Spokane Audubon has relied upon the board members (current and past) to store all sorts of things in their "spare" rooms. Our taxidermied birds, display boards, educational materials, tables, projector, canopy and tarps and many other items are, at this moment, stored with five Board members and one past member, who live in locations scattered all across the county. This issue has plagued us for quite some time and we are ready (really ready!!) to find a location to consolidate, organize and probably purge dated materials. We want to find a central location that is secure and accessible (within reason) and climate-controlled (for our taxidermied mounts). Of course, we are willing to pay for this storage space. A small room, maybe 8 x 12 feet, would probably be enough space to house all our items. Do you know of a space or have any suggestions for us as we search for this elusive property? Please contact Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com or call/text at (509) 999-9512.

AOS will change English common names of some birds

(from AOS Nov. 1, 2023 news release)

The American Ornithological Society (AOS) announced that, in an effort to address past wrongs and engage far more people in the enjoyment, protection, and study of birds, it will change all English bird names currently named after people within its geographic jurisdiction.

The AOS will also change the process by which English names are selected for bird species. The effort will begin in 2024 and will focus initially on 70–80 bird species that occur primarily within the U.S. and Canada.

“There is power in a name, and some English bird names have associations with the past that continue to be exclusionary and harmful today. We need a much more inclusive and engaging scientific process that focuses attention on the unique features and beauty of the birds themselves,” said AOS President Colleen Handel, Ph.D., a research wildlife biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska. “Everyone who loves and cares about birds should be able to enjoy and study them freely—and birds need our help now more than ever.”

Ornithologists have long grappled with historical and contemporary practices that contribute to the exclusion of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, including how birds are named. For example, in 2020, the AOS renamed a small prairie songbird found on the Great Plains to “Thick-billed Longspur.” The bird’s original name—honoring John P. McCown, an amateur naturalist who later became a general in the Confederate Army during the U.S. Civil War—was perceived as a painful link to slavery and racism.

Today, the AOS is taking decisive action to reframe the issue of birds named after people altogether. Specifically, the scientific society is announcing three changes to the way it and its predecessor organizations have operated since the 1880s:

- The AOS commits to changing all English-language names of birds within its geographic jurisdiction that are named directly after people (eponyms), along with other names deemed offensive and exclusionary, focusing first on those species that occur primarily within the U.S. or Canada.
- The AOS commits to establishing a new committee to oversee the assignment of all English common names for species within the AOS’s jurisdiction; this

committee will broaden participation by including a diverse representation of individuals with expertise in the social sciences, communications, ornithology, and taxonomy.

- The AOS commits to actively involving the public in the process of selecting new English bird names.

“As scientists, we work to eliminate bias in science. But there has been historic bias in how birds are named, and who might have a bird named in their honor. Exclusionary naming conventions developed in the 1800s, clouded by racism and misogyny, don’t work for us today, and the time has come for us to transform this process and redirect the focus to the birds, where it belongs,” said Judith Scarl, Ph.D., AOS Executive Director and CEO. “I am proud to be part of this new vision and am excited to work in partnership with a broad array of experts and bird lovers in creating an inclusive naming structure.” North America has lost nearly 3 billion birds since 1970. Says Scarl, “To reverse these alarming bird population declines, we need as many people as possible to get excited about birds and unite to protect them.”

Since 1886, the AOS and its predecessor, the American Ornithologists’ Union, have maintained a list of official English-language names for birds in North America (and more recently, South America). These names are widely used by schools and universities, government agencies, conservation organizations, the news media, artists and writers, birders and photographers, and many other members of the English-speaking public worldwide. These English names are often updated as scientists discover new information about the ecology and evolution of these birds.

In addition to their official English names, birds, like all living things, have a two-part scientific name that scientists use to communicate among themselves across languages and nationalities. For example, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* is the scientific name for the Bald Eagle. Scientific names will not be changed as a part of the AOS English bird names initiative, but they are regularly reviewed and updated by the AOS’s North American and South American classification committees in response to new scientific

(cont on page 4)

research and following the naming rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. The AOS will conduct an open, inclusive, and scientifically rigorous pilot program in 2024 to develop its new approach to English bird names in the U.S. and Canada. Interested parties are invited to follow this initiative's progress at www.americanornithology.org and @AmOrnith on major social media platforms over the coming months and years.

Reactions to AOS bird re-naming effort

"I am a birder, not an ornithologist," said our Spokane Audubon Society president Alan McCoy. "I am interested in birds, what sounds they make, what they look like, how they behave, how they fly, what they eat and how they interact with their world. I have never thought much about where or how their common names came about. But I much prefer names that are descriptive of the bird in some way rather than just a person's name, which doesn't say anything about the bird itself. If changing the names of birds puts our focus on the birds, not on humans, that is a good thing."



Barrow's Goldeneye
© Alan McCoy

Here are some other national and local reactions.

From New York Times 11-01-23 story:

"The idea of changing a bunch of names is, to many people — myself included, originally, — throwing out a lot of history," said **John Fitzpatrick**, an ornithologist at Cornell University. He said that he initially felt bird names should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but that further discussions convinced him



Townsend's Solitaire
© Wesley Schneider

that "there is no formula by which we can figure out which names are good enough." notably, only the common English names of birds will change, since scientific names — which are traditionally in Latin — are governed by

a rigid, universal set of rules that take into account evolutionary relationships between different species. (Latin designations taken from people's names exist as well, such as *Capito fitzpatricki* for the Sira barbet, a Peruvian bird named after Dr. Fitzpatrick.) With thousands of species across the Americas, birds are as diverse as the communities that cherish them. "Birds are by far the most accessible and beloved feature in biodiversity worldwide," said Dr. Fitzpatrick. He added that more colorful names for these creatures would heighten "the ease by which new birders of every stripe" can enjoy them.

The decision to change common names of birds "makes perfect sense" to **Christian Cooper**, a black birder who rose to fame after a 2020 incident in Central Park where a white woman falsely claimed he was threatening her. (His fame led him to hosting a National Geographic birding show.) "There's no reason to have a person's name attached to a bird, because it doesn't tell you anything about the bird," he said. For example, Cooper noted the Wilson's warbler, a canary-like songbird with a characteristic black cap. Changing the name to something "like black-capped warbler," he said, would give birders a better idea of what to look for.



Lewis's Woodpecker
© John Kerkering

Carlos Daniel Cadena, an ornithologist at the University of the Andes in Colombia and a leader of the AOS English Bird Names Committee, expects the changes to entail a slight learning curve, but also to present a new opportunity for the public to bond over birds. "It's going to be a level playing field where we all need to learn together," Dr. Cadena said. He noted that the process might be adjusted for birds in Latin American countries, where people commonly refer to them by their scientific names.

From **David Allen Sibley's** Facebook post: "A lot of people have been talking about bird names for the past few days. I'm so glad that people are thinking about birds, but I have seen some confusion and misinterpretation. These are my personal thoughts on eponymous bird names..."

(cont on page 5)

It's not for me to judge what makes someone else uncomfortable; but I know that, after I started learning a little more about the history of some of the people honored in bird names, it makes ME uncomfortable.

For example, Winfield Scott was a US Army officer in the 1800s. Scott's Oriole was named for him by a junior officer, but there is no evidence that Scott himself ever had an interest in birds. He was very highly regarded as a General, but, among other things, he presided over the forced removal of the Cherokee (the Trail of Tears).

Many people today could say that Scott's Oriole is named for a person who carried out the brutal persecution of their ancestors. That bothers me. We should not ignore that history, but it shouldn't be linked to the bird. The AOS already has accepted that such names can be changed, and it is clear that Scott's Oriole and many others should also be changed.



Scott's Oriole
© Tony Battiste

Taking names case-by-case would be a quagmire of moral judgment, competing interests, PR campaigns, influence-peddling, and more. Renaming ALL these birds for their appearance, sounds, habitat, etc. is the only viable solution, not because all these people were bad, but because it's impossible to determine who was "good enough" to put their name on a bird. And simply because birds are not objects, and should not have to carry the banner for a person, no matter how good that person was.

This process will not be fast and I don't expect anyone to adjust immediately to new names as they are announced. I ask everyone, myself included, to keep an open mind and stay flexible as things change.

From Spokane Spokesman Review 11-02-23 story:

Dr. Marcie Logsdon, an avian veterinarian at Washington State University, said it's a good idea to stop "naming these things after people." "Biologists from the past probably don't deserve to have birds named after them simply because they were the first white person to see or describe a particular species", Logsdon said. "Those birds were there long before them," she said. Logsdon said she understands that longtime birders and biologists will need time to adjust to new names. "I do understand that change is hard," she said. "But it's change for a good reason."

"We'll lose a little bit of knowledge about some key people in the history of ornithology, and that saddens me," said **Dr. Jeff Marks**, an ornithologist at the Montana Bird Advocacy. "But maybe in the scheme of things that's just not that big of a deal."

Joseph Haydock, a behavioral ecologist at Gonzaga University, said he's in favor of new names. Renaming birds won't erase the history of past ornithologists, he said. "There are other ways to remember history," Haydock said.

Bird Watchers Meetup Group

By Alan McCoy

About a week ago we learned that the Bird Watchers Meetup group had lost its "organizer" and was a few days from dissolving. In the last year a few of us on the board have been thinking about starting a birding Meetup group to encourage more people to go birding. Lo and behold!... the group already exists! We decided to go ahead and become the "organizer" so the group can continue. The "organizer" pays the fee; in this case it was at a 30% discount and came to about \$150. We aim to dovetail our field trip offerings with the Meetup group by simply announcing our field trips on Meetup. This will be in addition to what we have already been doing, which is announcing trips in the Pygmy Owl, on our website calendar, and on Facebook and Instagram.

But what is great about Meetup is that any member of the Meetup group can offer an outing. Say you want to go for a walk and watch some birds and you would like some company. All you do is create an event with date, time, location and perhaps a limit to the number of people and any other pertinent information plus post it on Meetup.

It is free for folks to sign up with Meetup. If this sounds interesting to you, you can either download the Meetup app onto your phone or use your laptop or desktop and sign up. [Here](#) is some general information about Meetup. Click [here](#) for more information on The Bird Watchers Meetup group and how to sign up

If you have any questions about this Meetup group, please contact Alan McCoy ahm2352@gmail.com or call / text me at (509) 999-9512.

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

It's been a seasonal, if slightly wet, fall migration. Most migration is over and winter visitors are moving into the region on schedule. So far it looks like an excellent year for low-elevation Pine Grosbeaks and possibly for Common Redpolls as well. The Bohemian Waxwing and Gray-crowned Rosy Finch surge seems to have passed through the region in October. It been a spectacular season for rare Eastern Warblers with Spokane's first HOODED and BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS appearing within about 10 days of one another. These and other goodies are listed below.

Surf Scoter: Rock Lake (10/21-eBird); Sprague (10/21-eBird)

Red-breasted Merganser: Sprague (11/9-eBird)

Anna's Hummingbird: Five-Mile (10/25-eBird); Spokane Valley (10/29-MC)

Sandhill Crane: Reardan (11/5-BH)

American Golden Plover: Kootenai NWR (11/12-SE and JR)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Harrison Slough (11/14-JI)

Glaucous-winged Gull: Harrison Slough (11/14-JI)

Pacific Loon: Bonner's Ferry (11/12-JR)

Blue Jay: Pullman (10/24-AS); Bonner's Ferry (11/10-JR); University of Idaho (11/10-GL)

Pine Grosbeak: Mt. Spokane SP (10/21-MW); Mt. Spokane Foothills (10/23-TO); Cocalalla (10/25-RC); Lincoln Park (10/26-eBird); Davenport (10/27-MC); Dishman Hills (10/28-JI); Spring Valley Reservoir (10/29-GL); Wilbur (11/3-eBird); Pullman (11/9-AS); Kamiak Butte (11/11-eBird); Palouse (11/12-CS); Palisades Park (11/13-eBird); Steptoe Butte (11/14-eBird); Slavin Ranch (11/16-JI); St. Marie's (11/16-CH); Bonner's Ferry (11/16-eBird); Moscow (11/16-BB); Rustler's Gulch WMA (11/23-eBird)

Lesser Goldfinch: Spokane (11/14-MW)

White-throated Sparrow: Washtucna (10/21-eBird); Colfax (11/9-eBird); Moscow (11/13-CS); WSU (11/16-eBird)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Washtucna (10/21-eBird)

Swamp Sparrow:

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER: North Spokane (11/16-eBird)

HOODED WARBLER: Spokane Valley (11/7-eBird)



Black-throated Blue Warbler
© Marlene Cashen



Hooded Warbler
© Marlene Cashen

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; BB-Ben Bright; MC-Marlene Cashen; JC-Jeffrey Colburn; FC-Forest Corcoran; RC-River Corcoran; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JE-Jacob Elonen; MG-Micah Grove; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Barb Hubbard; CH-Cameron Heusser; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-Dave Koehler; GL-Greg Lambeth; AM-Alan McCoy; CiM-Cindy McCormick; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Mason Maron; BM-Ben Meredyk; NM-Nancy Miller; WM-Will Merg; TO-Tim O'Brien; NP-Neil Paprocki; JR-Jethro Runco; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; NT-Norma Trefry; AT-Andrew Thomas; DW-Doug Ward; WY-Will Young; MW-Michael Woodruff

Gifts for Bird Lovers

by Shenendoah Marr

By now we have all noticed the holiday season is well underway. While gifts can and should reach beyond physical items, we do have a few ideas for gifts for your fellow bird-loving friends and family.

Consumable items such as [Smithsonian-Certified Bird-Friendly coffee](#), [Audubon-Certified maple syrup, sugar, or candies](#) can be delicious treats as well as a conversation starter about the importance of buying these products sourced from farms that practice good land stewardship.

New this year to the Smithsonian-Certified Bird-Friendly line this year is chocolate made from cacao beans grown on cacao trees as an understory rather than on a monoculture plantation that was cleared of native trees (<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/bird-friendly-cocoa>). Cacao trees grown as an understory retain the tall native trees above and shrubs and herbaceous plants below, thus providing vital habitat for birds, amphibians, and invertebrates. As a new certification, very few brands currently carry the Smithsonian Certification. However, many brands, such as Equal Exchange, Endangered Species, Seahorse, Divine chocolate, and Dick Taylor source their cacao from farms that maintain forest diversity and avoid pesticides. These can be purchased locally at the Main Market Co-op, Rocket Market, My Fresh Basket, and Huckleberries.

Packets of native plant seeds can be put into stockings or wrapped in a small box. Local nurseries such as Blue Moon and Desert Jewels carry native plants. They are closed for the season, but an “IOU” or handmade gift card would make a nice gift for a gardener. If you are unsure about what seeds to buy, Audubon maintains a comprehensive list of native plants that are especially beneficial for native birds (<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>).

Premium bird seed, suet cakes, and other backyard bird supplies make practical gifts for both seasoned and novice birders. If your gift recipient owns a bird bath, consider giving them a heater for the bird bath

to provide fresh, ice-free water for wild birds during the winter. These can be purchased locally at Wild Birds Unlimited.

Attracting birds to the yard comes with the responsibility of making windows safe for birds. Consider a gift of window treatments such as those found on [our website](#).

Our 2024 Spokane Audubon Society calendars feature beautiful photographs from local members. The phenology notes on local resident and migratory birds make these calendars good gifts for beginning birdwatchers and a great way for bird watchers of all levels to learn something in addition to enjoying the photography. <https://www.audubonspokane.org/> They can also be purchased at the December meeting.

Children may enjoy a symbolic bird adoption offered through the National Audubon Association (<https://gifts.audubon.org/adoption-center>). Donations include a plush bird, adoption certificate, and personalized letter. Several species are available to choose from. For the person who has everything, a donation or membership to a bird conservation association is a perfect gift. I am partial to Spokane Audubon, but others such as the American Bird Conservancy and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology are important organizations for bird data and conservation.



American Redstart
© Tom Munson
2024 Spokane Audubon Society Calendar
Birds of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho

SKAGIT COUNTY BIRD TRIP 2023

By Jim & Bea Harrison

We were excited about the October Audubon fieldtrip to Skagit County because we expected to see the arrival of thousands of over-wintering Snow Geese and Trumpeter Swans. We arrived a few days early and scouted out all the hotspots in the county. No Snow Geese could be found. Days passed. One flock of swans, still no geese.

Our two fieldtrip participants, Darcy Varona and Karen Edwards arrived on Saturday afternoon. We met them for breakfast Sunday morning and were relieved to hear they had spent the afternoon and evening chasing a flock of swans up the Skagit River so at least they got to see some swans. Karen is a wildlife photographer and was anxious to get photos of those huge flocks of geese and swans.

The first place we visited was the Skagit Wildlife Area known as Fir Island Farm. Fir Island Farm Reserve is a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife sanctuary with over 200 acres of restored intertidal estuary and managed agricultural land. The reserve attracts thousands of snow geese, swans, ducks, and shorebirds in the fall through early spring. The unit is managed to provide an undisturbed feeding and resting area for wintering waterfowl adjacent to Skagit Bay.

When we arrived, the tide was just right. Shorebirds, ducks, and other migratory birds were there feeding in the mudflats. With our spotting scope we could see thousands and thousands of ducks way out in the adjacent bay and some groups of swans and geese a long way off.

We next went to a wooded area, near La Conner, where we picked up Golden-crowned Kinglets, Chestnut-backed and Black-capped Chickadees, Fox Sparrows, and Varied Thrushes. On Skagit Bay, we saw Black Oystercatchers, Pelagic Cormorants and American Wigeons. We drove to beautiful Deception Pass State Park and saw Harlequin Ducks and Pigeon Guillemots and to Anacortes, picking up Red-necked Grebes and Surf Scoters.

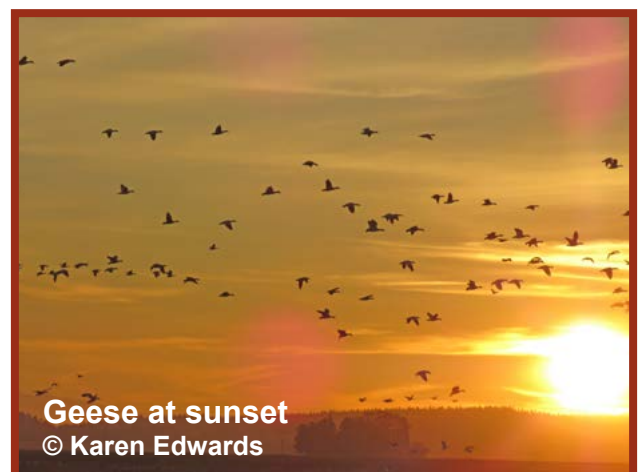
But later, as we “ran the roads” during the course of the day, it was obvious that the geese had indeed arrived as we saw several large flocks in the air

looking for fields to land in. As evening approached, we found a large flock of geese in a farm field, with thousands more silhouetted in the evening sun as they dropped in to feed and rest. Like us, several other cars had pulled over to watch the amazing event. Karen was sitting next to our car on the ground taking pictures as fast as she could. These geese had just arrived from Canada and perhaps Russia. It was a spectacular show as the sunset lit the sky in shades of orange and the geese created a cacophony of sound as they swirled around.

It was great way to end a wonderful day of birding. We really enjoyed having Darcy and Karen’s company. Bea recorded 58 species, but made no attempt to count the Snow Geese.



Karen, Darcy and Bea
© Jim Harrison



Geese at sunset
© Karen Edwards

Klamath Bird Observatory (located in Oregon) tracks the first Western Purple Martin with GPS tag technology

by Sarah Rockwell

Spoiler alert: Our first recaptured Martin flew almost 8,000 miles to southeastern Brazil and back again!



Purple Martin by Lorelle Sherman

The unique western subspecies of Purple Martin is of conservation concern, roughly estimated at just 3,500 pairs. Little is known about the Western Purple Martin compared to the more abundant eastern subspecies. One of the biggest challenges in identifying ways to help migratory species is that we simply don't know where they are for most of the year. Western Purple Martins breeding in Oregon are only here from about April to August and, until recently, we only had the slightest idea of where they spend the non-breeding months. From 2020-2022, a small team of researchers from KBO (Klamath Bird Observatory), USFS (U.S. Forest Service), US Geological Survey, and Cape Arago Audubon Society of Coos County, Oregon captured adult Western Purple Martins and outfitted them with lightweight archival GPS tags that fit like a backpack with two leg loops to track their movements. Our goal is to track martins that nest in Oregon to discover their migratory pathways and winter roost locations and assess whether

conservation actions are needed at these non-breeding sites. This is the first study of its kind with the western subspecies and the first to track them with GPS technology throughout the year!

There is one important catch – to have a battery small and lightweight enough for a small songbird to carry safely, the tags cannot transmit GPS data, only store it on board. Returning tagged birds must be recaptured following a year-long round-trip migration to retrieve the tag and its precious geospatial data. It can be very challenging to find these birds again, not to mention recapture them! So, we were thrilled to recapture our first female, whom we nicknamed Roxa ('purple' in Brazilian Portuguese – pronounced more like "hoshá"), in the summer of 2021.

Roxa returned with fascinating information, revealing new discoveries about her incredible 8,000-mile journey. After she left her nesting area in coastal Oregon in August, Roxa first headed south to Baja California, where she spent about a month from mid-Aug to mid-Sept on an extended fall stopover. Although somewhat unusual for a songbird, this long pause was not totally unexpected, as it matched hints from earlier research using geolocators on a few martins from British Columbia (Fraser et al. 2017). She then continued south through western Mexico, with GPS points taken every 5 days, including stops in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela, before entering Brazil, where she passed over many of her Eastern Purple Martin cousins in their wintering area in the Amazon. She then spent another multi-week stopover in late November in northern Minas Gerais, near Parque Nacional do Peruaçu – which was unexpected! Roxa finally completed the last leg of her trip to the southeastern Brazilian coast, where she spent Christmas in Linhares in the state of Espírito Santo. She even made it to the beach city of Praia do Morro in time for Carnival before winging her way back north and graciously returning her GPS tag to us.

We now have an amazing window into what Roxa and other Western Purple Martins are up to after they leave Oregon and the incredible voyages they undertake. These insights also lead us to more questions. Why does she stop for so long in Baja California Sur, Mexico, and Minas Gerais, Brazil? Could



Photos by Joe Metzler

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she be molting and regrowing feathers at one of these locations where the insect food resources are especially abundant? Does she use the same route every year, and do other Western Purple Martins use similar or different routes? What changes are occurring in the habitats she occupies along the way? Are any of these places threatened by deforestation, pesticide use, or other conservation challenges? We hope to apply what we have learned to help make sure the Western Purple Martin's migratory journey, connecting people and places across continents, remains a phenomenon we can all marvel at well into the future.

In summer 2023, we recaptured two more returning Purple Martins with new data to add to our understanding of their migration routes and winter homes. We are so excited to process these data and see how they compare to our first recapture! We also deployed 8 more GPS tags on Purple Martins nesting at Fern Ridge Reservoir near Veneta, OR. Those individuals have finished their nests for this summer and will be leaving soon for parts unknown – but a little less unknown than before - so we also will have more chances to add data to this study next summer.

The USFS, USGS, Purple Martin Conservation Association, and the Greenfield Hartline Habitat Conservation Fund supported this work. If you'd like to follow Roxa's journey via the series of postcards that she sent from her trip, search #Roxabird on KBO's facebook page.

Link to the article on the Klamath Bird Observatory website: <https://klamathbird.org/callnote/kbo-tracks-the-first-western-purple-martin-with-gps-tag-technology/>



by Karen Maguire

A specialized pole that traps the Purple Martins in their nesting box so the box can safely lowered and the Martins extracted.

Winter bird feeding fuels us more

By Madonna Luers

Feeding birds and other wildlife through the winter fuels our own interests more than the animals consuming our offerings.

Studies show that birds do not depend solely on feeders in their foraging, many obtaining only up to one-fifth of their nutrition at feeders. Some small pockets of bird populations do benefit from feeders under extreme and persistent weather conditions. But feeding can't replace natural habitat needed for winter cover and spring nesting and rearing. And poorly maintained feeding stations actually can harm birds by spreading disease.

The main benefit of feeding is that it provides a direct, intimate view of birds and other wildlife for more than 50 million Americans who provide backyard feeding stations of some kind.

Experts in Cornell University Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch, which has been collecting winter bird feeder use data from thousands of volunteers across the country for 33 years, say most bird feeding does neither significant good nor significant harm. It's something we do for ourselves, they say, but it has a lot of educational value.

Up close and personal encounters with wildlife can and do trigger lifelong interest in and compassion for wildlife, desire to learn more, and ultimately the "bigger picture" understanding of the need to maintain and enhance year-round wildlife habitat.

In fact, the best way to help any wild birds or other animals survive a severe winter is to provide high-quality habitat plantings and water year-round. Wildlife that goes into the winter in good condition is most able to survive deep snow, ice, and cold temperatures. Even in well-functioning natural ecosystems, however, some animals succumb during winter months. The winter season has always been the great "equalizer," keeping wildlife populations in balance with available habitat.

(cont on page 11)

If you choose to feed birds for that close-up connection, remember to keep feeders clean. Use tube feeders to reduce accumulations of scattered seed on the ground that can become wet and moldy and spread disease if not picked up and discarded regularly. Disinfect feeders at least once a month with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts warm water, and dry thoroughly before refilling.

Locate feeders where there is no immediate cover for cats to wait in ambush, but close enough to cover to allow birds to escape natural predators like hawks. Keep in mind that bird feeding stations will concentrate small birds and in turn attract predators, but studies have shown that natural food sources do the same and the difference is mostly insignificant. Remember, too, that a bird feeder provides not only for small seed eaters, but also for the birds that feed on them.

Leaving feeders unfilled, or removing them entirely, for several days or weeks can actually be a good thing in terms of disease prevention and predation reduction. Most birds will rely on their ongoing natural food sources and you'll be able to enjoy that winter vacation guilt-free!

Save the Dates



Wild & Winged
Snow Goose Festival
of the Pacific Flyway!

January 25 - 28, 2024

Patrick Ranch Museum
Chico, CA

Registration begins in early December

If you have any questions, you can reach us at info@snowgoosefestival.org,
or by calling the Festival Office at 530-592-9092

Snow Goose Festival
PO Box 3671
Chico, CA 95927-3671
(530) 592-9092
Email: info@snowgoosefestival.org

Expo '74: 50th Anniversary Celebration

By Alan McCoy

Many of you may already know that the city of Spokane is planning a series of events during the spring and summer of 2024 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Expo '74. These events are being held to honor the "impactful transformation to our community" that the World's Fair of 1974 provided. The official dates of this celebration are May 4, 2024 through July 4, 2024.

The city is partnering with many local organizations to host events that are being grouped into the following categories: Arts & Culture, Environmental Stewardship, Tribal, EXPO Legacy, and Recreation & Sports. Spokane Audubon Society is participating in the Environmental Stewardship committee and we will be offering a bird walk each week of the celebration. What better way to celebrate than to be outside with our feathered friends and introduce these lovely creatures to some folks who may not know how avian-rich our area is!

Over the next few weeks, I will be on the lookout for volunteers to lead one of the nine bird walks. If we have enough volunteers, we can offer more than one bird walk a week. The walks can be held any day of the week. They could be done in the early morning or after work and can be short walks or long walks.

I have a list of locations to choose from, but other locations within the county would be fine too. If this is something that you are interested in doing, please contact Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com or call/text (509) 999-9512.



Pygmy Owl Contributions

Spokane Audubon Society members who want to contribute to the Pygmy Owl newsletter can submit articles on, and photos of, birds and bird conservation issues to info@spokaneaudubon.org for publishing consideration.

The newsletter deadline is the 20th of the month for the next month's edition.



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

The Spokane Audubon Society advocates for birds and their habitats in the Inland Northwest and connects people with nature.

Visit our website:

<https://audubonspokane.org>

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual Membership and Donation:

Student (under 21): \$10 per year _____

Individual: \$20 per year _____

Family: \$30 per year _____

Supporting: \$50 per year _____

Contributing: \$100 per year _____

Lifetime: \$500 _____

Other: _____

Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational activities.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

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Please make check payable to: Spokane Audubon Society

Send this form and your check to:
Audubon Membership
Attn: Alan McCoy
615 W Paradise Rd
Spokane WA 99224

Join us, or renew your membership, online at our website:

<https://www.audubonspokane.org>.

Click "Support Us" or "Join Us" We accept PayPal, credit/debit cards or Apple Pay. Receiving duplicate newsletters? Errors or other changes to your email address? Contact Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com or (509) 999-9512.