Volume 22
Issue 2
October
2014

Pygmy Owl The Newsletter of the Spokane Audubon Society



October 8th Program: Palouse - Rock Lake Conservation District Riparian Restoration, featuring District Coordinator Dan Harwood

The mission of the Palouse - Rock Lake Conservation District is to assist the ranchers and farmers of the district to maximize sustainable productivity and increase their income, while conserving and enhancing natural resources (soil, water, air, plants, animals, and humans) for current and future generations. The District does this by making available federal, state, county, city, and private programs, resources, technical and scientific information, and educational opportunities.



Join us on October 8th as we welcome District Coordinator Dan Harwood for a presentation about the District's efforts to work with ranchers and farmers to restore riparian buffers on their lands.

(Photo courtesy of the Palouse - Rock Lake Conservation District.)

Spokane Audubon's October program will be held at the
Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Building
(Directions on page 8.)

Please join us at 7 p.m. for refreshments and friendly conversation.

The program will begin at about 7:30 p.m., after announcements.

SAS Field Trips: October & November

October 25, 2014, Saturday Grant County Late Fall Migrant Trip Leader: Gary Blevins

This is a beginning, intermediate and advanced birder-oriented trip to look for specialty birds, such as Arctic Gulls, Lapland Longspurs, and other hard to find and see northern visitors. There may be some down time, with little action in between bird sightings, but potential for rarities is high. It is a full-day trip from sunrise to sunset. Contact Gary Blevins (533-3661 or garyb@spokanefalls.edu) by October 18 if you plan to attend.

November 22, 2014, Saturday Douglas Plateau Northern Visitors Trip Leader: Kim Thorburn

The Waterville Plateau is a challenging, but high-quality, destination for rarities during the late fall and winter months. We will work the rolling steppe of the Plateau in search of unusual raptors, owls, and passerines. We'll also bird along the Columbia River in hopes of finding rare Arctic Gulls and saltwater waterfowl, such as scoters, Long-tailed Duck, and Pacific Loon. We will spend the night of November 21 in Brewster for an earlier start with the birds during this short daylight season. Contact Kim Thorburn (465-3025 or kthorburn@msn.com) by November 15 if you plan to attend.

Note: This trip will be dependent on weather and road conditions.

The Pygmy Owl

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Notes from the President

by Fran Haywood

We are in full swing now and environmental issues are in the forefront. Most of you should have seen something about the National Audubon's recent release of their study about birds and climate change. We all need to conserve energy ourselves and pay attention to this major issue. The thought of losing so many species of birds is appalling.

[The report may be found online at http://climate.audubon. org/, or go to Washington Audubon for a more local perspective: http://wa.audubon.org/.]

The managers of the Mt Spokane Resort want to put a ski run down the back side and in the process, destroy the only remaining old growth forest in this area of eastern Washington. While we fully support new ski runs, we feel that there is room for more growth in other areas of the mountain and the back side should be preserved for everyone, not just for downhill skiers. Greg Gordon, Spokane Audubon's Conservation Chair, is coordinating SAS's response. If you would like to comment as an individual, you have until September 30th.

Coal and oil trains continue to be a major issue. The latest proposal is to build a terminal at Boardman and barge the product from there to the coast. This coal is being shipped to China where air pollution is already severe. It will only add to their problems, and we all know that things in the atmosphere drift all over the world. Closer to home, the concern is that there will be accidents. We have already seen oil trains burn and take lives, even destroying a town in Canada. These trains are travelling over our aquifer many times a day. This is our sole source of drinking water. Imagine living without potable water, after a major spill! We know it is only a matter of time until there is a major accident. There is also the issue of major traffic tie-ups with all the extra trains, and freight trains bump passenger trains to the side while they pass. Check the on-time record of Amtrak! That will continue to get worse as more and more trains are added for coal and oil. By using passenger trains more we can help to save fossil fuels, but passengers hesitate to use them because of the terrible on time records.

We recently had a scare when a tanker truck was stopped at State Line leaking a hazardous chemical. It took 19 hours to locate a replacement valve to stop the leak, closing the freeway both ways for the entire time causing major traffic tie-ups, and spilling chemical meanwhile. We need to make sure that truckers are required to carry spare equipment

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Sights & Sounds

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Migration is under way! Those seeking shorebirds should head to Slavin Ranch in Spokane County, Cow Lake in Adams County, and Sheep Lake in Whitman County, where mud conditions are perfect for migrants. Overall going may be a little slow compared with past years but some good stuff is being reported throughout the Inland Northwest including the following birds. Especially rare species are indicated in bold italic:

GREAT EGRET: Philleo Lake (8/8-JI and 9/13-GF); Cow Lake (8/26-NT)

Swainson's Hawk: Incredible high count of 20 birds (14 and 6, respectively), Moscow and University of Idaho Dairy Ponds (9/1-CL and CS, respectively). Also Spangle (9/13-GF)

SANDHILL CRANE: Sheep Lake (8/4-JI)

AMERICAN AVOCET: University of Idaho Dairy Ponds (8/4-CL); Cow Lake (8/26-NT)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER: Calispell Lake (8/15-TL); Cow Lake (9/16-JI)

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER: Cow Lake (8/4, 8/8, 8/14, 8/28, and 9/4-JI and TL); Calispell Lake (8/15-TL); Slavin Ranch (9/6-WY)

WILLET: Rare in Eastern WA; Reardan (8/18-TM)

RUDDY TURNSTONE: Rare in Eastern WA, Slavin Ranch (9/6-JI)

SANDERLING: Slavin Ranch (9/1-RK); Sandpoint (9/13-CL); Cow Lake (9/16-JI)

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER: Aero Road (8/2-TO); Cow Lake (8/5-JI); Univ. of Idaho Dairy Ponds (8/9 and 8/14-CL); Colville STP (8/15-TL)

STILT SANDPIPER: Calispell Lake (8/15-TL); University of Idaho Dairy Ponds (8/18-BB); Valley, WA (8/30-SS)

RED NECKED PHALAROPE: Rare in northeast corner of WA, Calispell Lake (8/15-TL)

Sabine's Gull: Sprague Lake (8/27-JI)

FRANKLIN'S GULL: Sprague Lake (8/14-TL; 8/30-RT; 9/1-JI; 9/2-RK); North Gorge Campground (9/3-WC)

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL: Sprague Lake (9/13-GF)

COMMON TERN: Sprague Lake (8/27-JI; 8/29-GF; and 9/10-JI); North Gorge Campground (8/31-RK)

PEREGRINE FALCON: Peone Prairie Wetland (8/21-TL); University of Idaho Dairy Ponds (8/23-CS); Reardan (8/26-JI) Sprague Lake (8/27-JI and 8/29-GF and 9/4-TL); Slavin Ranch (8/29 and 9/3-JI); Colville Flats (8/31-RK)

BLACK SWIFT: Rare in Inland Northwest, Moscow (9/3-CL)

ROCK WREN: Rare in Northern Idaho, Bayview (9/10-DW)

BEWICK'S WREN: Rare in Northeast Corner of WA, Leclerc Creek (8/1-TL)

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER: Rare in WA, Bassett Park (9/11-KB and 9/13-MlD and MD)

AMERICAN REDSTART: Rare migrant in the Columbia Basin and locally rare elsewhere in Inland Northwest, Little Spokane Natural Area (8/23-SS); Swanson Lakes (9/6-KT); Bassett Park (9/11-KB)

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER: Though not especially rare, lovely and very hard to spot migrant due to its stealthy nature. Spokane (8/10-MF, RF); Pullman (8/24-RB); Pullman (9/5-RB); Swanson Lakes (9/6-KT)

LINCOLN'S SPARROW: Colville (8/28-WC); Sullivan Lake (8/29-TL); Kalispell Tribal HQ (8/29-TL); University of Idaho Dairy Ponds (9/4-CS); Rock Lake (9/4-DaW); Pullman (9/5-RB); Swanson Lakes (9/6-KT); Moscow (9/7-CS); Eloika Lake (9/7-TL); Peone Prairie Wetland (9/9-TL); Reardan (9/10-CM); Lower Gold Creek (9/11-WC)

Fox Sparrow: Pullman (9/5-RB); Stevens Creek Natural Area (9/5-JI); Spokane (9/9-MF, RF)

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW: Reardan (9/10-CM and 9/13-JI)

RED CROSSBILL: Uncommon in central Columbia Basin, Bassett Park (8/16-MlD, MD)

RB-RJ Baltierra; KB-Keith Brady; BB-Ben Bright; WC-Warren Current; MlD-MerryLynn Denny; MD-Mike Denny; GF-Greg Falco; MF-Marian Frobe; RF-Russell Frobe; JI-Jon Isacoff; RS-Russ Koppendrayer; TL-Terry Little; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Cindy McCormack; TM- Tom Munson; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; NT-Norma Trefry; RT-Rick Taylor; KT-Kim Thorburn; DaW-Dan Waggoner; DW-Doug Ward; WY-Will Young

Pelagic Birding

by Kim Thorburn

A s Audubon works to advocate for the protection of forage fish, a pelagic birding trip provides an exciting and pleasurable reminder of why this is an important issue. That's just what Lindell Haggin, Ken Trease, and I did on Labor Day weekend, joining about 30 other bird enthusiasts on a Westport Seabirds cruise out of Westport, Washington.

It was certain from the start that we were enthusiasts when all but one trip registrant showed up for the pre-dawn departure in pouring rain. As we crowded into the tiny cabin and under any other shelter we could find, the captain, Phil Anderson, noted optimistically that the downpour was often a land phenomenon and we might find clearing as we headed out. He proved correct and with calm winds and seas. it turned into a perfect day. While many were sporting scopolamine patches behind their ears, it was hardly necessary for those who were fairly resistant to motion sickness, even over the Bar.



Rhinoceros Auklet, by Kim Thorburn

Just like land birds, the sea-goers predominate in zones, i.e., ecosystems where the underwater ecology supports their feeding needs. The harbor zone is very active but not birded until we return since we leave the harbor in the half-light of dawn.

Alcids are common in the near-shore zones and clusters of common murre, most already in basic plumage, were prevalent. The rhinoceros auklet is another common alcid in Washington waters, so named because of a horn-like projection from its upper bill. We also saw large numbers of Cassin's auklets, relatively tiny birds that would wait for the last minute of the boat's arrival before running across the water to gain flight or make the effortless rolling alcid dive that uses only wings to push. Alcids are colonial breeders that come on land only for that. Their legs are placed far back on their bodies, meaning their wings are more maneuverable appendages.

Other alcids that we saw on the trip included the-always-special tufted puffin and a lone pigeon guillemot. The guillemot was far out at sea. One of the trip guides explained that, according to banding studies, this was probably a California-bred bird. These (northheading) migrants move far out at sea, in contrast to the Washington birds that would have been closer to shore.



Black-footed Albatross and 1st-year California Gull, by Kim Thorburn

Further out to sea were the tube noses-shearwaters, storm-petrels, and albatross. These magnificent birds that spend months on end at sea are classified by an unusual apparatus on their upper bill that desalinates sea water during their long periods away from land. Large flocks of sooty and pinkfooted shearwaters skimmed across the water surface or floated around the boat. There was quite a thrill when a couple of rarer flesh-footed shearwaters showed up among the birds taking advantage of shrimper vessels pulling in their nets. Buller's shearwater was another species on the move.

The fork-tailed storm-petrel was certain to make a flitting appearance when the captain stopped the boat to chum. Black-footed albatross are common in Washington waters. It's the Hawaiian Islands-based Laysan albatross that always creates excitement when it shows up. We saw one on the trip. It cooperatively flew close to the boat but rushed off faster than we could follow.

Most gull and jaeger species are common close to shore. There is a deep seagoing gull that is a definite reason for a pelagic birding journey, the graceful Sabine's gull. They, too, like chumming



Sabine's Gull, by Kim Thorburn

and were still in their lovely breeding plumage. The other gulls that were far out at sea were the first-year California gulls. It's theorized that adult gulls push these young birds out to less desirable feeding grounds. Many will not survive, which is why you see mostly first-year and adult gulls in large post-breeding flocks. Gulls, like many pelagic birds, are long lived. Mortality is highest among young gulls and the fewer second- and third-year gulls that are seen among the post-breeding flocks are the lucky ones that will add to the adult breeding population.

Red phalaropes were on the move but would be better called ghost phalaropes in their non-breeding plumage. It seemed surprising to see shorebirds floating far out at sea. Another surprise was a lost migrating yellow warbler that frantically flew around the boat for a while. It could not bring itself to light long among the human crowd.

There is other shorebirding on a

pelagic trip as we pull back into the harbor and especially watch for the rock shorebirds, like wandering tattler, turnstones, and rock sandpipers, on the breakwaters. The harbor is also graced with several gull species, many brown pelicans, and all three cormorants.

Pelagic birds are not the only wildlife on a sea-going trip. We were thrilled by three hump-backed whales that surfaced several times close to the boat before their flukes indicated a deep dive. We enjoyed distant views of a young bull elephant seal, as well several other pinniped species. There were many mola mola or sunfish, an often giant, funny-looking flat fish that floated close to the surface. The sailing jellyfish velella colored the water. Albacore jumped and a blue shark came in for chum.



Velella, by Kim Thorburn

The trip takes you so far out to sea that land disappears on Anderson's, the soon to be retiring director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, boat, the Monte Carlo. The deck hand for our trip was Phil's wife, Chris, whose first job was to make sure we had enough ginger snaps to ward off queasiness while going over the Bar. Another important deck hand role was calling out the crab pot buoys to ensure we didn't shear a line. Three expert pelagic birders joined the trip to identify and count the birds. Westport Seabirds has produced the longest running pelagic bird census in the world. With such a trove of experience, pelagic birding, even by a land lubber, is sure to be productive.

Addressing Concerns about Forage Fish: Pacific Fishery Management Council Meeting Report

by Mary Jokela

The Pacific Fishery Management Council convened September 10-17 in Spokane to address issues related to groundfish (including over 90 different species that, with a few exceptions, live on or near the bottom of the ocean), highly migratory species (tuna, sharks, and swordfish), coastal pelagic species (sardines, anchovies, and mackerel), salmon, ecosystems and habitat.

The Council meets publicly five times each year, and is comprised of 19 members (14 voting). It is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the 1976 Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Its diverse members appear to work together collegially, respectfully and in genuine appreciation for marine resources. With jurisdiction over the 317,690 square-mile exclusive economic zone off Washington, Oregon and California, the Council manages fisheries for about 119 species. Its decisions impact commercial and recreational fishing, and bird populations.

Here's how:

A critical component of the food web has been excluded from most Fishery Management Plans, until now. Forage fish are small fish that are a big deal for marine mammals, sea birds, sharks, tuna and other larger and anadromous predator fish (salmon and steelhead) that populate our inland waters, as well as the ocean where they grow to maturity. In the California Current, which runs from Baja California in Mexico to British Columbia, a diverse group of forage fishes occupies a critical space but often underappreciated role in the "middle" of the food web. These species include krill, squid and juveniles of some predatory fish and rockfish as well as sardine and anchovy. They eat plankton and support predators such as whales, sea lions, seabirds, sharks, salmon and tuna. And while they are being fished, they (with the exception of sardines) have generally been neither managed and studied nor inventoried.

These forage fish apparently constitute 37 percent of commercial catch world wide; 90 percent of that catch is utilized for other than human consumption.

Under an increasing array of threats to forage fish, we should enable maximum resilience and health of forage fish stocks, seabirds, marine mammals and threatened and endangered species. The Council historically had adopted a document to bring ecosystem-based principles into the Council's decision-making process under its existing Fishery Management Plans. Accordingly, we placed SAS's bird-focused oar in the water to present comments on the inclusion of ecosystem-based principles in the Fishery Management Plans amendments.

Spokane Audubon urged support of a preliminary preferred alternative, Alternative 2, amending all four of the Council's Fishery Management Plans to bring unfished and unmanaged forage fish species into the Fishery Management Plans as ecosystem component species. Several other NGO's and advisory body spokespersons agreed, and comments made by some Council members seemed supportive of this Alternative as well. Final action and adopting a final preferred alternative is set for the March 2015 meeting in Vancouver WA.

We inlanders have much to learn about the marine environment, fishing, national and international resource interaction and regulations. My one-day participation was enormously interesting and instructive. Stay tuned.

[Thanks from us all to Mary for taking on this important assignment! ~ ed.]

Bird and Bike Trip: Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes

by Alan McCoy

It all started simply enough. Sandy Sollie and I signed up to lead the second year of the Bike and Bird field trip, scheduled for August 24, 2014. Actually that's not quite true. I signed up and then twisted Sandy's arm to co-lead it with me. In February she reserved a couple of campsites at the Chatcolet campground in Heyburn State Park. I have to admit that at first, I was a bit skeptical about the trip. But after packing up our bikes and checking it out early one morning in July we thought it might have some potential. The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes is a paved-over railroad bed that skirts the southern end of Coeur d'Alene Lake all the way to Cataldo and beyond.

On the morning of the trip we biked the 7 miles to Harrison, our starting place. On the way we picked up some Wild Turkeys, Pied-billed Grebe, Spotted Sandpipers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Sharp-shinned Hawk and plenty of Gray Catbirds. While waiting a short while for Tom and Francie Light to arrive, Rick Sollie had time to try one of the muffins at the local bakery. "Best apple honey muffin I've ever had!" he exclaimed. Of course that might have been the 7 mile bike ride on an empty stomach! From our July exploration we decided that we would head north for probably no more than about 3-4 miles before turning around and getting back to Harrison in time for lunch. Along the way were still more catbirds, kingfishers, lots of Wood Ducks, and Great Blue Herons as you would expect along the lake and marshy areas. Other than Osprey there weren't as many raptors as I expected: only one Bald Eagle, one Red-tail and a couple TVs. Probably the best sighting of the day was a pair of Warbling Vireos in a shrub very close to the trail, while the most common birds, hands down, were the tEastern Kingbird and especially Cedar Waxwings. There were a couple of Steller's Jays in exactly the same area where we had seen them in July. The bird that got away (there's always at least one) was a hummingbird flying too fast and eluding ID. The only other warbler species for the day was the Yellow Warbler. A couple of Western Wood-Pewees were still lingering around as were a few Savannah Sparrows, a Western Tanager, and quite a few swallows (Barn and Cliff). Sandy found a Bewick's Wren and a few Marsh Wrens to go along with a couple House Wrens. A couple other notables were a Pileated Woodpecker and quite a few Red-necked Grebes. All in all 51 was a decent number of species for a halfday trip. The group was compatible and lunch at One-Shot Charlie's was a great way to rest up for the trip back to the campground and for Tom and Francie to drive back to Spokane.

The trip is not terribly strenuous as a bike trip, but we will be changing the trip for next year. It so happens that where we camped at the Chatcolet campground is an excellent place for birding as well as camping. We camped out another night and went for a brief walk in the morning along the trail just below our campsite. In less than a half-hour we saw about 30 species including a couple of Red-naped Sapsuckers, Wilson's Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Tanager, and Blackheaded Grosbeak. Next year we will be starting at the parking lot of the Plummer Creek Marsh, which is a short distance from the campground. Starting here will also be easier and closer for those coming from Spokane than Harrison is. The downside of course is that we will miss out on those fantastic muffins.

It turns out that this trip was a nice prelude to some fun fall birding from my porch and deck, but you'll have to wait until the next *Pygmy Owl* for that story.

Get your 2015 Spokane Audubon Calendar!

If you purchase at a meeting, they're

\$10 each

Calendars are available at meetings, by mail or through spokaneaudubon.org (using PayPal).



Rufous Hummingbird, by Marlene Cashen

Note: Shipping charges apply for all mail/online orders:

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Notes, cont. from pg. 2.

to prevent a recurrence. Another concern for our drinking water!

Mary Jokela attended a conference on the state of forage fish in Washington. Without forage fish, many food species and of course birds will have nothing to eat. Mary was a long time conservation chair for Spokane Audubon and is passionate about protecting fish species. Check out what she has to say about these issues on page 5. Several Audubon clubs on the west side of the state, in Oregon, California and Alaska, are working on this issue. We all need to inform ourselves about this issue and its potential global impact.

In the good news column, we are close to getting some state funding to expand the property at Reardon Lakes. A property that we recommended for Conservation Futures Acquisition is #1 on the list. Thanks to our members who walked this property and wrote proposals.

Other issues will pop up. We all need to be vigilant. Brad and

Local Membership Dues:

I are off the ACOW meeting in Ocean Shores on September 19th and 20th. I will have more to report next month.

November Newsletter Deadline: **Thursday, October 23rd**

Please e-mail material to Carmen Yount at **birdlydrawn@gmail.com**

(note e-mail address change!)

Attentive readers, please note: opinion among birders varies regarding the capitalization of species names. Some hold to the standard grammatical practice of capitalizing species names in all occurrences, while others prefer no capitalization except for human names (i.e. Wilson's warbler). Because there is no consensus about which practice is "correct," the editor and proofreader endeavor to respect each writer's preference.

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

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
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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
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- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

From North Spokane

- Take US-395 S to E. Mission Ave.
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- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

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- Follow E. Upriver to 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.

