

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 28
Issue 2
October 2019

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society

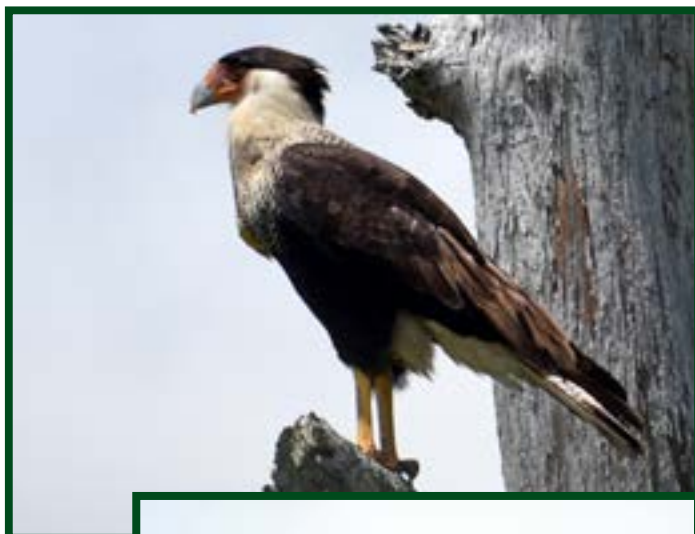


**Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday, October 9th at 7:30 p.m.
Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Bldg
2117 E. North Crescent Avenue**

Birding Florida: Miami to the Dry Tortugas

Ron Force will present: "Birding Florida: Miami to the Dry Tortugas." The state of Florida has always attracted birders, starting with John James Audubon, for its diverse populations of species found nowhere else. The second edition (1947) of Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds featured a separate page of "Florida Specialties." The state is also on the eastern flyway for migrants from the Caribbean and Central America. Release and escape of exotic species have added to the unique number of birds that can be added to your life list. In the Spring of 2018 Ron Force joined a birding tour to look for the "Florida Specialties", resident birds, migrants, and exotics in south Florida and the Florida Keys. He'll show pictures of the many species he saw, and discuss conservation practices and challenges in Florida in an era of climate change and population growth.

Ron Force: I got turned on to birding by my high school biology teacher. I majored in biology in college, but went in the Army as a helicopter pilot, then went to graduate school as a librarian (safer). I spent my career at Ohio State, WSU and 22 years at the University of Idaho, the last 14 as Dean. What with career and raising a family, birding became sporadic, but it picked up when I retired in 2006 and joined the local Palouse Audubon Society (and became president). I'm not a hard-core birder, but do enjoy running down new lifers. I enjoy traveling, and have been to seven continents, 48 countries, and all 50 states.



**Crested Caracara
Limpkin
Florida Jay**

All photos by Ron Force

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Spokane Audubon Society
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Owl illustrations on pg. 1 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



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November Pygmy Owl
Deadline October 20th

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through Sept 16, 2019:

Welcome to our new nesters: Carolyn Boyles & Family, Candace Fisher, Melissa O'Hara and Katherine Sarensen.

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Patricia Johnson and Dave Plemons.

Many nesters chose to not receive a hard copy of the Pygmy Owl. If you could help us to reduce costs and save paper and energy by switching to our electronic full-color publication, please contact me. You already have access to the newsletter on the Spokane Audubon WebSite on the Pygmy Owl page. 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. Occasionally I cannot clearly make out some Email addresses.

A few More Florida Birds



Yellow-crowned Night Heron

Brown Pelican

photos courtesy of Alan McCoy



The **Field Report** will be further delayed. Soon after returning from Italy a family emergency arose, and Jon will be out of town for a little longer. Look for a BIG Field Report in November.

Meeting Structure Changes

- Refreshments from 7-7:15
- Announcements - 7:15-7:30
- Program - 7:30
- Meeting adjourns - 8:30



A report from the American Bird Conservancy.

A portion of this report is presented here, with a link to the complete document included at the end of this article.

(Washington, D.C., September 19, 2019) A study published today in the journal *Science* reveals that since 1970, bird populations in the United States and Canada have declined by 29 percent, or almost 3 billion birds, signaling a widespread ecological crisis. The results show tremendous losses across diverse groups of birds and habitats — from iconic songsters such as meadow-larks to long-distance migrants such as swallows and backyard birds including sparrows.

“Multiple, independent lines of evidence show a massive reduction in the abundance of birds,” said Ken Rosenberg, the study’s lead author and a senior scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and American Bird Conservancy. “We expected to see continuing declines of threatened species. But for the first time, the results also showed pervasive losses among common birds across all habitats, including backyard birds.”

The findings show that of nearly 3 billion birds lost, 90 percent belong to 12 bird families, including sparrows, warblers, finches, and swallows — common, widespread species that play influential roles in food webs and ecosystem functioning, from seed dispersal to pest control.

Among the steep declines noted:

- Grassland birds are especially hard hit, with a 53-percent reduction in population — more than 720 million birds — since 1970.
- Shorebirds, most of which frequent sensitive coastal habitats, were already at dangerously low numbers and have lost more than one-third of their population.
- The volume of spring migration, measured by radar in the night skies, has dropped by 14 percent in just the past decade.

“These data are consistent with what we’re seeing elsewhere with other taxa showing massive declines, including insects and amphibians,” said coauthor Peter Marra, senior scientist emeritus and former head of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and now director of the Georgetown Environment Initiative at Georgetown University. “It’s imperative to address immediate and ongoing threats, both because the domino effects can lead to the decay of ecosystems that humans depend on for our own health and livelihoods — and because people all over the world cherish birds in their own right. Can you imagine a world without birdsong?”



(cont on page 4)

Although the study did not analyze the causes of declines, it noted that the steep drop in North American birds parallels the losses of birds elsewhere in the world, suggesting multiple interacting causes that reduce breeding success and increase mortality. It noted that the largest factor driving these declines is likely the widespread loss and degradation of habitat, especially due to agricultural intensification and urbanization.

Other studies have documented mortality from predation by free-roaming domestic cats; collisions with glass, buildings, and other structures; and pervasive use of pesticides associated with widespread declines in insects, an essential food source for birds. Climate change is expected to compound these challenges by altering habitats and threatening plant communities that birds need to survive. More research is needed to pinpoint primary causes for declines in individual species.

“The story is not over,” said coauthor Michael Parr, president of American Bird Conservancy. “There are so many ways to help save birds. Some require policy decisions such as strengthening the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. We can also work to ban harmful pesticides and properly fund effective bird conservation programs. Each of us can make a difference with everyday actions that together can save the lives of millions of birds — actions like making windows safer for birds, keeping cats indoors, and protecting habitat.”

The study also documents a few promising rebounds resulting from galvanized human efforts. Waterfowl (ducks, geese, and swans) have made a remarkable recovery over the past 50 years, made possible by investments in conservation by hunters and billions of dollars of government funding for wetland protection and restoration. Raptors such as the Bald Eagle have also made spectacular comebacks since the 1970s, after the harmful pesticide DDT was banned and recovery efforts through endangered species legislation in the U.S. and Canada provided critical protection.

<https://abcbirds.org/article/new-study-finds-u-s-and-canada-have-lost-more-than-one-in-four-birds-in-the-past-50-years/>

Submitted by Alan McCoy

Reduce fall yard clean-up and get “wild”!

By Madonna Luers

Fall yard and garden clean-up is a ritual in our neighborhoods of trees to protect grass lawns from leaves and pine needles, and – let’s be honest – to save face with orderly neighbors. After all, we don’t want our property to appear “unruly” or “mussy” – words that are included in extended dictionary definitions of “wild”.

But the most successful wildlife habitat managers know that resisting that neat-and-tidy urge, especially now in the fall, is the key to helping birds and other wildlife more. Here’s why:

Leaf litter, dry heads and stalks of summer perennials, and other “leftovers” from the growing season are homes and/or food for wildlife. Insects and other invertebrates in that litter or duff are food for migrating blackbirds, bluebirds and many other species. Birds like goldfinches and grosbeaks love to feed on the old seed heads of your spent blooms and other plants that provide seeds well into winter.

Reptiles and amphibians use spent yard and garden vegetation for cover. Many small mammals make use of decaying matter and brush piles. Some, like mice, are not welcome in great numbers, but they DO provide food for birds of prey, coyotes, and other wildlife. Skunks and raccoons are better off using your natural garden waste rather than your garbage can or pet food.

Any wildlife, especially in abundance, can become a nuisance. So the amount of fall clean-up work you do depends on your situation, preference and tolerance. But consider leaving some piles of leaf litter here and there, and resist the urge to “dead-head” all spent blooms.

In the long term, consider reducing the amount of grass lawn to maintain on your property, and replace it with native shrubs and other plants that provide food and cover year-round for birds and other wildlife.

Then put down the rake and really get “wild”!

Bob and Marlene Cashen

by Madonna Luers

Who runs this Spokane chapter of the Audubon Society?

Let us introduce ourselves! This monthly newsletter series of board member profiles is meant to help members, and prospective members, learn more about this chapter's governing board.

Bob and Marlene Cashen

This year you've heard a lot about the first moon landing since it's the 50th anniversary of that scientific milestone. But you probably didn't know that Spokane Audubon board members Bob and Marlene Cashen were part of that National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) project. In fact, along with meeting astronauts, that's where they first met each other.

Bob was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1935, earned a civil engineering degree from University of Virginia, and was working for Boeing as a government sub-contractor planning equipment budgets for NASA's new Apollo program. Marlene was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1946, earned a Soule Business College degree, and was working for Boeing as a secretary to Bob's boss.

"I ended up working with Bob a lot," Marlene said with a twinkle in her eye, "because no one else wanted to since he was such a stickler for details, such a perfectionist!"

They married in 1968 and worked in many other capacities in the New Orleans area. Bob was with Lockheed Martin, building the external tank for the reusable space shuttle, and at the end of his career was an environmental manager cleaning up 50 years of chemical spills and leaks at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility. Marlene became a criminal district court reporter and later took depositions for the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy hearings; with

national certification, she continued deposition freelancing for another six years after they moved to Spokane in 2006.

The Cashens started feeding birds in their backyard in Metairie, a suburb of New Orleans. Marlene says her Dad always had bird feeders in the yard when she was growing up, and though he didn't know the species' names, just his "redbirds" and "bluebirds," she and Bob soon learned about cardinals, blue jays, mockingbirds and more, even great egrets that would feed on their backyard Anole lizards.

When they moved to Slidell, another New Orleans suburb, they bordered a wetland and learned about snags, even placing some in their yard to attract red-headed and red-bellied woodpeckers. There they also enjoyed buff-bellied, ruby-throated, broad-tailed, and black-chinned hummingbirds, and helped a fellow local birding club member band some of them.

They traveled around the south to birdwatch, enjoyed seeing unique species on trips to Costa Rica and Panama, and specifically made a guided trip to the Galapagos Islands to see blue-footed and Nazca boobies, albatrosses, Galapagos hawks, Galapagos penguins, and much more.

When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, it didn't damage their home near the wetland, but it devastated all their favorite birding areas with saltwater intrusion. They lived without electric power for nearly a month and felt like they were in a third world country during wartime. Graveyard coffins floated in ditches, boats were deposited on roads by a massive tidal wave, and everyone was armed to ward off looting. They didn't want to spend retirement in an area that would take years to recover and would likely see similar problems again. Marlene's sister in Seattle suggested Spokane for their new home, so they took a leap of faith.

(cont on page 6)

Within a year of moving to Spokane they joined the Spokane Audubon chapter to learn about local birds from others. They also joined the Spokane Camera Club since both enjoy photography, and many of their beautiful bird photos have graced the pages of our annual calendar.

The Cashens like to bird slow, watching behavior, letting birds come to them, rather than rushing from point to point to check off species. Marlene once stood on the Liberty Lake boardwalk for 45 minutes to get photos of a Virginia rail that ended up nearly running into her.

They believe that habitat protection and public access are the most important issue for birds and the future of birding. Development of open space and wild areas concerns them.

By 2011, Bob was voted to the chapter board of directors, “despite being a conservative southerner,” he says with a wink. A couple of years later, Marlene was asked to join the board, too. They both look at their board roles as community service and want to help the chapter be more inclusive by providing opportunities for others to learn more about birds.

“You can study birds in books,” Bob said, “but you need a relationship with superior birders to really learn to identify species by sight and sound.”

Bob’s favorite bird:
Northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*).
Photo by Bob.



Marlene’s favorite bird:
Blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*).
Photo by Marlene

2019 Field Trips at a Glance

October 26, 2019, Saturday

Grant County Late Fall Migrant Trip

Leader: Gary Blevins

863-2659

blevins@spocom.com

This is a 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. The trip takes a Loop drive from Spokane to Soap Lake and back to Spokane usually after dark. Contact Gary Blevins (863-2659 or blevins@spocom.com) by October 16 if you plan to attend.

Target Birds: Loons and grebes; scoters and rare wintering waterfowl; wintering raptors; Glaucous,

Thayers, and Glaucous-winged Gulls; Northern Shrike; Snow Bunting; Lapland Longspur; Gray-crowned Rosy Finch

December 15, 2019, Sunday

Cheney Christmas Bird Count

Leader: Sandy Schreven

December 29, 2019, Sunday

Spokane Christmas Bird Count

Leader: Alan McCoy

Details of the field trips will be found on our website <https://www.audubonspokane.org/upcoming-events>.

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Local Membership Dues:

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

Individual: \$20 per year _____

Family: \$30 per year _____

Supporting: \$50 per year _____

Contributing: \$100 per year _____

Lifetime: \$500 _____

Your local membership supports your local chapter's many conservation and educational activities..

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Are you a member of the National Audubon Society?

Yes _____ No _____



Please make check payable to: Spokane Audubon Society

Send this form and your check to:

Audubon Membership

Attn: Dave Plemons

1224 W Riverside Ave #1101

Spokane WA 99201

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

<http://audubonspokane.org>

Click "Support Us"

Receiving duplicate newsletters? Errors or other changes needed on your mailing label? Contact Dave Plemons at davep_nublado@me.com or 509-413-1524



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

October 2019

To:

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

Visit our website: <http://audubonspokane.org>

Directions to the General Meeting

Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Bldg
2117 E. North Crescent Avenue

From West Spokane & South Hill

- 1-90 East to Exit 281 toward US-1 E/US-395 N (Newport/Colville)
- Follow US-2 E/US-395 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 Dr.

From North Spokane

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

Once you're on E. Upriver Drive (see map below)

- Follow E. Upriver Drive to N. Crestline Street
- Turn Left on N. Crestline Street
- Turn Right on E. North Crescent Drive
- Proceed to entry on left showing numbers 2015-2145



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

