

Volume 25  
Issue 4  
December 2016

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## Celebrating Spokane Audubon's Christmas Bird Count.

By Gary Blevins

This year's December program will use CBC data from the Pacific Northwest to explore changes in bird populations. Over the years I've used this data to focus on different aspects of bird populations. A couple of years ago I did a presentation on the top 10 birds observed on the Spokane CBC. This year we'll look at the second 10 most common birds from 1999 to 2015 data. And, of course, we will end the evening reviewing ways to distinguish between some of those pesky bird species that can be difficult to tell apart. I'm looking forward to doing another Audubon presentation and hope you can join me for a fun evening to bring in this year's CBC.



**American Goldfinch**  
Photo: Lindell Haggin



**Black-billed Magpie**  
Photo: Ron Dudley



**Bohemian Waxwing**  
Photo: Christopher Wood

### This Month's Speaker

If you have been involved in Audubon for some time, Gary will be a familiar face. Until recently, he served on the Spokane Audubon board in several capacities. His background combines a long academic career, with agency experience early in his career, and a long history of being active with environment groups. Gary is an avid promoter of birding and has conducted "Learn to Bird" workshops for Spokane Audubon in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day for a numbers of years and also leads field trips for SAS. In addition to his work with Spokane Audubon he has served on the boards of Audubon Washington, the Sierra Club, The Lands Council and the Western Bird Banding Association.

Gary has work experience as a Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Kansas Fish and Game. He has engaged in research on Neotropical Migratory birds off and on throughout his career. Past research includes the effects of park management and landscaping on populations of both non-migratory and migratory bird populations in Wichita, Kansas and managing MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) banding stations in Wyoming and Washington

## The Pygmy Owl

Volume 25 Issue 43 ~ December 2016

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

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

Owl illustrations on pg. 1 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



### Officers President

Tom Light tlight3@gmail.com

### Vice President OPEN

### Treasurer

Lindell Haggin lindell4118@comcast.net

### Secretary

Ed Reynolds edndaisy@aol.com

### Elected Board of Directors

Joyce Alonso	jbalonso3@msn.com
Ann Brinly	agbmaelstrom@gmail.com
Bob Cashen	mjaycashen@aol.com
Marlene Harrison	mjaycashen@aol.com
Bea Harrison	beatriceann@peoplepc.com
Jim Harrison	jimharrison2@peoplepc.com
Gary Lee	bird_fan@aol.com
Jan Reynolds	edndaisy@aol.com

### Committee Chairs

#### Field Trips OPEN

Gary Lee bird\_fan@aol.com

#### Education

Joyce Alonso jbalonso3@msn.com  
Lindell Haggin lindell4118@comcast.net

#### Conservation

Greg Gordon fightingbull63@gmail.com

#### Hospitality

Jan Strobeck janddeerpark@aol.com

#### Membership

Dave Plemons davep\_nublado@me.com

#### Publication

John English jhe230@yahoo.com

#### Publicity

Kim Thorburn kthorburn@msn.com

#### Pygmy Owl

Joanne Powell jopowell39@aol.com

#### Volunteer Coordinator

Joyce Alonso jbalonso3@msn.com

#### Website

Alan McCoy spokaneaudubon.org

## Black-billed Magpie

Sources: Audubon, National Geographic

Black-billed Magpies are familiar and entertaining birds of western North America. They sit on fenceposts and road signs or flap across rangelands, their white wing patches flashing and their very long tails trailing behind them. This large, flashy relative of jays and crows is a social creature, gathering in numbers to feed at carrion. They're also vocal birds and keep up a regular stream of raucous or querulous calls. They hop and walk on the ground with a swaggering and confident gait.

**Identification** An unusually long-tailed black-and-white corvid with a black bill. In good light, black on wings and tail shine with iridescent green, blue, and violet. Juvenile has milky grayish-colored iris and fleshy pinkish gape. The upperparts are washed dull brownish, and the belly is more cream-colored. Immatures have narrower and more pointed outer tail feathers. Flight: relatively slow, with steady, rowing wingbeats, but the birds are easily able to quickly change direction in flight. Magpies usually swoop up or down to perch.

**Similar Species** Black bill and range distinguish this species from the yellow-billed magpie; larger size of the black-billed magpie sometimes appreciable in the field.



Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:

Wednesday, December 14th at 7:30 p.m.

Deadline for January P.O. submissions  
is December 20th.

# Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

---

Fall is rapidly becoming winter. I find this time of year a bit tough; some places that are teeming with birds in May-June are now empty. Waterfowl will collect in huge flocks on the big rivers and lakes but smaller lakes and ponds are losing their inhabitants. On the bright side, Clark's Grebes made a big showing throughout the region and the influx of Scoters continued. The first Bohemian Waxwings have made their presence known in the region and with luck will be followed by other goodies and perhaps some odd rarity of who knows what origin?! Especially rare sightings are in bold and caps.

Snow Goose: Rose Lake (10/21-TL); Genessee (10/23-CL); Sprague (10/28-TL and JP); Slavin Ranch (11/3-JI) Reardan (11/5-JI and TL); Sheep Lake (11/11-TL)

Ross's Goose: Sprague (10/28-TL and JP)

Surf Scoter: Diamond Lake (10/19-TL); St. Maries (10/21-TL); Mill Canyon (10/28-TL and JP); Sprague (10/28-TL and JP); Sandpoint (11/7-ER)

White-winged Scoter: Diamond Lake (10/19-TL); Killarney Lake (10/21-TL)

Long-tailed Duck: Diamond Lake (10/27-TL)

Pacific Loon: Mill Canyon (10/28-TL and JP); Sandpoint (10/30-ER); Heyburn State Park (11/1-JI); Priest Lake (11/10-TL); Winchester Lake (11/12-CL)

Clark's Grebe: Moscow (10/21-BB); Heyburn State Park (10/21-TL); Rock Lake (10/23-RB); West Medical Lake (10/29-SS); Deyo Reservoir (10/29-CJ); Sandpoint (10/30-ER);

Great Egret: Cow Lake (10/20-RK); Moscow (10/25-PW)

Northern Goshawk: Rock Lake (10/23-RB); Davenport (10/28-TL and JP); Pullman (10/28-JW); Eloika Lake (11/3-FH and NT); Moscow (11/16-JT); Syringa (10/27-CL)

RED PHALAROPE: Sandpoint (11/7-ER)

Sabine's Gull: Heyburn State Park (10/21-TL); Sandpoint (10/22-RDC)

Franklin's Gull: Killarney Lake (10/21-WN)

Mew Gull: Coeur D'Alene (10/21-DW); Sandpoint (11/17-ER)

Anna's Hummingbird: Spokane (10/21-11/20-CoL); Pullman (11/16-RB); Hayden (11/7-DW)

American Three-toed Woodpecker: Bunchgrass Meadows (11/4-TL and JP)

BLACK-CAPPED X MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE HYBRID: Hawk Creek Canyon (11/5-JI and TL)

Snow Bunting: Heyburn State Park (11/1-JI); Coeur D'Alene (11/5-SJ); Dworshak Reservoir (11/6-EG and KO); Davenport (11/7-FH)

Nashville Warbler: Rare in November – Moscow (11/21-CS)

Swamp Sparrow: Mill Canyon (11/19-JI)

White-throated Sparrow: Heyburn State Park (10/21-TL); Eloika Lake (10/25-TL); Spokane (11/5-MF); Davenport (11/11-JA and JR)

Pine Grosbeak: Freezeout Saddle (10/23-CL); Steptoe Butte (11/13-RB)

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch: Freezeout Saddle (10/23-CL); Skyline Drive (11/6-CL and CS); Steptoe Butte (11/13-RB)

**Gray Crowned Rosy Finch**

Copyright © Scott Streit,



cont on page 4

PURPLE FINCH: Hayden (11/5-DW)



**Observers:**

JA-Joyce Alonzo; DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MaB-Matt Bartels; TB- KB-Kyle Bren; BB-Ben Bright; Janet Callen (JC); MaC-Marlene Cashen; MC-Mike Clarke; WC-Warren Current; KD-Kirsten Dahl; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; MD-Mike Denny; MLD-MerryLynn Denny; KD-Kas Dumroese; PE-Patrick Ellsworth; GF-Greg Falco; BF-Bob Flores; MF-Marian Frobe; RF-Russell Frobe; EG-Emma Gregory; JG-Jim Greaves; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; LH-Lisa Hardy; FH-Fran Haywood; BH-Bettie Hoff; RH-Ray Hoff; DH-Dave Holick; JI-Jon Isacoff; CJ-Craig Johnson; SJ-Steve Joyce; RK-Russ Koppen-drayer; DK-David Kreft; CL-Christopher Lindsey; JL-Joshua Little; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Cindy McCormack; AM-Alan McCoy; EM-Eliot Miller; NM-Nancy Miller; WN-Walker Noe; KO-Kurt Ongman; PO-Peter Olsoy; TO-Tim O'Brien; JP-Jonathan Pafford; DP-Donald Pendleton; ER-Eric Rasmussen; JR-Jan Reynolds; JR-Jethro Runco; SS-Sandy Schreven; HS-Herman Schreven; RS-Ryan Shaw; MS-Mark Stromberg; SS-Shirley Sturts; CS-Charles Swift; JT-Jason Talbot; NT-Norma Trefry; TW-TC Walker; DW-Doug Ward; PW-Paul Warnick; JW-John Wolff; TW-Tina Wynne-coop; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young

## How to Welcome Winter Birds

By Ashley P. Taylor

The following is an excerpt from National Audubon's on-line newsletter.

*Fall may mean migration, but one bird's north is just another bird's south.*

As birds that breed in the lower 48 states head to Central and South America, those from the boreal forests of Canada and Alaska are also heading south in search of warmer climes.

Helping these winter visitors out could help sustain their populations in both their wintering and summering grounds. Birds have the same needs—food, water, shelter—in winter as they do any other time. Winter habitat has also been shown to affect breeding success, according to studies on tropical-wintering birds, and the same could be true for the boreal birds wintering here, says Kristen Dybala, (an ecologist conducting research at the intersection of population dynamics, biodiversity conservation, and global change). If the birds don't find quality habitats with good food, their health suffers, Dybala explains, and it may take them longer to gather the energy to migrate back to their breeding grounds. When they finally arrive, the best breeding spots might be taken. "Each stage of the annual cycle kind of depends on the previous one," says Dybala. Basically, it's a snowball effect.

While conservationists tend to pay the most attention to habitats during breeding season, "there's this whole other season that we haven't been paying nearly as much attention to, and there may be opportunities to do a better job providing higher-quality habitat during the winter," Dybala says.



Evening Grosbeak  
© Laura Erickson

cont on page 5



So what can you do to welcome the boreal birds to your backyard this winter? Here are some tips from Stephen Kress, who directs Audubon's Project Puffin.

**Create a songbird border of native trees and shrubs to shelter your yard from the wind.** Choose berry-producing landscape plants, such as juniper trees and shrubs like dogwood, serviceberry, and viburnum; many boreal birds, such as the Cedar Waxwing, the Yellow-rumped Warbler, and several sparrow species, eat berries during the winter. Fall is the perfect time to plant, says Kress—though be sure to put wire-mesh cages around the new plants to protect them from mice, deer, and rabbits.

**Make a brush pile in the corner of the yard to shelter the birds from predators and storms and to provide night roosting places.** Put logs and larger branches on the bottom and layer smaller branches on top. Rake leaves up under trees and shrubs—and leave them there. The resulting mulch will make a lush environment for the insects and spiders that these birds, such as the Savannah Sparrow and Golden-crowned Sparrow, like to eat.

**Turn part of your lawn into a mini-meadow by letting it grow up in grass and weeds.** (Mow it once a year, in late summer.) Seed-eating boreal visitors, including several sparrow species and the Dark-eyed Junco, will benefit from your letting things go literally to seed. "In general, overly tidy gardeners are poor bird gardeners," Kress writes in *The Audubon Guide To Attracting Birds*.



## Christmas Bird Count

By Alan McCoy

Need an excuse to get out of the house? "I can't go to the fashion show that day honey, I have to go count birds." Or, "You'll have to do your own laundry next Saturday dear, I'm going birding!" Now you have a unique exit strategy from the mundane tedium you've been dreading. Join us on this year's Christmas Bird Count and enjoy your feathered friends with others who share your passion! You don't have to be an expert to participate. Although it is a dawn to dusk affair, you don't even have to stay the whole day – part timers are welcome too. And if you live within the count circle, we need "feeder watchers" too. Spokane's Christmas Bird Count will take place on Monday January 2, 2017.

We have 10 to 12 teams of counters and can always use more help. Please call Alan McCoy at 448-3123 or email him at [ahm2352@gmail.com](mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com) to join the count or if you have any questions about it. Can't make it on that date or can't get enough of the outdoors? There are other Christmas counts in our region too. Find out about them by pointing your browser to the Washington Ornithological Society at [www.wos.org](http://www.wos.org).

Some winter visitors to the Spokane area:



Dark-eyed Juncos  
© Christopher Wood



Cedar Waxwing  
©Ben Thomas



## We Are Looking For a Good Man!

One of our male participants for the upcoming trip to the Rio Grande Valley has had to cancel and so we have a opening for a roommate for Gary Lee.

The trip leaves Spokane on Saturday, Jan 28, 2017, and will return on Feb 6th. We will be headed first to Houston where we shall search for Monk Parakeets, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. On our way down to the Valley we will be taking a boat trip, hoping for a close look at Whooping Cranes (we will very likely see them, just no guarantee how close without the boat). We will then head down to Brownsville to start our Valley birding. Green Jays, Kiskadee, Common Chachalaca and Green Parakeet should be abundant as well as many of other resident Valley birds. Often during trips vagrants stop in for a visit - a Variegated Flycatcher was there earlier this fall, a Hook-billed Kite was seen this week as was a Northern Jacana. Projected cost for the trip is just slightly over \$1000 including airfare

Please contact Ann Brinly [agbmaelstrom@gmail.com](mailto:agbmaelstrom@gmail.com) or 509 443 5661 if you would like to join us for a fantastic birding (and usually photographic) opportunity.



Monk Parakeets



Chachalaca

## Other Activities



### Stand up to Oil - Communities for Change

Come to a forum to learn how we can come together as a community and find ways to reduce dependence on carbon sources of fuel. Lower costs for green energy makes it more viable. The initiative to support buses in Spokane is also a step in the right direction. We have a lot of challenges ahead. Come hear the possibilities. Free admission.

Wednesday, Nov. 30, 7 -8:30 pm

Gonzaga Moot Law Court, Gonzaga University Law School, 721 N. Cincinnati St.

## WinterFest

December 3, 2016

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge  
(26010 S. Smith Rd., 4 miles south of Cheney)

Carmen Yount, long-time Audubon member and previous Pygmy Owl editor, will be presenting a program on raptors including how they deal with winter. She will have an American Kestrel and a Great Horned owl to help her with the show!

You are invited to be a part of the 3rd Annual Winterfest Chili Contest. Bring us a slowcooker filled with your favorite chili to share by 10:30 a.m. on December 3. List the major ingredients on a 3 x 5 card with your name, address, and phone number. The prize? Bragging rights to the best chili at Turnbull and a pair of tickets to the Turnbull Auction to be held on March 11, 2017.

## Field Trips, December

December 10, 2016, Saturday  
Coeur d' Alene area Eagles  
Leader: Fran Haywood

We will be looking for eagles at Wolf Lodge & Beauty Bay and birding in areas around Coeur d'Alene. We will not be going to Harrison. I hope to make it a half day, but do bring lunch & liquid. Sometimes if birding is great it could be 2:00 pm. We are meeting at Albertson's parking lot in Liberty Lake at 8:00am. We hope for many species of waterfowl and a few passerines.

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

Fran Haywood 290-1814 birders13@gmail.com



---

### Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Local Membership Dues:

Individual: \$20/year \_\_\_\_\_

Couple & Family: \$25/year \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \$10/year \_\_\_\_\_

Lifetime: \$300 \_\_\_\_\_

National Membership Dues: \$35/year \_\_\_\_\_

Individual + National Dues: \$55/year \_\_\_\_\_

Couple + National Dues: \$60/year \_\_\_\_\_

**Your local membership provides you with *The Pygmy Owl* and supports your local chapter's many conservation and education activities. You will also be eligible for website privileges.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



Please make check payable to:  
**Spokane Audubon Society**  
Send this form and your check to:

Audubon Membership  
Attn: Dave Plemons  
1224 W. Riverside #1101  
Spokane, WA 99201

Current members may renew memberships from our web site::

<http://spokaneaudubon.org>

Receiving duplicate newsletters?  
Errors or other changes needed on your mailing label? Contact Dave Plemons at [davep\\_nublado@me.com](mailto:davep_nublado@me.com), or 413-1524.



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

Non-Profit  
 Organization  
 Spokane, WA  
 US Postage  
 PAID  
 Permit No. 34

**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>**

Listen to  
**BirdNote®**  
 on KYRS  
 Thin Air Community Radio  
 88.1 & 92.3 FM  
**Saturdays at 8:30 AM**

*10 years of stories about birds,  
 the environment, and more*

**KYRS**  
 88.1 | 92.3

Other ways to hear BirdNote >>

