

Volume 23  
Issue 6  
February 2016

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## February 10<sup>th</sup> Program: Kayaks to Airplanes and Dip Nets to Whoosh Nets featuring Spokane Audubon's Jim and Bea Harrison



*Bea Harrison releasing a White-tailed Hawk. Photo courtesy of Jim Harrison.*

With funding scarce, avian scientists need all the help they can get gathering information that can help them understand what we need to do to protect birds from the many global factors threatening them today.

Volunteers, aka *citizen scientists* are key to helping scientists in their quest for knowledge about birds. Bea and Jim Harrison discuss the wide variety of citizen science birding projects they have been involved in in the past.

From working for the Smithsonian banding neotropical migrants after they have crossed the Gulf of Mexico to manning hawk watch stations from daylight to dark, chasing black rails around the marsh at night to monitoring dead pelagic birds on the Washington Coast, being a citizen scientist is never boring, and sometimes it's life changing.

*(Speaking of citizen science, the Great Backyard Bird Count is February 12 - 16. See page 6 for more details, or go to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). ~ ed.)*

*The February 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, February & March

February 6, 2016, Saturday  
Snowy Owl Trip

**Leaders: Fran and Brad Haywood**

This trip is geared toward all levels of birders. We will spend most of the day exploring the area around Reardan and Davenport, and perhaps drive down Mill Canyon or to Coffee Pot Lake area depending on the latest bird reports. Winter birding can be slow and there are no guarantees. Weather can be a major factor. We will meet at Spokane's Coeur d'Alene Park at 7:30 a.m. Contact Fran at 484-8666, or [birders13@gmail.com](mailto:birders13@gmail.com) by January 31 if you plan to attend.

March 19, 2016, Saturday  
Bluebird Trip

**Leader: Marian Frobe**

This is a family friendly half-day trip and a great way to greet spring. We'll drive a route on Paradise Prairie to see returning favorite birds. We probably will finish at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. The trip usually ends around 2 p.m. We will meet at Spokane's Coeur d'Alene Park at 7:00 a.m. Call leader Marian Frobe at 328-0621 by March 15, if you plan to attend.

March 26, 2016, Saturday  
Turnbull NWR

**Beginning Birder Basics Trip  
Leader: Fran Haywood**

This is a half-day driving and walking trip for all levels of birders, and is family oriented. It is early in the season for many species, but always exciting to see what has arrived. Meet at the refuge headquarters near Cheney at 7 a.m. Contact leader Fran Haywood, 484-8666, [birders13@gmail.com](mailto:birders13@gmail.com) by March 20 if you plan to attend.

## The Pygmy Owl

Volume 23, Issue 6 ~ February 2016

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

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



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## Announcements

### Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge

#### Annual Dinner & Auction

March 5, 2016, 5 - 9 p.m.

Friends of Turnbull NWR supports the mandate of the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge to protect and enhance wildlife and their habitats through education, research, habitat preservation and restoration.

Many animals call the refuge home including over 200 species of birds, 45 species of mammals, twelve species of amphibians and 51 species of butterflies. Premier environmental education classes are provided by refuge staff and volunteers for over 7,000 elementary through high school students throughout Eastern Washington.

The annual dinner and auction is Friends of Turnbull NWR's primary source of funding to support their mission.

For more information or to buy tickets, visit [www.fotnwr.org](http://www.fotnwr.org). If you would like to make a donation to the auction, please call Kellisa Owens at 509-629-1826 ([wildrefuge@fotnwr.org](mailto:wildrefuge@fotnwr.org)) or Lorna Kropp at 509-448-2291 ([activities@fotnwr.org](mailto:activities@fotnwr.org)).

### Turnbull NWR Photo Contest

Turnbull is seeking photos from amateur photographers showcasing the wildlife and habitats found on the refuge.

Contest Dates: 11/1/2015 - 10/31/2016

For complete rules, go to [www.fws.gov/refuge/turnbull](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/turnbull)

The winning photo will be featured on the face of the 2017 annual refuge pass.

### Call for Volunteers: Waterfowl Survey

Ducks Unlimited, Turnbull NWR and WDFW are starting a Channelled Scablands Spring Waterfowl Survey effort. Spokane Audubon will be assisting with the ground surveys in Reardan. Please contact Lindell Haggin ([lindell4118@comcast.net](mailto:lindell4118@comcast.net)) to help with this project.

### Help Wanted: Newsletter Editor

Contact Carmen Yount ([carmen@floreo.com](mailto:carmen@floreo.com)) for a job description if you're interested! New editor will start with the September 2016 issue of *The Pygmy Owl*.

The deadline for March's *Pygmy Owl* is

**Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**

Please send any content to

[carmen@floreo.com](mailto:carmen@floreo.com)

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# Sights & Sounds

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

**A** *real* winter has hit the region. Snow can be measured in feet in some places! With the white Christmas came the bountiful winter birds of the North, with very nice showings of Snow Buntings, Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls, White-winged Crossbills, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches, and a surprise **PURPLE FINCH** at the University of Idaho. Other mega-rarities for the region included a **BROWN PELICAN** and **BROWN THRASHER** (must be the color)! Keep searching for new and fun stuff and happy new birding year! Especially rare birds are listed in italics.

**TRUMPETER SWAN:** Beauty Bay (12/3-SJ)

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:** Mill Canyon (11/17-JI)

**BROWN PELICAN:** Lake Pend Oreille (11/12-IBRC)

**PACIFIC LOON:** Mill Canyon (12/1-JI)

**MEW GULL:** Mill Canyon (12/18-TL); Blue Creek Bay (LH-11-21 and JI-1-6)

**ICELAND GULL:** Coeur D'Alene (11/25-CL and 12/17-LH)

**THAYER'S GULL:** Seven Bays (1/18-JI)

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** Coeur D'Alene (LH-12-15)

**SNOWY OWL:** Swanson Lakes (12/4-TL)

**LONG-EARED OWL:** Mill Canyon (11/10-TL); Swanson Lakes (1/1-CM)

**ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD:** Moscow (12/17-MS); Spokane (12/22-RF); Hayden (12/25-DW)

**RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER:** Otis Orchards (11/30-SJ)

**NORTHERN FLICKER (YELLOW-SHAFTED):** Spokane Valley (1/15-MaC)

**SAY'S PHOEBE:** Rare in winter; Moscow (12/17-JU)

**BROWN THRASHER:** Selle (11/23-mob)

**SNOW BUNTING:** Swanson Lakes (12/4-TL); Steptoe Butte (12/5-RB); Rathdrum Prairie (12/21-DW); Davenport (1/1-CM); Swanson Lakes (1/1-JL); Davenport (1/5-JI)

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER:** Spokane (1/16-MW)

**YELLOW WARBLER:** Rare in winter; Mill Canyon (11/17-JI)

**WILSON'S WARBLER:** Rare in winter; Gonzaga (12/4-JI)

**WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:** Pullman (12/10-MC)

**RUSTY BLACKBIRD:** Sandpoint (12/13-RDC)

**GRAY-CROWNED ROSY FINCH:** Steptoe Butte (11/15 and 12/5-RB); Mill Canyon (11/17-JI); Colville (12/19-WC); Rathdrum Prairie (12/26-SJ)

**PINE GROSBEAK:** Moscow (11/25-BB); Mill Canyon (12/4-TL); Moscow (12/5 and 12/9-CL); Pullman (12/12-MC and RB); Moscow (12/15-CT); Slavin Ranch (12/16-TO); Cusick (12/26-TL); Calispell Lake (12/26-TL); Mt. Spokane Foothills (1/1-TO); Spokane (1/3-TO); Coeur D'Alene (1/4-WN); Cheney (1/7-FH)

**PURPLE FINCH:** Moscow (12/12 through 1/18-BB)

**WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:** Moscow (12/2 and 1/18-BB); Moscow (12/5 and 12/19-CL); Pullman (12/12-RB); Davenport (1/5-JI)

**COMMON REDPOLL:** Moscow (11/11 and 11/20 and 12/5 and 12/19-CL); Pullman (12/5-RB); Coeur D'Alene (12-15-DW); Swanson Lakes (1/1-JL); Mill Canyon (1/5-JI); Scotia (12/26-TL); Peone Prairie (1/5 through 1/18-TL); Conkling (1/6-JI); Hawk Creek Canyon (1/15-TL and 1/18-JI)

Observers: JA-Jim Acton; DA-Dan Audet; DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MBa-Maria Barone; MaB-Matt Bartels; ToB-Tom Besser; TB-Tom Bragg; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; CC-Corinne Cameron; DC-Del Cameron; MaC-Marlene Cashen; MC-Mike Clarke; Stacy Crist (SC); RDC-Rich Del Carlo; WC-Warren Current; KD-Kas Dumroese; PD-Peter Dunwiddie; GF-Greg Falco; RF-Rex Franklin; MF-Marian Frobe; RF-Russell Frobe; MF-Mike Fulton; JG-Joshua Glant; JH-John Hanna; LH-Lisa Hardy; FH-Fran Haywood; RH-Ray Hoff; DH-Dave Holick; Idaho Bird Records Committee (IBRC); MI-Michael Irving; JI-Jon Isacoff; ; CJ-Chris Jannet; DJ-Dick Johnson; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; RK-Russ Koppendrayer; JL-Joshua Little; TL-Terry Little; AL-Angela Lotrario; TL-Thomas Light; CL-Carl Lundblad; TM-Tom Mansfield; CM-Cindy McCormack; AM-Alan McCoy; EM-Eliot Miller; NM-Nancy Miller; WN-Walker Noe; TO-Tim O'Brien; JP-Jonathan Pafford; JR-Jethro Runco; TS-Todd Sahl; SS-Shane Sater; MS-Mike Scott; BS-Brad Sondahl; CS-Charles Swift; RT-Rick Taylor; CT-Catherine Temple; NT-Norma Trefry; KT-Kim Thorburn; JU-Josef Uyeda; DW-Doug Ward; MW-Margot Wolff; TW-Tina Wynnecoop; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young

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## Spokane Audubon Society Response to Occupation of Malheur NWR

January 7, 2016

The Spokane Audubon Society, whose members work for the conservation of birds and other wildlife, joins the Audubon Society of Portland and other Audubon chapters to express our dismay at the armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County, Oregon.

While experiencing the incredible recreational pleasures of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, Spokane Audubon members have contributed to the Harney County economy. We cherish the special lands of the Blitzen Valley for their exceptional bird and other wildlife habitat. Their importance to the conservation of fish, waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds was recognized more than a century ago when, in 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt established one of the first national wildlife refuges on unclaimed federal property around Malheur Lake.

Spokane Audubon members believe that the management of public lands is a trust that our government takes seriously. Guided by laws and regulations, government officials use stakeholder processes for decision making about public land planning and management. Our members take advantage of these opportunities to provide input about bird and other wildlife conservation.

“Spokane Audubon Society strongly objects to the armed occupation of these public lands by out-of-state protesters,” said conservation chair Greg Gordon. “Holding this bird sanctuary hostage in order to prove a political objective is inappropriate and has the potential of disrupting years of carefully planned protection of birds and wildlife.”

## Speak Out for Public Lands

January 19, 2016 was the seventeenth day of the seditious armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. We, the owners of our public lands, held demonstrations throughout the Pacific Northwest to call for the return of our lands.

At the Bend, Oregon demonstration, one of the rolling pen- and mixer-wielding women from organizers *Great Old Broads for Wilderness* displayed the “**Recipe for Making Bully Turnovers**: 1) Pour in buckets of truth in a bowl. 2) Add dozens of public land advocates. 3) Let simmer for days. 4) Allow to rise overnight. 5) Bake, sprinkle with science. 6) Slice and dice, and watch them quickly disappear!”

In Spokane, 70 - 100 supporters, including Spokane Audubon members, waved signs and heard speakers at the Federal Courthouse at the event organized by the Lands Council. Spokane Audubon member Kim Thorburn spoke for the birds. She explained that the greater Sandhill crane that breeds in the wetlands of the arid lands of the Pacific Northwest is endangered in our state but not in Oregon because of the 300 breeding pairs that return to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge from their Central California wintering grounds each year to mate and rear their young.



*Sandhill Cranes at Malheur (Photo courtesy of Kim Thorburn)*

Kim celebrated the role of the Refuge in the recovery of Trumpeter Swans from near-extinction a century ago and pointed out that southeastern Oregon is one of the few remaining strongholds of the Greater Sage Grouse. She tipped her hat to the hunters in the crowd, lamenting that the obstinate drought in the Pacific Northwest had forced closure of the 2015 Greater White-fronted and Snow Goose seasons on the Refuge but pointed out that, in environmentally challenging conditions, it took our public land managers and scientists to ensure enough resource for future hunts.

For the anglers, Kim pointed out that most of the Donner und Blitzen River flows through the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge where native Redband Rainbow Trout can roam unobstructed from spawning on the slopes of Steen Mountain all the way to Lake Malheur and reach sizes of 18-20 inches. Even without dams, these fish face threats from forage competition by bottom-feeding invasive common carp. It is Refuge scientists and staff who are working to mitigate this threat to fish and waterfowl.

It's urgent. To protect birds and other wildlife, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge must be returned to us, its owners. Speak out for public lands.

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## Christmas Bird Count 2015

by Alan McCoy

**A**nother CBC is behind us. It will be remembered as a cold one, but not the coldest in memory. It may also be remembered as a count with more than a few rarities. **ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRDS** were seen along Latah Creek not too far from Qualchan golf course by several families all winter. The shivering little birds are still there. **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS** were seen by one group and have since been seen by others around Spokane. A solitary **CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE** was seen mixed in with assorted finches, juncos and chickadees at a feeder near Drumheller Springs Park in central Spokane. Bill Siems had an elusive **SORA** on the day before the official count day near the confluence of the Little Spokane and Spokane Rivers; a Sora has never been seen on our CBC. **TRUMPETER SWANS** were observed on the Spokane CBC in 1985, but this year Kim Thorburn's group saw five of these graceful birds. We also had record numbers of *Common Raven*, *Eurasian Collared-Dove* and *Mourning Dove*.



*Anna's Hummingbird, courtesy of Alan McCoy*

Eighty seven species and a total of 19,406 birds made the list this year as recorded by 77 participants. This represents higher than average species (80) but lower than average total individuals (23,000). Since 1999 we have averaged about 59 volunteers in the field and this year we had 63 folks who braved the cold. In addition to those in the field we had 14 volunteer feeder watchers who spent about 38 collective hours watching from the comfort of their homes. In a cold year such as this one, feeder watchers are very important participants who make a significant contribution to the count. Make a note of this for next year and if you live within the count circle, please consider helping out.

The Christmas Bird Count provides valuable data on our feathered friends. National Audubon collects this information into a huge database. Of course it costs money to maintain the database and to analyze the information therein. To that end participants donated a total of \$200 to the cause.

Donations can still be made to the Christmas Bird Count with a check made out to National Audubon Society, make a note on your check with the Donation code *CBCX7W*. Send any donations to:

NAS Christmas Bird Count  
Attn: Chance Muehle  
225 Varick St 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10014

### Spokane Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count At a Glance

Sunday, January 3, 2016

7:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Low temperature: 4° F

High Temperature: 22° F

Snow Depth: 6.7" - 12.7"

Still Water: Partly Frozen

Moving Water: Partly Frozen

Field Observers: Partly Frozen (!)

Total Observers (field): 63

Total Observers (feeders): 14

Total Distance Covered (Foot + Car): 713.5 Miles

Total Distance Covered (Dog Sled): 0 Miles

Total Species Observed: 87

Total Individuals: 19,406

Most Common Sightings: Mallard (3,555 individuals), Rock Pigeon (2,056 individuals), House Sparrow (1,688 individuals), Canada Goose (1,421 individuals), House Finch (1,341 individuals)

Least Common Sightings (1 each): Virginia Rail, Wilson's Snipe, Western Screech Owl, Northern Pygmy Owl, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Canyon Wren, Pacific Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Tree Sparrow

Unusual Species (requiring Rare Bird Reports): Trumpeter Swan, Canvasback, Sora, Anna's Hummingbird, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Hermit Thrush, White-winged Crossbill

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## Field Trip Report: Winter Lake & Wet Belt Field Trip (December 12th, 2015)

by Fran Haywood

Since Joyce was unavailable to lead this trip, I volunteered. Only two others besides Brad and I went, but despite the drizzle that wouldn't quit, we had a good time, and we did see lots of eagles. We kept hoping for clearing, as it slowed several times, but alas, the rain never stopped.

We started near Wolf Lodge Bay, where we met Coeur d'Alene Audubon members trying to do a monthly bird survey. They decided the drizzle made it impossible for an accurate count and decided to try another day. In hindsight, they were right, but we thought it was clearing up, so we kept going.

At Wolf Lodge, we saw a dead bird in the water near the boat launch, but couldn't see the head. Coeur d'Alene Audubon members checked it and said it was a Canada Goose, probably shot by one of the many waterfowl hunters in the area. That was a relief, as we feared it was an eagle.

At the bays we found Belted Kingfisher, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Mallards, a Common Loon, Canada Geese, Western Grebe, American Coot, American Wigeon, and five swans. We also found lots of eagles—they always leave everyone in awe.

Driving to Thompson Lake, Harrison and St. Maries we spotted several Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks, Wild Turkeys, Red-shafted Northern Flickers and a Great Blue Heron.

At Thompson Lake we added Hooded Merganser, Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco and Song Sparrow to our list of sightings.

At St. Maries STP we saw European Starlings and a Barrow's Goldeneye.

If I lead this trip again, I will plan to bird Beauty Bay and Wolf Lodge Bay, and several areas near Coeur d'Alene including Independence Point. In years past, in better weather, the long drive was more productive, but this year's steady drizzle probably had a negative impact on the trip. That said, Margaret and Ed were good sports.

We missed Joyce as our trip leader because she always does such a great job; hopefully she will return to lead the trip in the future!

## Great Backyard Bird Count February 12 - 16, 2016



*2015 Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest  
Honorable Mention in the "People" Category,  
by Marion Mogielnicki, Washington.*

Count birds anywhere you like. Audubon recommends at LEAST 15 minutes—or even longer if you wish. Keep track of the numbers and species of birds you see and how long you watched.

- Make your best estimate of how many birds you saw of each species. For example, 5 Northern Cardinals, 3 American Crows. Huge flocks may be a challenge, but your best guess is still valuable.
- Enter your list(s) online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Put in a new checklist:
  - for each new day
  - for each different location
  - for the same location, same day, if you counted at a different time of day

### ***Look for El Niño Surprises During the GBBC***

With the El Niño weather phenomenon warming Pacific waters to temperatures matching the highest ever recorded, participants in the 2016 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), may be in for a few surprises. Information gathered and reported online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) will help scientists track changes in bird distribution, some of which may be traced to El Niño storms and unusual weather patterns.

“The most recent big El Niño took place during the winter of 1997-98,” says the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Marshall Iliff. “The GBBC was launched in February 1998 and was pretty small at first. This will be the first time we’ll have tens of thousands of people doing the count during a whopper El Niño.”

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Saturdays at 8:30 a.m.

*Pileated Woodpecker © Gregg Thompson*

**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: \_\_\_\_\_



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Audubon Membership  
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 1224 W. Riverside #1101  
 Spokane, WA 99201

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<http://spokaneaudubon.org>

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 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  
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February 10<sup>th</sup> Program:  
**Kayaks to Airplanes and Dip Nets**  
 to Whoosh Nets  
 with Bea and Jim Harrison  
 7:30 p.m.

**To:**

*The Spokane Audubon Society provides resources and services to educate people about birds, wildlife, and the importance of habitats, and to advocate and support public policies and actions that conserve and restore wildlife habitats.*

**Visit our website: <http://spokaneaudubon.org>**

**Directions to the General Meeting:**

*Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Building  
 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue*

**To get to Riverview Retirement Community:**

**From West Spokane & South Hill**

- I-90 East to Exit 281 toward US-2 E/US-395 N/ Newport/Colville
- Follow US-2 E/US-395 N to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

**From Spokane Valley**

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

**From North Spokane**

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

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

- Follow E. Upriver Drive to N. Crestline Street
- Turn Left at N. Crestline Street
- Turn Right on E. North Crescent Drive
- Proceed to entry on left showing numbers 2105-2145

Limited parking is available by the Village Community Building. Overflow parking is along E. North Crescent Ave.

