

Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:  
Wednesday, May 8th at 7:30 p.m. Social get-together at 7:00

Volume 27  
Issue 9  
May 2019

# The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



## SEATTLE'S ADAPTABLE URBAN COOPER'S HAWKS

presented by Ed Deal

Twenty-five years ago, Cooper's Hawks began colonizing urban and suburban landscapes throughout the US, evolving a tolerance for living in proximity to humans. Ed Deal, from the Urban Raptor Conservancy, will provide insights into these common but elusive raptors, covering the breeding season with photos and videos. The Seattle study, one of several in large US cities (e.g., Tucson, Milwaukee, Albuquerque), is monitoring the local population nesting density and annual productivity. In addition, a color ID banding program looks at fledgling dispersal, longevity, and adult breeding site and winter site fidelity. The results include annual increases in productivity, little evidence of migration, strong site fidelity and (mostly) short natal dispersal distances.



Ralph and Ed

You would think that someone born in Cooper Hospital and raised in Audubon, NJ would be a child prodigy birder. But Ed's mid-life conversion involved taking Bud Anderson's Hawk ID class in 1991. He went on to volunteer on Fall Migration hawk banding projects in the Goshutes Mtn, NV, Florida Keys and Cape May, NJ, in addition to Diamond Head, Chelan Ridge and Entiat Ridge in WA. He volunteered on Falcon Research Group's entire 17-year study of nesting Peregrine Falcons in the San Juan Islands and is in his 25th year monitoring and banding nesting Peregrines in the Seattle area. For the last seven years he has worked with a group of volunteers studying the expanding urban population of Cooper's Hawks in Seattle. He holds a Federal Master Raptor Banding Permit. He is a graduate of the Seattle Audubon Master Birder Program and a recovering lister.

# The Pygmy Owl

Volume 27 Issue 9 May 2019

*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

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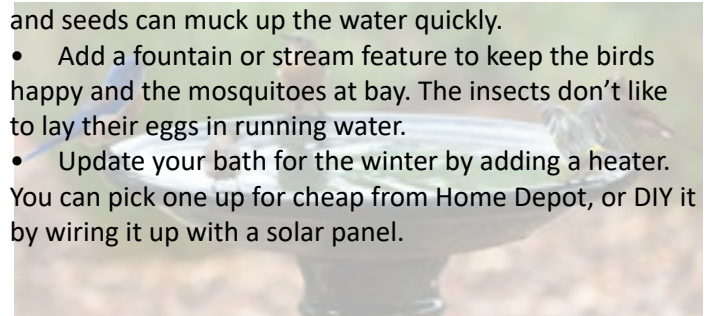
## Keeping Your Birdbath Clean

A few hints from Alan McCoy and the Audubon Society newsletter

To keep your birdbath fresh, just rinse and scrub it with nine parts water, one part vinegar. Skip the synthetic soaps and cleansers; they can strip the essential oils from bird feathers. And make sure to refill the water every other day to keep it from bugging up. Neglecting your birdbath doesn't just make for a filthy experience for your birds: It could also do more harm than good, Geoffrey LeBaron, director of Audubon's Christmas Bird Count program, says. "If you don't take good care of your birdbath, either it will dry out completely, which is of no use for birds, or it'll get fetid," LeBaron says. "That's when mosquitoes might become a problem."

Here are a few more tips on birdbath maintenance:

- Remember to keep your birdbath close to, but not directly under, woody brush and feeders. Falling debris and seeds can muck up the water quickly.
- Add a fountain or stream feature to keep the birds happy and the mosquitoes at bay. The insects don't like to lay their eggs in running water.
- Update your bath for the winter by adding a heater. You can pick one up for cheap from Home Depot, or DIY it by wiring it up with a solar panel.



## Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through April 18, 2019:

Welcome to our new nester: Lori Leaver.

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Jim Acton, Carl & Lynn Baum, Mary Benham, Pearl & Howard Bouchard, Ron & Pat Dexter, Sharon & Norman Genung, Jim Hudlow, Mary Jokela, Claudia Kroll, Gary Lee, Mary Marsh, Susan Orlowski, Ronald Petersen, Mary Jean Porter, Helen Rhodes, John & Amy Roberson, Steven Siegfried, Liz Deniro & Paul Swetik, Peggy Tan, Kris Wilson, Conn & Julie Wittwer, Margo Wolf & Leonard Shields.

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](mailto:davep_acer@msn.com). Legibility is critical. Occasionally I cannot clearly make out some Email addresses.

June Pygmy Owl  
Deadline May 20th

# Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Spring has arrived! After one of the coldest, snowiest Februarys ever, things seem to have returned to “normal.” And we are right on the edge of the big migratory push. Notable for this report are two LONG-TAILED DUCKS, one at Lake Pend Oreille and one at Sprague, which, along with the February bird at Seven Bays, make three sightings in the region in two months. Waterfowl migrants have peaked and are starting to depart our flooded fields. Shorebirds and the first passerines are beginning to arrive. In the next few weeks, look for our beloved long-range migrants, including hummingbirds, flycatchers, vireos, and warblers, to show up in all the expected – and possibly unexpected – places!

Snow Goose: Lacrosse (3/26-RB); Pullman (3/29-PO and KS); Syringa (3/29-NP); Slavin Ranch (3/30-MW); Peone Prairie (4/1-TL); Harrison (4/3-MS); Rice (4/7-TD); St. John (4/9-RB); Kootenai NWR (4/12-TL); Little Bear Ridge (4/14-CL); Colville (4/16-WC); Reardan (4/18-TL); Sprague (4/19-JI)

Greater White-fronted Goose: Saltese Wetlands (4/5-MC); Ewan (4/9-RB); Ewan (4/14-PO and KS)

Trumpeter Swan: Moscow (3/26-BB); Kulzer (4/9-TL); MacArthur Lake (4/12-TL)

Long-tailed Duck: Lake Pend Oreille (4/12-TL); Sprague (4/19-JI)

Red-breasted Merganser: Little Spokane Confluence (3/31-CM)

Sandhill Crane: Hog Meadows (4/14-CL); Ewan (4/14-PO and KS)

Mew Gull: Valley (4/9-TL)

Ferruginous Hawk: Sprague (4/19-JI)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Mt. Spokane SP (3/24-fide SJ)

Blue Jay: Harrison (4/1-MS); Bonner’s Ferry (4/12-TL)

White-winged Crossbill: Bonner’s Ferry (4/12-TL); Bull River (4/12-NM)

Pine Grosbeak: Alladin (3/27-JC); Bonner’s Ferry (4/12-TL)

Lesser Goldfinch: Seven Bays (4/1-MC); Spokane Valley (4/10-MC); Little Spokane Confluence (4/16-TL)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Spokane West Plains (4/19-DM)

Tricolored Blackbird: Sprague (4/19-JI)

Observers: DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra;; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; JC-Janice Ceridwen; MaC-Marlene Cashen; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; JoE-Johnna Eilers; JE-Jacob Elonen; JF-Judy Ferguson; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Bea Harrison; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Curtis Mahon; TM-Theresa Mathis; DM-David McNeely; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O’Brien; PO-Peter Olsoy; NP-Neil Paprocki; ER-Eric Rassmussen; NR-Nick Risch; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; KS-Katie Sorenson; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; DW-Doug Ward; NW-Nancy Williams; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney

**Long-tailed Duck, Breeding Male**  
©Jay McGown



**Long-tailed Duck, Non-breeding Female**  
©Tim Lenz



# BLACK TERNS

By Mary Jokela

Barely visible hundreds of feet aloft, black scimitars in pairs and small groups ascend in spirals, gliding down--Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*)! These petite terns usually arrive in our region in late April or early May. Very social, they breed in loose colonies and usually forage, roost, and migrate in flocks of a few to more than 100 birds, occasionally up to tens of thousands.

Their bills are slender; in breeding plumage heads and underparts are black and wings and tail are gray. Rather longish black legs with 3-toed webbed feet allow easy walking and swimming. Flight is buoyant and light, skimming swiftly over the surface of the water like a swallow, darting, zig-zagging and dipping to quickly snatch mostly insects and small fish, never plunge-diving.

Black Terns' summer and nesting habitat is freshwater wetlands, richly vegetated lakes, ponds and marshes. When the terns reach three-year maturity, breeding adventures begin. Nests are flimsy, loosely constructed affairs of dried reeds, cattails, other stubby debris and sometimes algae mats, often built close to shorelines or floating.

One brood per year, two to four olive-buff eggs hatch into rapidly-developing chicks. Within two to three days the tiny hatchlings can walk or run or swim and scuttle off the nest into nearby vegetation to escape disturbance, or predation, which is significant. The fluffy chicks may be fed by parents for up to two more weeks. 19-25 days after hatching the miracle of flight catapults the youngsters into the real world!

The birds spend their approximately four months' breeding season inland where their small fish-insect diet can also include tadpoles, frogs, spiders, earthworms, crustaceans and leeches. Thereafter, migration at sea and winter diet in the coastal areas of Central and South America are mostly small fish, some crustaceans and insects.

Black Terns, having historically favored the northern US, Canada and the Great Lakes, are vulnerable to loss of marsh habitat. Their numbers have decreased in many areas during recent decades. Loss of wetlands on breeding grounds and migration routes is likely a major cause of these declines. Nest failures, habitat loss, the proliferation of invasive species such as purple loosestrife and phragmites—a

common reed that is everywhere—all place pressure on the terns' breeding population. Food supplies also may have been reduced through agricultural control of insects and overfishing in the marine winter range.

In any event, at some point these terns are unable to survive. According to Audubon's Black Tern Project in the Great Lakes, and Caleb Putnam, Michigan Important Bird Areas program coordinator for Audubon Great Lakes, since the 1960's the population worldwide has dropped by 70 percent. "The bird is going downhill fast," Putnam says. "The population should be stable but it's not."

Satellite transmitters capable of tracking individuals as they migrate south would help fill important gaps, such as adult mortality rates, winter movements, and colony fidelity. Currently such devices aren't light enough for Black Terns, L 9.75", WS 24", WT 2.2 oz, little more than a Wiffle ball.

It's probably pre-arrival at this writing for these small terns. Locally in north Spokane and Pend'Oreille Counties, we might locate them in any of the heavily vegetated wetlands, possibly across the highway from Davis Lake or at Calispell Lake, also, the cattail swamp on Jared Road just west of Highway 211. And if we discover them, the sharp scraping "keef" warns us to back off!



**Black Tern**  
©Marlene Cashen



**Black Tern**  
©John Sullivan

# Spokane Audubon Society

## Field Trips

by Alan McCoy

We are in the process of creating our field trips for 2019. As we get leaders and trips arranged, we will add them to the list below. We plan to introduce new and varied trips each year. The following are our “official” field trips for 2019. Trips may be added with short notice, so check the website often. Trips may be canceled at any time due to bad weather, too few participants, or the lack of a leader. Contact the leader for more information and to reserve a spot.

**Our Leaders and Field Trip Cost:** Field trips are free and are open to anyone. You don't have to be an Audubon member to participate in our field trips. Our leaders are club volunteers and are not compensated. If you carpool with somebody, it is common courtesy to compensate the driver for your share of gas and vehicle use. You are also responsible for any park entry fees, camping fees, or motel bills.

**What to Bring:** Participants need to provide their own binoculars, food and drink, adequate clothing, and transportation unless you find somebody with whom to carpool. Drivers, bring your Discover Pass and any other pass you may have.

**Skill Level:** We provide a variety of trips that accommodate many birding skill levels. Birders of all levels are welcome on all trips. However, please bear in mind that some beginners may get frustrated or bored on trips designed for advanced birders, where much of the birding is done by ear and the pace is very fast. Some advanced birders might find the trips geared toward beginning birders too basic and slow-paced. The skill level for each trip will be posted.

**Trip Length and Starting Time:** To meet varied goals, some trips are five or six hours while some are 12 hours or longer. Starting times are when we leave so arrive earlier than the posted hour.

**Families, Children and Dogs:** Dogs are disruptive to the birding experience; therefore, we do not allow any dogs on our trips. While we very much want

families to participate, very young children are not appropriate for our field trips. When in doubt about the appropriateness of bringing your child, ask the leader before the trip so you can make plans for child care.

**First Come, First Served:** We have received feedback from past field trip participants as well as our leaders and concluded that to enhance the birding experience we need to limit the number of participants on our trips. The number allowed for each trip will be posted. Call or email early to reserve your place on a trip. But also call ASAP if you are not able to make the trip so the leader can contact folks on the wait list to fill your place.

Our 2019 Field Trips list can be downloaded, but be sure to check back here or call the trip leader for last minute changes. Check the Pygmy Owl for field trips too.

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

Page 7 of the Pygmy Owl shows a list of the field trip: **2019 Field Trips at a Glance**



# Lessons about Seattle from the Cooper's hawk

by Kelly Brenner

*The following is an excerpt from an article by Kelly Brenner provided by Ed Deal*

To visit the Queen of Seattle one must first step over empty beer bottles and condom wrappers before skidding down a dirt slope and traipsing over a massive tangle of bindweed. The Queen is not holding audience today, but her 'kids' are there to welcome Ed Deal.

The Queen is a Cooper's hawk, fierce, deadly and beautiful. Deal, a raptor expert, points out her nest, a large, solid mass of branches perched near the top of a tall, scrawny alder. The tree sits in a ravine, not far from Longfellow Creek in West Seattle, and the Queen has ruled this location for the past eight years, her current 'kids' as Deal refers to them, flying around the small forest.

The Queen of Seattle is one of dozens of birds monitored by Deal as part of an ongoing study documenting Cooper's hawks in Seattle. The self-funded, volunteer-run study Deal now manages with his partner, Martin Muller, was begun in 2003 by Jack Bettesworth. This is Deal's sixth year documenting Seattle's Cooper's hawks with help from volunteers around the city and he is passionate about these birds.

Over the past 14 years, the study has been slowly revealing a picture of the population of a bird that is relatively new to the city. It has also shown what this bird can tell us about the future. Each year Deal and the other volunteers count as many nests as they can find in Seattle, then monitor every nest to document how many young each produces. If possible, they will catch and band both juveniles and adults. In Deal's first year, they monitored 22 nests. This year they have 40. Deal admits they're getting better at finding them, but the number of nests is also growing. The increasing number of nests in Seattle is part of a national trend of the Cooper's hawks' move to cities. Prior to the 1990s, the hawks were relatively rare in urban landscapes before their numbers dipped precariously low due to a combined effect of human persecution and DDT. Made infamous from Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring," DDT is a pesticide which accumulates in raptors, creating thin eggshells which are crushed

by incubating adults. In the early 1990s, Cooper's hawks began a natural colonization of cities around the United States. Beginning with Milwaukee, Wisconsin, they are now studied in half a dozen cities, including Seattle. The ongoing effort to document the number of nests in Seattle, year after year, has created a rich data set, all available at the Burke Museum, and creates a baseline for future population changes. These population numbers are particularly important when considering potential future impacts from climate and other environmental changes, because Cooper's hawks are the urban canary in the coal mine. Just as disappearing hawks hinted at a larger problem before research pinpointed the problems with DDT, they have shown they are a bellwether for future change. This time, Deal and others are paying close attention.



Cooper's Hawk  
© 2019 Mitch Waite

## 2019 Field Trips at a Glance

April 27, 2019, Saturday Owens Lake-Bear Lake  
Leader: Curtis Mahon

May 4, 2019 Saturday Cheney Wetlands Tour  
Leaders: Buck and Sandy Domitrovich

May 11, 2019, Saturday Slavin Ranch Wetland Trip  
Leader: Alan McCoy

May 18, 2019, Saturday Peone Prairie Wetlands  
Leaders: Ann Brinly and Jenny Michaels

May 25, 2019, Saturday Turnbull Wildlife Refuge  
Family Trip  
Leaders: Sandy & Richard Sollie

May 26, 2019, Sunday Iller Creek (Dishman  
Hills Natural Area)  
Leader: Michael Woodruff

June 7-8, 2019 Friday-Saturday Little Pend  
Oreille National Wildlife Refuge  
Leader: Mike Munts/Alan McCoy

June 8, 2019 Saturday Liberty Lake  
Leader: TBD

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:

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

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

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

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

Donation \_\_\_\_\_

**Your local membership provides you with *The Pygmy Owl* and supports your local chapter's many conservation and education activities.**

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

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

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

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

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



Please make check payable to:

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Send this form and your check to:

Audubon Membership

Attn: Dave Plemons

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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\\_acer@msn.com](mailto:davep_acer@msn.com), or 413-1524.



The Pygmy Owl  
**Spokane Audubon Society**  
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May 2019

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 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

