

The Pygmy Owl



Volume 29
Issue 9
May 2021

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society

May 12th, 7:00 p.m.

This meeting again will be via Zoom on-line since pandemic-prevention restrictions continue to keep us from meeting in person. To join the Zoom meeting (ID: 842 3259 3923, Passcode: 629079), link to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84232593923?pwd=cGV4Y2VGSGxIOEsrZFdiZ1FWbHRkdz09>

Finches of the Little Pend Oreille

presented by **Michael Munts**

Ten species of finches are known to occur on the refuge. Although a familiar family to most of us, they are surprisingly varied in size, shape, color and life history. Some species probably show up at just about every bird feeder in Washington, but how well do we really know these familiar birds? I will take an in-depth look at each of the finch species known to occur on the refuge.



Evening Grosbeak
© Bellemare Celine



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch © Joshua Covill



Purple Finch
© James McKenzie

Michael Munts

I am originally from Sandpoint, Idaho, and have spent most of my life in the Pacific/Inland Northwest. I am the wildlife biologist at the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge.

Prior to the refuge, I worked for the National Park Service for 14 years at Olympic in Washington, Craters of the Moon in Idaho, and Klondike Gold Rush in Alaska. I came to Colville and Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge in 2011. My primary specialty has been nongame birds.



The Pygmy Owl

Volume 29 Issue 9 May 2021

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, 11 and 12 © Jan Reynolds.



Officers

President

Alan McCoy

Vice President

Lisa Langelier

Treasurer

Lindell Haggin

Secretary

Madonna Luers

Elected Board of Directors

Bob Cashen
Marlene Cashen
Gary Lee
Jenny Michaels

Committee Chairs

Field Trips

Alan McCoy

Programs

Gary Lee

Education

Joyce Alonso
Lindell Haggin

Conservation

Greg Gordon

Hospitality

Jan Strobeck

Membership

Alan McCoy

Publicity

Madonna Luers

Pygmy Owl

Joanne Powell

Website

Jenny Michaels

Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status March 20, 2021 through April 19, 2021:

Welcome and thanks to our **new members**:

Student: Mason Maron

Individual: Karen Ssebanakitta, Peter Goldberg, Mercedes Cousland, Barbara Coe, Mark Schuller, Lynne Carter

Family: Robert Atkinson, John Van Haalen,

Supporting:

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

Student: Theo Goodwin,

Individual: Claudia Kroll,

Family: Don Goodwin

Supporting:

Contributing:

If you change your email address, please send your new email address to me, Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com and I will make sure you get the Pygmy Owl in your email inbox. Another way to get the Pygmy Owl is to go to our website: <https://www.audubonspokane.org/the-pygmy-owl>.



Hummers are back!

Turnbull Treasures

by Carlene Hardt

It was wonderful to have such nice weather on Friday and Saturday! I had the opportunity to go out to Turnbull after work on Friday and at 7am on Saturday.

I was happy to see three swans this trip. One was a Tundra swan and as you can see it has a yellow spot by its eye and it is smaller than the Trumpeter. They must be migrating at the same time. There was a lone Trumpeter on Middle Pine, too.

Once again there was a variety of ducks. It was nice to see the colorful Northern Shoveler back. I was on the path and walking past some reeds when a female mallard duck screamed at me and then entered the water. I didn't even see her until she raised her voice!

I was delighted to get closer pictures of the Hooded Merganser pair. The female looks so different than the male but she has her own crest at the back of the head which can be expanded or contracted.

"The more I study nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator"-Louis Pasteur

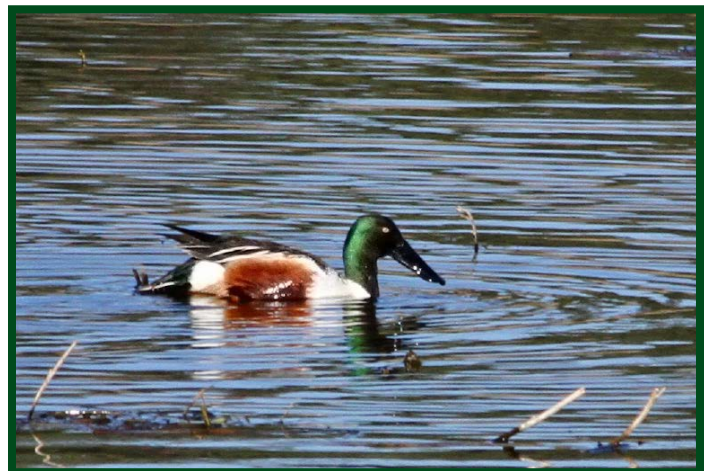
Have a wonderful week!

Carlene

all photos by Carlene Hardt



Tundra and Trumpeter Swans



Northern Shoveler

Hooded Mergansers

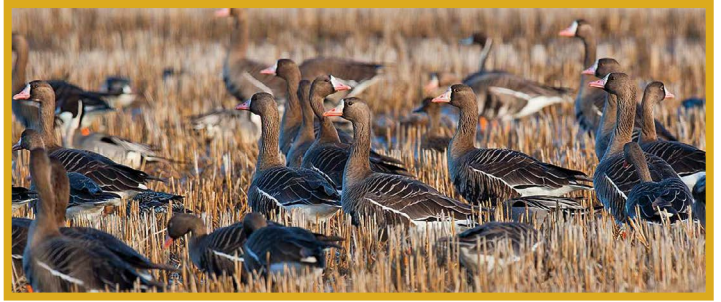


Screaming Momma Mallard

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

By the time this gets to readers, spring migration will reach its early peak period. Hundreds of thousands of migratory songbirds will be passing through our region. The first wave of our breeding migrants will be singing in their newly-established territories. It's an exciting time where interesting birds could be anywhere, any time! The past few weeks have been the expected calm before the big plunge.



White-fronted Geese © Michael Peters

Greater White-fronted Goose: Spokane (3/20-MW); Spokane (3/21-MS); Sandpoint (3/26-JR); Sprague (4/1-NT); Calispell Lake (4/14-eBird)

Eurasian Green-winged Teal: Reardan (4/6-NT)

Long-tailed Duck: Pringle Park (3/24-eBird)

Red-breasted Merganser: Denton Slough (3/23-FF); Heyburn SP (4/15-JI)

Anna's Hummingbird: Spokane Valley (4/10-MC); Moscow (4/16-NP)

Sandhill Crane: Pullman (3/30-MoS); Cheney (4/13-WM); Moose Creek Reservoir (4/18-NP)

Ferruginous Hawk: Davenport (4/8-JI)

Loggerhead Shrike: Nine Mile Falls (4/10-DG)

Blue Jay: Pullman (3/21-eBird); Sandpoint (3/23-eBird); Kendrick (4/4-eBird); Spokane (4/4-SW); University of Idaho (4/17-eBird)

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch: Potlatch (3/21-NP); Moscow (3/23-BM)

Lesser Goldfinch: Cheney (4/12-JI)

White-throated Sparrow: Moscow (4/15-MoS)



Red-breaster Merganser (Male) © Daniel Grossi



Red-breaster Merganser (Female) © Ethan Denton

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; MaC-Marlene Cashen; RC-River Corcoran; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; KiD-Kirsten Dahl; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JoE-Johnna Eilers; JE-Jacob Elonen; BF-Bob Flores; FF-Fred Forssell; DG-Don Goodwin; CG-Cierra Gove; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; JI-Jon Isacoff; LJ-Louie Johnson; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-David Kreft; GL-Greg Lambeth; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Mason Maron; AM-Alan McCoy; BM-Ben Meredyk; NM-Nancy Miller; WM-Will Merg; RuM-Russ Morgan; TO-Tim O'Brien; PO-Peter Olsoy; JP-Jim Patten; CP-Chris Pease; NP-Neil Paprocki; JR-Jethro Runco; SS-Sandy Schreven; MoS-Monique Slipher; MS-Mark Selle; CS-Charles Swift; NT-Norma Trefry; DW-Doug Ward; SW-Steven Warren; JW-John Wolff; MW-Michael Woodruff; MY-Matt Yawney

Member Profile:

Tina Wynecoop

by Madonna Luers

The humorist Erma Bombeck wrote that she went into each of her children's rooms at their bedtime and told each they were her favorite. That, says Tina Wynecoop, is her answer to the favorite bird question. It's as much about not wanting to offend any bird as it is about trying to choose a favorite, she says.



Tina not only loves them all, she loves learning about virtually everything and anything connected to the natural world, from archaeology to zoology, evidenced by her sprawling collection

of books, maps, photographs, artwork and more. It's no wonder she became a teacher and librarian.

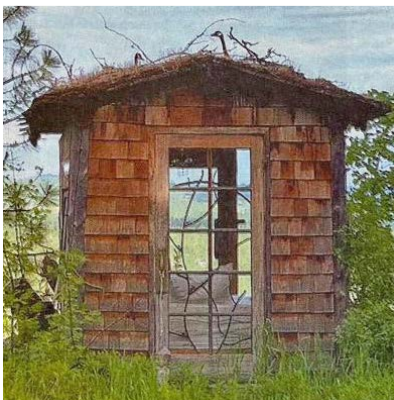
Tina Granmo was born in Seattle in 1946 in a family of Norwegian descent. She remembers, as a young girl, watching violet-green swallows nesting in a backyard birdhouse where they were attacked and removed by house sparrows -- the start of her deep compassion for all animals. She remembers, as a teenager, a striking increase in bird calls and sounds in the pre-dawn hours the day of the 1964 Alaskan earthquake -- the start of her awareness of the connectivity of all life.

Tina earned degrees in education and library science, starting at the University of Washington and completing at Western Washington College in Bellingham. Full-time teaching jobs were hard to come by so she initially worked as a substitute teacher in a school where students and resources were sadly neglected and subs like her were "targets for abuse." Eager to find something better, she followed a tip that tribal schools in eastern Washington needed teachers and sent a letter of inquiry to the Spokane Reservation. Sigh unseen and un-interviewed, the school board president -- her future mother-in-law -- sent her a teaching contract in return mail, and in 1970 she moved to Wellpinit in Stevens County to teach first graders.

"Growing up in western Washington, I thought it was the most interesting place in the world," Tina says. "But after I made that move, the culture, geography, history, and the flora and fauna of eastern Washington became my beloved home ground."



One day it's the brown creeper moving up the pine tree outside her kitchen window. Then next it's the turkey vulture soaring overhead on an updraft from her backyard cliff. Or the Canada goose pair nesting on the grass roof of an old cabin on her property. Or the calliope hummingbird with a broken wing that for four months she cared for. Or the spotted towhee scratching alongside her chickens in the leaves.



Marrying tribal member Arnold “Judge” Wynecoop in 1972 sealed the deal. A gold miner, logger and cattle rancher with his six brothers, Judge soon noticed “šəšuʔtm ʔtmncutm”, “the girl who jumps” in Salish, as he says about Tina’s hopping over logs on her country walk to her classroom. He slyly met her when he had the task of confronting reservation residents whose free-ranging dogs were chasing cattle during calving season; Tina’s dog wasn’t among the perpetrators, but he came calling nonetheless. When she’d ride along with him in the country he was impressed with her willingness, unasked, to jump out and open and close barbed-wire fence gates, even though she initially failed to keep herself on the truck side of the gate. Tina was impressed with a man who presented her with a Melmac coffee cup filled with the first wild buttercups she’d ever seen, and brought her two orphaned baby red squirrels after cutting through their nest while logging.

In 1976 Tina and Judge moved to their current home on 25 wooded, wildlife-filled acres on a ridge above the Little Spokane River on the southern edge of Half Moon Prairie. While raising two boys and two girls, Tina worked for the Spokane library system for 15 years, developing outreach programs. As a member of the North American Bluebird Society since the ‘70’s, she coordinated 3,400 bluebird nest box giveaways through such library programs.

She can’t remember just when she joined the Spokane Audubon Society, but knows she’s been participating in Christmas Bird Counts for a long time and has helped with other surveys, like mist-net-capture and banding of songbirds in the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program and the Sagebrush Songbird Survey.

Tina has traveled to bird throughout the Pacific Northwest region, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Peru, and Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. But she birds wherever she goes, no matter the reason for traveling. She recalls counting 81 hawks along Interstate 90 once on a winter road trip to Seattle, and seeing white-headed, three-toed, black-backed and Lewis’ woodpeckers all on the Spokane Indian Reservation.

Her most memorable birding experience is underway now in her own backyard – a lone male Townsend’s solitaire has been over-wintering there the last two years. In researching why a bird not seen there

before was now taking up residence, she discovered that solitaires love juniper berries. In recent years the Wynecoops have been planting fast-growing junipers to create a visual screen between them and encroaching suburban development in the area. She hopes Mr. Townsend draws a Mrs. soon.

Tina’s tip for new birders is to learn calls and songs and associate them with specific birds. She’s gifted grandkids and neighbors’ and friends’ children with “push-and-play” bird song books and copies of Sibley’s Birds of the West to get them started.

She doesn’t believe there’s one single issue that’s most important for the future of birds and birding, but many things. “We need to get rid of so much night lighting and so many free-roaming neighborhood cats,” she said. “We need to design and use wind turbines better. We need to be more thoughtful about so many things, to think more like a bird.”

Although long-retired, Tina remains a teacher and librarian at heart, writing regularly for North Columbia Monthly, and serving on the board of The Friends of the Little Spokane River Valley and on the board developing a library/museum/research center in Inchelium on the Colville Indian Reservation.



My first grader, Trina Andrews, painted this hawk carrying her nestling to a safer spot. 1971 Wellpinit

2022 Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: April 15 – May 15, 2021

Submit photos to: sauduboncalendar@gmail.com

Here is the link to the rules for the contest:

<https://www.audubonspokane.org/calendar-photo-contest>

Use fire-resistant plants to enjoy wildlife near your home

By Madonna Luers

With a forecast of dry, warm weather and another wildfire season ahead, and that spring itch to get some new plants in the ground, it's time to add or replace backyard plants with fire-resistant species that wildlife will use.

Fire-resistant does not mean fireproof, since any plant can burn. But some plants do not readily ignite or significantly add to the fuel load and fire's intensity.

Fire-resistant plants have moist and supple leaves, have little dead wood, and tend not to accumulate dry, dead material. Their sap is water-like and does not have resins or strong odors. Many deciduous trees and shrubs are fire-resistant.

An example of a highly-flammable plant that is often used in home landscapes is the juniper. It contains a lot of fine, dry or dead needles that contain aromatic and volatile oils, and its sap is very resinous. Native junipers are popular because they grow quickly and provide cover and winter berries for birds, but they should be kept out of the "defensible space" within 100 feet of your home or other structures.

Within that closer-in "defensible space," consider planting these native, fire-resistant species that are used by birds and other wildlife for food or cover:

Groundcovers: Kinnikinnick, Phlox, Sedum, Wild strawberry

Perennials: Blanket flower, Columbine, Coral bells, Fireweed (not flammable but sprouts naturally in burned over areas!), Honeysuckle, Lupine, Penstemon, Yarrow, Yucca

Shrubs: Chokecherry, Dogwood, Mock orange, Oceanspray, Oregon grape, Rhododendron, Rocky Mountain maple, Salal, Serviceberry, Snowberry, Sumac, Vine maple, Wild or wood rose, Willow

Trees: Alder, Aspen, Crabapple, Hawthorn

For more information, see the "Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes" publication available through Washington State University Extension offices.



Fireweed

Chokecherry



Crabapple

Birds Brought the World Together

Participation Is Growing

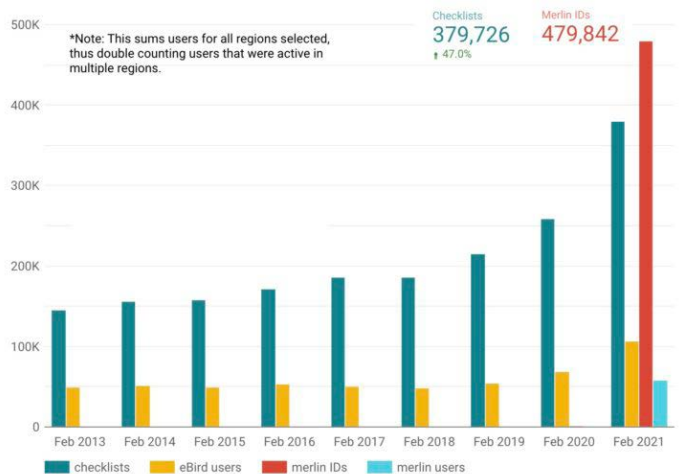
In 2013, the Great Backyard Bird Count started saving data in eBird. We compiled participation from 2013 to 2021 to see how the project participation has changed over time. Each year more and more people join in the fun of sharing their bird sightings. We are continuously humbled by the numbers. Anyone who is passionate about preserving biodiversity can be heartened to see how the world is coming together to admire, watch, and count birds. Be inspired and proud of our accomplishments.

- **6,436** species of birds identified
- **190** participating countries
- **379,726** eBird checklists submitted
- **479,842** Merlin Bird IDs submitted
- **151,393** photo submissions to Macaulay Library
- **+ 300,000** estimated global participants

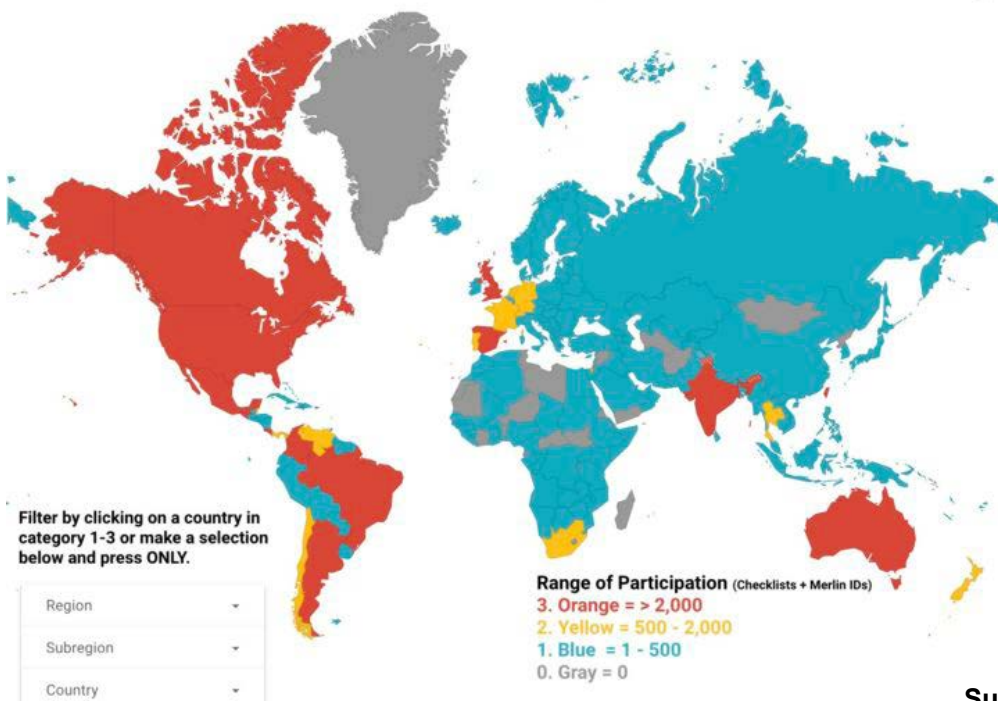
Respect for Birds Is Global

The map clearly shows that the world is actively engaged in watching and reporting birds. We had 190 countries submit at least one checklist in 2021. Record-breaking participation from the United States, Canada, and India was followed by impressive numbers in Spain, the United Kingdom, and Australia. In Latin America, Argentina had the most checklists, followed closely by Mexico, with Colombia holding the 10th spot. A growing country for participation is Taiwan, which came in 9th place with 2,050 checklists.

Participation from Around the World Over Time



2021 Global Participation



Submitted by Georgiana Sutherland

SAS Election Information

Our annual meeting, as outlined in the Spokane Audubon Society bylaws, is usually in May. In addition to our monthly program, we will vote for our board of directors and officers. Directors and officers serve a two-year term. On May 12, 2021 members of SAS will vote for these positions. If unable to attend, members may send a written proxy to spokaneaudubon@gmail.com or to PO Box 9820 Spokane, WA 99209-9820.

The preliminary slate of officers and board members follow:

President:	Alan McCoy
Vice President:	Lisa Langelier
Treasurer:	Vacant
Secretary:	Madonna Luers

Directors: Bob Cashen, Marlene Cashen, Lindell Haggin, Bea Harrison, Jim Harrison, Gary Lee, and Jenny Michaels

Nominations will also be considered from members attending the Zoom meeting.



Field Trips 2021

by Alan McCoy

Spokane Audubon would like to begin offering field trips. We think it can be done safely as long as participants use the recommended safety precautions for outdoor events, namely wearing masks when not socially distanced, not sharing equipment and carpooling only with family members or close friends who are part of your "pod". Many of us are, or will shortly be, vaccinated and that is reassuring but does not guarantee that the virus cannot be transmitted. It just makes it less likely, thus we keep following protocols for health safety.

We are seeking any birders who would like to lead. Trips can be a short walk of a couple hours or an all-day marathon. There are many places close in such as Palisades Park, Wentel Grant Park, Riverside State Park and even the Gonzaga University campus. A little farther away there is the Little Spokane Painted Rocks area and Nine Mile Falls, the confluence of the Little Spokane and Spokane Rivers, Slavin Ranch, Liberty Lake County Park, Iller Creek and Stevens Creek and the Cheney Wetlands. So many excellent and diverse places to explore and discover.

Now all we need are some folks who are willing to share their time and birding skills. I will be contacting as many potential leaders as I can. If I haven't contacted you yet, and you want to lead a trip, please get in touch! I will leave it to leaders to choose a date, time, location and safety issues such as how many folks to allow on your trip. As I find leaders I will put the information for their trip on our website.

As for me, I plan to lead short trips to Slavin Conservation Area and Cheney Wetlands and possibly more locations.

Let the fun begin. You never know what you will find, and that is the pleasure of birding.

Alan McCoy
ahm2352@gmail.com
(509) 999-9512

A shy wetland denizen, the chunky, mid-sized American Bittern is more often heard than seen. If spotted and approached, this marsh bird prefers to freeze in place, not fly away as a Green Heron or Great Egret might. Its brown-striped and buff-flecked plumage provides effective camouflage amidst the reeds and tall grasses where it hides; to add to its disguise, the bittern stretches its neck and bill skyward and sways from side to side, imitating waving reeds. But it's the American Bittern's voice that makes it truly remarkable:

"On a warm spring evening, when the waters are teeming with new life and the trees and shrubberies are enlivened by the migrating host of small birds, one loves to linger on its border and listen to the voices of the marsh," wrote ornithologist Arthur Cleveland Bent in his *Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds*. "Many and varied are the sounds one hears at such a time ... above them all in intensity and volume are the loud, guttural pumping notes of the bittern, the weird, wild love notes of the 'thunder pumper' or 'stake driver.'"

Voice of the Marsh

The American Bittern's booming calls have earned it many nicknames: belcher-squelcher, mire-drum, slew pumper, bog bull, and dunk-a-doo. To produce

these sounds, the male bittern gulps air, inflating his esophagus, then unleashes a loud three-syllable call while throwing his head upward and forward, up to 10 times in a row. These low-pitched calls carry long distances through the thick marsh vegetation. Males most often call at dawn or dusk, to advertise territory or to attract a mate.

Stealthy Stalker

This bittern is a patient hunter, waiting motionless for long periods in order to strike at and capture passing prey with its spear-like bill. It may also slowly stalk along the shoreline. Although its quarry is mostly fish, including small eels, the bittern also eats frogs, watersnakes, insects, salamanders, crayfish, and small rodents.

Staking a Claim

The male American Bittern defends a nesting territory within dense marsh or wet meadow habitat, attracting one or more females to nest there. As part of his threat display, a male defending territory erects long, white plumes on his shoulders that nearly meet across the back like a ruff. Then he stands guard in a threatening posture or stalks the intruder in an intimidating crouch.

Submitted by Alan McCoy



American Bittern © Matt Knoth

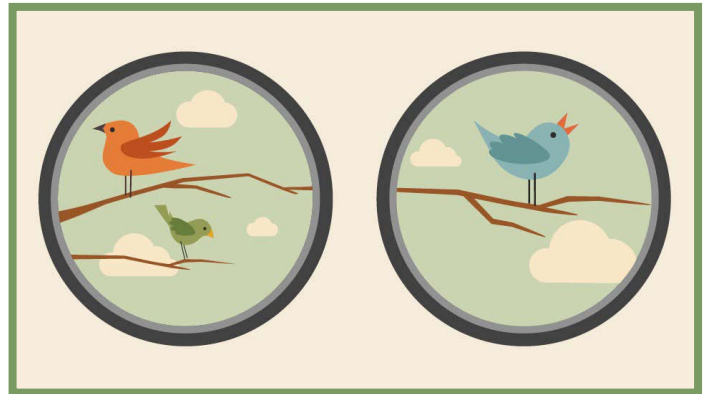
Pygmy Owl Contributions

Spokane Audubon Society members who want to contribute to the Pygmy Owl newsletter can submit articles on, and photos of, birds and bird conservation issues to info@spokaneaudubon.org for publishing consideration.

The newsletter deadline is the 20th of the month for the next month's edition.

Field Trips Update

Please see the announcement on page 9. As soon as leaders volunteer their time and expertise, the trips will be starting up!



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

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual Membership and Donation:

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

Individual: \$20 per year _____

Family: \$30 per year _____

Supporting: \$50 per year _____

Contributing: \$100 per year _____

Lifetime: \$500 _____

Other: _____

Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational activities.

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: Alan McCoy
615 W Paradise Rd
Spokane WA 99224

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

<https://www.audubonspokane.org>.

Click "Support Us" or "Join Us" We accept PayPal, credit/debit cards or Apple Pay. Receiving duplicate newsletters? Errors or other changes to your email address? Contact Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com or (509) 999-9512.



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

May 2021

To:

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

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



Broadcast live every Sunday morning, streamed live online, and released as a podcast, Talkin' Birds is a fun, engaging 30 minute show about birds and conservation. Host and producer Ray Brown has over 40 years experience in public radio broadcasting, and Talkin' Birds is now in its 15th year, with one show airing each week since 2006. That's more than 800 shows! Each show includes recent conservation news, a Featured Feathered Friend segment, an interview with a special guest, Let's Ask Mike, and a Mystery Bird Competition with prizes and call-in guests from across North America. Listen live online, subscribe as a podcast on your favorite podcast app, and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!