

Volume 20
Issue 1
September 2012

The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Welcome Back!

September 12th Program: *Ecology, Species Interactions, and Conservation of the Shrub-steppe, with Mike Livingston*

Mike uses three species: an herbivore, the Townsend's ground squirrel; an omnivore, the Greater Sage-grouse; and a carnivore, the Burrowing Owl, to demonstrate the importance of species interactions to the ecologic health of a community. The highly threatened shrub-steppe community of Eastern Washington and much of the western United States is his focus. He makes the case that shrub-steppe conservation is essential to maintaining a healthy wildlife balance.

Mike received a BS in Conservation from Northern Michigan University, a BS in Wildlife Ecology and Management from Michigan State University, and an MS in Wildlife Science from New Mexico State University. His MS thesis research focused on the comparison of avian habitat use between native vegetation and tamarisk on the Pecos River in southeastern New Mexico. Since 1996 he has worked for the US Forest Service in northern California, the US Army on the Yakima Training Center, the Yakama Nation, and for almost 10 years now as District Wildlife Biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in the Tri-Cities. He has worked with shrub steppe wildlife in eastern Washington for over 15 years.

(Photos courtesy of Mike Livingston and Kim Thorburn; Ground squirrel photo by John and Karen Hollingsworth, US Fish & Wildlife Service.)



Spokane Audubon's September program will be held at the Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Building, 2117 E. North Crescent Avenue (see page 8 for directions).

Please join us at 7 p.m. for refreshments and a brief business meeting.

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m.

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

Spokane Audubon Society
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Spokane, WA 99209-9820

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



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President's Message

by Kim Thorburn

Welcome back. I hope you had a wonderful summer of bird watching and sun. As many of our feathered friends turn southward, I watch with wonder.

Birds have such amazing lives. The great twittering flocks, frantically feeding, remind me of their huge caloric needs as they prepare for the long journeys south. I'm also picking up feathers they're leaving behind. Changing out of their flashy breeding suits requires energy. Hens are playing catch up from the vigor of egg laying, nesting, and brood rearing.

Such complicated lives need diverse ecologies to survive and thrive. Join me in looking forward to another season of conservation advocacy and enjoyment of birds.

September 12 Board Elections

Spokane Audubon will hold an election at the September 12th meeting to elect new board members.

If you are interested in serving Spokane Audubon as a board member, please let Kim know. Nominations may be taken from the floor.

Returning board members include Kim Thorburn as president, Joyce Alonso as vice president, Lindell Haggin as treasurer, Ed Reynolds as secretary, Ivan Lines, Fran and Brad Haywood, Jan Reynolds, Cheri and Howard Ferguson and Bob Cashen.

Spokane Audubon is seeking a Conservation Chairperson to form and lead a committee whose primary focus is protection, restoration and enhancement of native wildlife and wildlife habitat in Eastern Washington. Please contact Kim if you would like more information or are interested in serving in this position.

October newsletter deadline:

Thursday, September 20

Send material to:
carmen@floreo.com



2013 Spokane Audubon Society Calendar
Birds of Eastern Washington

I always anticipate the arrival of Goldfinch breeding plumage with the blossoms on our Crabapple tree and hope to photograph the simultaneous explosion of color. Unfortunately, the little stinkers love to chew the emergent flower buds (must be extra sweet!), so I spend a week scolding them before the flowers open. They are impervious to my distress. Seriously chewed flower buds are visible in the upper right of the frame. Shot with Canon 7D and 500 mm lens plus 1.4 extender. ~ Jeanne Dammarell

2013 Spokane Audubon Calendar

Photos by Spokane Audubon Members

Purchase at a meeting and they're

\$10 each

~ same price as last year!

Calendars are available at meetings, by mail
or through spokaneaudubon.org (using PayPal).

Shipping charges apply for all mail/online orders:

- 1 calendar: \$10 + \$2 s&H = \$12
- 2 calendars: \$20 + \$3 s&H = \$23
- 3 calendars: \$30 + \$4 s&H = \$34
- 4 calendars: \$40 + \$5 s&H = \$45

To order by mail, send check to:

Spokane Audubon Society
15418 Little Spokane Drive
Spokane, WA 99208

Make checks payable to Spokane Audubon.

Summer Campout: Field's Spring State Park

by Joyce Alonso

What could be better than an all-day field trip to a destination with beautiful and varied habitat, mostly great weather, and pleasant companions? Answer: a 3-day campout with all of the above features. From June 28th through July 1st, Melissa Cummins, Gary Lee, Brad and Fran Haywood and I enjoyed birding in and around Field's Spring State Park on the plateau above the Grande Ronde River.

Fran, Brad and I arrived on Thursday to stake out camping sites and plan excursions. The best birds en route were found on the Lewiston Grade—Western Kingbirds, Lazuli Buntings, and a Barn Owl hiding in a cliff niche, also Mountain Bluebirds near the Park.

On Friday morning we hiked up Puffer Butte for a spectacular view, open areas with lots of wildflowers, and good birds—Pileated Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Townsend, Orange-crowned, and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Pacific Slope Flycatchers, Western Bluebirds and chickadees, nuthatches, kinglets, juncos, etc. In the afternoon we opted to reverse direction, piled into Gary's capacious van and drove down to the Grande Ronde. It was quite warm, but we countered the heat with ice cream and good looks at Lazuli Buntings, several Yellow-breasted Chats, Red-eyed Vireos, plus catbirds, waxwings, Western Kingbirds at a nest, Bullocks Orioles, etc.

On Saturday Gary again chauffeured us all over the area—from Anatone feeders to mountain fire look-outs. Of our 50+ species for the day, the best

Campout, cont.

were: William's Sapsuckers (a target bird), Rock Wrens, Hermit Thrush with fledglings, Fox and Lark Sparrows, Olive-sided Flycatchers, and Grey Partridge. Our plans to go owling in the evening were thwarted, after supper but prior to marshmallow roasting, by an impressive storm cell that served up thunder, lightening, hail and rain, which we all observed from the comfort of Fran and Brad's RV.

Really roughing it!

Sunday morning was spent sauntering around the campground area, picking out a few more species—Golden-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Thrush, McGillivray's Warbler, Cassin's Vireo, etc. Then we reluctantly headed for home. Gary, Melissa and I opted to chase a couple of target species. First, we went to Steptoe Butte, where we saw buntings, waxwings, Rock Wrens, a Spotted Towhee, and finally a Black-throated Sparrow. After lunch at the picnic area, we drove on to Rosalia and its bridge, where we did see about 15 species, including an owl, but not the Eastern Phoebe. Can't win 'em all!



It's not the Black-throated Sparrow from the campout, but a nice example of the species. photo by Elaine R. Wilson (via Creative Commons).

We enjoyed ourselves so much we plan to repeat the experience next year, possibly in the same place. We hope that more of you will be able and motivated to join us.

Unsung Hero Revisited: Jan Strobeck

by Fran Haywood

In November, 2010, we featured Jan Strobeck as our Unsung Hero. But there was a problem: we didn't have a photo of Jan to share with you. So now, without further ado, let's re-introduce Jan!



This month's unsung hero(ine) is another member who is almost taken for granted in our club, but boy, would we all miss her if she weren't there! Jan is our hospitality chairman and has been trucking a large box filled with cups, coffee, tea, cream and sugar, and plates and napkins, back and forth from her home in Deer Park to all our meetings for years and years.

She usually bakes some goodies and arrives early enough to make sure there is hot water to make tea and coffee. She then sets out the goodies and even provides a wastebasket, which she takes home with her to empty.

All this means that she is usually one of the first to arrive at meetings. Because she cleans up afterwards, taking the cups home to wash each week, it also means that she is one of the last to leave. Jan will be the first to give credit to the all the other members who bake goodies and bring them to meetings, but without her, we would lose our before meeting get-acquainted and visiting time.

(By the way, everyone is invited to bake cookies or other snacks and bring them to the meeting. Jan and all members appreciate your efforts.)

Jan Strobeck goes way back in Spokane Audubon, serving as Vice President and President in the 1980's. Jan also is usually one of the first to volunteer when an extra body is needed for an activity. She has helped at Reardan Days and at Blossoms and Bloomers and other garden fairs that feature bird landscaping.

So the next time you have a "cuppa" and a cookie or two at a meeting, say thanks to Jan. She is that smiling, friendly lady standing next to the goodies.

(Photo courtesy of Fran Haywood.)

Diary of a Bird Nerd: Raptor Care Volunteer at the OLC

by Carmen Yount

When you walk into the West Valley Outdoor Learning Center, one of the first animals you see is Tilt. Tilt sustained an injury to his left eye that leaves him only partially sighted. He got his name because when he's looking at you quizzically, he tilts his head.



Tilt is a Western Screech Owl, and a charming old man. He is one of the nine birds of prey who make the West Valley Outdoor Learning Center their home. I'm fortunate enough to be part of a team of people who volunteer to clean up after, feed and water the birds.

The great thing about the Outdoor Learning Center is that it's usually teeming with life. There are the birds, of course, but also the turtles, tortoises, lizards, snakes and fish. During the school year, the OLC is staffed with two teachers and an Americorps volunteer. All year round, volunteers come and go to take care of the animals or the grounds. Jamie Ostby Marsh, the OLC's director, oversees the whole operation with grace and good humor.

It is a joy to be around the birds. Each of them has a distinct personality, including eccentricities that make me laugh every time I'm around them.

For example, Alberta and Hanovi (Great-horned Owls) are cranky, but they love to take a shower during the summer. Likewise, Orville (the Barred Owl/Spotted Owl hybrid), who is no longer flighted because of an injury to the muscle/tendon that attaches his left shoulder to his "hand." If you've ever seen a songbird enjoying a bath, you can imagine Orville's joy when the showerhead gets turned on him.

Sadie, an American Kestrel, spent her early years living with a dentist. She's jumpy and she squeaks, loudly and often.

Pants, the Rough-legged Hawk who is missing part of her left wing, eats mice, but doesn't like the tails. She's quite shy, but she's lovely company.



Stan, an adult male Harris's Hawk, at the end of my arm. This summer we've learned to duck when entering Stan's mew.

My main man, Stan, was a falconer's bird before coming to us. Of the birds of prey at the OLC, Stan is the most socialized to humans, but even he has developed a startling habit of trying to land on people's heads when they walk into his summer mew. (Talk about a thwack to the back of the head: try being a landing pad for a Harris's Hawk!)

Kiwi, the Red-tailed Hawk, is missing her left wing. She's flightless, but has lost none of her regal bearing. We're at

the point where she'll let me pick up her jesses. She looks at me as if to say, "Really? This is the best you've got?"

And Willie, the one-eyed Barn Owl, is so shy that he dives into his house every time someone steps into his mew.

As a raptor care volunteer, I get to do the dirty work: scoop raptor poop, replace gravel in the mews and haul water. If I'm feeding, I get to weigh out the mice, rats, rabbit or quail, and butcher them as necessary (an unusual activity for me, as a vegetarian). The birds are not tame, and I have learned to withdraw my hands quickly when feeding. In the wild, these birds kill their food with their feet, and just because most of them are no longer flighted, they still have all of their toes... and their talons.

As much as I enjoy spending time with these birds, and as thankful as I am for the experience, there is a part of me that wishes that I didn't have this opportunity. These are wild birds who would be in the wild were it not for the actions or activities of humans. Because they can't be in the wild, they're at the OLC, acting as ambassadors for their species. For that, we are all grateful.



A fuzzy picture of me with Orville. Orville is the newest bird to the OLC; he's been with us since December. He looks like a Barred Owl, but we've been told he is actually a Spurred Owl (Spotted Owl x Barred Owl).

Have Band, Will Travel



“On August 8, 2012, humbander Kelly Bryan and crew, in the Davis Mountains of Jeff Davis Co., Texas (the very southwestern part), recaptured a banded Rufous adult female that was originally banded by us on 5-17-08. The original banding location was about 12 miles southeast of downtown Spokane (south of Greenacres 4 miles) at a private yard. We had banded 16 hummers that day there, mostly Calliope, one Black-chinned, and only one Rufous!!”

~ Ned & Gigi Batchelder, relayed by Howard Ferguson.

(Whoops! Rufous Hummingbird illustration is a male. ~ ed.)

Help Us Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week! Turnbull NWR Community Work Party

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge and Spokane Audubon Society will host a community work party as part of an ongoing community effort to restore native riparian habitat to benefit birds and other wildlife species. We have hundreds of native saplings to plant, and fencing to build at the project site to protect the trees from deer, elk, and moose browsing. Everyone is welcome!

When: Saturday, October, 20 2012.

Planting Time: 9 am to 12 p.m.

Lunch: Potluck 12 p.m.

Where: Turnbull NWR Headquarters, 5 miles south of Cheney on Cheney-Plaza Road: turn left on Smith Road and drive 2 miles on gravel road to headquarters.

Clothing: Long-sleeved shirt, work pants, sturdy boots or shoes, gloves.

Equipment: (if you can) pliers, shovels (preferably with your name on them)

SAS Field Trips: September & October

September 8, Saturday

Philleo Lake Special Access Trip

Leader: Ivan Lines

Join Biologist Ivan Lines to see Philleo Lake up close as you've never seen it before! Philleo Lake is private property and Spokane Audubon Members are only allowed to access it in the company of Ivan, who has permission to bring people onto the property. Early and Mid-September is the peak time to see Migrant Shorebirds on the expansive mudflats of Philleo Lake. This is also the best location and time to see Great Egrets and Peregrine Falcons in Spokane County. Contact Ivan Lines at ivanlines@gmail.com by September 1st to sign up.

Target Species: Great Egret, Peregrine Falcon, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, all peep species; Spotted, Pectoral and Stilt Sandpipers; Long-billed Dowitcher, and Red-necked Phalarope

October 27, 2012 Saturday

Grant County Late Fall Migrant Trip

Leader: Gary Blevins

This is a beginning, intermediate and advanced birder-oriented trip to look for specialized 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's a day trip from sunrise to sunset. Contact Gary Blevins (533-3661 or garyb@spokanefalls.edu) by October 20 if you plan to attend.

Target Birds: loons and grebes, scoters and rare wintering waterfowl, wintering raptors, Glaucous, Thayers, and Glaucous-winged Gulls, Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike, Snow Bunting, Lapland Longspur, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch

Please join us on Wednesday,
October 10th
for our program,
Birds of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge
featuring
Mike Rule, Turnbull NWR Biologist.

**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
1817 S. Regal
Spokane, WA 99223

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, or
534-4404.



The Pygmy Owl
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September 12th Program
*“Ecology, Species Interactions, and
 Conservation of the Shrub-steppe”*
 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

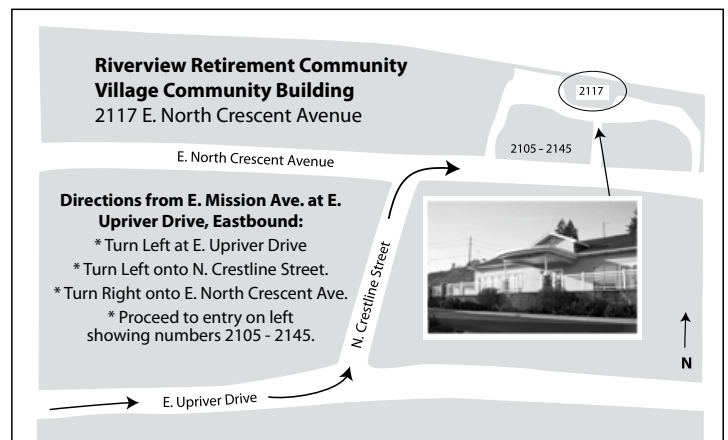
- I-90 West to Exit 282A
- Follow N. Hamilton St. to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Right at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Drive

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.