

Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday, September 11th at 7:30 p.m.

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 28
Issue 1
Sept. 2019

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



An African Photo Safari

presented by Gary Lee

For nature lovers, Africa is often seen as the ultimate destination. Elephant, rhino, hippo, giraffe, lion, leopard, zebra, wildebeest, Cape buffalo and other iconic mammals still roam free there. A vast array of unique and amazing bird species also call it home. Add the chance to observe African culture, see one of the world's most magnificent waterfalls, and walk where our earliest ancestors beat the survival odds with little more than wit and guile, and one might understandably call that "the adventure of a lifetime".

At the September 11th Spokane Audubon meeting, Audubon member Gary Lee will share stories, photos and videos from his family's 2018 travels in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. We hope to see you there.



Elephant Battle

all photos by
Gary Lee

Leopard in the Evening



Kudu Bull



The Pygmy Owl

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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

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Alan McCoy ahm2352@gmail.com

Vice President

Lisa Langelier langelier.lisa@gmail.com

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Gary Lee bird_fan@aol.com
Madonna Luers madwoodmel@centurylink.net
Jenny Michaels jemichaels@ieee.org

Committee Chairs

Field Trips

Alan McCoy ahm2352@gmail.com

Programs

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 jandeerpark@aol.com

Membership

Dave Plemons davep_nublado@me.com

Publicity

Madonna Luers madwoodmel@centurylink.net

Pygmy Owl

Joanne Powell jopowell39@aol.com

Volunteer Coordinator

Website

Alan McCoy audubonspokane.org

October Pygmy Owl
Deadline September 20th

Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

There will be no Membership Report for the September issue as there were no renewals/new member sign-ups over the summer. Dave Plemons will have an updated report for the October issue.

There will be no Field Report for the September issue. Jon Isacof is in Italy but will have the report for the October issue.

Meeting Structure Changes

- Refreshments from 7-7:15
- Announcements - 7:15-7:30
- Program - 7:30
- Meeting adjourns - 8:30



Chipping Sparrow. Taken on the June SAS field trip to Little Pend Oreille NWR
Photo provided by Alan McCoy

2,700+ Towers Update Lighting Systems, Saving Migratory Birds and Expenses

submitted by Alan McCoy



While the number of communications towers with steady-burning lights is decreasing, there are still thousands yet to make this change, which saves both migratory birds (like this Blackpoll Warbler) and money. Photo by John Turner, Washington, D.C., July 16, 2019)

Over the past two years, thousands of communications tower operators have updated their lighting systems by turning off steady-burning (L-810) side-marker lights that attract birds and cause millions to die from collisions each year. (Flashing lights remain atop these towers, ensuring aviation safety.) Since 2016, more than 2,700 of about 13,900 tall towers have made this change, stemming from December 2015 guidelines by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) pertaining to towers over 350 feet in height and their impact on aviation safety and birdlife.

“Every year in the United States, approximately 7 million migratory birds collide with tall communications towers and die,” said Steve Holmer, American Bird Conservancy’s (ABC’s) Vice President of Policy. “These birds, namely migratory species such as Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Blackpoll Warblers, are attracted to and disoriented by the steady-burning red lights on towers. Simply turning off the lights can reduce a tower’s rate of bird mortality by as much as 70 percent and save the tower operators money.”

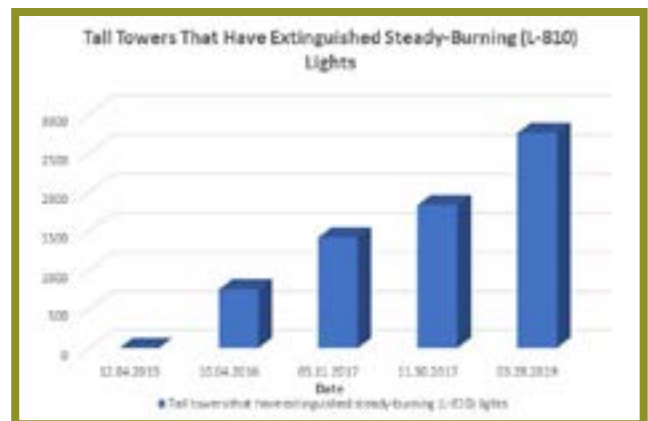
Following a 2012 FAA report confirming that turning off the steady-burning lights maintains aviation safety, the FAA and FCC have since created

a simple process for tower operators to request and receive official permission to adjust their current lighting systems. Operators are now increasingly taking these steps to reduce electricity and other tower operating costs, as well as to protect migratory birds.

Robert Davis, who works for the city of Savannah, Georgia, commented on the tower lighting change his team embraced eight months ago: “We sought and received approval from the FCC and FAA to turn off our waist (side-burning) lights on our 400-foot radio tower... The FCC and FAA seemed to be aware of the program and were very cooperative and responsive to our request to discontinue the lights.”

“American Bird Conservancy commends tower operators who have turned off their steady-burning lights,” says Holmer. “Thanks to their individual efforts, hundreds of thousands of migratory birds are now being saved each year as a result.”

ABC will be diligently working this summer to help U.S. tower operators embrace lighting adjustments on the remaining 11,228 towers that have yet to make the change.



[American Bird Conservancy](http://www.americanbirdconservancy.org) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. With an emphasis on achieving results and working in partnership, we take on the greatest problems facing birds today, innovating and building on rapid advancements in science to halt extinctions, protect habitats, eliminate threats, and build capacity for bird conservation. Find us on abcbirds.org, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (@ABCbirds).

The Eastern Kingbird (EAKI) Tyrant

by Lisa Langelier

“When we think of the kingbird, even if it be winter here in the north, and he is for the time thousands of miles away in the Tropics, we picture him as we see him in summer, perched on the topmost limb of an apple tree, erect in his full-dress suit--white tie, shirt-front, and waistcoat--upright, head thrown back, his eye roaming over his domain, on the watch for intruders. We see him sail out into the air, moving slowly, although his wings are quivering fast, then gaining speed and mounting higher as he comes near his enemy--a crow, a hawk, any bird that has stirred his resentment. We hear his high, sibilant, jerky voice ring out a challenge; we watch him dive at the big bird, striking for his back, and drive him off, and then come slithering back to his watchtower, proclaiming victory with an explosion of stuttering notes.” Winsor Marrett Tyler (Published in 1942: Smithsonian Institution United States National Museum Bulletin 179: 11-29)

You can tell from Mr. Tyler’s description that the Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) is no shrinking violet. Weighing about 1.3 ounces--about the same as eight nickels--they take on much larger birds who enter their breeding territory and have been known to knock corvids out of trees. They even dive-bomb nesting ospreys.

Their breeding season aggression contrasts with their wintering behavior (in South America) where they travel in quiet flocks. Their winter diet includes mostly fruit while breeding season fare is primarily insects. You often see them perched in the open, sallying out to catch insects on the wing.

Eastern kingbirds live near fields or expanses with scattered trees, and along forest edges. They breed across North America except for the southwestern United States. Roadside fence posts and wires may be favorable hunting perches but increase their risk of vehicle collisions. Every summer I see a few of their flattened black and white bodies along Spokane county roads.

This handsome flycatcher has a black head and tail, dark gray back, white- edged tail feathers, a white neck and belly, and gray breast. Concealed on their head are bright red or orange feathers that may appear when disturbed or displaying.

I read somewhere that they are rarely seen drinking water but the EAKIs in my neighborhood provide entertainment at our bird bath. They perch on the dripper then plunge belly-first into the water and zip back to their dripper perch.

Soon they will head south and I’ll miss their bold manners and boisterous clamor. But they will be back next June. My favorite fearless tyrants.



Eastern Kingbird
Photo: Terry Suhl



Eastern Kingbird and Osprey.
Photo: Johann Schumacher

View from Sapsucker Woods: Why Bird Watchers Should Buy Duck Stamps

by John Fitzpatrick
October 15, 2009

Waterfowl hunting season is upon us again, and this year there is a twist that involves all of us who watch and love birds, whether or not we are duck hunters. A movement is rapidly gaining traction encouraging everyone who loves wildlife and the outdoors to get to the nearest post office and buy the 2009 “Duck Stamp.”

Officially called the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, and produced annually since 1934 as the official federal waterfowl-hunting license, the “Migratory Bird Stamp” (as I like call it) has become far more than a ticket to shoot. For one thing, it’s a free pass to enter any of the hundreds of National Wildlife Refuges across the United States. Much more important, of every dollar you spend buying the stamp (they still cost only \$15), 98 cents will go directly to fund the purchase and restoration of wildlife habitat via the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Each year the Service awards millions of dollars in grants to create or restore wildlife habitat, and it also purchases land to increase the size and ecological security of its wildlife refuges. In 2009 alone, \$38 million were so allocated, and in all, more than three quarters of a billion dollars in stamp revenue have been spent to protect more than 5 million acres of migratory bird habitat.

Federal regulation of waterfowl hunting began early in the 20th century, and in 1929 the Migratory Bird Conservation Act established the mechanics by which various sources of federal dollars would be earmarked specifically for purchasing or leasing land and water. For decades, these funds were used almost exclusively to protect places where migratory waterfowl breed, stage, or winter. Without question, the original idea was to promote the long-term sustainability of an autumn waterfowl hunting season, still cherished by millions of citizens.

But times are changing, and now all conservationists—not just the hunters—should be doing their part to support this worthy, grassroots process. For one thing, although hunting is still a popular recreational pastime in much of rural America, it is definitely declining overall. The resulting loss of Migratory Bird Stamp revenue could jeopardize the

continued much-needed investment in habitat protection. Secondly (and here’s where the bird-watching public comes in), the public-private joint venture partnerships around the county, which compete for these conservation dollars and administer their expenditures locally, have become staunch advocates for “all birds, all habitats.” So the stamp isn’t just about ducks anymore, it’s about protecting all manner of upland habitats, corridors, buffers, forested lands, and prairies in the United States.

Bird watching continues to be one of the fastest-growing recreational pastimes in North America. Yet, as we all know, many of our most beloved species are declining as a result of suburban sprawl and large-scale agriculture. Call me old fashioned, but I still believe that the most important thing we can do as conservationists to preserve and protect the best wild areas is to place the highest-priority spots under perpetual conservation management. This is precisely what the National Wildlife Refuge system was designed to accomplish, and despite all the federal budgetary strains, the system is still working spectacularly well.

I wholeheartedly applaud the recent appointment of Sam Hamilton as the new head of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, long a forceful supporter of the refuge system. Let’s all do our small part to help him. Whether you call it a Duck Stamp or a Migratory Bird Stamp, please go out and buy one—or, if you can, consider buying two. I’ll be getting mine this weekend, and I won’t be pointing a gun at a duck this fall.

John Fitzpatrick
Louis Agassiz Fuertes Director
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

One of the best ways to support National Wildlife Refuges is to buy a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or “Duck Stamp,” every year. It’s a win-win-win: it proudly proclaims your support of public land, it funnels money directly to the refuge system, and it gets you free entry to the refuges all year.

(cont on page 6)

Tip: You can buy the 2018–2019 stamp at many post offices, National Wildlife Refuge offices, and sporting-goods stores, as well as online from USPS. Buying a Migratory Bird Stamp is a simple and direct way for people to contribute to grassland and wetland conservation. Here’s our list of eight reasons to love the stamp:

1. Over \$1 billion for conservation and counting. The first stamp was issued in 1934. It cost \$1 (about \$18 in today’s dollars) and sold 635,001 copies. By law, the funds raised go directly to habitat acquisition in the lower 48 states. By now, stamp sales have surpassed \$1 billion and helped to protect 6.5 million acres of wetland and grassland habitat.

2. A 79-year tradition of beautiful wildlife art. The Migratory Bird stamp is a beautiful collectible and a great artistic tradition. Since 1949, the design of each year’s duck stamp has been chosen in an open art contest. The 2018 stamp, showing a pair of Mallards, was painted by Bob Hautman, a veteran of the contest who has won it twice before (see a [gallery of all stamps back to 1934](#)).

3. A bargain at \$25. Ninety-eight cents of each dollar spent on a stamp goes directly to land conservation for the National Wildlife Refuge System. This \$25 purchase is perhaps the single simplest thing you can do to support a legacy of wetland and grassland conservation for birds.

4. It’s much more than ducks. Waterfowl hunters have long been the main supporters for the program—the stamps are a requirement for anyone 16

or older who wants to hunt. But the funds benefit scores of other bird species, including shorebirds, herons, raptors, and songbirds, not to mention reptiles, amphibians, fish, butterflies, native plants, and more.

5. Save wetlands; save grasslands. Since 1958, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has used stamp revenues to protect “waterfowl production areas”—over 3 million acres—within the critical Prairie Pothole Region. The same program also protects declining prairie-nesting birds in the face of increasing loss of grasslands. As a result, refuges are among the best places to find grassland specialties such as Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Clay-colored Sparrows, Sedge Wrens, and others.

6. The benefits are gorgeous. Some of the most diverse and wildlife-rich refuges across the Lower 48 have been acquired with stamp funds. Check out this map—chances are there’s a wildlife refuge near you that has benefited:

7. It’s your free pass to refuges. A migratory bird stamp is a free pass for an entire year to all refuges that charge for admission—so your \$25 could even save you money.

8. As bird watchers, let’s get in on the secret. Though it’s long been a fixture in hunting circles, the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp is one of the best-kept secrets in all of bird conservation. It’s time to buy and show your stamp!

Article contributed by Alan McCoy



Duck Stamps are available from Spokane Audubon at our meetings or by arrangement. (\$25 cash or check.) Contact Alan McCoy or call (509) 999-9512. Online at <https://www.audubonspokane.org/duck-stamps>. (\$25 plus \$2 mailing = \$27.)

2019 Field Trips at a Glance

December 15, 2019, Sunday
Cheney Christmas Bird Count
Leader: Sandy Schreven

December 29, 2019, Sunday
Spokane Christmas Bird Count
Leader: Alan McCoy

ACOW (Audubon Council of Washington)

HOST REGION: Southwest Chapters (Vancouver, Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, Tahoma, Black Hills)

WHEN: September 27-29, 2019

WHERE: Vancouver Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, WA 98661

REGISTRATION: \$40/person [REGISTRATION](#)

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:

Spokane Audubon Society

Send this form and your check to:

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

Non-members can join and current members may renew memberships from our web site:

<http://audubonspokane.org>

Receiving duplicate newsletters?
Errors or other changes needed on your mailing label? Contact Dave Plemons at davep_acer@msn.com, or 413-1524.



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

Sept. 2019

To:

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

Visit our website: <http://audubonspokane.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

