

The Pygmy Owl



Volume 32
Issue 8
May 2024

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society

May 8, 2024 7:00 p.m.

This meeting will be a “hybrid” – you can attend in-person at the Finch Arboretum, 3404 W. Woodland Blvd. (off Sunset Hwy., just west of downtown Spokane), in the Willow Room of the Woodland Center, or you can attend virtually on-line via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81222402423?pwd=SU16OE5hVE44TXByOUcva2xHOFB4dz09>

Meeting ID: 812 2240 2423

Passcode: 987330

Chickadees and Nuthatches of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Presented by Mike Munts, Wildlife Biologist,
Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge



Chickadees and nuthatches are some of the most familiar backyard birds throughout north-east Washington. But what do you really know about them?

Mike Munts, Wildlife
Biologist at the Little

Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties, will share information about the life cycles of three species of chickadees – Black-capped, Mountain, and Chestnut-backed – and three species of nuthatches – Red-breasted, White-breasted, and Pygmy – that inhabit the refuge.

Mike is originally from Sandpoint, Idaho, and has spent most of his life in the Pacific/Inland Northwest. He earned his wildlife biology degree with an emphasis in ornithology as he studied the Great Gray Owl and Western Screech Owl in Idaho and songbirds in Western Montana. He 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. He came to Colville and the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge in 2011. His primary

specialty has been non-game birds, with much of his experience being with owls, coniferous forest passerines and woodpeckers



Black-capped Chickadee
© Scott Martin

Chestnut-backed Chickadee
© John Reynolds



Mountain Chickadee
© Michael Woodruff

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Spokane Audubon Society
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Support Spokane Audubon with Fred Meyer Community Rewards!

Spokane Audubon Society is now eligible to have a portion of sales donated by Fred Meyer through their Community Rewards program. To have a percentage of your purchases at Fred Meyer donated to Spokane Audubon, visit <https://www.fredmeyer.com>. Once logged into their Fred Meyer account, search for Spokane Audubon Society either by name or QM485 and then click Enroll. New users will need to create an account, which requires some basic information, a valid email address and a rewards card.

Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status March 22, 2024 through April 20, 2024:

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

Individual: Jennifer Olson, Sheryl Piskel, Kristy Busch, Dennis Held, George Orr, Anna Duncan

Family: Steve Shirley, Robert Orr, Mark Ellis

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

Individual: Richard Waldt, Sharon McNeil, Peggy Davey, Dave Drum, Chris Flanagan, Peter Goldberg, Delores Schwindt, Ryan Grant

Family: Ina & Martin Ward, Phillip Brown, Charlene & Jerry Michael, Rachel Brabeck, Thomas & Myriam Munson

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Contributing: Jim Hallett & Peggy O'Connell

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/>.

Free Spring bird presentations and field trips are a great way to introduce your family and friends to birding

Spokane Audubon Society is offering a series of presentations and field trips this Spring that are free to anyone interested in learning more about local birds.

- **Monday, May 6, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.,**
“Introduction to Birding” presentation at Medical Lake Library, S. 1386 Lefevre St., Medical Lake
- **Saturday, May 11, 7:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.**
EXPO Celebration Bird Walk Mount Spokane--Lower Kit Carson Trail Parking Lot
- **Saturday, May 11, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.,**
Spring waterfowl watching at Reardan Audubon Lake Wildlife Area, 350 E. Railroad Ave, Reardan
- **Monday, May 20, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.,**
“Attracting Birds to Your Yard” presentation, Moran Prairie Library, 6004 S. Regal St.
- **Friday, May 31, 7:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**
EXPO Celebration Bird Walk, Waikiki Springs Nature Area Trailhead
- **Saturday, June 1, 8:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.**
Bird Walk with Joseph Cooney at Turnbull NWR
- **Thursday, June 6, 7:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m.**
Indian Painted Rocks Trailhead
- **Friday, June 7, 7:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.**
EXPO Celebration Bird Walk Iller Creek Conservation Area
- **Sunday, June 9, 8:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.**
EXPO Celebration Bird Walk Medical Lake Waterfront Park
- **Friday, June 21, 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**
EXPO Celebration Bird Walk Cheney Wetlands
- **Wednesday, June 26, 6:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m.**
EXPO Celebration Bird Walk Riverside State Park (Bowl and Pitcher Area)

A complete list and details about all events are available at <https://www.audubonspokane.org/upcoming-events>



2025 Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: Monday, April 15 – Wednesday, May 15, 2024

Submit photos to: calendarspokaneaudubon@gmail.com

Requirements

- All photographs must be submitted by a Spokane Audubon Society member in good standing (i.e., a current member).
- A maximum of four photographs can be submitted per person.
- Photographs must be submitted electronically via email to calendarspokaneaudubon@gmail.com
- Each photograph must be submitted in jpeg format, be in landscape orientation with dimensions of 9.25" wide by 6.75" high, have a resolution of at least 300 pixels per inch, and be no larger than 10MB in size.
- Submitted photographs shall not have the © symbol with the photographer's name or other inserted script.
- For images selected for the calendar, the photographer maintains copyright and agrees to provide perpetual use of the photograph(s) to Spokane Audubon Society for the calendar and other promotional and educational purposes.
- All photos must be of wild birds and must be taken in Eastern Washington (East of the Cascades) or Northern Idaho. Please include the species name(s) and location where each photograph was taken.

Call for Entries

Photographers may submit entries starting Monday, April 15th. The deadline is Wednesday, May 15th; no entries will be accepted after that date.

Judging and Selection

- Selection will be made by a panel of three to five impartial judges, at least one of whom is a Spokane Audubon Society board member. At least some panel members will have moderately advanced bird identification skills and experience with bird photography.
- Photographers who submit entries will not be judges.
- The bird in a natural setting must be the focus of the photograph. Preference is given to interesting behaviors, unusual or hard-to-see species, and eye-catching compositions. Habitat and artificial features should not overpower nor draw attention away from the bird(s).
- Judging criteria are photo composition, technical excellence, artistic merit, and overall impact. Normal processing is allowed but over-processed or altered photos will be rejected.
- Submissions must comply with the specified size requirements.
- Following selection, all entrants will be notified of the decisions.

Publication

Each photograph will be published with the common name of the bird species and © with the name of the photographer.

Special Note: Photographers whose images are selected for the calendar may need to provide a TIFF version of the photograph for printing purposes.

Member Profile:

Karen Edwards

Karen Edwards is our Spokane Audubon Society (SAS) website manager, but her skills, interests, and experiences go far beyond Internet work.

Karen Edwards with falconer's *Buteo buteo* in Italy



She's a landscape architect by education at the University of Oregon where she focused on large-scale environmental planning, dreaming of creating alternatives to sprawling suburbs and concrete jungles, with highly livable spaces for both wildlife and humans. "I was really interested in incorporating bioswales into every design and loved the idea of wetland restoration," she said. "As you can guess, I didn't get very far in 'real life' since these aren't exactly money-making ideas. I actually was thankful when my company went bankrupt and I didn't have to design parking lots anymore."

Karen now is building her conservation photography portfolio. Her photographic skills are mostly self-taught, after getting a professional camera just before the Covid pandemic hit and spending endless hours watching YouTube videos to learn how to use it. She's taken photography courses and workshops, including one on eagles in western Washington with Mark Smith (known for his osprey photographs), and one at the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival by Diana McPherson. She's been participating for three years in the Conservation Visuals Storytellers Academy run by photographer Jaymi Heimbuch and Conservation Filmmaking with filmmaker Morgan Heim. Karen is working on conservation stories for publications and hopes to lead some local photography workshops, eventually including video as she develops those skills.

This summer Karen will complete requirements through Washington State University to be a Washington Certified Naturalist in a volunteer-work-based program like Master Gardeners that she enrolled in to learn more about Washington ecosystems to better inform her conservation photography work.



Karen Henry was born in 1974 in Portland, Oregon, where she grew up spending lots of time outside enjoying nature. She didn't get serious about birding until she was in her 20's when she joined the Portland Audubon chapter. "That's when I was introduced to the subtleties of bird identification," she recalled, "and saw a level of dedication to learning bird calls and getting up at 0-dark-30 to see as many possible species in a day. That's where I participated in my first Bird-a-thon and learned what fun it is to challenge yourself to learn all the local birds, know when the migrating ones are coming and going, and be prepared for the possibility of seeing a rare bird."

Karen moved to Waterbury, Vermont to see the other side of the country and later to North Carolina to find work, unexpectedly meeting Josh Edwards, who became her husband. They lived in Cary, NC until they decided to start a family, then returned to Portland, where Karen's family still lives. When their son and daughter were in pre-school, Josh took up work as an engineer with the military, which meant moving around a lot – something Karen feels very fortunate about and prefers it to short-term travel, where you only get a glimpse of life in different parts of the world.

(cont on page 6)

They've lived in the Marshall Islands on Kwajalein Atoll where he was a port engineer, and Montecchio-Maggiore, Italy where he was an electrical engineer with the joint forces NATO base there.

Their children both "notice" birds, "but my daughter is the one who gets their names right when I ask," Karen said. "My husband is much better than I am at finding owls. He and my son are learning birds from the pictures I take, and much prefer to study the photos for identification later, rather than during our walks."

When the Edwards family lived in Northern Italy, during a homeschool meet-up, Karen and the kids met Syliva, a falconer who has a Eurasian Eagle Owl, American Kestrels, and a Buteo buteo or Common Buzzard. Sylvia let the kids handle the owl and "fly" a kestrel, and Karen and other adults got to fly the buteo which was called back by Sylvia's whistle and the mouse tucked in the handler's glove.

Karen had several other memorable bird experiences in Italy. "I knew the flamingos migrated from Africa to the Venetian Lagoon," Karen recalled, "so I rented a traditional wooden Venetian fishing boat and went out in the tidal flats and found a flock! In the Province of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Northern Italy, I convinced the family we needed to see Griffon Vultures circling the air, and we found them!"

When the family moved to Spokane in 2022 for Josh's job with the Bonneville Power Administration, Karen joined SAS to learn the area, local birds, and regional conservation priorities, and to make friends and participate in the Christmas Bird Count. She joined SAS board members Bea and Jim Harrison on their Skagit County field trip in November to see Tundra swans and Snow geese, "and so many more amazing birds I didn't expect!"

Perhaps because she's moved around so much, Karen doesn't typically travel far now to see birds, preferring to make local bird encounters. It's hard to pick a favorite bird, but she always gets "extra excited" when she sees a Western Tanager.

Among her favorite birding experiences was seeing her first Common Loon in Vermont while kayaking on a lake in autumn. "He was floating on the water, slightly rotating in the breeze, not caring less that I was floating beside him, watching in awe," she recalled. One of her favorite bird photographs is of a Red-naped Sapsucker in Ferry County. "I stopped and watched this nesting pair for half a day, getting into a perfect position to watch them collect ants and feed them to their young."

Karen encourages new birdwatchers to join a local birding trip, pay close attention to what the leaders are getting excited about, borrow their binoculars or scopes to best see the birds, then later look up the species on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "All About Birds" website to learn more. She also advises putting birds' welfare first. "If you've changed their behavior, you've gotten too close," she said. "When I'm not hiking, I use my car as a blind."

To interest more kids in birds, Karen feels more local natural history needs to be taught in schools and kids need more time outside doing things like owl pellet dissection, bird feather study, and nature journaling. She notes the Dishman Hills Conservancy's "Kids in the Hills" program, in which she plans to volunteer as a Master Naturalist, is trying to address this deficiency. "Children need to learn about the plants and animals that were there before their neighborhoods were developed," she said. "Find them in undeveloped natural areas, see what's using them, and then figure out what plants are missing in their own yards. Encourage them to plant a few of their favorites and watch how their new growing habitat brings more birds with the food and shelter they've provided. "We need to instill wonder and give them the skills to override the feeling of helplessness many adults are working through today as they are addressing habitat fragmentation and the environmental destruction they see around them. Some schools are creating habitats on their campus, which is especially helpful for those who live in condos or apartments or have parents who aren't interested in rewilding. At the very least, birding easily can be made into a game of hide and seek. What kid doesn't love that?"

Karen feels the most important issue for the future of birds and birdwatching is climate change. "We've all got a lot of work to do on that front," she said.



Red-naped Sapsucker
© Karen Edwards

An Inflection Point

by Alan McCoy

It happened last summer. “You can’t keep asking us to do more things!” This abrupt statement, uttered at our annual board planning meeting, brought me up short. I had had, so I thought, another brilliant idea for something we could do. But after a moment’s reflection, I knew that she was spot on; I had to agree. And it has been ricocheting around in my brain ever since. But also bouncing around in my head is this: “But there is so much more that we could be doing!” These two statements make for awkward dance partners. That dance led me to the conclusion that the Spokane Audubon Society is at a turning point as an organization. We needed to decide - we could keep on as we are, doing some good work but leaving a lot on the table and burning out our volunteer leaders. Or, as I like to think about it, we could make an investment in our vision and our community.

After much discussion and debate over the intervening months the Board decided that we would hire someone to help us be more effective. I am sure that Spokane Audubon has always been an all-volunteer organization so this is a big step. Hiring a full-time employee was deemed to be too large a step, so we have opted for a smaller one – a part-time contract position for six months. We also discussed the possibility that that we will continue the position beyond six months if all goes well and we see measurable progress toward the main goal - to engage more of our members in our activities.

But first we needed to write up a description of the job and other details such as pay scale and how to evaluate the work done. Three smart and experienced Board members Madonna Luers, Lisa Langelier and Jenny Emerson got together and hammered out these details



in a remarkably short time. After some discussion the Board adopted their position description. We agreed to spend up to \$9000 over the next six months and for the position to begin April 1, 2024. Then we invited a couple of chapter volunteers who have the background we’re looking for to consider taking on this new part-time job. One declined, but one accepted.

It is my pleasure to announce that we have contracted with Shenandoah Marr to be our Outreach Coordinator beginning April 1, 2024. Many of you already have met Shenandoah and may remember the profile that was in the October 2022 Pygmy Owl. You can read that profile here: <https://www.audubonspokane.org/pygmyowl/2022/10/the-pygmy-owl>. She still will serve as our Conservation chair where she actively is engaging with Audubon Washington, allied organizations, and the legislature. Please join me in welcoming her to our leadership team.

Since she started in her role as Outreach Coordinator Shenandoah is already busy with promising ideas and action. She is collaborating with our allied organizations such as Dishman Hills Conservancy, The Lands Council, Pilchuck Audubon (Snohomish County) and others. She will be present at several upcoming events (Turnbull Earth Day, Arbor Day at Finch Arboretum, Expo 74 Celebration and more) and at our meetings, where in May she will oversee the newly resurrected raffle.

As previously mentioned, one of the primary goals of this new position is to engage more of our members in our activities. We have at any given time about 250 members. Our members give us vital monetary support at varying levels, but over the years only a few have volunteered with us for various activities. To be more effective as an organization, we need more people to call on for the things we want to do. Involving more members potentially can provide more energy, creativity, and greater effectiveness. And it can be more fun! Some tasks are small and time-limited, and some require a bit more commitment. Shenandoah will write more about what kind of help we need in the next few newsletters. We hope that you will consider working with us in some way according to your time and skills.

To learn about current volunteer opportunities with SAS visit www.volunteermatch.org or contact Shenandoah at conservation@spokaneaudubon.org

Great Success from Bumblebee Volunteer Effort

By Bea Harrison

Rich Hatfield, Xerces Society Bumblebee Conservation Lead, was a little teary-eyed when expressing his gratitude to the Bumblebee Atlas volunteers on the April 8th Zoom presentation.

The Atlas has been such an overwhelming success that he hardly could control his emotions, describing the impact that this amazing Community Science project has had. The over 42,000 bumblebee records collected since the start of the program in 2018 already are making a huge difference in conservation of pollinators in our region and the program is now expanding to 20 other states.

Hatfield's assignment in 2014, was to assess bumblebee status. He and his team began by using museum specimens. This meant looking at dead bees collected over the years and preserved in museums around the country. These collections were analyzed to determine which bumblebees were the most imperiled. They published the results and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) began using the data to better manage for pollinators.

But museum specimens had their limitations. There was no data on how much effort went into collecting them, what habitat they were in, and what flowers they were using. They were collected by just a few scientists and tended to be from just a few areas, leaving huge gaps of un-surveyed landscapes. More detailed information was needed.

The team learned about a program in the Northeastern United States, where surveyors were killing bees and sending them in to be identified. This got a lot of data, but Xerces did not want to kill bees.

Xerces tried a different approach. They reached out to agencies, such as Washington Department of Natural Resources (WADNR), to send in bumblebee sightings. They put up posters in field offices and other places, asking for help from foresters and other scientists. They were rewarded with thousands of sightings, but still just in a few places. They knew they needed more.

This led to the idea of the Bumblebee Atlas. A map of Washington, Idaho and Oregon was divided into 50 kilometer squares, covering the entire area. When volunteers were solicited, the response was overwhelming. Training sessions filled to capacity within days. Over 100 people showed up for one in Spokane!



Training Group
by Bea Harrison

I attended with my friends, and fellow Spokane Audubon members, Tina Wynecoop, and Lindell Hagen. Rich Hatfield was one of the instructors. After the classroom time, we went outside and learned how to capture bumblebees. In the months to come, Wynecoop and I selected a site and did some bumblebee captures and releases. We caught bees at a farm near Riverside State Park. The bees were caught, cooled down to make them calm and then photographed. The plant they were feeding on was recorded and photographed as well. This and other specific information was then uploaded to the Bumblebee Watch website. We got a thank-you email for each bee we submitted. It was determined that photo-based data is just as good or better than dead specimen-based data. (And the bees fly away and continue pollinating!)

(cont on page 9)

In that same time period, other volunteers were surveying bees all across Washington, Idaho and Oregon. By covering the entire state, all habitat types were surveyed. Some sites had no bumblebees, due to the habitat just being wrong, but that is good data, too

Volunteers also recorded bumblebee nest sites and these data were used to ascertain the ideal environment for nests and the importance of leaving areas for nesting and over-wintering.

What got Hatfield so emotional, I think, was that not only did he get a great number of volunteers submitting good usable data, but that this data already is being used far and wide for conservation! Land managers, lawmakers, conservation groups and others are using the readily available data to plan and implement new strategies to save bumblebees. The interactive map that was developed is easy to navigate and full of useful information. The data is also being used to determine which bees need protection through the Endangered Species Act.

The program now is expanding to California, Colorado, Iowa, Georgia, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, Nevada, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming.

To learn more about Bumblebee Atlas or to volunteer, go to the Bumblebee Atlas website at: <https://www.pnwbumblebeeatlas.org/about.html>.



Bumblebee
courtesy Xerces

Exclusive Spokane Audubon Member Discounts!

Enjoy discounts at these local businesses for being a member of Spokane Audubon Society. Just mention your membership at check out. New partnerships coming! Check our website for updates.

[Desert Jewels Nursery](#) specializes in plants for people who want to save water and still have a beautiful landscape. They grow hardy, locally adapted, and drought tolerant plants that can bring beauty while using minimal resources. **10% off all purchases**

[Wild Birds Unlimited](#) offers only the freshest, highest quality food for birds and other necessities for the hobby of backyard bird feeding, as well as quality nature gifts.

The owners are Certified Bird Feeding Specialists and are ready to help customers attract the birds they want according to their yard and habitat, the time of year and our region. **10% off all purchases**

[Pet Vittles and Wild Birds West](#) is a local, family-owned pet and wild bird supply store. **10% off bird seed & pet food on Wednesdays**



Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

By the time this goes to press the first wave of passerine migration should be in full swing. So far, the weather has been moderate, but that could change at any time during this volatile “change of the seasons.” This is a great time to look out for rare singing songbirds. Also check appropriate habitats for migrating shorebirds. The next six weeks will be peak spring migration. For many, this is the best time of year for birding as masses of migrants pass through and all of our favorite singing breeding birds return after a long winter away! Special sightings in caps:

Ross’s Goose: University of Idaho (4/13-GL)

Long-tailed Duck: Almota (3/28-eBird)

BAND-TAILED PIGEON: Bonner’s Ferry (4/14-JR and SE)

Sandhill Crane: Kootenai NWR (3/26-eBird); Hep-ton Lake (4/2-CH); Clark Fork (4/13-eBird); Cataldo (4/20-JE)

Ferruginous Hawk: LaCrosse (3/23-RB)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Riverside State Park (4/5-eBird)

Blue Jay: Bonner’s Ferry (3/30-JR); North Spokane (4/2-eBird); Pullman (4/12-eBird); Moscow (4/12-eBird)

Gray-crowned Rosy-finch: Mount Spokane State Park (4/17-MW)

Lesser Goldfinch: Spokane (3/24-eBird); Paradise Prairie (4/14-AM)

White-throated Sparrow: Pioneer Hill Hawkwatch (4/9-AS)



Band-tailed Pigeon
© Bridget Spencer



Band-tailed Pigeon
© Paul Fenwick

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; BB-Ben Bright; MV-Marlene Cashen; FC-Forest Corcoran; RC-River Corcoran; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JE-Jacob Elonen; MC-Micah Grove; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Bea Harrison; CH-Cameron Heusser; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-Dave Koehler; GL-Greg Lambeth; CL-Christopher Lindsey; AM-Alan McCoy; CM-Curtis Mahon; WM-Will Merg; TO-Tim O’Brien; NP-Neil Paprocki; JR-Jethro Runco; SS-Sandy Schreven; AS-Alex Sowers; CS-Charles Swift; NT-Norma Trefry; DW-Doug Ward; MW-Michael Woodruff

Conservation Updates

By Shenandoah Marr

Washington State Parks announced last year that they are considering acquiring an area known as Glen Tana. If acquired, the addition would add 1,060 acres to Riverside State Park. Importantly, the Glen Tana addition would create a wildlife corridor from Waikiki Springs to Long Lake. A wildlife corridor that also allows public access has been a long-time goal of the Spokane Audubon Society, so we enthusiastically submitted a letter of support for the Glen Tana acquisition to the State Parks department in April.

The “No on Initiative 2117” campaign officially has begun. So far, over 100 Washington organizations including environmental leaders, Tribal nations, faith groups, and community organizations have pledged to vote No on I-2117. I-2117 would repeal Washington’s landmark Climate Commitment Act. Included in this group are Washington Audubon and several Audubon chapters. Expect a lot of press coverage about this important issue in the upcoming months.

**FRIDAY
MAY 10TH
6PM – 10PM**

Featuring
The Kelly Hughes Band
and
**Lite Feet
Country
Line Dancers**

**CHENEY
MAYFEST
2024**

**CORNHOLE
TOURNAMENT** **CAR SHOW**
LOCAL EATS

VENDORS
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Featuring
**The Jim Bury Band
Alchemy
Hermano Kuya
Plaid Cats
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Bird-Friendly Maple Products are Sweet!

by Shenandoah Marr

Reprinted from blog entry October 2022

Once I made sure that my pantry would always be stocked with bird-friendly coffee, I turned my attention to other bird-friendly food products.

Along with wildlife, food and cooking are favorite interests of mine so why not continue my obsession with bringing bird-friendly products into my kitchen? Turn to bird-friendly maple syrup and other maple products. Having spent my whole life on the West coast, I'd never given much thought to where maple syrup comes from other than observing that the Canadian flag has a maple leaf on it.

As it turns out, Audubon Vermont has a Bird-Friendly Maple Project. I was intrigued. As with Smithsonian Certified Bird-Friendly coffee, biologists work with sugar maple farmers to best manage their forests to maximize habitat for birds and other wildlife. Bird-Friendly Maple farms, or "sugarbushes," are managed to promote tree species diversity, multiple layers of vegetation, standing dead trees and snags with cavities, and logs and branches left to decompose on the forest floor. In other words, exactly the type of ecosystem I wanted to support.

Thankfully, the holiday season was fast approaching so I had the perfect excuse to purchase some maple products. After browsing through many of the 40 or so small, family-owned sugar maple farms in Vermont who sell Bird-Friendly Maple products, I decided to buy some items from [Couching Lion Maple Sugar Farm](#). They offered a unique product in a maple sugar/smoked paprika rub I really wanted to try. Then I had to decide between the tantalizing names of "amber rich" or "dark robust" syrup (who knew?). After mulling it over, I finally decided on the amber rich because it sounded more like what I was used to and I didn't want to get too exotic.

This is like no other maple syrup I have tried. It has a complexity and richness that I have never tasted in the mass-produced maple syrups. A little goes a long way and I have eaten it over pancakes, yoghurt, and roasted vegetables. It adds a touch of sweetness to a refreshing summer cocktail. The smoked paprika maple sugar rub? Fantastic on roasted or sauteed vegetables and white fish. These Bird-Friendly maple goods are a decadent treat for sure, but one I enjoy both for taste and for the birds.

For more information on Vermont Audubon's Bird-Friendly Maple Project, visit [this link](#).

Attend our May meeting and purchase raffle tickets (cash or check only) for a chance to win a bottle of this maple syrup!



What is a Migrant Trap?

All About Birds/Cornell University 8/1/2021

Some places seem to have a knack for concentrating migrating birds in larger than normal numbers. These “migrant traps” often become well known as birding hotspots. This is typically the result of local weather conditions, an abundance of food, or the local topography.

For example, small songbirds migrating north in the spring fly directly over the Gulf of Mexico, landing on the coastlines of the Gulf Coast states. When storms or cold fronts bring headwinds, these birds can be near exhaustion when they reach land. In such cases they head for the nearest location offering food and cover—typically live-oak groves on barrier islands - where very large numbers of migrants can collect in what’s known as a “fallout.” These migration traps have become very popular with birders, even earning international reputations.

Peninsulas can also concentrate migrating birds as they follow the land and then pause before launching over water. This explains why places like Point

Pelee, Ontario; the Florida Keys; Point Reyes, California; and Cape May, New Jersey have great reputations as migration hotspots.

Spring migration is an especially good time for those that feed birds in their backyard to attract species they normally do not see. Offering a variety of food sources, water, and adding natural food sources to the landscape can make a backyard attractive to migrating songbirds.

Giant live oak trees, like these in High Island, Texas, attract many of our most beautiful birds after their spring journey across the Gulf of Mexico. Clockwise from top left: Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Green Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Black-and-white Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler.



Local Migrants Returning

Black-headed Grosbeak
© Marlene Cashen



Western Tanager
© Simon Boivin



Cinnamon Teal
© Ad Konings



Swainson's Hark
© Brian Sullivan

Eared Grebe
© Caroline Lambert



Yellow-headed Blackbird
© Dorian Anderson



THE MOLT

By Lisa Langelier

Change can be a verb or a noun. As a verb, change makes someone or something different; to replace or modify something. As a noun, change could be the act or instance of modifying something or it may refer to coins. Birds make distinctive annual changes. They shed and totally replace their feathers.

Unique to birds, feathers offer vital protection from weather, enable birds to fly, and help to attract mates. Like our hair and fingernails, once grown, feathers are lifeless, horny structures made from the protein keratin. Life takes a toll on feathers, requiring regular replacement. Molting is the process of feather replacement.

When birds molt, they shed their feathers that have loosened in the follicle, pushed out by the growing feather. Many animals go through some sort of molting, including humans. We shed our hair and skin cells. Insects, reptiles, and even our domesticated dogs and cats cast off and replace skin cells, nails, and hair.

The details of bird molts are complicated. Most North American birds totally replace their feathers in late summer and fall and wear this new plumage through fall and winter. But many molt a second time before breeding. For example, male American goldfinches recently replaced their dull winter coverings with bright yellow body feathers and black caps. Ptarmigan, birds living on the tundra or high

elevation habitats, molt to blend in with snow during winter then change to mottled plumage to camouflage them during the summer. Species that live in harsh environments with stiff abrasive vegetation need more frequent feather replacement.

Some species molt prior to migration, while others wait until they reach their wintering grounds. Greater yellowlegs start molting before fall migration, suspend it while migrating south, then finish on the wintering grounds.

Altricial birds, who are born naked, develop several stages of feathers. While in the nest they are downy and then develop a new set of body and flight feathers. They leave the nest in this juvenile plumage, then in late summer they molt again, often keeping their first set of flight feathers.

Winter plumage may contain many more feathers than summer plumage. Our familiar songbirds molt over 5-12 weeks. Birds that require all their flight feathers molt over a shorter period since they cannot fly while molting. Waterfowl, pelicans, and auks change their feathers in a shorter period of two weeks to a month.

So, let's take a lesson from our feathered change agents and cast off the winter doldrums and grow with spring's renewal.



Lesser Goldfinch molting
by Kurt Ongman

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.



The Pygmy Owl
Spokane Audubon Society
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