

The Pygmy Owl



Volume 26
Issue 46
February 2017

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society

Our Cuban Adventure

February Program by Ann Brinly

In March of 2016, my birding buddy Paula, my husband Bob, and I signed on with Victor Emmanuel Nature Tours for an expedition to Cuba. At that time our government did not allow US citizens to enter the country just to go birding (unless as part of a formal study program)!! Therefore, our tour included some of the history and culture of Cuba as well as great looks at its wonderful birds.

We were accompanied by a Cuban guide, who talked about the country as we rode our bus from one birding location to another. We visited a coffee-growing family who talked with us about their work and their lives. We also had a short visit with a tobacco farmer and spent an afternoon at a commune. On another day we toured Ernest Hemmingway's Cuban home and the town of Trinidad.

We visited the western part of the island, beginning our tour in Santa Clara and ending with a day in Havana. We were able to see many of the endemic birds, with very close looks at some. These included the Cuban Gnatcatcher, Solitaire, and Grassquit, Cuban and Black-shouldered Blackbirds, and the Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest. Most of our birding stops were led by local birders who were able to lead us right to the birds we were seeking. It was an unforgettable trip!



Cuban Trogon
(national bird of
Cuba)
photo by Ann Brinly

**Cuban Emerald
Hummingbird**
photo by Ann Brinly



Ann Brinly says that she grew up in Kentucky, where she learned the species names (chickadee, nuthatch) of common local birds, but didn't begin to study them until years later, when her children were in Middle School. In her words..."At that time we lived in Texas, which is a marvelous birding location. While we were there, I spent a lot of time volunteering at the nearby Nature Center, teaching and, later, focusing on stewardship work, which included prescribed burns and placing bulrush bombs.

I've been able to make birding trips to six continents, (and after this cold winter, I'm not sure I'll ever brave Antarctica!). When someone asks which is my favorite bird, I usually respond, 'Whichever one I'm looking at right now.' I spend many hours on my deck watching the antics of my Wild Turkeys, chickadees, and nuthatches."

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

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



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Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge PHOTO CONTEST

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is seeking amazing photographs from amateur photographers showcasing the incredible wildlife and habitats found on the refuge. The winning photo will be featured on the face of the 2018 annual refuge pass.

For complete rules, go to...

www.fws.gov/refuge/turnbull



Yellow-pine Chipmunk
©Christine Haines

Contest Dates:

11/1/2016 –
10/31/2017

Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:

Wednesday, February 8th at 7:30 p.m.

Deadline for March P.O. submissions
is February 20th.

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

The highlight of the regional birding world the past month and a half was the incredible **RED-FLANKED BLUTAIL** found by John Hanna in Lewiston. The bird graced the area for the better part of 2 weeks allowing thousands from all over the US to come see it, though as of this writing, it seems to have moved on. The other big news is the Coeur D'Alene Winter Gull extravaganza that often occurs at just about this time. This year has met or exceeded expectations with **NINE** gull species observed in one day! Most of these are likely still around so for those who like gulls what are you waiting for!? Especially rare species are in bold caps.

Trumpeter Swan: Scotia (1/14-TL)

Surf Scoter: Ephrata (1/1-MY)

Black-crowned Night-Heron (rare in winter): Ephrata (1/17-MY)

Mew Gull: Coeur D'Alene (1/6-WN)

ICELAND GULL: Coeur D'Alene Coeur D'Alene (1/14-NS)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Wolf Lodge Bay (12-25-NS); Coeur D'Alene (1/14-CS)

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL: Coeur D'Alene (1/14-CS)

Glaucous Gull: Coeur D'Alene Coeur D'Alene (1/14-NS)

Anna's Hummingbird: Pullman (12/17-CBC)

Red-breasted Sapsucker: Pullman (12/17-RB)

Peregrine Falcon (rare in winter): Spokane (1/15-TO); Spokane Premix (1/21-JI)

Blue Jay: St. Maries (1/5-CH); Bonner's Ferry (1/7-ShS)

American Pipit (rare in winter): Coeur D'Alene (12/15-LH); Lenore (1/7-JH)

Snow Bunting: Moscow (12/18-CS); Post Falls (12/18-DW); Davenport (12/23-SJ); Ritzville (12/28-JL); Step-toe (1/6-RB)

Harris's Sparrow: Kellogg (12/30-MD)

Pine Grosbeak: Lookout Pass (1/6-BK); Mead (1/10-TL); Fan Lake (1/12-TL); Mt. Spokane (1/16-CM)

Common Redpoll: Noxon (1/2-ER)

Lesser Goldfinch: Electric City (1/8-RM)

Observers: JA-Joyce Alonso; DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra; MaB-Matt Bartels; TB- DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; Janet Callen (JC); MaC-Marlene Cashen; MC-Mike Clarke; WC-Warren Current; KD-Kirsten Dahl; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; MD-Mike Denny; MLD-MerryLynn Denny; ND-Nancy Draznin, KD-Kas Dumroese; MD-Mike Dunn; GF-Greg Falco; BF-Bob Flores; MF-Marian Frobe; RF-Russell Frobe; EG-Emma Gregory; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; LH-Lisa Hardy; FH-Fran Haywood; BH-Bettie Hoff; RH-Ray Hoff; DH-Dave Holick; CH-Carrie Hugo; JI-Jon Isacoff; CJ-Craig Johnson; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; RK-Russ Koppendrayer; DK-David Kreft; CL-Christopher Lindsey; JL-Joshua Little; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Curtis Mahon; AM-Alan McCoy; EM-Eliot Miller; NM-Nancy Miller; RM-Roy Myers; PO-Peter Olsoy; JP-Jonathan Pafford; ER-Eric Rassmussen; JR-Jan Reynolds; JR-Jethro Runco; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; HS-Herman Schreven; NS-Nick Sly; MS-Mark Stromberg; SS-Shirley Sturts; CS-Charles Swift; JT-Jason Talbot; NT-Norma Trefry; TW-TC Walker; DW-Doug Ward; JW-John Wolff; TW-Tina Wynnecoop; MY-Matt Yawney; WY-Will Young



Red-flanked Bluetail.
Photo by Sandy Schreven

Public Lands under Attack

by Lindell Haggin

Our public lands are already threatened by actions taken in the new congress. Despite a study which shows that 95% of the American public believes that National Parks are worth protecting, Congress is greasing the wheels for transferring the land to states. Oil and mining interests are already lobbying to despoil our public lands for their profits.

Language introduced by Rep. Rob Bishop of Utah revised the budget rules. According to this language, federal land basically has no value. This means that if Congress gives away federal land, it technically does not decrease federal revenue or contribute to the federal debt. This is despite BLM's 2016 figures which indicate that they received \$2 billion in royalty revenue from federal leases. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that federal tax revenue from the recreation economy is almost \$40 billion.

Contact Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers. Tell her that you value public lands for all people, not just vested interests. Ph. 509-353-2374 or go to her website and send an email to mcmorris.house.gov

A Coffee Label That Benefits Songbirds

Coffee is commonly grown on "sun coffee plantations" that have clear-cut a tropical forest. But there is an alternative that is good for wildlife and for people: plantations that grow coffee underneath a canopy of diverse, native trees that provide a forest-like environment. This has many ecological benefits, including providing shelter and food for the songbirds that overwinter in these tropical places.



The label means that the farm where the coffee was grown qualifies as "bird friendly habitat" as defined by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. The standards promote environmental sustainability of coffee farms and protect biodiversity, with a special focus on providing shelter and food for migratory birds. Coffee farms are also required to be certified organic. The label is verified and highly meaningful.

Sagebrush Songbird Survey

The planning and scoping of sites for this year's Sagebrush Songbird Survey has been going apace. We will be doing most of the work in Lincoln County. It is a special opportunity to get out in the wonderful shrub-steppe habitat each spring, see and hear good birds, and gather important data for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. There will be a training session on April 1st and 2nd in Moses Coulee. People will stay in the Nature Conservancy's lodge. Experts will be there to help you learn the habits and songs of the target species. There will also be training on GPS units needed to locate the observation sites. The ability to hear bird songs is vital, as well as the ability to walk up to two miles. If you are interested in participating, please contact Lindell Haggin (lindell4118@comcast.net or call 466-4118). It is a great opportunity to get out and enjoy some wonderful birds in a marvelous setting.

Lindell Haggin
509-466-4118

Winter Birds in Spokane

photos by Audubon members.



Bohemian Waxwing

photo by Buck Dimitrovich



Cedar Waxwing

photo by Buck Dimitrovich

Dark-eyed Juncos

photos by Curtis Mahon



Memorial to John English

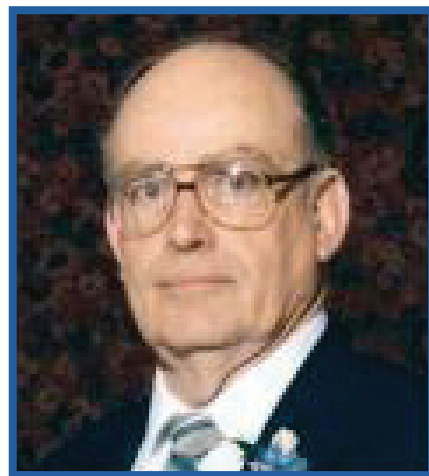
John English died on January 7, 2017. Spokane Audubon Society misses him. Those of us who had the good fortune to know John miss him.

John was a dedicated volunteer for Spokane Audubon. He and his wife Sally provided many hours of environmental education as members of the Education Committee. This important contribution to our stewardship mission is intended to inspire especially youth to take up the banner of conservation and carry it forward for future generations.

For years, John was responsible for ensuring the Pygmy Owl arrived in our mailboxes. This was no easy feat. He became accustomed to showing up at the post office to learn of some new requirement about bulk mailing and was adept at mastering the roadblock. And, of course, it was handled with John's customary good humor.

In addition to enjoying our local birds, John was a nature traveler. Several of us Spokane Auduboners have fond memories of birding with him in Costa Rica and Peru. John had a way of sometimes surprising us with a sought-after "spot" while the rest of the group was intently chasing some other wary species.

We send our condolences to John's wife and Spokane Audubon member and volunteer, Sally, and her family. We are lucky that John was part of our Spokane Audubon family.



John Hunter English
March 30, 1936 ~ January 7, 2017

Christmas Bird Count: Experiences Over the Years

by Joyce Alonso

When I was growing up, my mother's birding was a "fair weather" activity. In Denver, that phrase described a large part of the year. Still, I don't remember anyone focusing on birds during the winter. When I took up this "obsession," about three decades ago, it definitely was as a "warm weather" birder. It never occurred to me to go looking for our feathered friends in December or January.

And then I was invited to participate in my first Christmas Count! I was assigned to go with Tom Carroll, one of the club's leaders, because at that time I could hear the birds, if not identify them, so I served as his ears. After being introduced to my 5th lifer in one day, I was hooked, despite the long hours and frigid temps. Who knew that so many birds hang out in our vicinity all winter?!

In the ensuing years, I've had some of my most interesting birding experiences while on the Christmas Count. There was the year I was counting with Warren Hall in bitter cold and snow to our knees. We walked into a small post-office/store for a pit stop and nearly frightened the postmistress to death with our masks, which we hadn't thought to remove.

Another year, on the South Hill with Vee Neely, from whom I later inherited the territory, we were riding in a near-blizzard, in her small VW, cleaning the windows every few minutes in order to see. We stopped at a mansion on Cliff Drive to count Mrs. Jewett's birds. While wandering through the paths on her property, I noticed a chickadee in a bush directly ahead. I was surprised that

it didn't move as I approached. I could have picked it up. That was my first experience with survival torpor.

Now, 25 years later...and I'm still at it...with the thick folder of records to prove it. Friends Joanne Powell and Sally English have been faithful collaborators for most of these years as we cover the upper hill and the Latah Creek area. Many homeowners have become enthusiastic participants, major feeder counters who invite cold participants in for hot chocolate and keep an eye out for unusual species for the Count Week. Last year two families committed to early morning rituals of getting warm humming bird feeders out and refilled for the crazy Anna's that decided to winter in the area. They confessed to feeling relief this year when their hummingbird visitors departed in November.

This year provided a challenge, with both snow and cold temperatures. I was surprised at the number of birds we saw. Our totals were a bit lower, due to the almost frozen creek, but we had several surprises—a soaring Harlan Redtail, a couple of young White-crowned Sparrows. The best, however, was the abundance of the beautiful Varied Thrush. I had just said to Sally that we should look among all those robins, when she spotted one....two, three, four...so cooperative I even got photos!

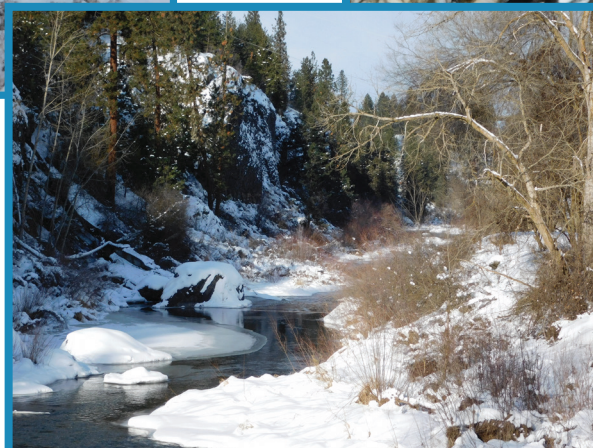
What will next year bring? Who knows? I'll be ready. Maybe you'll join us.



Sally English at Qualchan golf course
photo by Joyce Alonso



Varied Thrush
photo by Joyce Alonso



Latah Creek
photo by Joyce Alonso

On The Web

(www.spokaneaudubon.org)

Welcome to the debut of a monthly article about our website. I want follow up on the fabulous January program presented by Jeanne Dammarell. Did you know that she has provided Spokane Audubon with pictures and comments about her backyard habitat? Go to the website. On the left side of the screen is the navigation bar. Click on "Birds and Birding." The very first menu item is called, "Attracting Birds." Click on this button and you will see Jeanne's pictures and commentary.

Here are two websites mentioned by Jeanne in her presentation that I thought would be of interest: www.bug-guide.net and <http://www.xerces.org/>.

One of our major goals with our website is to present information that is specific to our local area. We welcome pictures and comments from folks in our area that we can publish on our site. In this way we can share information and support fellow stewards of the natural community. I look forward to your contributions. Please contact me for information about how to send pictures and text.

Alan McCoy
ahm2352@gmail.com

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.

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City: _____ State: _____

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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_nublado@me.com, or 413-1524.



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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>

From Division Street go about 12 blocks East on Mission Ave. Just before the bridge over the Spokane River (by Avista), turn left (East) on Upriver Drive. Go 3 long blocks and turn left (North) on Crestline Street. Go one block. Turn right onto E. North Crescent Ave. Proceed a short way and take a left into the second of the driveways to the Community Building. The Community Building is straight ahead at the end. There are about 15 spaces to the left of the building and about 8 to the right. If these are full, you may have to park on E. North Crescent Ave



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