

Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday, March 13th at 7:30 p.m. Social get-together at 7:00

Volume 27
Issue 7
March 2019

The Pygmy Owl

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Purple Martin Recovery in SW Washington

presented by Cindy McCormack

Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) are the largest swallow in North America. The Western Purple Martins (*Progne subis arboricola*) breed along the west coast of North America from California to British Columbia and are genetically distinct from their eastern cousins, *Progne subis subis*. Western martins are a Species of Concern from California to Washington and a provincial Species at Risk in BC.

Martins once nested in loose colonies in cavities in old trees and snags as far north as Campbell River, BC, the historic northern limit of their range. Their colony sites were either in open treed areas with little undergrowth, such as recently burned areas, or bordering freshwater.

Cindy McCormack will be coming in from Vancouver, WA to give a presentation on the on-going Purple Martin project in southwest Washington. She is a past long-time member of the Spokane birding community and Spokane Audubon. She has worked and volunteered in wildlife research for thirty years and is a licensed bird bander.

Cindy participates in the Purple Martin Working Group, which is dedicated to the recovery and conservation of Western Purple Martin populations on the West Coast of North America. She is currently a volunteer at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the lower Columbia River sites, participating in monitoring, band re-sights, nesting gourd maintenance, and nestling banding efforts.

Purple Martin
© Russel Smith



Purple Martin Colony
© Russel Smith

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 27 Issue 7~ March 2019

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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Membership Report

by Dave Plemons

Update of Members' Nesting through February 18, 2019:

Welcome to our new nesters: Diane Garcia & Charlene Michael and family.

Many thanks to our returning nesters: Michael & Crystal Atamian, Rachel Brabeck, Doris & Rodney Butler, Marianne & Mahlon Dalley, Michael & Pam Dixon, Nita Hamilton, Claudia Kroll, Thomas & Myriam Munson, and Joanne Powell.

Many nesters chose to not receive a hard copy of the Pygmy Owl. If you could help us to reduce costs and save paper and energy by switching to our electronic full-color publication, please contact me. You already have access on the Spokane Audubon WebSite on the Pygmy Owl page of the website. To receive a personal PDF copy for your own file, we will need your Email address. Mine is davep_acer@msn.com. Legibility is critical. I cannot clearly make out some Email addresses.

Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker (with a roving eye!)

Joanne Powell

Many years ago, when I lived in Reardan, I had a yellow-shafted flicker that hung around for a month or two, long enough for him to hook up with a red-shafted one. Three offspring started showing up at the feeders. One looked like a regular red-shafted; one had red shafts but the face and back of the head had the neck spots of a yellow-shafted; and one had red shafts but the facial markings, instead of being red or black, were a medium gray. It was very interesting to see the differences.



Red-Yellow Flicker Comparison
©Kevin T. Karlson

April Pygmy Owl
Deadline March 20th

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Just when we thought we had escaped winter, we thought wrong! The past month has clobbered us with snow and subzero temperatures, indicating that spring is still a long ways away. Already a lackluster season in terms of visiting winter birds, the effects of the weather have made access to birding areas challenging and likely reduced the number of birds and reports. Still quite a few nice continuing birds are being seen, as noted below. Let's hope for better luck next month!

Snow Goose: Liberty Lake (1/21-TL); Spokane Valley (2/2-MC); Peone Prairie (2/4-TL)

Greater White-fronted Goose: Nine Mile Falls (1/20-MW and RM)

Trumpeter Swan: Hawkins Point (1/21-FF); Colville Flats (2/14-DB); Little Spokane River Confluence (2/16-TL)

Red-breasted Merganser: Liberty Lake (1/21-TL); Clark Fork (1/26-JI and TL)

Mew Gull: Coeur D'Alene (2/16-CL)

Kumlien's Iceland Gull: Coeur D'Alene (2/16-CL)

Glaucous Gull: Seven Bays (1/25-TL)

Northern Goshawk: Little Spokane River Confluence (1/20); Potlatch (1/27-CS); Sandpoint (2/8-FF)

Blue Jay: West Plains (1/20-RM and MW); Coeur D'Alene (1/22-DY);

Lesser Goldfinch: Mead (1/23-TL); Seven Bays (1/25-TL)

Snow Bunting: St. John (2/16-RB)

Chipping Sparrow: Deer Park (2/13-CM)

Harris's Sparrow: Hooper (1/27-MMLD); Washtucna (1/27-MMLD); Potlatch (2/2-RB); Moscow Mountain (2/17-KD)

White-throated Sparrow: Potlatch (1/31-BB and JH)

Swamp Sparrow: Liberty Lake (1/29-TO); Potlatch (2/2-CL and RB)

YELLOW-SHAFTED NORTHERN FLICKER: North Spokane County (2/17-LH)

Observers: DB-Don Baker; MB-Missy Baker; RB-R.J. Baltierra;; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; TB-Travis Brakefield; SC-Shay Caflin; MaC-Marlene Cashen; WC-Warren Current; MMLD-Mike and MerryLynn Denny; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; JoE-Johnna Eilers; Jacob Elonen; JF-Judy Ferguson; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Bea Harrison; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; SL-Sherry Lee; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; CM-Curtis Mahan; TM-The-resa Mathis; RM-Ryan Merrill; NM-Nancy Miller; TO-Tim O'Brien; NP-Neil Paprocki; ER-Eric Rassmussen; NR-Nick Risch; ShS-Shane Sater; SS-Sandy Schreven; JS-John Stuart; CS-Charles Swift; MS-Mark Stromberg; DW-Doug Ward; NW-Nancy Williams; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney



Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker
©Lindell Haggin

Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus)

by Lindell Haggin

The Northern Flicker is in the woodpecker family. You will know this when he pounds on your house, trying to burrow in to your wood siding. In the spring, he also will rap on a metal stove pipe, satellite dish or any other object that makes a lot of noise in the spring. He is trying to attract the attention of any female in the area.

There are two varieties of Northern Flicker and for a period of time they were listed as two species, the Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted Flickers. The red-shafted is typically found in the western United States, while the yellow-shafted is found in the eastern portion of the country.

Flickers are about 12 inches long, 2 inches longer than a Robin. There are dark spots on a cream-colored breast with a black oval just below the neck. The back is brown with black barring. There is a large white patch at the base of the tail, which is quite apparent when it flies. In the red-shafted variety, the shafts and underside of the feathers on the wings and tail are red. The male has gray cheeks and red whiskers. The female is lacking the red whiskers. In the yellow-shafted variety, the shafts and underside of the feathers on the wings and tail are yellow. The male has brown cheeks with black whiskers and red at the nape. The female is lacking the black whiskers. There can be cross-breeding between the two species, resulting in a mixture of characteristics. These crosses are considered to be intergrades.

Flickers do not spend much time feeding on the trunks of trees, but rather forage on the ground for ants and beetles. They also like fruits and berries when available. You can sometimes find them hanging from tube feeders trying to retrieve sunflower seeds. They love the suet feeders.

Both sexes help excavate a nest cavity, usually in an older, decaying tree like a cottonwood. They will often reuse the same cavity. They raise one brood per year, laying from 5 to 8 eggs.

Since living on the Little Spokane River, I have typically seen the red-shafted variety and occasionally

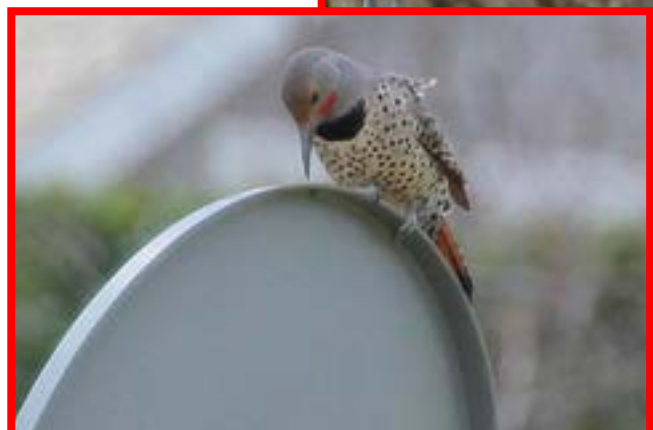
an intergrade. One I saw had red whiskers and red on the nape of its neck. Since the middle of November, however, I have seen a male yellow-shafted variety on a regular basis. It always pays to look carefully. You never know when a Robin ends up being a Varied Thrush, another Song Sparrow is really a Swamp Sparrow, or that Northern Flicker turns out to be a yellow-shafted variety! Enjoy your birding.



Intergrade - red shafts, red facial mark, and red crescent on back of head

Red-shafted female

Red-shafted male (Larger photos ©Lindell Haggin)



Why Native Plants Are Better for Birds and People

Bird-friendly landscaping provides food, saves water, and fights climate change.

By Marina Richie

Excerpts from the original article, which was submitted by Alan McCoy.

More native plants mean more choices of food and shelter for native birds and other wildlife. To survive, native birds need native plants and the insects that have co-evolved with them. Most landscaping plants available in nurseries are exotic species from other countries. Many are prized for qualities that make them poor food sources for native birds—like having leaves that are unpalatable to native insects and caterpillars. With 96 percent of all terrestrial bird species in North America feeding insects to their young, planting insect-proof exotic plants is like serving up plastic food. No insects? No birds.

For example, research by entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oaks support more than 550 different species of butterflies and moths alone. The non-native ginkgo tree supports just five. Caterpillars are the go-to food source for migrant and resident birds alike. In the 16 days between hatching and fledging, a clutch of Carolina Chickadee chicks can down more than 9,000 of them.

Tallamy's work points to native landscaping as a key tool in increasing bird diversity and abundance. In a study of suburban properties in southeast Pennsylvania, for example, eight times more Wood Thrushes, Eastern Towhees, Veeries, and Scarlet Tanagers (all species of conservation concern) were found in yards with native plantings as compared with yards landscaped with typical alien ornamentals.

What's more, the habitat provided by native plants can help birds adapt and survive amid a changing climate. More than half of North American bird species are threatened by climate change, and native plants can help increase their resilience by giving them food and places to rest and nest.

By planting native species, you will also:

Save water

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 30 to 60 percent of fresh water in American cities is used for watering lawns. Native plants have adapted to thrive in their regional landscape, without

added water or nutrients. With climate change models predicting increased episodes of extreme drought such as California is experiencing, it's a good time to shift to water-wise yards and native plants.

Use fewer chemicals

Less lawn mowing, fertilizing, and pesticide application means cleaner air and water.

Homeowners apply nearly 80 million pounds of pesticides to lawns in the United States each year. What's more, they use up to 10 times more pesticides per acre on their lawns than farmers use on crops. During storms, lawn chemicals can be carried by runoff and wind, contaminating streams and wetlands many miles away.

Native plants are often hardier than non-native ornamentals and thrive without pesticides or fertilizers. Moreover, as you work to create a bird-friendly sanctuary in your yard, insects that may have seemed like pests before become allies. Since caterpillars are premium bird food, the holes they make in your oak's leaves are badges of success and the caterpillars themselves, cause for celebration.



DEFERENCE

by Mary Jokela

Recently my dog and I walked up the road, past the neighbors and neared the town's pump-house access, a seldom-used gravel track heading west. Drifted snow covered the surrounding fields and stubble. A sudden, unexpected spectacle: a mature bald eagle banked, perched tenaciously on a fencepost, hunched down into the wind, and then watched us!

I wondered whether the present distance between us and the eagle was greater than it might be if we turned down the pumphouse road and walked parallel to the bird. The road terminates at a new structure protected by serpentine barbed wire a few acres distant. An antenna crossbar on the nearby older auxiliary building might've been the eagle's tantalizing and commanding vantage point instead of the fencepost. Why was the fencepost chosen? Shall we walk closer to this magnificent raptor for a "better" view or backtrack and defer disturbance?

This quandry, then, resurrected the perennial question: how do we compromise the integrity, the survival, of birds and other wildlife including via casual birding, particularly during winter? Winter is ordinarily their most perilous day-to-day existence, an inarguably difficult season when practically all wild creatures' energies are expended in search of paltry food sources and nutrients.

Accordingly, and with spring's breeding season around the corner, we might consider less vigorous pursuit, inappropriate pressure and temper our approach for that perfect aspect or photo. An opportunity for deference and a thoughtful boost for sustainable wild connections.



American Bald Eagle
© Christopher Martin

Washington Audubon Society

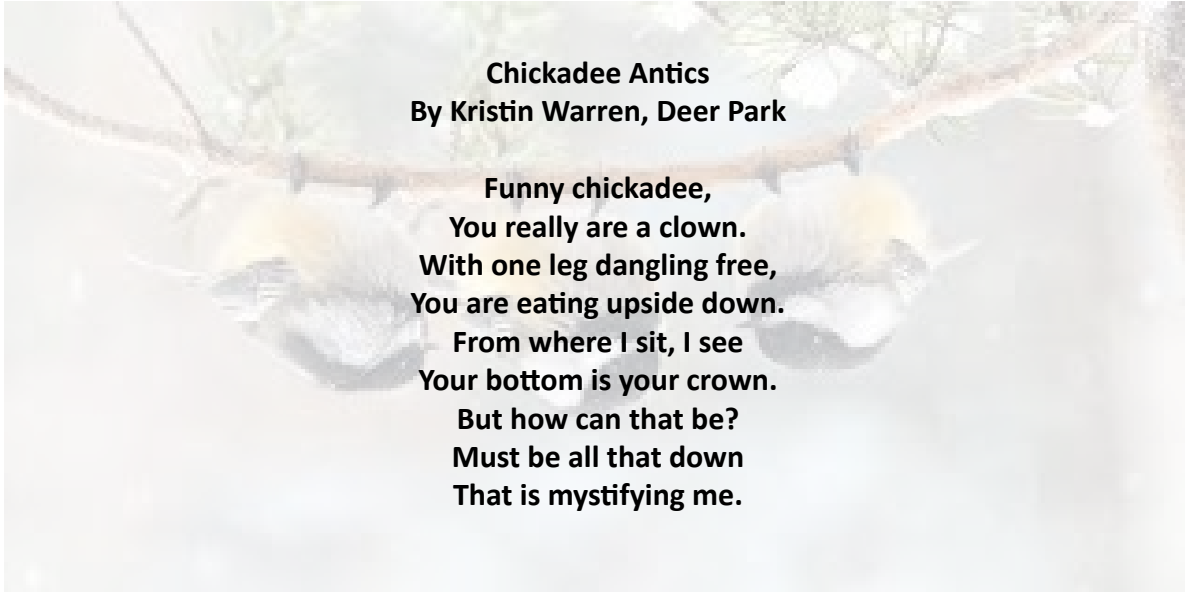
Washington State: 100 percent clean electricity legislation passes out of final House and Senate committees

A bill to establish a 100 percent clean electricity standard in Washington state moved out of the House Finance Committee, clearing a final hurdle before a potentially historic floor vote. This followed closely on the heels of a companion bill passing out of its final Senate committee earlier in the week. In response, Gail Gatton, executive director of Audubon Washington, issued the following statement:

"Audubon's support for 100 percent clean electricity builds on our commitment to protect birds and people from climate change. Reducing carbon pollution by switching to clean energy sources is technically possible, economically viable, and a key driver for new jobs and economic growth. Poll after poll show the move to clean energy is supported overwhelmingly by Washingtonians and is, simply put, the right thing to do. With a floor vote anticipated in the coming weeks, we expect our elected officials will take the necessary action now to keep our birds, residents, and communities healthy and safe from a changing climate."

House Bill 1211 and Senate Bill 5116 would:

- Phase out coal from our electricity grid by 2025, accelerating the closure of coal plants in Montana and Wyoming which are among the largest sources of climate pollution in the American West;
- Put in place interim emission reduction targets, starting in 2030, that would prevent unnecessary and costly near-term build out of new fracked gas infrastructure in our electric grid -- ensuring an orderly transition to clean electricity;
- Require investment in low-income communities to address historic energy inequities and inclusion of equity in the planning and acquisition of clean energy;
- Increase investments in clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency, adding more jobs to the state's clean energy industries, which already employ more than 82,000 Washingtonians - 13 times as many as fossil fuels.
- Commit to powering Washington State's entire electric grid with 100% clean energy by 2045.



Chickadee Antics
By Kristin Warren, Deer Park

Funny chickadee,
You really are a clown.
With one leg dangling free,
You are eating upside down.
From where I sit, I see
Your bottom is your crown.
But how can that be?
Must be all that down
That is mystifying me.

**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. You will also be eligible for website privileges.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____



Please make check payable to:
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Send this form and your check to:

Audubon Membership
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Spokane, WA 99201

Current members may renew memberships from our web site::

<http://spokaneaudubon.org>

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



The Pygmy Owl
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March 2019

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 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

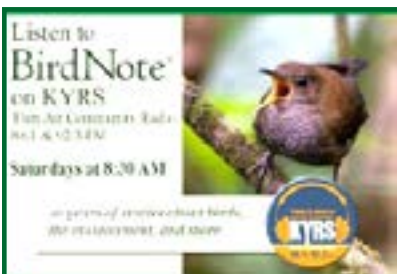
- Take US-395 S to E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Mission Ave.
- Turn Left at E. Upriver Dr.

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

