

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 31
Issue 9
May 2023

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



May 10, 2023 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 Ponderosa Room of the Woodland Center, or you can attend virtually on-line via Zoom link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87541785255?pwd=WHITT2JRcGtaZFpWdS9Sb0NiUk5hUT09>

Meeting ID: **875 4178 5255** Passcode: **038984** See our hybrid meeting protocol on page 7.

Weird woodpeckers of northern Arizona forests

presented by **Dr. Ruby Hammond**



Dr. Ruby Hammond, who is currently a visiting lecturer at Eastern Washington University teaching courses in Vertebrate Ecology and Wildlife Biology,

in conservation and vertebrate ecology. She obtained her B.Sc. from Middle Tennessee State University, and both her M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees at Northern Arizona University. Her research has largely focused on critically endangered birds in the Hawaiian Archipelago, or birds that live in imperiled habitats such as those in Arctic, urban, and arid lands. Ruby is “miserably lost without nature”, and has thus spent her entire career trying to help save and restore nature directly, through research, and indirectly by educating people in a variety of settings.

will present information about her studies of unusual Hairy Woodpecker foraging ecology.

In November 2016, Ruby documented Hairy Woodpeckers excavating for food in live trees – not dead or dying trees -- near Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument in northern Arizona. Because excavation of food in live trees isn't well-documented for non-sapsucking woodpeckers, Ruby has been investigating how tree characteristics such as bark thickness, amount of resin, etc. may be related to the use of live trees by the woodpeckers and their wood-borer prey. She's also been trying to determine if tree age or environmental stress in this arid landscape might drive this unusual behavior.

Originally from the land of honky-tonk bars and fried chicken near Nashville, Ruby has worked around the U.S. and abroad since 2002 as a remote field biologist



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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, 11 and 12 © Jan Reynolds.



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Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status March 21, 2023 through April 20, 2023:

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

Individual: Melissa Johnson, Paul Castonguay, Steven Alexander, Beverly Rihn

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

Individual: Silvia Oliver, David Smith, Robin Crain, Sharon Genung, Peggy Blum, Surender Bodhireddy, Delores Schwindt, Peter Goldberg

Family: Rachel Brabeck, Chauna Bingham
Supporting: Dave Smith, Cindy Cilyo & Brian Aut

Contributing: Lea Smith

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>.



Great Blue Heron
© Alan McCoy

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Well, Spring is being coy with us and not coming through as cold, unsettled weather systems have predominated, bringing some winds and bouts of hail. Many species still are arriving more or less on time, though seemingly in smaller numbers than expected for the date. Therefore, this may be a “slightly delayed” Spring migration, TBD. Of course, there should be a major influx of migrant passerines in the region during the next 3-4 weeks. Below are the noteworthy sightings:

Greater White-fronted Goose: Glorfield Road (3/27-RB)

Snow Goose: Hepton Lake (4/29-CH)

Long-tailed Duck: Hope (4/6-eBird)

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Swanson Lakes WMA (4/4-AT)

Anna’s Hummingbird: Spokane Valley (4/20-MC)

Ferruginous Hawk: Crooked Knee Lake (4/8-RB)

White-headed Woodpecker: Fruitland (4/2-eBird)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Athol (3/26-RyB); Newport (4/5-eBird)

Blue Jay: Coeur D’Alene (3/27-WY); Bonner’s Ferry (4/18-JR)

Lesser Goldfinch: Williams Lake (3/25-JI); Spokane Valley (4/14-MC); Paradise Prairie (4/16-AM)

White-Throated Sparrow: Othello (3/26-eBird); Sandpoint (3/29-JR); Little Spokane Natural Area (4/10-eBird); Pullman (4/20-MM)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Othello (3/29-eBird)

Fox Sparrow: Colfax (4/4-RB); Pullman (4/4-eBird); Colville (4/8-eBird); Harker Canyon (4/15-eBird); Rose Creek Preserve (4/20-BM)

Tricolored Blackbird: Pampa Pond (4/15-BM)



Tri-colored Blackbird, Male
© Matt Elyash



Tri-colored Blackbird, Female
© Ted Breedy

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; RyB-Ryan Bart; DB-Donna Bragg; BB-Ben Bright; MC-Marlene Cashen; JC-Jeffrey Colburn; FC-Forest Corcoran; RC-River Corcoran; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; Jacob Elonen; CG-Cierra Gove; LH-Lindell Haggin; JH-John Hanna; CH-Cameron Heusser; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-Dave Koehler; GL-Greg Lambeth; TL-Terry Little; CiM-Cindy McCormick; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Mason Maron; AM-Alan McCoy; BM-Ben Meredyk; NM-Nancy Miller; WM-Will Merg; TO-Tim O’Brien; NP-Neil Paprocki; JR-Jethro Runco; SS-Sandy Schreven; CS-Charles Swift; NT-Norma Trefry; AT-Andrew Thomas; DW-Doug Ward; JW-John Wolff; MW-Michael Woodruff

Medical Lake Field Trip

By Bea Harrison

Red-winged blackbird song greeted us at the Medical Lake field trip on the morning of April 15, 2023.

Jim and I, and our 5-year-old granddaughter, Iona, were joined by Julia, Nick, Sarah, and Allison Monkman; Theresa Erwin and her sister, Sandi Murillo; Bonnie Mandel, Marc Lewis, Cheryl Branz, and Beverly Rihn.

It was a rather chilly, windy day, but sunny. Most participants were beginning or intermediate birders and everyone seemed to enjoy the outing. We shared a few of the loaner binoculars, which were a hit.

We saw 21 bird species: Canada Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Eurasian Collared-Dove, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Flicker, Common Raven, Violet-green Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Song Sparrow, Red-winged and Brewer's Blackbird.

One of the highlights of the trip was non-avian. We saw a group of garter snakes emerging from their winter den, all coiled up together. Our granddaughter was thrilled to see many chipmunks scampering about, and a Mallard hen sitting on a nest.

We were surprised to see a Canada Goose nesting on top of one of the stadium lights, where the Osprey pair were trying to nest last year. The ospreys seemed to be nesting across the lake on a platform.

Afterward, most of the group met at the LeFevre Bakery in the town of Medical Lake for some sweet treats and good conversation. When we received the following soon after, it confirmed why we lead field trips:

Bea and Jim,

I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the wonderful bird watching tour on Saturday. It was the highlight of our weekend! Not only did we get to see and identify a variety of birds, we also enjoyed talking with everyone in the group. Thank you for helping us feel so welcome. From having binoculars to loan out to providing a wealth of knowledge, we truly enjoyed every minute. It was also great to have the option to meet at the cafe afterwards. We were sorry we couldn't stay for that portion. Hopefully next time!

With great appreciation,

Julia, Nick, Sarah, and Allison



Field Trip Group



Iona



Garter Snakes



Ring-billed Gulls



Chipmunk

All photos by Bea Harrison

Common Nighthawk

"Bullbat"

ABC BIRD OF THE WEEK

Scientific Name: *Chordeiles minor*

Population: 22 million

Trend: Decreasing

Habitat: Nests in a variety of open habitats; wintering habitat poorly known

The Common Nighthawk's erratic, acrobatic flight style gives the bird its folk name, "bullbat." But the nighthawk is a bird, not a mammal. On long, pointed wings, this dusky hunter jerks and weaves through the air, flashing distinctive white wing patches. Unfortunately, in recent decades, the nighthawk has become a less familiar sight in many parts of town-and-country North America.

Nighthawks usually spend their days hidden, sometimes in plain view, thanks to their cryptic gray, brown, and blackish plumage and the birds' squat, "neckless" shape. They often prove difficult to spot, even while roosting quietly on a tree branch or fence post.

The name "nighthawk" is misleading, since this bird is neither strictly nocturnal nor closely related to raptors like the [Red-tailed Hawk](#) or [Peregrine Falcon](#).

Goatsucker

Like the [Eastern Whip-poor-will](#) and [Chuck-will's-widow](#), the Common Nighthawk belongs to the family Caprimulgidae, a group also called nightjars or goatsuckers. Like many of its kin, the nighthawk is most often (though not always) out and about at dusk, dawn, and nighttime, when seeing this bird clearly can be a challenge.

One theory of why these insect-eating birds are called goatsuckers: Pastoralists would see the birds buzzing livestock and guessed that they were nursing from the hooved mammals, when in actuality they were collecting flying invertebrate prey flushed by the herds.

Breeding and Feeding

Booming Birds

This species lays its eggs directly on the ground, usually on sand, dirt, gravel, or bare rock. In cities, Common Nighthawks often nest on flat gravel roofs. Unfortunately, urban populations of crows increasingly target these city nighthawks, and eat their eggs.

A male nighthawk courts a female by circling and hovering high in the air while calling repeatedly; then he plunges into a steep dive. The air passing through the bird's primary wing feathers creates a loud rushing or "booming" sound at the bottom of the dive. Male nighthawks also use this display to establish and protect territory.

The female Common Nighthawk performs all incubation duties, but will leave the nest to feed. Both parents care for young, feeding them regurgitated insects.



Common Nighthawk
© Jane Mann

Aerial Insectivore

Common Nighthawks eat many kinds of flying insects, including mosquitoes, moths, beetles, and grasshoppers. Their wide, bristle-fringed mouths are adapted to scoop insects from the air, and long tails and long, pointed wings allow for acrobatic maneuvering in pursuit of prey. Nighthawks can most often be seen hunting on the wing at dawn and dusk, but they occasionally forage during the day, especially during overcast weather.

These nocturnal hunters take advantage of the clouds of insects attracted to streetlamps, stadium lights, and other bright lights, and often swoop around these artificial light sources. They also feed over fields and ponds.

Region and Range

Common Nighthawks have one of the longest migration routes of all North American birds, and move early, beginning to travel south in August. The easiest way for many people to see this species is to watch the skies during this fall migration, when small to large flocks may pass overhead almost anywhere, usually close to dusk.

Until recently, this species' wintering grounds and the particulars of its migration remained mysteries. However, advances in satellite tracking are beginning to paint a clearer picture: For example, a paper published in the journal *Ecography* in 2021, reported on data collected from 13 birds tagged on breeding grounds, then tracked to wintering grounds in Amazonian habitats, mostly in Brazil. Migrating birds were found to concentrate along the Mississippi Flyway before taking a single path across the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, then on to South America. Pinpointing locations important to Common Nighthawk migration and wintering is key to planning for better conservation of this species.



Breeding Range Map
© ABC



Common Nighthawk in Flight
© Ronnie d'Entremont

2023 Annual Meeting and Board Elections

Our annual meeting, as outlined in the Spokane Audubon Society bylaws, is usually in May. In addition to our monthly program, we will vote for our board of directors and officers. Directors and officers serve a two-year term. If interested in being considered for a board position, please send an email indicating your interest to spokaneaudubon@gmail.com. Include your name and contact information. The preliminary slate of officers and board members follows:

President: Alan McCoy
Vice President: Lisa Langelier
Treasurer: Jenny Emerson
Secretary: Madonna Luers

Directors: Bob Cashen, Marlene Cashen, Bea Harrison, Jim Harrison, and Gary Lee. Potential new board members include Mike Borysewicz and Tina Penny.

Mike is interested in serving to promote bird conservation and education in the region. He recently retired from the Forest Service where he served as a district wildlife biologist in the Colville National Forest. He also worked on forests in Western Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.

Tina would like to serve on the board to do more for an organization that she is passionate about. Her background includes avid birder, hiker, raptor docent, bird of prey rescuer, environmental educator, National Park Ranger, Natural Resource Specialist Ranger, and Air Force veteran.

All 11 of these members will be on the slate for election this year, plus any others who may be nominated before the meeting. Our bylaws require that we have “no fewer than eight board members, which shall include all SAS elected officers and additional elected directors.”

On May 10, 2023, members of SAS will vote for these positions. Nominations also will be considered from members attending the May meeting. If you are a member, are unable to attend and want to vote, you may send a written proxy to spokaneaudubon@gmail.com or to PO Box 9820 Spokane, WA 99209-9820.

2024 Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: April 15 – May 15, 2023

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 per person can be submitted.
- 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 Cascades) or Northern Idaho. Please include the species name(s) and location where each photograph was taken.

Call for Entries

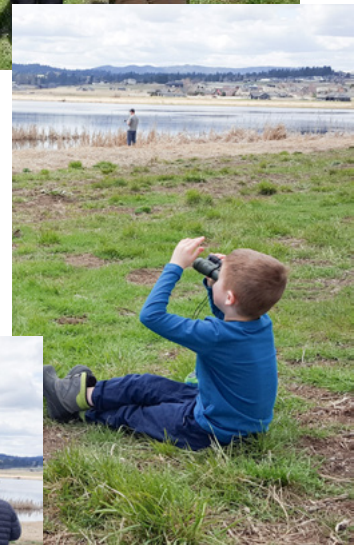
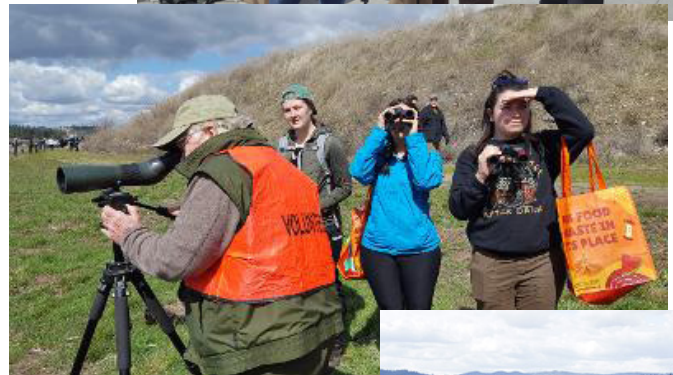
Photographers may submit entries starting Friday, April 15th. The deadline is Sunday, May 15th. **No entries will be accepted after that date.**

Spokane Audubon volunteers help open Doris Morrison Learning Center at Saltese Wetlands

Spokane County's Doris Morrison Learning Center at Saltese Wetlands got finishing touches and then a grand opening, thanks to help from dozens of Spokane Audubon volunteers.

Installation of bird collision prevention systems on the center's massive glass windows was a challenge on a cold and windy March 31st. Volunteers also helped test newly-purchased binoculars and assemble center furniture that day.

Hundreds of people attended the center's grand opening on a sunny Earth Day, April 22, which included bird walks every half-hour led by our chapter's birders and explanations of the bird collision systems by our volunteers stationed on the center's deck.



Member Profile:

Wanda Peters

By Madonna Luers

One of Wanda Peters' favorite birding experiences is sitting very quietly and still with pre-school children in a thicket and watching birds come close and fill them with wonder and awe.



“I think the way to have more young people interested in birding is to provide them fun opportunities to experience that joy and beauty,” she said. “And we need patient adults willing to engage with them on their level and in their ways.”

Wanda's patient spirit -- and her extensive background -- are why she is Spokane Audubon Society's new Education Chair, taking the reins from our retired teachers Lindell Haggin and Joyce Alonso.

With a degree in Environmental Education/Natural History and Master's studies in Adult Environmental Education from Prescott College in Arizona, Wanda's work has centered around leading groups and teaching people outdoors in a variety of places for a number of entities. She's been an interpretive naturalist for the National Park Service and Washington State Parks, and an Environmental Education consultant

for Washington Forest Protection Association. She ran overnight outdoor school programs in Washington and Oregon, directed an Audubon Nature Center in Wyoming, and led outdoor nature play classes for pre-schoolers through the Cedar River Watershed Visitor Center near North Bend.

Wanda joined the chapter to “connect with like-minded people” when she moved to Nine Mile Falls in 2019 with her family and began substitute teaching in local school districts. Although her late partner was a birder, Wanda says her kids just “tolerate” her passion for birding. “My son-in-law did a great imitation of a birder when I was visiting them,” she said. “He would hear birds I couldn't hear and point to them, and he did put up the hummingbird feeder I gave them, so maybe there's hope!”

Born in 1957 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Wanda has been interested in nature as long as she can remember, growing up with parents who fed and watched backyard birds. She had a professor at Prescott College with “a contagious passion for birds,” and working for Audubon in Wyoming really launched her into birds and birding.

“I pretty much bird wherever I am,” she said, “I'm easily entertained by ravens and robins, but also plants, insects, tracks, galls, clouds in the sky, just being outside in the stillness of early morning or evening times.”

Some of her most memorable birding was watching and listening to the thousands of Sandhill cranes on Nebraska's Platte River in the Spring, and witnessing college students have their “Aha! moments” birding in Arizona.

If she had to pick a favorite bird it would be the Dipper. “I always just loved the name Water Ouzel before they changed it to Dipper,” she said, “but I'm also always mesmerized watching them on the rocks by a stream, then watching them dive in. It kind of astounds me every time.”



Wanda's tips for new birdwatchers are to be patient with themselves and to take time to observe, notice and enjoy the beauty of birds and their habitat. She believes that young people in particular need to be given opportunities to foster relationships with birding adults and to be able to use "good" binoculars, which is why she was glad to see the chapter invest in binoculars for field trip leaders to lend and has volunteered to manage their use.

Wanda's "Think Like A Bird" family field trip along the Spokane River in late February and her Beginning Birder Class at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge last month were big hits with participants, some of whom were inspired to join the chapter after the experience.

She believes that the most important issues for the future of birds and birding are loss of healthy habitats and the human "disconnect" from natural processes and systems.

"I am excited to be involved in the future educational efforts for Spokane Audubon," she said. "I want to discover ways to engage people with birds, birdwatching and this place we live. "My vision is that wildlife and people have healthy places to live, and that people feel connected to natural places and work together to preserve and restore habitats, whether it be in their backyards or neighborhood or cities or wildlife refuges or wilderness. "



Wanda hiking near Bend, Oregon



Dipper
© Derek Hameister

May 13 is World Migratory Bird Day

By Madonna Luers

World Migratory Bird Day officially is celebrated on the second Saturday of May in Canada and the US (May 13 in 2023), and the second Saturday of October in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean (October 14 in 2023).

World Migratory Bird Day is an annual global awareness-raising campaign to celebrate the amazing journeys of migratory birds, and to inspire worldwide conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. Traditionally observed on the second Saturday of May and October, the two dates of World Migratory Bird Day are a way to reflect the cyclical nature of bird migration as well as the fact that there are varying peak migration periods in the northern and southern hemispheres.

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), now World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), was created in 1993 by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. From 1995 to 2006, the program was under the direction of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Because of its consistent growth, these organizations sought a new home for the program. In 2007, IMBD found its “forever home” at Environment for the Americas (EFTA), a non-profit organization that connects people to bird conservation through education and research.

EFTA recognized that migratory birds leave and arrive at breeding and non-breeding states at different times, depending on many factors. They also stop at different sites across the Western Hemisphere to rest and refuel, providing opportunities to engage the public in learning about birds and their conservation. The traditional second Saturday in May celebration of IMBD is maintained for the northern hemisphere and the second Saturday in October for the southern hemisphere, but EFTA encourages organizations and groups to host their activities when migratory birds are present.

EFTA also developed the concept of a single conservation theme to help highlight one topic that is important to migratory bird conservation. These educational campaigns have been integrated into numerous programs and events, focusing on topics including the habitats birds need to survive, birds and the ecosystem services they provide, the impacts of climate change on birds, and the laws, acts,

and conventions that protect birds, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Convention on Biodiversity.

This year’s theme is “Water: Sustaining Bird Life.” Virtually all migratory birds rely on water and its associated habitats at some point during their life cycles. Lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands, and coastal waters all are vital for feeding, drinking, or nesting, and as places to rest and refuel during long seasonal migrations. Unfortunately, these aquatic ecosystems are becoming increasingly threatened around the world, and so are the migratory birds that depend on them. The increasing human demand for water, as well as the effect of pollution and climate change, is having a direct impact on the quantity and quality of water resources and on the conservation status of many migratory bird species.

Events to celebrate IMBD

Our chapter has a field trip scheduled for May 13 this year – the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Family Trip led by members Sandy & Richard Sollie and their 4-year-old granddaughter. This two-hour (8:30 to about 10:30 a.m.) outing is “child friendly” with the emphasis on fun, some exercise, and an introduction into birding. Target species include a variety of ducks, geese, and swans, plus bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, and blackbirds. To register and for more information, contact Richard at contactme@richardsollie.com or 509-981-9003.

Another nearby all-ages event celebrating bird migration is the May 18-21 Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, sponsored by the Wenatchee River Institute and North Central Washington Audubon Society, including a May 20 “Magnificent Migrations” Field Trip at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery targeting Says Phoebe, Rufous Hummingbird, Tree Swallow, Belted Kingfisher, and more. For details and registration, see <https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/education-programs/community-programs/bird-fest.html>.

May 13 is also “Global Big Day” when birders are encouraged to find as many species as they can and record them to the citizen science database via eBird.org.

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.



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

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

Visit our website:

<https://audubonspokane.org>

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual Membership and Donation:

Student (under 21): \$10 per year _____

Individual: \$20 per year _____

Family: \$30 per year _____

Supporting: \$50 per year _____

Contributing: \$100 per year _____

Lifetime: \$500 _____

Other: _____

Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational 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: Alan McCoy
615 W Paradise Rd
Spokane WA 99224

Join us, or renew your membership, online at our website:

<https://www.audubonspokane.org>.

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Contact Alan McCoy at ahm2352@gmail.com or (509) 999-9512.