

The Pygmy Owl

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Feb. 2024

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



Feb. 14, 2023 7:00 p.m.

This meeting will be on-line only via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88682819809?pwd=WGNRZUFuS0RQYmdVNUtNdk8xRnNuUT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8281 9809

Passcode: 378111

How to Manage Domestic Cats to Benefit Cats, Wildlife and People

Presented by

*Grant Sizemore, American Bird Conservancy
Director of Invasive Species Programs*

Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) can make wonderful pets but also have the capacity to kill birds and other wildlife, spread infectious diseases, and cause nuisances in the community. Predation by cats is the number one cause of wild bird deaths in the country.

Grant Sizemore, Director of Invasive Species Programs at American Bird Conservancy, where he runs the “Cats Indoors” campaign, will talk about how to manage domestic cats for everyone’s benefit – birds and other wildlife, people, and cats themselves.



Effective cat management is often complicated by the species’ close affiliation with people and unique legal status. Grant will focus on



the conservation and public health science underpinning the need to manage domestic cats and identify opportunities for organizations and individuals to advance science-based solutions.

Grant has earned degrees in Zoology and Environmental Science from Miami University in Ohio and an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida. He has worked in wildlife conservation policy, education, and research for over 15 years and is a Certified Wildlife Biologist. Outside of work, Grant enjoys hiking, birding, and taking care of his indoor cat.



Photos courtesy ABC

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Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status December 19, 2023 through January 19, 2024:

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

Individual: Jody Morehouse, Julie Hopkins, Mark Selle, Robert Perret

Supporting: Dr Sarah Haynes, Alisa Heinzman

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

Individual: Carla Brannan, Barbara Whitney, Ellen Bower, Jeff Wills

Family: Patricia & Gerald Johnson, Mike & Eileen McFadden, Don Goodwin, Harold & Karen Cottet

Supporting: Carla Joyal

Contributing: Lois & Stephen Johnson, Bill & Ann-Scott Ettinger

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>



Killdeer
© Carrie Dugovic

Remember Great Backyard Bird Count this month

by Madonna Luers

The 26th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) runs Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19 (Presidents Holiday weekend). Any time during that period you can spend a minimum of 15 minutes counting the birds you see in your own backyard or your favorite local park or natural area, and then report your results on-line.

Volunteers participating in GBBC help track changes in bird populations at a scale that scientists can't achieve alone. Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the GBBC was the first online participatory-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, the GBBC became a global project when data entry began using eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related participatory science project.

You can find details on the GBBC at <https://www.birdcount.org/>, including an on-line bird identification guide, birding apps, and instructions on reporting your counts on-line.

If you choose to count on public land, keep in mind that the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and US Forest Service lands are offering fee-free days over Presidents' Day Weekend.



The Great Backyard
Bird Count



Art by Challey Harper

Kestrel Nest Box Program Call for Volunteers

The Spokane Audubon Society will be collaborating with the American Kestrel Partnership to install a "quadrant" of 10 nest boxes in appropriate habitat west of Spokane. We are looking for volunteers who would be interested in assisting with installing boxes and monitoring them for occupancy and productivity, using an established protocol. Volunteers would need to have a means of transportation, be able to climb a ladder up to 6 feet in height and have an interest in contributing to the conservation of these beautiful little falcons. For further information about this project, please contact:

Mike Borysewicz
maborysewicz@gmail.com



American Kestrel Partnership



American Kestrel
© Alan McCoy

The Spokane birding community lost one of its pioneers in early January 2024. Maurice Vial died at age 88 years in the care of his devoted wife and birding companion, Laura. Maurice was involved in Spokane Audubon Society during its beginnings in the early 1970s. He left a memorable legacy for our community of birders. Fellow chapter forerunners Jan and Ed Reynolds found Pygmy Owl articles in their archives about Maurice's attempts to save Havermale Island yellow-bellied marmots during the Spokane Expo construction. Maurice served as president of the chapter in 1986 and Alan McCoy located a calendar the society published that year containing his artwork along with that of other Spokane Audubon talents like Jan Reynolds.

As he was born in France, one could not help but draw comparisons to another French-born American birder, John James Audubon. Maurice was a keen observer and exquisite artist. Many of us treasure a drawing or two of favorite birds by Maurice among our collections. His work can still be seen on posters for public land agencies, particularly the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), where he would use birds to capture the sense of entire local ecosystems.

I credit Maurice for bringing me into birding 25 years ago. I'd long heeded the presence of avian creatures without any systematic attention and finally decided I needed to learn more when I was enchanted by the beautiful echoing of the canyon wren's descending whistles during a hike in the Santa Rosa Mountains of Nevada. Unable to discover the source of the chorus on my own, I enrolled in a birding class at the community college taught by Maurice. And it was Maurice who showed me my first canyon wren.

The class was just the beginning. It included time in the field with tutelage by Maurice and Laura. Maurice stressed careful attention to detail before making a call. He gave me the foundation to see far more than plumage and coloring. I remember working with him on a survey one late autumn when we came upon a small flock of American tree sparrows. "Look, Maurice," I said. "American tree sparrows." We couldn't add the count to our list until he was certain he'd confirmed the dark spot on their white breasts (even as most of our breeding sparrows had departed for southern climes).

It was Maurice who introduced me to bird surveys and their importance to understanding the health of ecosystems. He organized many efforts for the BLM as they were acquiring new lands in Eastern Washington. The community science efforts provided baseline data for the agency as they would work to restore native ecosystems in subsequent years.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was my first survey with Maurice. The holiday season was an important time of year for the Vials and the CBC was a big part of the celebrations. Maurice coordinated a large chunk in the northern part of Spokane's CBC circle. With the Little Spokane River running through the area, it was prime habitat for winter birds, including waterfowl. Always a bit competitive, Maurice strived for the high species total among the circle coordinators and would recruit as many birders as he could to join his group, including from the class I took. His party would spread out over 5-Mile Prairie, Whitworth University, Waikiki Springs, Dartford, and Wild Rose Prairie, usually to re-group with good stories and finds.

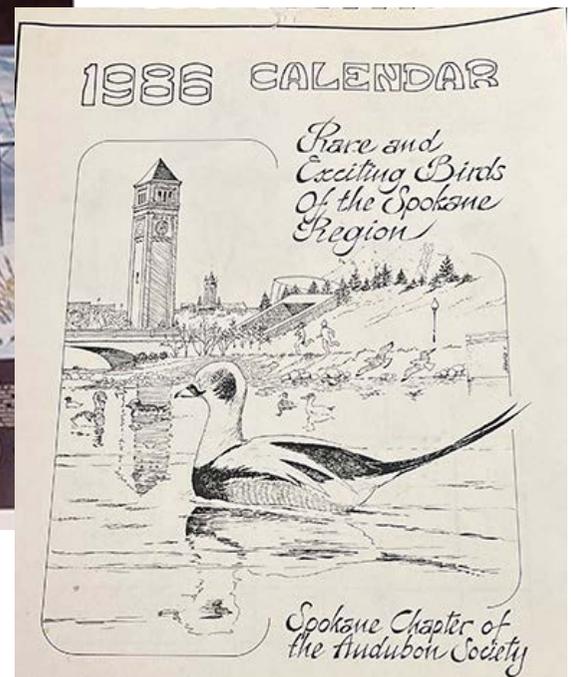
Maurice gave up CBC coordination as he began to feel that his sensory acumen was declining. I was extremely honored when he named me as his successor coordinator and while our parties are now smaller, I try to keep up his competitive spirit to bring in high species totals each year.

Maurice and Laura also had a passion for arts and food, serving many years as ushers at Interplayers and the Spokane Symphony. A fine cook, Maurice and Laura were inventive with foraged foods. One fond memory from my days of surveys with him was his delight as he pounced on a large mushroom. Obviously, a delicacy for him, he insisted that I take it for my dinner. I certainly agreed with his tastes on that item! He was also a familiar sight downtown on his old bicycle that served as his transportation around town into recent years. I suspect it was his preferred means of transport so he could relish the sights and sounds of his favored critters as he went about his errands.

Characteristic of us birders, Maurice took great joy in sharing his birding passion with others. For that I am most grateful. Maurice's spirit will live on in our community.

(cont on page 5)

Examples of Maurice's artwork



2023 Report of the Save-A-Bird Team

Volunteer team members logged 300 hours responding to 259 reports from the public regarding birds needing assistance. The team handled most of these by providing advice / information to the reporting party over the phone. A total of 81 separate incidents required physical intervention by team members. Typically, these involved capturing and transporting injured birds to cooperating veterinarians. On occasion, we assisted vulnerable raptor nestlings that had fallen from the nest by placing them into alternate nest structures. In one such case, we rescued several Cooper's hawk nestlings after their nest tree was cut down inadvertently by a landowner while thinning his woodlot. Renested birds normally are found and reared by their parents. Our volunteers drove 5,069 miles to complete physical interventions with wild birds this year.

The known or suspected causes of reported incidents were wide-ranging. About 34 percent of the incidents involved birds colliding with vehicles or with infrastructure such as windows, utility lines, and fences. About 12 percent of the incidents involved birds injured by cats and dogs. We responded to 3 incidents of birds trapped in buildings, including a merlin that spent several days in the Lowe's on North Division in Spokane. Other incidents involved: pathogens such as West Nile Virus (5 percent); shooting (1 percent); orphaned / lost (8 percent); fallen from nest (13 percent); trapped / entangled (4 percent), other / unknown (23 percent).

The team responded to incidents involving 56 bird species, ranging from bald eagles to hummingbirds. Great horned owls had the highest number of reported incidents for a species, at 27 birds.

Team members transported 60 birds to vets in 2023. Of these, 39 were not treatable due to the extent of their injuries. These birds were euthanized humanely. Eight birds were treated by vets and ultimately released. We were not able to ascertain the fate of 13 birds we transported.

If you have questions regarding the team's efforts this year, or if you are interested in volunteering with the team, please contact:

[Margo Wolf ml12722@icehouse.net](mailto:ml12722@icehouse.net) or
[Mike Borysewicz maborysewicz@gmail.com](mailto:maborysewicz@gmail.com)

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Winter arrived with a vengeance as we had 10 days of arctic temperatures that cleared a lot of birds out of the area. As of this writing, we are returning to the more typical rainy El Nino pattern that persisted before. Dead of winter is always a slow time for birds in general and this winter is typical. While most winter finches have not irrupted, we have had some luck with Pine Grosbeaks, which continue to delight birders in the area. Those and other noteworthy sightings are below:

Greater White-fronted Goose: Liberty Lake (1/1-TO)

Red-breasted Merganser: Sandpoint (12/30-eBird); MacArthur Lake WMA (1/6-JR and SE); Coeur D'Alene (1/7-CM) Hayden Lake (1/8-DW); Sunnyside Road (1/15-JI)

Anna's Hummingbird: Spokane Valley (1/1-MC)

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Wolf Lodge Bay (1/1-DW)

Iceland Gull: Wolf Lodge Bay (1/1-DW)

American Goshawk: University of Idaho (1/7-CS)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Elk (1/13-eBird)

Blue Jay: Sandpoint (12/30-SE and JR); Bonner's Ferry (1/1-eBird)

Pine Grosbeak: Mt. Spokane SP (1/24-eBird); Queen Mountain (12/25-SE and JR); Robinson County Park (1/4-eBird); William's Valley (1/4-eBird); Spokane Valley (1/7-MC); Bonner's Ferry (1/12-JR); University of Idaho (1/15-GL); WSU (1/16-eBird); Moscow Mountain (1/19-KD); Benewah Creek (1/20-KD)

Common Redpoll: Bonner's Ferry (1/1-eBird)

Lesser Goldfinch: South Hill (12/23-eBird) Feryn Conservation Area (12/30-CM)

White-throated Sparrow: Sandpoint (1/11-RDC)



Pine Grosbeak, Male
© Christoph Moning



Pine Grosbeak, female
© Brendan Klickn

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; 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; JE-Jacob Elonen; MG-Micah Grove; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Barb Hubbard; CH-Cameron Heusser; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-Dave Koehler; GL-Greg Lambeth; AM-Alan McCoy; CiM-Cindy McCormick; CM-Curtis Mahon; MM-Mason Maron; 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; WY-Will Young; MW-Michael Woodruff

Member Profile:

Carrie Dugovic

Carrie Dugovic says kayaking down the Little Spokane River “feels like traveling through a magical bird aviary.”

She led a Spokane Audubon Society kayaking bird trip there last summer when participants saw and heard Common Merganser, Wood Duck, Mallard, Spotted Sandpiper, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Song Sparrow, Bullock’s Oriole, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Red-Tailed Hawk, Osprey, and more.

As a leader of the Spokane Women Kayaking and Spokane Women Hiking and Snowshoeing groups, her outdoor sports skills help make for unique birding opportunities. But it was actually Carrie’s wildlife photography that got her started in birdwatching and joining the Spokane Audubon Society just a few years ago.

“I’ve always enjoyed photographing wildlife and birds, but I wouldn’t say I was an enthusiast,” she said. “I followed Backyard Birds and Wildlife Lovers on Facebook, and when they offered a challenge to identify a different bird every day for 30 days, I was hooked!”

Carrie joined the chapter when she wanted to submit one of her photos for the annual calendar. “Now that I am a member and get the newsletters and attend some of the meetings via Zoom,” she said, “I am very impressed with everyone I’ve met and their passion for birds and conservation.”

Carrie Teeters was born in Sterling, Colorado, in 1962, to parents who moved around a lot, so as a child she also lived in Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington. At 16, she moved in with her godparents near Fairchild Air Force Base and at 17, joined the Air Force with a guaranteed job as a mainframe computer operator. For the first seven years she was stationed at Fairchild AFB where she met her first husband Jim Retemeyer, a B-52 Tail Gunner.

When her husband was transferred to Castle Air Force Base in Atwater California, Carrie left active duty and joined the California Air National Guard in Fresno, where she would meet her second husband, Greg Dugovic, also in the Information Technology



field. She left the Air National Guard in 1992 after having her first child. Years later, she and Greg became reacquainted through a mutual friend and married in 2012.

Carrie earned a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Information Systems and a Master’s degree in Business Administration from California

State University, Stanislaus. She worked 38 years in Information Technology in the Air Force and at CSU Stanislaus as a computer operator and programmer, database administrator and university lecturer.

When Carrie retired in 2018 she returned to the Spokane area where she and Greg now live in Colbert. Besides leading the women’s groups, she volunteers at the American Cancer Society Discovery Shop. She also enjoys pottery, watercolor painting, and competing with her two dogs, both Golden Border Collies, a fabulous mix of a golden retriever and a border collie, with Spokane Disc Dogs.



Example of Carrie’s pottery

(cont on page 8)

“We are fortunate to live on the Little Spokane River,” she said, “where our property has a few different habitats -- the river, a small orchard, conifers and native trees, low bushes, and a meadow. As a result, we have the opportunity to see many different varieties of birds. At last count, I’ve identified 73 species. I’ve heard more, such as a Great Horned Owl, but until I see and photograph the bird, I don’t count it.” She is pleased that their property qualified for a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Carrie’s Dipper photo

Carrie likes to lead hikes to local birding locations like Slavin, Saltese Flats, Turnbull, and the Cheney Wetlands. She hopes to lead more kayak trips down the Little Spokane River this summer, both with the Spokane Audubon Society and her kayaking group.

Her favorite birding experience was on a frigidly cold January morning when she was bundled up to take photos of the intricate chandelier-like ice formations on the Little Spokane River. She spotted something odd on a rock and realized it was an American Dipper. “It looked frozen with ice drops on its feathers and not moving,” she recalled. “I was concerned, thinking it was frozen to the rock. But then it started doing its fabulous dipping and diving into the water for food, and of course I laughed. I took a few photos, and that was the one accepted for the Spokane Audubon Society 2023 calendar.”

Carrie’s favorite bird is the “tiny, humble” Black-capped Chickadee. “There are other more majestic or lightning-fast birds, but the little chickadee, calling its ‘cheeeseburger’ or ‘chickadeedeede’ call, and flitting here and there, brings a smile every time. I

call back to them; and when I fill the feeders with black oil sunflower seeds, they sit very close in a nearby tree, chattering away. They don’t migrate so I can enjoy them all year long.”

Carrie has several tips for new birdwatchers:

- Be still, observe. I find myself noticing things that move much more now that I am a birder and watching more quietly.
- Install the Merlin app on your smartphone to help identify what calls you’re hearing. It’s not always accurate but it’s a start.
- Use the All About Birds website to help identify species, either from photos or descriptions; the iNaturalist app also helps identify species from photos, and the American Birding Association’s “What’s This Bird?” Facebook group is also helpful.



Carrie’s watercolor art of Dipper

Carrie’s husband and her three adult children enjoy birds but don’t really share her birding enthusiasm. “They mostly just indulge me when I exclaim

“Oh, look, the Evening Grosbeaks came back!”, she said with a laugh.

But she believes that the way to get more young people interested in birding is to take them under our wings, so to speak. “My neighbor has a ten-year-old daughter who goes birding with me near our homes and local refuges,” she explained. “For her birthday, I gave her an official bird identifying book, small “grown-up” binoculars, and a cool hiking backpack. Sometimes we’ll just go outside to see what we can find. Other times, such as in the case of the bald eagles rebuilding their nest at Waikiki Springs after it was destroyed in a wind storm earlier this year, we’ll go on an adventure to watch their progress.”

Carrie believes that climate change, conservation efforts, and education are all important issues for the future of birds and birding. “As our climate changes, bird habitats are changing,” she said. “For example, the horrific fires in the western states in 2020 led to thousands of migratory bird deaths. Conserving wetlands, forests and other habitats that support wildlife is crucial to their survival. I appreciate researchers and their published conclusions to educate us on how to help.”

Dead of Winter Spy

by Lisa Langelier

Winter's bite keeps many inside. It rattles the bones of dormant plants and freezes the footsteps of four-legged rodents in snow. Wicked wind sucks the ease out of life. The kitchen window offers feathered and furred drama and heart-warming pleasure provided by visitors to my bird feeders. They endured subzero temperatures recently.

The menu includes hulled sunflowers, peanut pieces, thistle, a compressed quail block, and suet. Birds wash these down with water from a heated bath.

From the forty-odd House Finch flock to the Sharp-shinned assassin, there is never a dull moment. This year, for the first time, a red squirrel found the lunch counter. Typically solitary, these half-pound rodents stay active during winter. Somehow, the word is out about my buffet because suddenly, I have three squirrels, to the dismay of the California Quail. This is my fault because abundant food means there is enough for everyone.

Three or four times per day, the quail march from the back forty in a wide flank to check out the fare. Two dozen of them scour the ground for seeds. A few "evolved" to jump up on the feeding platform, eschewing their ground-bound friends. Red, the squirrel, darts over, rushing quail from its seed cache, scolding theatrically.

Unrelated to the weather, sometimes my quail freeze. Their brown and gray feathering blends with the basalt rock where they disappear. The assassin must be close. I've ticked off thirty minutes waiting for them to thaw. A juvenile Cooper's Hawk crowned a pine tree. Two of the five flickers that live here cling to an adjacent tree, motionless. On a branch below the hawk, a red squirrel chattered nonstop, clearly an informant.

Three pairs of Black-billed Magpies haunt the feeding platform throughout the day. These handsome cousins of jays impress with their long tail and black and white plumage. In the right light, their wings and tail have a blue-green sheen. Both Black-capped and Mountain chickadees are regulars too. They dart in and grab a seed. They often hang around while I fill the feeders, hoping to be first to lunch.



Black-billed Magpie
© Alan Wilson

The Pygmy Nuthatch family and friends forage together, unlike the White-breasted Nuthatch, who is a loner. A pair of Downy Woodpeckers gobble suet. Until recently Hairy Woodpeckers went undercover but one appeared this week. So did some Red-winged Blackbirds and European Starlings.

I love to watch the Northern Flickers cruise in, displaying a flash of coral from their underwing and tail feather shafts. I wish they would stop pecking on my roof, however.

So, I sit by the window peeping at the action, thinking we should call it the life (vs. dead) of winter. From the heckling squirrel to the flicker's rattling call, to the frantic scurrying quail, I watch and revel. This kind of spy craft is joyous.



Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers
© Pat Schiller

Spokane Christmas Bird Count: Some Numbers to Ponder

By Alan McCoy

The 124th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is in the books. The earliest date for which I can find data for the Spokane count circle is 1932 and, in that year, there were only 15 species and 714 individual birds observed by 7 participants. Fast forward to the last 40 years and we are averaging 78 species, 18500 individuals, 56 participants and about 140 hours in the field. The data for this entire history of the Spokane CBC is now on our website.

Some years ago, I created a spreadsheet to show data for the Spokane CBC from 1980 to present (this can also be found on our website). This spreadsheet shows all the species seen each year including rarities and those species seen during the count week. One thing I wanted to do with this spreadsheet is to show decade by decade how many counts a species was seen. For instance, Evening grosbeaks were seen on 9 out of 10 counts in the 80's but only seen on 4 out of 10 counts between 2010-2019. On the other hand, the Eurasian Collared-dove was not seen at all until 2007 but from 2010-2019 it was seen on all 10 counts. A similar situation is true for Wild turkeys. Horned larks were frequently recorded in the 80's and 90's whereas these days they are rarely seen as their open grassland habitat has shrunk. If this kind of bird data is interesting to you, go to our website and download it.

Total Species	78	78	68	88	78	82	84	82
Total Individuals	18308	18664	8220	34046	16589	20402	17738	19610
Total Field Participants	54	57	39	68	60	56	62	64
Total Hours in the Field	140	141	94	193	153.7	135	130.8	137.3
Low Temperature	22	25	-5	37	36	12	34	29
Maximum Snow	6	4	0	32	3	8	10.5	0.2
	Avg	Median	Min	Max	2020	2021	2022	2023

In the screenshot (above) of the 1980-2023 spreadsheet of Spokane CBC the gray columns show statistics for total species, individuals, hours, etc. Looking at the minimum column we see that the fewest field participants (39) yielded the fewest species (68). Also (not shown) in 1986 we had 41 participants who spent 94 hours in the field and saw just 70 species. On the other hand, in 2016, the 60 participants spent 139 hours in the field but only saw 70 species. In 2016 we had an average of 16" of snow and it was 14°. That was a tough 139 hours! I think that in general we can say that more hours and more humans in the field will yield higher species totals.

Count Year	Avg	Median	Min	Max	1980-	1990-	2000-	2010-	2020-	Total	2023
					1989	1999	2009	2019	2029		
White-crowned Sparrow	13	6	0	99	10	8	9	9	3	89%	6
Golden-crowned Sparrow	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5%	0
Harris's Sparrow	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	7%	0
White-throated Sparrow	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	5%	0
Song Sparrow	151	142	45	302	10	10	10	10	4	100%	132
Lincoln's Sparrow	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2%	0
Swamp Sparrow	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2%	0
Spotted Towhee	2	1	0	22	6	5	7	8	3	66%	0
Red-winged Blackbird	144	47	0	1433	9	10	8	10	4	93%	159
Rusty Blackbird	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2%	0
Western Meadowlark	0	0	0	6	2	3	1	0	0	14%	0
Yellow-headed Blackbird	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2%	0
Bullock's Oriole	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2%	0
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2%	0
Pine Grosbeak	9	0	0	177	5	2	4	3	0	32%	0
House Finch	1259	1253	616	2295	10	10	10	10	4	100%	769
Cassin's Finch	41	2	0	1451	7	9	6	5	2	66%	0
Red Crossbill	251	180	0	901	9	9	10	10	3	93%	9
White-winged Crossbill	0	0	0	15	1	0	0	1	0	5%	0
Common Redpoll	25	0	0	250	7	4	2	3	1	39%	0
Pine Siskin	62	23	0	682	6	9	9	9	4	84%	7
Lesser Goldfinch	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	5%	3
American Goldfinch	207	176	12	593	10	10	10	10	4	100%	195
Evening Grosbeak	41	0	0	973	9	4	1	4	1	43%	0
House Sparrow	1551	1608	471	2475	10	10	10	10	4	100%	1639
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0

(cont on page 11)

In this screenshot (above) of the spreadsheet the blue decade columns show the number of counts (NC) a species was seen in each decade. For instance, Song Sparrows were seen in 10 out of 10 counts in every decade. Dividing up the span of time into decades allows us to see trends. Evening Grosbeaks were seen in 9 out of 10 counts in the 80's but by the 2000's they are recorded only half as much or less often.

Now let's turn to this year and a few observations. We did have higher than average species count (82 vs 78 avg) as well as more individual birds than average. But for many of us it was eerily quiet. My area includes People's Park and this can be a rich area. But it was very quiet this year. Carl Barrentine reported a similar situation during his hike in the Painted Rocks area. Red-breasted Nuthatches were just not around in anywhere near the normal abundance. And this year all finches, even House Finches, were just not here. No Cassin's Finches, very few Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins. Sparrow and Kinglet counts were low as well. There were some cool sightings though. Curtis Mahon's group found a lone Snow Goose and 3 Lesser Goldfinches. Kim Thorburn's team located the Black-throated Blue Warbler that has been hanging around a home in north Spokane. Michael Woodruff had some Western Bluebirds west of town and he got up super early to do some owling and was again successful in finding Northern Saw-whet and Western Screech Owls. Another positive outcome is the large number of waterfowl seen. Good numbers of Ring-necked Ducks, American Wigeon and Gadwall were found along with a record number of Cackling Geese.

Raptor counts were interesting. Many more Cooper's Hawks and Merlin than usual but zero Rough-legged Hawks. In the corvid family American Crows were a good bit below average but Common Ravens were abundant. Steller's Jays are only seen on 25% of our counts but we did have 4 this year, and last Black-billed Magpies are gradually making a comeback from the West Nile virus that was so deadly for corvids. Only two north-side groups saw Cedar Waxwings while all other groups were skunked. One last note is that no one saw any gulls. Not even Ring-billed Gulls and they have been seen on 91% of our counts since 1980.

Want more information? Go to our website: <https://www.audubonspokane.org/spokane-christmas-bird-count>

I don't know exactly when I started compiling (i.e. organizing) the Spokane CBC but I think it was pretty close to 25 years ago. Back in those days everything was done on paper and I received all the information from our leaders via snail mail (USPS). Soon enough though I latched onto spreadsheets and then email. The transition to digital records was a bit rough as many of our team leaders were not all that comfortable with computers, spreadsheets or email. I still get some reports from team leaders on paper and that is fine with me. It was the comically "hybrid" reports that I got early on that I was happy to see go away as folks got more conversant with spreadsheets. One last thing that I have been working on with the help of Rose Richardson is to create maps of the count circle with the team areas delineated. Rose really did all the work. Thanks Rose! By the way Rose's father Bob Richardson accompanied me on many CBC's in the 80's and 90's and he was also a founding member of the Inland NW Land Conservancy where Rose now works! These maps will be especially helpful when the leaders of different areas move on and other leaders are recruited to take their place.

And speaking of moving on, this will be my last year serving as the compiler of the Spokane CBC. It has been my pleasure to work with all of the team leaders and all the folks volunteering their time and skills to this great community science effort. Bravo everyone! The very capable Tim O'Brien has agreed to take over as compiler of the count. Thanks, Tim for stepping up.

I hope to see you all sometime on the trail of the elusive feathered friend.

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
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.

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