

The Pygmy Owl



Volume 28
Issue 7
March 2020

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society

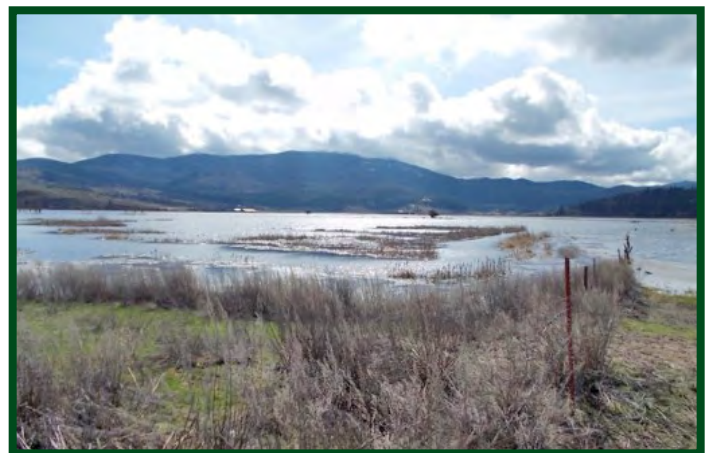
**Spokane Audubon's next meeting will be:
Wednesday, March 11th at 7:00 p.m.
Riverview Retirement Community, Village Community Bldg
2117 E. North Crescent Avenue**

Saltese Flats Wetlands Restoration Restoring a Natural Landscape

Presented by Nicki Feiten

Saltese Flats is an area located about 15 miles east of Spokane. Historically a natural shallow lake, about 1000 acres was drained for agricultural use around the turn of the 20th century. In 2003, Spokane County purchased approximately 600 acres of the former lake bed as a potential place to discharge Class A reclaimed water from their new water reclamation facility. Several water control structures were installed in late 2018 to admit local runoff to the Flats while being able to also control the natural water surface elevation.

In addition, a habitat management plan has been implemented to control invasive species and enhance wildlife habitat. Moving forward, Saltese Flats will be a natural area meant for potential reclaimed water introduction, wildlife habitat and a place of recreation and enjoyment for all who visit.



Nicki Feiten is a Water Resource Scientist who has spent years training in the field. Her background is in wetland ecology, fisheries management and water quality monitoring. Currently working for Spokane County Environmental Services, she collects field data for multiple ground and surface water projects. Nicki's primary focus is managing the Saltese Flats wetland restoration project. This includes planning multi-year vegetation control and native species re-growth, documenting pre- and post-restoration wildlife habitat, adjusting water control structures and building community partnerships.



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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 and pg. 8 © Jan Reynolds.



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Membership Report

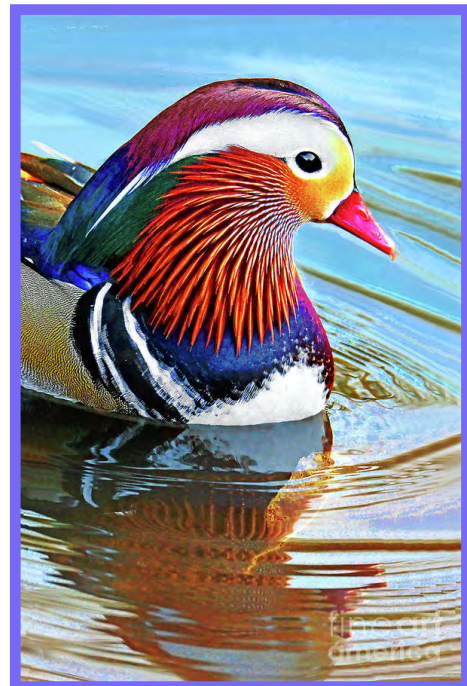
by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status through February 18, 2020:

Welcome to our new members: Wes Schneider, Mary Jo Stauner

Many thanks to our returning members: Charlene and Jerry Michael, Nancy Curry, Dean Chapman, Rich and Sharon Leon, Jim Acton, Richard and Sabrina Wood, Tom and Frances Light, and Sharon and Norman Genung.

You can help us reduce our costs and energy use and save paper by switching to our electronic, full-color publication. Please send your email address to me, Alan McCoy, at ahm2352@gmail.com and I will make sure that 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>.



Mandarin Duck

© Regina Geoghan

April Pygmy Owl
Deadline March 20th

Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

Is Spring here? We're being teased with clear skies and temperatures in the high 40s. Bird sightings have been slow the past month and our winter finch prospects never panned out. But worry not: bluebirds may have arrived by the time you receive this! Anecdotally, it seems that a large bulk of our winter raptors have taken off; keep your eyes out though for migrants passing through from points South.

Snow Goose: Peone Prairie (1/18-MW); Mondovi (2/8-TL); Central Ferry (2/12-RB)

Long-tailed Duck: Spokane (1/27-JI); Dworshak Reservoir (2/9-BM)

White-winged Scoter: Spokane (1/30-MC)

Red-breasted Merganser: Clark Fork Delta (1/26-RDC); Mill Canyon (2/8-TL)

Mew Gull: Pleasant Prairie (2/10-TO)

Glaucous Gull: Bayview (1/31-RDC)

Northern Goshawk: Spangle (2/10-MW); Spokane; Deer Park (2/20-JM)

Peregrine Falcon: Peone Prairie (1/21-TL); Spokane (2/18-MW)

Prairie Falcon: Saltese Wetlands (1/29-JI); Valley Chapel (2/2-MC); Fairfield (2/19-TO)

Blue Jay: University of Idaho (1/20-BM); Bonner's Ferry (2/10-JR)

Pine Grosbeak: Liberty Lake (1/29-JI); Little Spokane Natural Area (2/9-TO); Kettle Falls (2/17-eBird)

Common Redpoll: Spokane (1/27-JI); Moscow Mountain (2/9-DG)

Lesser Goldfinch: Latah (1/27-TO); Saltese Wetlands (1/30-TO)

Rusty Blackbird: Spangle (1/29-TO); University of Idaho (2/3-BB); Colville (2/21-WC)

Observers: DA-Dan Audet; RB-R.J. Baltierra; BB-Ben Bright; MaC-Marlene Cashen; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; RD-Roger Doucette; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JoE-Johnna Eilers; JE-Jacob Elonen; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; DG-David Griffin; LH-Lindell Haggin; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; GL-Greg Lambeth; TLa-Terry Lane; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; BL-Becky Lyle; CM-Curtis Mahon; BM-Ben Meredyk; AM-Alan McCoy; JM-Jennifer Michaels; NM-Nancy Miller; LO-Larry Owens; TO-Tim O'Brien; PO-Peter Olsoy; LP-Linda Post; NP-Neil Paprocki; MR-Mary Rumble; MS-Mike Scott; SS-Sandy Schreven; BS-Bill Siems; KS-Katie Sorenson; CS-Charles Swift; DW-Doug Ward; JW-John Wolff; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney

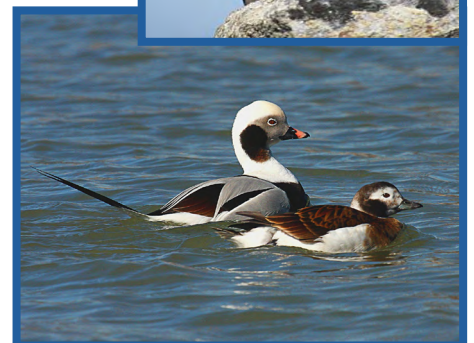
Saltese Wetlands sightings



Lesser Goldfinch
© Carlos Echevierra



Prairie Falcon
© USGS



Long-tailed Ducks

Revised 2021 Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Revised 2021 Spokane Audubon Calendar Photograph Contest Guidelines

Submission Period: April 15 – May 15, 2020

Submit photos to: sauduboncalendar@gmail.com

Eligibility Requirements

- Spokane Audubon Society member in good standing (with current membership).
- Submit electronically up to four 9.25" wide by 6.75" height photographs (landscape orientation). The photographs shall not have the © symbol with the photographer's name or other inserted script.
- Submissions should be 300 pixels per inch (ppi) and less than 10MB per image in jpeg format.
- For selected images, 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 and/or Northern Idaho.

Call for entries

- Photographers may submit entries starting Monday, April 15th. The deadline is Friday May 15th.
- No entries will be accepted after May 15th.

Judging and Selection

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

Publication

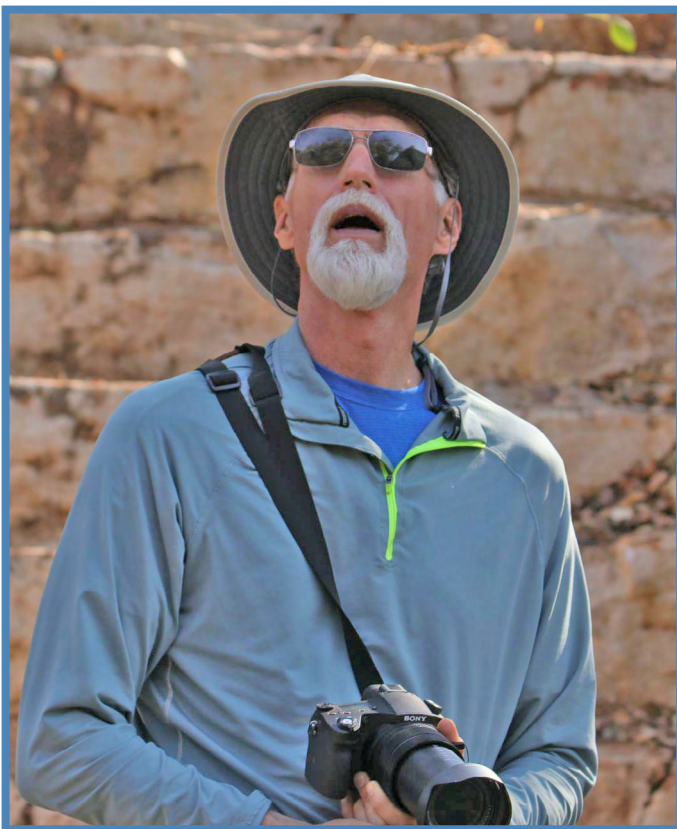
- Each photograph will be published with the common name of the bird species and © with the name of the photographer.
- Please include the species name and location where the photograph was taken.

Board Profiles: March

Gary Lee

by Madonna Luers

Gary Lee, Spokane Audubon board member since 2013, considers himself a relatively new birder. "I grew up in a small logging town in northern California's redwood forest, so loving nature and the outdoors was always in my blood," he said, "but I didn't really know birdwatching was a 'thing' for most of my life."



Gary first joined Audubon in December 2011 when he read an article in the Spokane newspaper about the Christmas Bird Count and thought it sounded like a fun way to learn about birds. At that point, he says, his kids were grown and his days of facilitating their involvement in extracurricular school activities were over. It was time to choose his own recreational pursuits.

Gary was born in Ukiah, California in 1958. After high school he joined the U.S. Air Force to see the world and get an education on the G.I. bill. (He lived in Europe for three years and traveled through 20

countries.) He considered becoming a wildlife biologist, but he loved financial management and ended up with a B.A. degree in accounting and finance from Sonoma State University, followed by his Certified Financial Planning (CFP) designation from the College for Financial Planning.

As a CFP he built up his practice and his investment advisory firm in northern California, as he and his wife Cathy raised their young family. But by the mid-90's, the growth in California made traffic and commuting "terrible". They wanted to buy land in a quieter place so they started looking around the west for a more suitable home for their family. In 1996 they moved to the Spokane area for its small-town feel but with urban amenities, including access to air travel so that Gary could continue to meet with California clients as needed.

Even though he's still running his financial advisory business full-time, Gary says that he joined the Audubon board when asked because he believes in giving back to an organization that provides him the benefit of a "bird education." He has helped the board invest money for better returns with the goal of covering chapter expenses, like field trip liability insurance and educational outreach materials, from interest income. Ideally, he says, the chapter might build a foundation that could be a funding source for bigger projects, such as wildlife habitat protection. Gary is also the chapter's program chair, lining up presenters for monthly meetings, a role that fits with his job schedule and has helped him meet many birding experts.

His first international birding trip was to Costa Rica, where he was amazed by the diversity of species – he saw 452 species in a couple of weeks. Last year Gary, Cathy and their daughter traveled to Africa for a do-it-yourself trip through several national parks to see the countryside and all its wildlife – an adventure that he shared with the chapter in a meeting program last fall.



Gary often combines business trips to California with birding, once adding a six-week road trip from California east through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and all the way to the Outer Banks of North Carolina during bird migration.

"I started birding so late in my life, and I'm still so busy with work, that I know I won't ever see all the species that I'd like to through travel," he said, "so I'm now in the habit of watching YouTube birding videos from exotic places on-line during my lunch hour. In that way, I'm up to about 3,000 of the world's some 10,000 bird species!"

His tip for new birders is what worked for him: go on Spokane Audubon field trips to learn about local places you wouldn't otherwise know existed, see and learn about birds, and meet lots of like-minded people.

Gary acknowledges that the critical issues for the future of birds and birding are climate change and habitat loss – something he thought about when he was in Africa last year, wondering if all those special places and animals will exist 50 years from now. It's an overwhelming concern that's hard to address, so he focuses on what he can do, like being mindful about consumption and planting trees (he's planted 1,100 so far!)

Gary says that he could not possibly pick a favorite birding experience or bird species. He does have a "soft spot" for little common birds like chickadees, which are often overlooked. The best part of birding, he says, is that it's "treasure hunting, where you never know what you'll see and you're always hopeful."

He says he learned from another birder to "celebrate each new species I see, but to also celebrate the fourth or fifth time I see that same species because, by that time, I've seen more of its behavior at different times of the year in different places. And the next experience will be the best, or at least the one to focus on."



The Othello Sandhill Crane Festival celebrates the annual return of approximately 25,000 Sandhill cranes to Othello every March as they migrate north to their breeding grounds in Alaska. The Festival offers an incredible opportunity to view the cranes up-close, with tours led by local experts. The Festival also boasts other specialty tours of the flora, fauna and geology of the area, and many lectures, as well as children's' activities.

The Festival, and the cranes themselves, have gained much popularity over the years. Now new and returning participants are attending from all across the country. Pre-registration is suggested to reserve your seat as some tours fill up quickly. The 22nd Annual festival will be held March 20, 21, 22, 2020.

If you would like to be added to the Sandhill Crane Festival mailing list to receive the annual event brochure, please contact us at (509) 765-9618 or email marie-lotz@conservewa.net.

For more information please visit our website: www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org

Banana Belt Field Trip

January 25, 2020

by Alan McCoy

There were no bananas to be found down in Lewiston or Clarkston this January. We did, however, find some ducks, lots of ducks, which of course were inevitably on the other side of whatever body of water we were peering over. They didn't seem to mind the rain or cold at all. And we were pretty sure we heard them laughing at all 14 shivering birders, fumbling with their gloves while attempting to wipe their lenses and focus through their fogged optics.

Did I mention that there were ducks? Ring-bills, bufflehead and scaup, oh my! A couple of dozen Wood Ducks graced the limbs of pond-side trees. What a fantastic sight! The one duck we were most interested to find was a Long-tailed Duck and, with Keith Carlson as our guide, we saw at least a couple.

Probably the coolest sighting for many of us was a Cooper's Hawk chasing a Eurasian Collared-Dove. The hawk persevered at some length until, wham, it scored! We were thrilled to have witnessed the drama; the dove, not so much.

Lindell's fondest memory of the trip was the voice of an early Western Meadowlark. She also got a lifer as her group spotted a flying Gyrfalcon. That would have been a lifer for yours truly as well, but we had split into two groups for logistical reasons. Our team went to the landfill in search of a Lesser Black-backed Gull, while the other team ventured off to locate the Gyrfalcon. We saw the gull but, when we switched places, we missed the falcon. The other team got both! Such is the birding life.

The sun finally peeked out towards the very end of the day as we searched the cliffs for, and once again found, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches. Despite the cold and wet, we had a great day birding with friends. Now we just need to come up with a better name for this trip.



All photos by Alan McCoy

Should we feed birds in the Spring?

By Madonna Luers

Lots of us maintain winter bird feeding stations to enjoy close-up views of our feathered friends in snowy conditions from our warm window-side seats.

But should we continue feeding in the Spring? Experts sayonly if we are meticulous about keeping feeders and feed clean and dry to avoid spreading disease, and consider birds' needs at this time.

Many birds really chow down just before or during the rigors of mating season. March and April can continue to be a busy time at feeding stations for that reason, but even more because newly arrived migrants may join the buffet for a day or two as they pass through.

Starting this month and next, some of the feeder birds we've been seeing all winter move into nesting territories outside our feeding station areas. Birds are not as territorial during the winter and will congregate in much greater numbers at feeders then. But smaller Spring nesting territories must be defended, so we may not see as many of the same individuals at feeders now.

Some birds also shift their diet in Spring as preferred foods become available. Seeds and suet can't compete with green buds and newly emerged insects, worms and other fresh sources of protein.

We can provide mealworms and other fresher fare at feeders to continue seeing some of our old winter friends and to catch glimpses of some of the newcomers, like bluebirds. If we continue providing seed, we must be especially diligent about feeding station hygiene during the wetter, warmer conditions of Spring.

Clean feeders weekly with a ten percent chlorine bleach solution and dry thoroughly before refilling. Use tube feeders only, instead of platform or hopper feeders with flat surfaces that collect more droppings, which may spread disease. Regularly pick up and discard feed spilled on the ground. Reduce the number of feeders so birds have more space at this time of year in particular. Use smaller feeders that allow only a couple birds to feed at a time.

Disease is part of a bird's natural world. Salmonellosis (a bacterial avian disease), Avian pox (a viral disease that causes wart-like growths), Trichomaniasis (a parasitic disease that can affect a wide variety of animals including humans), and Aspergillosis (a disease caused by fungal mold that causes bronchitis and pneumonia), are not caused by humans feeding birds. But they can be spread easily at wet, dirty feeding stations.

If maintaining clean, dry conditions at your feeding station becomes difficult this Spring, it may be wiser to simply stop feeding. The birds WILL find other natural sources of food.



Clean out those nest boxes!

If you haven't already, clean out your bird nest boxes as soon as possible.

Cavity-nesting species that will use nest boxes, like bluebirds, chickadees, nuthatches, swallows and wrens, prefer them empty so they can line them with their choice of nesting material.

Removal of old materials, including insects that often invade nest boxes, is cleaner. It also keeps birds from building nests on top of old nests, bringing their eggs and young dangerously close to the entrance hole where predators might reach them. Old nest material should be disposed of away from the nest box to avoid drawing predators by its smell.

2020 Field Trips at a Glance

Details of the field trips will be found on our website
<https://www.audubonspokane.org/upcoming-events>.

In Search of Ducks and other Oddities

3/21/2020, Saturday

Leaders: Fran Haywood and Alan McCoy

Trip Description: This trip is geared toward all levels of birders. We don't know yet how long this trip will last nor do we know exactly where we will go. Weather and the quality of the birding will determine how long we go. We will check out eBird the evening before for mention of rarities that we may want to pursue. Possible stops include Slavin Ranch, Marshall and Cheney wetlands, Philleo Lake, Turnbull NWR, Reardan's Audubon Lake, Sprague Lake and others.

Come prepared for: inclement weather as it is always colder than we want; bring snacks, water, and lunch.

Contact Fran (509) 290-1814 at birders13@gmail.com or Alan (509) 999-9512 at ahm2352@gmail.com to register for the trip.

Where and When to Meet: We will meet in the parking lot of Slavin Ranch Conservation Area (12900 S Kee-ney Rd, Spokane WA 99224) at 7:15 am and will begin hiking at 7:30. Limit for the day is four cars so we may need to carpool, leaving some cars in the Slavin parking lot.

Target Species:

Waterfowl of all kinds, raptors, early shorebirds, migrants, vagrants and other oddities

Spokane Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual Membership:

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.

Joining

Renewing

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>. Click "Support Us" or "Join Us" We accept PayPal, credit/debit cards or Apple Pay.

Receiving duplicate newsletters? Errors or other changes needed on your mailing label? Contact Alan McCoy: ahm2352@gmail.com



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

March 2020

To:

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>

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.

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