

# The Pygmy Owl

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Issue 10  
June 2020

The Newsletter of the  
Spokane Audubon Society



**Happy summer birding! Our next meeting is September 9, 2020 at a new location described at the end of this newsletter.**

## Backyard birding through the pandemic stay-at-home time

When Spokane Audubon Society field trips were cancelled this spring and summer, following restrictions on gatherings and stay-at-home directives to help slow the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, we all started paying more attention to the birds in our own backyards.

We asked you to share your backyard observations and photos for posting on our website at [www.audubonspokane.org](http://www.audubonspokane.org). With or without continued stay-at-home directives, we're continuing this website feature as long as backyard birders submit observations.

You can check out all the posted reports at the website, but here's a brief summary of some May reports to get a glimpse of what others have been enjoying so far...

Jim Patten, who lives near Palisades Park, reported that the area is busy with birds, including lark sparrow and cinnamon and green-winged teal at the Grove Road ponds. Earlier he noted pairs of Lazuli buntings and yellow-headed blackbirds, juvenile great horned owls, an accipiter (sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk), and lots of calliope and black-chinned hummingbirds.

Cynthia Cilyo also reported both black-chinned and calliope hummingbirds and, for the first time ever, a house wren "singing his little heart out!"

Brian saw 15-20 western tanagers flying north along Latah Creek in Vinegar Flats near the 11th Street bridge.

Michelle Walker reported that an Anna's hummingbird flew up to a slider window to visit a stained-glass hummingbird hanging inside.

Madonna Luers reported a Cooper's hawk landed on a birdbath near where seed feeders used to attract the usual crowd of finches, chickadees, juncos and quail (October through mid-April), looking around at new nectar feeders abuzz with hummingbirds as if thinking, "Where are all those meal-sized birds? These hummers are just appetizers!"

Terry and Linda Van Hoozer wondered why the Rufous hummingbirds never seem to get along with the Calliopes and Black-chins. They noted "just as important" signs of spring as the first garter snake out sunning and frogs in the low spots in a vernal creek. A spring sound like no other was the territorial flight display of a Wilson's snipe. They speculated that the local pair of red-tailed hawks building a nest on the neighbor's place, rather than theirs, might be "social distancing" from their great horned owls. A house wren was as busy stuffing sticks into any and all available holes as Terry was tilling the garden soil – "busy little fellows are we both."

Terry also wrote poetically about recognizing familiar sounds at this time while doing outdoor chores: "A friend has 'come down the road' so to speak, and once here, the thought of it makes me smile. Something that has been going on for ages. The swallows are back! The house wren, the robins, and all others in time. Sometimes their movement will catch my sight, at other times it's their call. That

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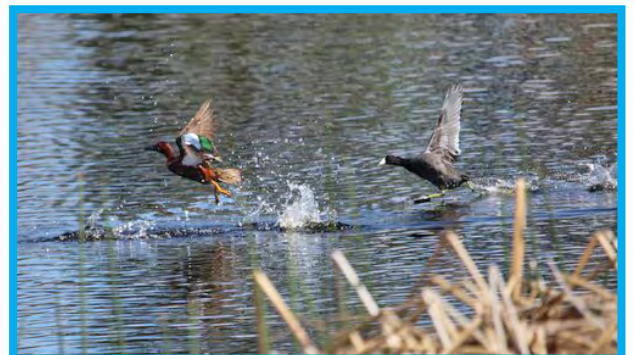
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Jenny Michaels [jemichaels@ieeee.org](mailto:jemichaels@ieeee.org)

white noise you mildly sense for whatever reason changes, but you're not sure why. Then just as interesting, you start to key in on them, sharpening your focus. They kindly intrude into your life again. The movement of the seasons of the planet. We're all invited to the dance, and today I wonder what the song will be tomorrow.

Here are some of the bird photographs Jim Patten submitted with his report: Black-chinned Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird, Great Horned Owls, Cinnamon Teal.



**The Pygmy Owl will be on hiatus for the summer.  
Next Deadline - August 20th**

# Field Notes

Bird Sightings for the Inland Northwest, compiled by Jon Isacoff

The peak of migration is just about past. A warm, dry spring has been a welcome relief for most of us coping with the national virus crisis. Fortunately, birding is one of the safest activities available! Local birders provided a nice share of unusual and fun sightings, including two NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS, one apiece for each side of the Idaho-Washington border. The region has seen a lovely insurgence of White-faced Ibises in many locations, providing delight to local birders. Also of note were BROAD-WINGED HAWKS in at least four different locations.

Observers: RB-R.J. Baltierra; BB-Ben Bright; MaC-Marlene Cashen; SC-Stacy Crist; WC-Warren Current; RDC-Rich Del Carlo; KD-Kas Dumroese; TD-Tim Durnell; SE-Shannon Ehlers; JoE-Johnna Eilers; JE-Jacob Elonen; FF-Fred Forssell; MF-Marian Frobe; LH-Lindell Haggin; BH-Bea Harrison; EH-Evan Hilpman; JI-Jon Isacoff; SJ-Steve Joyce; BK-Bob Kemp; DK-David Kreft; GL-Greg Lambeth; TLa-Terry Lane; TL-Terry Little; CoL-Courtney Litwin; CL-Carl Lundblad; BL-Becky Lyle; CM-Curtis Mahon; AM-Alan McCoy; JM-Jennifer Michaels; NM-Nancy Miller; SM-Stuart Muller; TO-Tim O'Brien; PO-Peter Olsoy; NP-Neil Paprocki; MR-Mary Rumble; JR-Jethro Runco; MS-Mike Scott; SS-Sandy Schreven; BS-Bill Siems; KS-Katie Sorenson; CS-Charles Swift; ST-Susan Treu; DW-Doug Ward; JW-John Wolff; MW-Michael Woodruff; DY-David Yake; MY-Matt Yawney

Ross's Goose: Peone Prairie Wetland (5/13-TL)

Greater White-fronted Goose: Sprague (5/1-TL)

Anna's Hummingbird: Spokane Valley (5/5-MC)

Marbled Godwit: Rock Lake (4/29-RB)

Franklin's Gull: Saltese Wetlands (5/7-TO); Sprague (5/13-JI)

White-faced Ibis: Saltese Wetlands (5/7-TO); Kendrick (5/9-CL); Ewan (5/9-JE and PO); Spangle (5/11-JI); Cheney (5/15-JI)

BROAD-WINGED HAWK: Potato Hill (4/25-NP); Elmira (4/29-eBird); Pullman (5/2-eBird); Moscow (5/12-NP)

White-headed Woodpecker: Tum Tum (5/13-TL)

Black-backed Woodpecker: Bead Lake (5/1-eBird)

Blue Jay: Bonner's Ferry (5/5-MR); University of Idaho (5/12-GL); Kootenai NWR (5/16-eBird)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD: Kendrick (5/9-CL); Step-toe Butte (5/17-JE and PO)

Lesser Goldfinch: Spokane Valley (5/1-TO); Lincoln (5/8-TL)

Golden-crowned Sparrow: Pullman (4/26-JW)

Tricolored Blackbird: Texas Lake (5/15-RB)





Maybe a child you know asked, “Where do eggs come from? How do they get here?” Let’s review. We’re not concerned with the poultry industry, how best to manipulate and manage egg production. Instead, we focus on spring--it’s here despite recent volatile weather--time for nests, eggs, nestlings--small wonders of life’s circle!

The entire process resembles a miniature assembly line, which involves 24-27 hours, with most of that time required for shell formation. Think of the female bird’s reproductive system in this order: ovary/ follicles - ovum (egg) production; infundibulum - fertilization takes place here, first membrane and first albumen (white) layer form; magnum - most of albumen produced; isthmus - inner and outer shell membranes initiated; uterus (shell gland) - shell formation; and vagina; cloaca/vent.

In passerines egg formation occurs mainly at night. Ova (eggs) are produced in the ovaries, but in most birds only the left ovary and oviduct persist (two are typical of many raptors). The ovary contains from 500 to several thousand finite ova. Enlarged greatly during breeding season, active ovaries resemble bunches of tiny grapes--the developing follicles. Yolk in concentric layers, extensive food reserves for the developing embryo, forms in the pre-ovulatory follicle and varies among bird species in relative amounts of yolk as well as in amounts of energy available to the developing embryo (i.e., precocial chicks, which hatch covered in downy feathers, come from larger yolks. Altricial chicks, which hatch naked, come from smaller yolks. With less food available inside the egg, the latter hatch at an earlier stage of development.)

One pre-ovulatory follicle, which contains the protein-packed yolk, ruptures per day, releasing the ovum propelled by ciliary currents and captured in the infundibulum where albumen secretions begin to coat the ovum and fertilization takes place. A bird’s ovum must be penetrated by multiple sperm in order for the embryo to develop. The albumen secretions contain water, protein, minerals and sources of nutrients for the developing embryo.

Some proteins also have anti-microbial properties to protect against marauding micro-organisms. The ovum funnels into the magnum region where most of its albumen is produced.

Shell is next. The inner and outer shell membranes initiate in the isthmus and the final step in egg formation is egg shell production in the uterus. 95% of the eggshell total weight is calcium carbonate, and up to 10% of the requisite calcium is sourced from the female’s bones. The shell consists of 4 layers applied to other surfaces of albumen. The egg receives its signature colors and patterning during the last few hours before it is laid. Shell thickness varies by bird species. This “new” egg is pliable when it enters the vagina and cloaca for laying and hardens with residual mucous as it dries and cools.

Interestingly, whether a bird is more likely to lay a male or female egg depends on which sex will have the greater chance of thriving. According to Rutstein et al, researchers apparently found that well-fed females are able to bias sex, more likely to produce daughters, while less well-nourished birds were more likely to have sons. This is exactly as predicted since female offspring need to be better nourished than males if they are to survive and thrive.

There appeared to be no females in 2017’s typical 2 broods of western bluebirds on our property--it was a long, dry summer in the Deer Park area--a record 80 days without measurable precipitation--not the most favorable for robust plants and insect populations....except grasshoppers.

#### **Other egg information:**

Although birds’ eggs appear to be fragile, they are in fact extremely robust. The oval shape applies the same rules of engineering as an arched bridge; the convex surface can withstand considerable pressure without breaking. This is essential if the egg is not to crack under the weight of the sitting bird.

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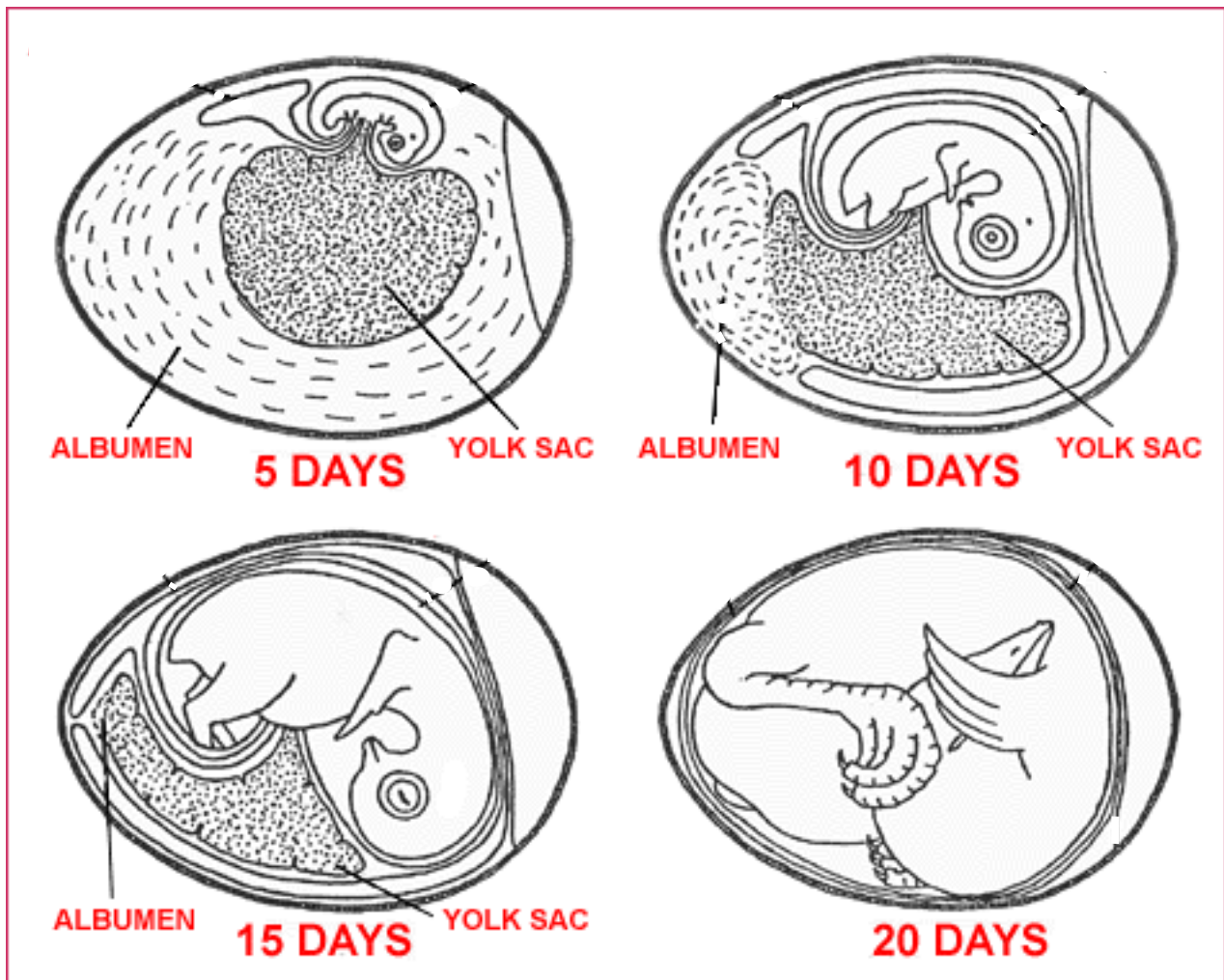
Depending on species, eggshells can have anywhere from a few hundred pores to tens of thousands. An egg loses 18% of its mass, on average, between laying and hatching, mostly from water loss through shell pores.

The size of the air cell is smaller in newly laid eggs, so they sink in water. Older eggs have more air space and will float. Regardless of an egg's position, the yolk rotates so that in the early stages of development the embryo always floats to the top.

More than 100 types of antimicrobial enzymes are found in albumen, the egg white.

The largest living cell on Earth? The egg of an Ostrich!

Source: The Most Perfect Thing, by Tim Birkhead; Handbook of Bird Biology, 2nd edition. Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



# Madonna Luers

by Madonna Luers

I hope these articles on my fellow board members over the past year have helped to personalize the Spokane Audubon Society with insight on their diverse backgrounds and talents. I also hope that it motivates others to serve on the board or as a committee chair in the future.



Last December's edition featured founding board members Jan and Ed Reynolds and long-time board member Joyce Alonso in commemoration of our chapter's 50th anniversary. I hope to profile other long-time members, along with some of our committee chairs, to continue getting to know each other better.

In that spirit, here's my own response to my standard questions of fellow board members:

I'm the newest board member, elected just a year ago, about eight months after I retired from 34 years as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) public information officer in Spokane. I promised Audubon members at my retirement party

that I would become more involved since I only had participated in chapter meetings and field trips peripherally during my professional career. Now I'm a lifetime member, publicity chair, and recording secretary who hopes to bring new members to our organization.

I was born in 1953 in Denver, Colorado, and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, with three sisters, by parents who loved to take us on weeks-long car-camping trips throughout the country, mostly west to national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges. My love of the outdoors definitely was molded then and I vowed to someday leave the Midwest's predominately private land base and move out west near public-owned playgrounds.

After gaining a Journalism/English bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, I worked as a newspaper reporter, then as a public information officer for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, which included promotion of Platte River sandhill crane watching tours. When I realized that I was slowly, like through osmosis, learning wildlife ecology from the biologists, I decided to accelerate my education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. There I earned a master's degree in Environmental Communications, studying under Clay Schoenfeld, who took us students to the shack on the Wisconsin River where his own teacher, Aldo Leopold, wrote the ecological classic "Sand County Almanac."

In my quest to go west, I volunteered as a seasonal naturalist at Glacier National Park in Montana, moved to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to cover the environment and education for the Spokesman-Review's North Idaho Bureau, then to Spokane and WDFW. My WDFW career was full of incredible adventures, telling the many stories of fish and wildlife management through the news media, agency publications and social media platforms. Urban-wandering

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moose, coyotes and turkeys were perennial headlines and helicopter-net-gunning and radio-collaring deer and elk for research was exciting. But our threatened and endangered species recovery work for woodland caribou, upland sandpiper, peregrine falcon, bull trout, pygmy rabbit, sharp-tailed and sage grouse, and gray wolf was some of the most challenging and memorable.

From the time I watched orioles build a basket nest in a tree outside my childhood home or spotted my first magpie during a family road trip west, I've loved birds. But I didn't really get into "birding" until recently. Part of the reason I wanted to get more involved with Audubon was to learn more from you veteran birders, particularly to increase my birdsong "vocabulary."

I'm always looking for birds when I travel, but have only made a few trips just to see birds (like sage grouse dancing on leks at Malheur NWR in Oregon). My husband, a retired WDFW research scientist, introduced me to the Texas Gulf Coast where he spent part of his childhood. One of our favorite places there is Laguna Atascosa NWR with its green jays, great kiskadees and more. We have bird-pointing dogs that we've hunted behind for Gambel's, scaled, and Montezuma quail in southeast Arizona, sharp-tailed grouse in eastern Montana and South Dakota, bobwhite quail in Nebraska, and of course California quail, Hungarian and chukar partridge, ruffed grouse, and pheasants here in Washington. One of my favorite birding experiences was watching a merlin hunt "with" us across a Montana field, homing in on the insects and tiny songbirds that flushed up under our dogs as they coursed back and forth across the wind to find grouse.

My favorite bird is quail. Their plumage is so beautiful and I love to watch their comical rolling movement around winter feeders at our Greenbluff home. Like all gallinaceous birds, they're also tasty!

My advice to newcomers is what I'm trying to do now myself -- concentrate more on learning bird sounds since so many species are difficult to just see.

And as for the most important issue for the future of birds and birding? I have to agree with all my fellow board members about climate and habitat

change, but especially with Jenny Michaels, who last month said that the heart of those issues is that "not enough people are engaged with nature." I hope to change that a little during my Audubon service.



## Board Update

Contrary to our May meeting cancellation notice in last month's newsletter, we won't be conducting board elections at our September meeting.

All of our nine board members were elected in May 2019 to serve two-year terms. The board voted to have interim chapter secretary Madonna Luers (who stepped in to cover secretary duties when Dave Plemons left the Spokane area late last year) continue to serve as secretary through May 2021.

Although we are not seeking new board members now, any member interested in serving next year should contact the nominating committee (Lisa Langelier, Jenny Michaels, Madonna Luers) who will prepare a slate of candidates for the next election in May 2021.

Watch for more ways to get involved in our September edition.

# Wrens are some of the most fascinating birds to visit your yard

by Madonna Luers

Backyard birders may wonder “who’s that?” when tiny, quick-moving members of the Wren family arrive on their property in the spring.

These assertive, noisy birds hardly fit our definition of a reclusive troglodyte, but they actually make up the family Troglodytidae. One Native American term for wren translates to “big noise from little size.” The Anglo-Saxon word “wren” carries a connotation of lasciviousness, perhaps because of the males’ polygamous behavior.

Whatever we call them, wrens are fun to get to know, especially since some species readily use or even prefer human-made nest boxes.

Washington is home to six species of wrens. Three are particular to special habitats not usually found in residential backyards, as noted by their common names – Marsh wren, Canyon wren, Rock wren. But the other three species are relatively common in the open woods, dense shrubbery, or gardens that many backyards include.

The Pacific wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*) is the smallest at about 3-1/2 inches in length. It also has the shortest tail, a mere stub in comparison to other birds; but, like most wrens, it cocks that tail in a perky upright position. Also like most wrens, it has a chunky body, slender and slightly curved bill for insect-eating, and basic brown plumage.

Along Washington’s coast, the Pacific wren is a year-round resident. But in the rest of the state it moves in for spring and summer breeding and migrates to the southwest for the winter. (Until a recent taxonomic split, this species was known as “winter wren”.) The males arrive in April, usually a week or two before females. He busily builds several nests, usually low in dense brush, often streamside. A mating female chooses a nest, and then the male shows the remaining nests to another female for a second mating.

The most common is the House wren (*Troglodytes aedon*), a spring and summer resident of Washington that winters in or near Mexico. Its larger size (4-1/2-inch length) is gained mostly in its longer tail. Otherwise it looks very similar to the winter wren, perhaps with less prominent barring on the belly.

Its common name comes from its nesting affinity for birdhouses, or house porch lights, cans, hats, boots, or nearly any cavity-like, man-made item that appears to provide some measure of security. House wrens have even been known to nest in the pockets of pants hanging on clotheslines!

The early-arriving male House wren cleans out a nest site, which may include destroying another bird’s nest and nestlings, then builds a foundation with twigs. He repeats this in several sites within his half-acre or so territory, all the while warbling loudly. When a female arrives to inspect the sites, his song changes to a high, squeaky one and he performs wing quivers and flutter flights to entice her. When she chooses a nest, she lines it with soft grass and feathers. The male brings her food while she incubates eggs.

House wrens often have a second brood, sometimes with the same mate but sometimes not. The male repeats his nest cleaning and building and courting rituals, and the female leaves her first brood for the male to feed so she can start the second.

The Bewick’s wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) is more distinctive in appearance, with its long, sideways-flitting tail edged in white spots, its light-colored breast, long white eyebrow, and larger size (up to 5 inches). A year-round resident, it is most commonly found in western Washington but has been noted regularly throughout the state.

The Bewick’s (pronounced like “Buick’s”) wren was named by John James Audubon to commemorate his friend Thomas Bewick, an English naturalist and wood engraver. Although all wrens are prolific and loud songsters, the Bewick’s wren has one of the most beautiful voices. It begins high and rapid, changing to a lower register, ending in trills.

These wrens also readily use nestboxes, taking as much as ten days to build very sturdy nests. Like most wren species, egg incubation last about two weeks, and nestling care before fledging lasts about another two weeks.

These six weeks or so of high-energy wren courting, nesting, and rearing can be among the most fascinating for backyard birders, especially those who make and place nestboxes suited for them.

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**House Wren**  
© Andy Witchger



**Pacific Wren**  
© Davey Walters



**Bewick's Wren**  
© Steve Zamek

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## **Membership Report**

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status April 20 through May 20, 2020:

Welcome to our new members: Kathryn Jessen, Cheryl Branz and Family, James Patten and Family, Monte Swenson, and Jim and Joanie Christian!

Many thanks to our returning members: Merry Armstrong and Family, Delores Schwindt, Lori Pegg, Lori Leaver, Curtis Mahon, Craig Brown and Family, Lorna and James Emerich, John Stuart and Carol Mack, and Kathy Edwards and Family.

You can help us reduce our costs and energy use and save paper by switching to our electronic publication. Please send your email address to me, Alan McCoy at [ahm2352@gmail.com](mailto: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/>.

# Olives...and Migrating Birds

by Mary Jokela

Ripe, green, kalamata, green stuffed with pimientos, finger decorations for children—delightful olives. And olive oils with health benefits.

Not so much for migrating birds October through January in Europe, according to a recent Bird Watcher's Digest report. Olive harvesting vacuums literally suck sleeping birds off their perches, stunned and blinded by the high-intensity machinery. Adding insult to this gruesome fate, some of the world's songbirds are then sold to rural hotels to be served as fried birds.

Apparently night-time harvesting in cool temperatures helps preserve olive flavors and aromas. However, the super-machines used also suck up countless birds, many resting in the trees while on their migratory journey between Europe and North Africa. Estimates in Andalusia alone? 2.6 million birds die each year due to this method of harvesting, while in Portugal the numbers approximate 96,000. Similar practices are also used elsewhere in Europe, e.g., France and Italy, although bird death numbers there were unknown at the report date.

Given these shocking statistics, how can we make a positive difference for bird health and conservation? A short answer: choose products that support protection of birds. Or how about buying only organic extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)?

Non-government organization Ethical Consumer contacted the European Soil Association (the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use). Does their organic stamp guarantee the exclusion of super-intensive nocturnal harvesting methods? The simple answer: no. The Soil Association states: "our standards do not exclude the use of heavy machinery in organic farming."

"The main thing to note is that these methods are unlikely to comply with basic EU legislation on protection of birds. The Soil Association accreditation

means that farms will have been subject to an additional check for compliance with organic legislation, which includes specific provisions on protection of the environment. So if people want assurance on the issue, organic is probably as good as they can get."

Ethical Consumer apparently also contacted an EU representative to find out whether the super-intensive nocturnal harvesting methods went against EU legislation, such as the Bird Directive. The following statement was received:

"All wild bird species naturally occurring in the EU are strictly protected by EU legislation... If high-intensity olive harvesting during night hours is known to lead to the killing or to significant disturbance of birds, there is a duty for the competent authorities in those member states to address this problem under provisions set out in the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive."

What should consumers do now? Shall we purchase these olives and olive oils? Shall we fund this method of harvest? To begin work on a solution right now, be assured we can note place/country of origin and production—no need to give up on olives.

There are better ways and we will find them together. Stay tuned for more information.

# 2020 Field Trips at a Glance

## Carpooling on field trips limited with coronavirus prevention

We always encourage and enjoy carpooling on birding field trips to save fuel, lower our carbon footprint, and share sighting information more easily.

But with the current need for “social distancing” to help minimize the spread of coronavirus, we need to shift gears. Please consider the following on your next birding field trip:

- Carpool only with people you live with or at least feel comfortable and confident with in the close quarters of a motor vehicle.

- Don’t share binoculars, scopes, cameras, or mobile units with birding apps; if you need or want to share, clean equipment with disinfecting wipes between users.

- Maintain the Centers for Disease Control and other public health official “social distancing” guidelines of staying at least six feet away from each other when you reach a birding site where you leave your vehicles.

These steps may seem extreme, but they are simply part of our collective, responsible pre-emptive action to slow the spread and impacts of this virus and disease. We’d all rather be safe than sorry. Happy birding!

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

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_



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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](mailto:ahm2352@gmail.com)



The Pygmy Owl  
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June 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>**

### **Heads up: New location when we meet again**

When we meet again, hopefully in September, we'll convene at a new location – the Henry David Thoreau room of the Unitarian Church at 4340 W. Ft. George Wright Dr. (on the corner of Government Way and Ft. George Wright, just west of Spokane Falls Community College, northwest of downtown Spokane.)

If you've been attending monthly meetings, you know that we've been generously hosted by the Riverview Retirement Community off Upriver Drive for many years, most recently in their Village Community Building. Parking at that site has always been very limited and newcomers often had difficulty finding the meeting room. Avista Corporation, headquartered just east of this site, has plans to develop a Spokane River parkway off Upriver Drive, and when construction begins this year or next, road closures will make finding us and parking even more difficult.

The board began looking into alternative meeting sites earlier this year, even before we lost our meeting space when senior facilities like Riverview were among the first to close to protect residents from the Covid-19 pandemic.

At least 15 meeting sites were explored, including libraries, schools, community centers, churches, fire districts, and natural resource agency offices. We sought an easy-to-find relatively central location, plenty of parking, consistent availability for meeting on the same day of the month and time throughout the year, refreshments permissible, and no or low cost.

The Unitarian Church is not exactly centrally located, but it is easily reached in a very recognizable area and it meets all our other criteria. In addition, it's an institution that is supportive of environmental stewardship, sustainability, and science, with a spacious meeting room named after a nature philosopher. We think we'll all feel at home there quickly.

The September newsletter edition, which you should get in advance of our September 9th meeting, will remind you of this change again, including a map to the site, and you'll receive an e-mail reminder, too.