

The Pygmy Owl

Volume 31
Issue 10
June 2023

The Newsletter of the
Spokane Audubon Society



National Audubon Society Announces Decision to Retain Current Name

Organization commits to new \$25 million fund to expand Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging work, a decision that follows a thorough and inclusive process to examine the legacy of its namesake.

New York, NY – The Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society (NAS) today announced that it has decided to retain the name of the organization, after a lengthy process to examine its name in light of the personal history of its namesake, John James Audubon. The decision was made taking into consideration many factors, including the complexity of John James Audubon’s legacy and how the decision would impact NAS’s mission to protect birds and the places they need long into the future. The organization will continue its non-partisan commitment to habitat conservation and climate action, its agenda-setting policy work, and community-building efforts to advance its mission.



Audubon

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Membership Report

by Alan McCoy

Update of Members' Status April 21, 2023 through May 21, 2023:

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

Individual: Barbara Kowalski, Bill Doley, Gail Stewart, Lois Hughes

Family: Barbara Lawson

Lifetime: Larry Stone

Many thanks to our **returning members**:

Individual: Tom Munson, Della Meyer, Linda Carroll, Hank Nelson, Ruthie Dearing, Patricia Ediger, Lee Wolfand, David Kreft, Irène Arm

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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>.

Reardan field trip series was a trip down memory lane

By Madonna Luers

When my husband, Woody Myers, and I committed to leading a series of Spring field trips at Reardan Audubon Lake Wildlife Area in eastern Lincoln County, it became a trip down memory lane for us. We both retired from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) which manages the property.

It was also our first time leading birding field trips, and an experiment in conducting them without reservations, just come if you want, and stay as short or long a time as you like. The advertised focus, of course, was on waterfowl, with one each month - March, April and May - to witness the "procession of species" through the advancing season.

The first one, on March 11, was still pretty wintery, with 36 degree weather and an iced-up, snow-covered lake. We were joined by fellow Auduboners Bea and Jim Harrison and three participants and all we saw were Canada geese, Red-winged blackbirds, a Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and Northern Harrier. I spent more time looking at the interpretive kiosk in the parking area and remembering our work putting that together some 17 years ago. We were all ready to leave within an hour, but before we did, the Reardan High School science teacher who had contacted the chapter about help with a student field trip stopped by to let us know she was looking forward to showing her students that the area was more than a "poop pond" (sewage treatment pond west of the area) and truly a point of community pride.

The second one on April 8 was much more spring-like, with 50 degree weather, a completely open lake, and some 16 of us seeing 19 species, including Tundra Swan, American Wigeon, Northern

Pintail, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, LOTS of Coots, and even a Prairie Falcon. The best was a surprise "crashing" of the field trip by Chris DeForest of the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy, who talked to the group about how this special place came to be in public ownership, starting with chapter member Joyce Alonso alerting everyone over 20 years ago to the impending threat of the sale and development of the property.

As Chris recalled, Joyce was relentless about getting the Conservancy (then Trust) to buy the place since the state couldn't act quickly enough. For decades the site had come to be known as "Reardan's Audubon Lake" because it drew so many birders during spring and fall migration. Including donations from Spokane Audubon Society members, the Conservancy purchased the first 280 acres -- including the 80-acre lake, multiple vernal ponds, wetlands, Palouse prairie grasslands, and channeled scablands -- in 2003 from landowner Susan Eastman. She and her husband had been contacted by SAS member Norma Trefry, who convinced her of the importance of preserving the land for wildlife, especially the 150-some bird species.

In 2006, WDFW bought the property from the Conservancy to manage as a state wildlife area. We celebrated with a grand opening ceremony on-site that included project partners - the Lincoln County Conservation District, the Reardan Chamber of Commerce, Reardan Lions Club and, of course, the Spokane Audubon Society. We proudly promoted it as a unique stop on the Washington Audubon Palouse to Pines Birding Trail and a notable feature on the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail. I still have my "Birds Eye View" t-shirt that was made and sold at many summertime Reardan Mule Days events where WDFW and Spokane Audubon partnered at a booth.



Chris DeForest of INLC (in orange vest) talks with field trip participants about area history.

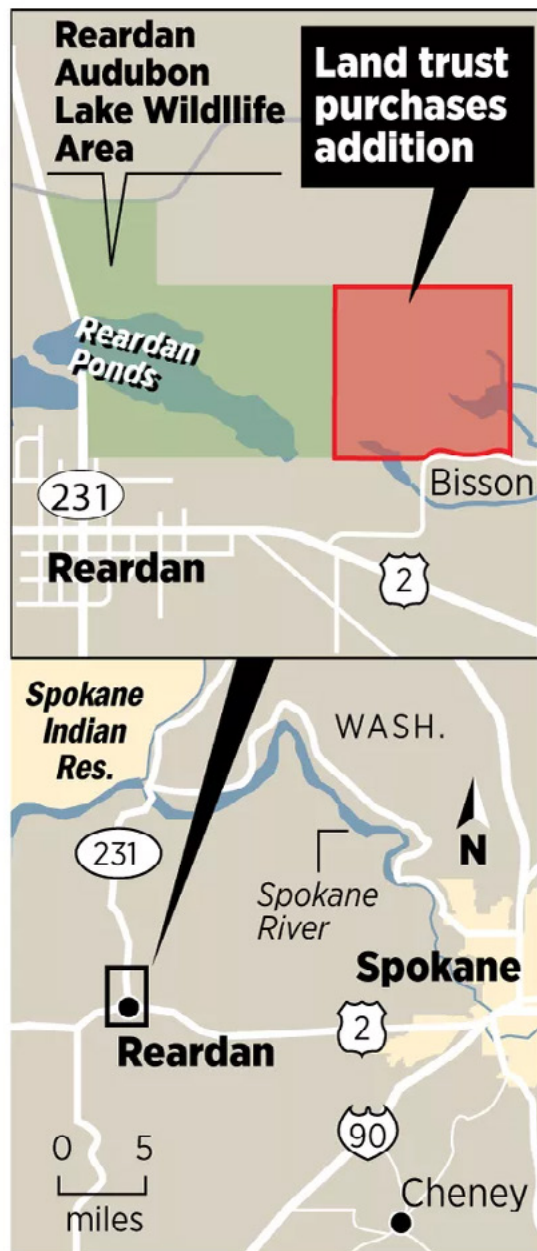


(cont on page 4)

The Conservancy later acquired an additional 150 acres that WDFW subsequently purchased to add to the wildlife area. Viewing blinds, spotting scopes, asphalt trails, parking lots, and restrooms were added to make it more accessible and restoration work with native plants and grasses helped return the land from agriculture to its natural state. Another 156 acres on the east side is the Conservancy's Deep Creek Preserve where a bioassessment is underway with university faculty and student researchers. Chris' on-site history lesson of the place, and all the bird activity that early April day, had most of us spending almost three hours there, including time at the preserve off Bisson Road.

Our last field trip in the series on May 6 was windy and rainy, and Woody and I spent a couple of hours by ourselves – no takers with that kind of weather! But the Spring procession of species did not disappoint. Along with everything seen in the earlier trips in the series, we saw about two dozen species, including Yellow-headed Blackbird, Tree, Violet-green and Northern Rough-winged swallows, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Redhead, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Eared Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, even a Calliope Hummingbird feeding on the blooms of a shrub along the path to the viewing blind.

It was good to get to know this special place all over again with this field trip series and we'll give it a try again next Spring.



Molly Quinn
© Spokesman Review



Field trip participants looking for birds near Reardan south side viewing blind.



Chris Lane and Georgina DelaGarza use field guide to identify birds at Reardan.

Board Profile:

Mike Borysewicz

by Madonna Luers

Our newest Spokane Audubon Society board member brings a wealth of wildlife experience to chapter leadership.

Mike Borysewicz retired last December after 35 years as a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Forest Service. He spent 30 years on the Colville National Forest at the Sullivan Lake Ranger District, but also served earlier in his career on the Randle district of the Gifford Pinchot Forest, the Prairie City district of the Malheur Forest and the Wallowa-Whitman Forest in Oregon.

Along with other wildlife species work, he conducted breeding bird surveys and specific surveys for Great Gray Owls, Sandhill Cranes, Spotted Owls, Harlequin Ducks, and Northern Goshawks.

He says if he had to pick one favorite birding experience, it would be watching a Northern Goshawk “delicately devour” a snowshoe hare it had caught.



Mike Borysewicz
Photo by Nan Berger

“Goshawks are an indicator/sensitive species on the national forests of Oregon and Washington,” Mike said, “so I spent a lot of time surveying for their nests, or teaching technicians to do so, for protecting their habitat according to established guidelines.”



Northern Goshawk
The Wildlife Trusts

His partner and fellow Audubon member, Nan Berger, was helping him with a U.S. Geological Service Breeding Bird Survey in the Colville Forest when they came across the bird on the shoulder of the road just before one of their established survey stops.

“We probably watched that goshawk dining on that hare for 15 minutes,” he recalls. “I especially love any and all raptors for their physicality, their beauty, and their intensity.”

Mike was born in 1959 in Somerville, New Jersey. He always loved being outdoors and seeing wildlife in general. His brother hunts and fishes and his other siblings appreciate nature, but his was the only path that led to a wildlife career.

“I think reading an article in National Geographic on David Mech’s work with wolves in Isle Royale National Park was the first catalyst I can remember,” he said. “In my senior year in high school, my best friend and I made a road trip to Yellowstone National Park and that’s when we decided we wanted to go to school out west.”

(cont on page 6)

Mike enrolled in the University of Idaho in Moscow. He initially was interested in astronomy, but thought making that a career was a long shot. He became serious about birding during college, thanks to an Ornithology class taught by Don Johnson, who Mike considers “one of the best lecturers I ever had the privilege to know.” He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management, working between semesters on the Red Ives Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest.

When Mike and Nan retired they moved to Cheney to be near Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, which affords them access to wildlands, birds, and other wildlife. Mike says that Nan signed them up for a family membership in Spokane Audubon.

“We both love birds and thought attending field trips would be fun,” he said. “We were also looking for volunteer opportunities in retirement and thought maybe one avenue to facilitate that could be through the local chapter.”

Both are now leaders of the chapter’s Save-A-Bird team. And, since they helped with Christmas Bird Counts in the Newport, Washington area for years, they also helped with the Cheney count last season. The past three winters they have completed one to three winter raptor survey routes for Jeff Fleischer, the wildlife researcher coordinating that Audubon-endorsed citizen science project. As a board member, Mike hopes to help keep the bird rescue group going and to advance general public appreciation of birds and the many challenges they face.

Mike’s tip for beginning birders is to try to learn as many bird songs and calls as possible. “The need to develop this skill for breeding bird surveys was a paradigm shift for me,” he said. “You don’t necessarily have to see the birds to identify the species around you. Also, never stop learning. I’ll never be as good a birder as I’d like to be.”

Although not a parent, Mike thinks about how to engage youth in birding. “I think young people have a lot on their plates today,” he said, “and in so many ways they have it tougher than I did. But I don’t think birding is in danger of dying out. Young people perhaps care more deeply about the environment than any generation up to this point. It’s natural that a love

of birding tends to develop later in life when you’re more settled, less stressed, and start thinking more about giving back.”

Mike believes that the most important issue for the future of birds and birding is the loss of habitat to human development. “Birds need a place to simply exist,” he said. “Hand-in-hand with increasing development is the increasing disconnect of people with the natural world. You can’t value something if you don’t know about it. I also think that apathy, born of despair over the state of the world, poses a real danger to positive change.”



1. Sharp-shinned Hawk, immature
2. Bald Eagle
3. American Kestrel
4. Northern Harrier
5. American Kestrel
6. Turkey Vulture
7. Sharp-shinned Hawk, adult
8. Broad-winged Hawk, immature
9. Red-shouldered Hawk, adult
10. Red-shouldered Hawk, immature
11. Northern Harrier
12. Merlin, adult
13. Northern Harrier, immature
14. Red-tailed Hawk
15. Cooper’s Hawk, immature
16. Cooper’s Hawk, immature
17. Peregrine Falcon, adult
18. Osprey
19. Sharp-shinned Hawk, adult

<https://www.audubon.org/news/quiz-identify-raptors-flight-0>

Success for birds and the environment in the 2023 Washington legislative session

By Shenandoah Marr, Conservation Chair

The 2023 Washington state legislative session that ended in late April produced some exciting successes for birds and other wildlife and their habitat, land use, climate change response, and plastic reduction.

Many thanks to members and others who contacted legislators expressing support for some of this legislation. Input from constituents is an important part of the legislative process and our voices make a difference.

About half of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) request for biodiversity funding was appropriated -- \$23 million over the next two years – to track the status of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need and implement habitat protection, restoration and recovery actions for them. Human stressors and climate change have been accelerating biodiversity losses and WDFW currently has little or no data on 130 species, including 13 birds. Their targeted work across the state includes two areas of specific interest to our chapter – the Okanogan ecoregion of northcentral Washington that includes Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse, Lynx and Redband Rainbow Trout; and the Columbia Plateau that includes Sagebrush Sparrow, Monarch Butterfly, Jackrabbits, Northern Leopard Frog and White Sturgeon. The agency intends to request the balance of the biodiversity funding needed in the 2025-27 biennium.

The Legislature also invested a landmark \$83 million in forest conservation and ecological forest management practices to boost carbon sequestration on state lands. This funding marks the first time the state government will set aside timber acreage strictly for its carbon value, by designating it a high-impact “natural climate solution” worthy of funding under the Climate Commitment Act’s Natural Climate Solutions Account. This new funding will conserve permanently 2,000 acres of older, carbon dense, structurally complex state forests across Western Washington and buy younger replacement forests to provide revenue to rural communities.

Washington Audubon priority bills that passed both houses and were signed by the governor include HB 1216 (Climate and Clean Energy) and HB 1181 (Climate and Growth Management).

The Climate and Clean Energy legislation will set up a formal process for “least conflict” siting of proposed renewable energy developments. This will allow tribes, local governments, farmers, and wildlife advocates to work together to identify areas for proposed clean energy projects that cause the least harm to all of their interests. Some proposed clean energy projects would cause harm to sensitive bird habitat such as shrub steppe. HB1216 will mitigate those concerns and allow for a clean energy transition that is best for Washington’s residents and wildlife.

The Climate and Growth Management legislation adds climate change mitigation and resiliency to the existing Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA is a series of state statutes, first adopted in 1990, that requires fast-growing cities and counties to develop a comprehensive plan to manage their population growth. HB 1181 requires GMA counties and cities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled through land use planning. The impacts of climate change also must be addressed in land use planning. HB 1181 will strengthen the state’s ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance climate resilience and mitigation

The passage of HB 1085 will reduce Washington’s use of plastics in three ways. First, it requires refill stations wherever a drinking fountain is required in all new buildings. Second, it will phase out mini toiletries in plastic packaging (shampoos, lotions, and soaps) in hotels. Hotels will need to use bulk dispensers or non-plastic packages for these items. Finally, it bans foam-filled dock floats. Many docks use floats which are filled with foam that leak bits of plastic, harming birds and other wildlife and polluting our waterways.

Other 2023 session successes include:

- SB 5390 establishes streamlined “safe harbor” agreements on non-federal forestlands to provide voluntary, incentive-based programs to support old growth habitat for endangered Northern Spotted Owls.
- SB 5104 is a crucial step towards protecting and restoring the habitats of marine birds, salmon, and orcas by assessing the condition of Puget Sound shorelines.

Carlene's Turnbull Travels

by Carlene Hardt

The signs of spring have arrived at Turnbull NWR! Wildflowers such as Balsam Root and Camas are covering the area with color. A dandelion attracted a butterfly to feast on its nectar.

Birds like the Red-winged Blackbird are singing their lovely songs to catch a mate. At the same time, the male turkeys are strutting about to catch the attention of the females.

There are several Canada geese families grazing on grass and eating the aquatic vegetation. The goslings are as cute as ever! Just looking at the itty-bitty wings of the gosling brought a smile to my face. The parents will defend the goslings until they are able to fly in about two months. The goslings remain with their family group for about one year.

A Killdeer was near a small pond on the auto tour. Its bright red eye ring sure catches one's attention. It was probably looking for ground invertebrates such as earthworms, beetles, grasshoppers, and snails. They occasionally eat seeds and small vertebrates.



All photos by Carlene Hardt

June Field Trips

June 6, Tuesday

Kayak/Canoe Little Spokane River

Leader: Carrie Dugovic (carrie.dugovic@gmail.com)

Limit: 15

Registration deadline: May 30

This will be an approximately four-hour canoe/kayak on the Little Spokane River from the St. George's put-in to the Nine Mile takeout. We will coordinate and use our vehicles to shuttle attendees and boats between the put-in and the take-out. Attendees should be experienced boaters on flat water or slow-moving rivers. There are a few small rapids to be aware of as well as currents that can pull you into a strainer or bushes. Attendees will provide their own kayaks/canoes. Personal flotation devices required. Bring Discover Pass, snack, water, dry bag for binoculars and camera if desired, hat and sunscreen. No dogs allowed. Meet-up time to be determined

Description of Habitat and Target Species: Riparian woodlands. 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. Moose also possible.

June 10, Saturday

Lincoln County Shrub-steppe to Coulee Loop

Leader: Kim Thorburn (kthorburn@msn.com)

Limit: 3 vehicles with a maximum of 12 birders

Registration deadline: June 9

Meet-up at 6 a.m. at Dean's Drive-In in Reardan. This will be all day, including drive to and from starting point at Telford rest stop on Hwy. 2. Trip will include driving with stops and some short walks. Bring clothes in layers, hats, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, binoculars, scopes (optional), and water and lunch food.

Description of Habitat and Target Species: Channeled scabland wildland fire recovering shrub-steppe, potholes, dryland ag fields, dry pine forest, riparian, and basalt walls. Depending on water levels, some breeding waterfowl and shorebirds (Black-Necked Stilt And Wilson's Phalarope). Swainson's Hawk, Lewis's Woodpecker, Western And Eastern Kingbirds, Gray Flycatchers, Willow Flycatchers, Horned Lark, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Western And Mountain Bluebirds, Veery, Cassin's Finch, and many more.

June 11, Sunday

Riverside State Park's Painted Rocks Nature Trail

Leader: Lindell Haggin (lindell4118@comcast.net)

Registration deadline: June 9

Meet up at 7 a.m. at trailhead off Rutter Parkway. We will start at the Painted Rocks and cover a stretch of trail that parallels the Little Spokane River. We will then double back to catch some additional species of birds when we proceed north from the parking area. If there is time we will explore the area just north of Rutter Parkway off Indian Trail Rd.

Description of Habitat and Target Species:

Target Species: Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, White-throated Swift, Bewick's Wren, Pileated Woodpecker, Western Bluebird and Lark Sparrow

June 17, Saturday

Liberty Lake Regional Park

Leader: Joseph Cooney (Text 509-951-3179 or jcooney805@gmail.com)

Registration deadline: June 12

This is a half-day easy walking trip, 8 a.m. to 12-noon, with meet-up at the first parking lot at Liberty Lake Regional Park where there's a \$2 park entry fee. Bring a pair of binoculars, snacks, water.

Description of Habitat and Target Species: Liberty Lake hosts some of the best habitat diversity in Spokane County, with breeding grebes on the lake, extensive wetlands and prairie, old second-growth Ponderosa Pine, and some of the best wet belt mixed conifer forest in the area. Red-necked Grebe; Wilson's Snipe; Virginia and Sora Rails; woodpeckers; Hammond's, Dusky, and Willow Flycatcher; Cassin's, Warbling, and Red-eyed Vireos; Marsh Wren; Swainson's Thrush; Veery; Yellow, MacGillivray's, Orange-crowned, Townsend's, and Nashville Warblers; American Redstart; Common Yellowthroat among others.

More field trips are listed as they are created at <https://www.audubonspokane.org/field-trips>

Loggerhead Shrike

American Bird Conservancy

The predatory Loggerhead Shrike is a distinctive songbird found only in North America. The word “loggerhead” refers to the large size of this shrike’s head in relation to its body, which gives it a bull-headed look. Roughly the size of a **Northern Cardinal**, the Loggerhead Shrike has gray plumage set off by a black mask and a stout, slightly hooked bill. Its black wings have white patches that “flash” as the bird flies, somewhat like a **Northern Mockingbird**’s. Males and females look alike.

Although classed as a passerine (perching songbird), the Loggerhead Shrike’s hunting habits give it a rather ominous nickname.

Predatory Passerine

The Loggerhead Shrike is widely known as the “butcherbird” for its habit of skewering its prey on thorns or barbed wire before it eats it. (Its genus name, *Lanius*, derives from the Latin word “butcher”). This rather ghoulish trait is actually a practical adaptation that compensates for the shrike’s lack of strong, raptor-like feet and talons. It accumulates “larders” of prey to provide security against lean times, and males may also use a large food cache to impress prospective mates.

Breeding and Feeding

Bringing Up Butcherbirds

Loggerhead Shrikes are territorial, and pairs aggressively defend their territory. During courtship, a male shrike performs short flight displays and brings food to the female. The pair builds a sturdy nest low in a dense, often thorny, tree or shrub. The male



Loggerhead Shrike feeding young
© Philip Rathner

feeds the female while she incubates, sometimes bringing prey cached earlier. Both parents feed the nestlings, which leave the nest at two to three weeks but continue to be tended by their parents for another three to four weeks.

Newly fledged shrikes perform exaggerated versions of adult hunting behavior, including rudimentary impaling gestures. They seem to practice their skills by grasping objects in the tip of their bills and repeatedly touching them to a branch or perch, as if trying to get them to stick.

Hunting like a Hawk

The Loggerhead Shrike hunts by scanning the ground from an elevated perch, then pouncing onto its prey, which may include large insects, birds, snakes, lizards, and small mammals. They also hover-hunt like an **American Kestrel** and even hunt on the ground, flashing their wing patches to startle prey out of hiding.

The upper part of the shrike’s hooked bill features a pair of built-in projections called “tomial teeth.” Like a **Peregrine Falcon**, the shrike uses these specialized “teeth” to dispatch vertebrate prey by a strike to the nape of the neck.

Region and Range

The Loggerhead Shrike ranges throughout most of North America, from southern Canada to southern Mexico. Although widespread, it has an uneven and local distribution, particularly in the northeastern U.S. In the northern portion of its range, it’s a short-distance migrant that winters in the southern United States and Mexico. Farther south, the species is a resident year-round.

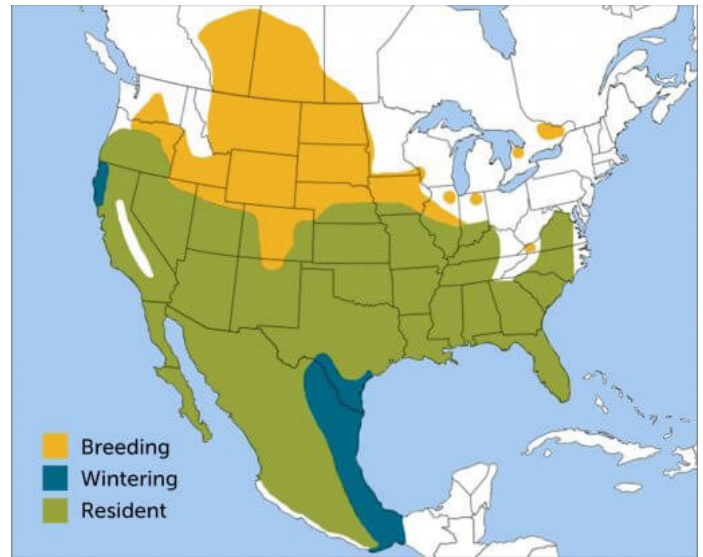
Ideal shrike breeding habitat consists of open habitats such as grasslands, agricultural areas with hedgerows, and pastures with scattered trees and shrubs. There are 11 recognized subspecies of Loggerhead

Shrike; the subspecies from San Clemente Island, in southern California, was listed as Endangered under the **Endangered Species Act** in 1977.

Conservation

The Loggerhead Shrike was recognized as a species in decline on the **2016 State of the Birds Watch List**. In addition, Breeding Bird Survey data show that its populations have declined by almost 80 percent since 1966, a troubling trend which coincides with the introduction of chemical **pesticides** in the United States. Other likely causes for the Loggerhead Shrike's steep population decline are **habitat loss**, **collisions**, and human disturbance.

Beginning in 1996, ABC helped convince the U.S. Navy, which was using part of San Clemente Island as a bombing range, to expand protective measures for the Loggerhead Shrike subspecies there. Thanks to this effort, along with captive breeding, predator control, and other habitat management, the subspecies is steadily recovering.



Loggerhead Shrike range map by ABC



Loggerhead Shrike
© Bethany Kays

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
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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 _____

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Other: _____

Annual memberships provide ongoing support for our many conservation and educational activities.

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