

The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 43 ISSUE 5

April-May 2015

EVENT CALENDAR

April 1: PAS Photo Contest begins
April 15: Program: Photographing Birds and Other Wildlife
May 2: Field Trip—Scablands to Snake
May 5: Beginning Birding Class
May 20: Program: Managing Wildlife in Climate Change
June: Turnbull field trip TBA
June: Wednesday night bird walks TBA (dates to be announced) watch Website www.palouseaudubon.org

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The 2015 PAS Photo Contest

Show us Your Wild Side



Lazuli Bunting
by J.J. Cebula

Palouse Audubon Society is now accepting entries for its second annual photo contest.

Entries can be submitted starting from April 1 until midnight Pacific Daylight Time on July

31, 2015. The contest is open to anyone who is an amateur photographer, whether a PAS member or non-member. Entries should consist of regional photos. There is no entry fee and each person can submit up to five entries. Submit your photos using the easy online submission upload form on the PAS website or else mail photos in on a CD.

Contest rules and detailed guidelines are posted on the photo contest page of the PAS website. There are categories for photos of birds, other wildlife, and other aspects of nature, and divisions are provided for both youth and adult. Entrants are encouraged to use this opportunity to express their creativity in photographic compositions of nature. This is a great opportunity to display your photographic talent for turning nature into art that can be appreciated by all.

The purpose of the photo contest is to further the mission of PAS by enhancing our awareness of the wildlife and nature that surround us, and to give local amateur photographers an opportunity to express their impressions of nature. The first contest, held in 2014, was a great success with a fantastic assortment of award-winning photos entered. The captured images represented a portrayal of nature. We anticipate that this

year's contest will entice an even wider audience to enter.

Get out your camera and capture photos of your favorite wildlife scenes!

Photos will be judged on aspects including technical merit, composition, and visual impact. Photos that you may have captured during the Christmas Bird Count or the Great Backyard Bird Count, as well as any photos taken during hikes and birding field trips, would make great entries.

Prizes will be awarded for the best entries in each category but the best prize will be the opportunity to share your award-winning photos with the PAS community!

To get some ideas for photographic subjects, take a look at the entries from the 2014 photo contest on the [2014 Contest Results](#) page of the PAS website. For more information about the photo contest, check the PAS website for announcements at www.palouseaudubon.org or send an email to email@palouseaudubon.org if you have any specific questions.



House Wren on an Evergreen Shrub
By Nancy LeDuke

Wednesday Evening Bird Walks in June—TBA

Watch your email, Facebook, and the PAS website for announcements about the traditional Wednesday evening bird walks. If anyone would like to volunteer to lead one or more, please let Ron Force know.

May 2, Field Trip

Spring Migration, Scablands to the Snake

This will be an all-day birding trip to explore some areas in far western Whitman County during the peak of spring migration. We will hit the area around LaCrosse to look for a few specialty breeders like Long-billed Curlew, Grasshopper Sparrow and Burrowing Owl. Then we will head down toward the river via Palouse Falls where we should see White-throated Swifts and will hope to see the nesting Peregrine Falcons.

After the falls, we will hit Lyon's Ferry, a great spot on the Snake River during migration. Anything is possible, but we will look for warblers, sparrows, shorebirds, and rarities. If there are positive reports, we may stop at Washtucna along the way toward or heading home from the river to see what has shown up there.

We will leave from the northwest corner of the Pullman Wal-Mart parking lot at 7:00 a.m. Plan on some walking at each location, but no serious hikes. Bring lunch and beverages. Please RSVP to Mike Clarke at transvolcanic@gmail.com. We will limit our group to three cars or 12 participants for ease of movement.

June Field Trip

Turnbull

R.J. Baltierra is planning a field trip in June to Turnbull. He will announce the date as soon as his schedule can be determined. Watch your email for final arrangements.

From the Prez



Ron Force

I was thinking today about how much had changed in the birding hobby since I started in high school fifty-plus years ago. Back then all you needed was a pair of binoculars from the pawn shop, a \$3.95 Peterson's field guide, and a walk around the neighborhood. Today the birder goes forth, after having checked eBird for possible species in the area of interest. NW Birder's mail list has alerted one to rarities in the area. One selects a birding area from one of the "Birding Trails", either published or on-line. Besides the printed bird guide, usually pocket-able (Peterson's is now over \$23) Sibley's is in the back seat of the car and iBird and/or Merlin on the phone, with a Bluetooth speaker in case calling in a reluctant bird is necessary.

We've gotten more particular about our binoculars (or our eyes have

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PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership includes an annual subscription to *The Prairie Owl* newsletter. Please consider an additional donation in support of the programs and activities of Palouse Audubon Society.

Annual Membership \$15.00 Donation _____

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Return this form along with your check to Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, Moscow, ID 83843-1914.

- Check one: ☐ I PREFER TO READ THE PRAIRIE OWL ON THE WEBSITE
(notice will be sent by email when a new issue has been posted on the website)
- ☐ PLEASE SEND A PRINTED COPY OF THE PRAIRIE OWL

The Majestic Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) by Tim Hillebrand



It's always a treat to come upon a Great Blue Heron standing out regally along the shore. It's a pleasure to see them flying stretched like a guided missile with their long necks and long legs. The Great Blue Heron is a large wading bird common near the shores of open water and in wetlands over most of North America and Central America as well as the Caribbean and the Galápagos Islands. It is a rare vagrant to Europe, with visits to Spain, the Azores, England and the Netherlands. An all-white population found only in the Caribbean and southern Florida was once treated as a separate species and known as the Great White Heron.

They are expert fishers. Herons snare their aquatic prey by walking slowly, or standing still for long periods of time and waiting for fish to come within range of their long necks and blade-like bills. The deathblow is delivered with a quick thrust of the sharp bill, and the prey is swallowed whole. Great blue herons have been known to choke to death by attempting to swallow fish too large for their long, S-shaped necks. Though they are best known as fishers, mice constitute a large part of their diet, and they also eat insects and other small creatures.

Great Blue Herons lead a fairly solitary existence but they do nest in colonies. We are fortunate to have at least two rookeries in our area that I know about. Perhaps there are more. The ones I have seen are at the Chief Timothy State Park and near the old Spalding Mission.

The female lays three to six pale blue eggs, which both parents protect and incubate. One brood is raised each year. First broods are laid generally from March to April. Eggs are usually laid at 2 day intervals, incubated for around 27 days and hatch asynchronously over a period of several days. Males incubate for about 10.5 hours of each day while females usually incubate for the remainder of each day and the night, with eggs left without incubation for about 6 minutes of each hour.

The first chick to hatch usually becomes more experienced in food handling and aggressive interactions with siblings, and so often grows more quickly than the other chicks. Both parents feed the young at the nest by regurgitating food. Parents have been shown to consume up to four times as much food when they are

feeding young chicks than when laying or incubating eggs. By the time they are 45 days old, the young weigh 86% of the adult's mass. After about 55 days at the northern edge of the range (Alberta) and 80 days at the southern edge of the range (California), young herons take their first flight. They will return to the nest to be fed for about another three weeks, following adults back from foraging grounds, and are likely to disperse gradually away from their original nest over the course of the ensuing winter. Young herons are not as successful at fish capture as adults, as strike rates are similar but capture rates about half that of adults during the first two months post-fledging.

Their call is a harsh croak. The heron is most vocal during the breeding season, but will call occasionally at any time of the year in territorial disputes or if disturbed. Nonvocal sounds include a loud bill snap, which males use to attract a female or to defend a nest site, and which females use in response to bachelor males or within breeding pairs. The bill snap may be analogous the territorial song of passerines. Bill clapping, the rapid chattering of the tips of the bill, is very common between paired herons. Listen to four calls of the GBH:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Blue_Heron.ogg

Predators of GBH eggs can include Ravens, Turkey Vultures, Crows, Red-tailed Hawks, Black Bears, Raccoons, Golden Eagles, Great Horned Owls, and even alligators. But the GBH is a formidable foe able to defend its brood in most instances.

Treat yourself to a visit to one of the local GBH rookeries this spring.



A typical Great Blue Heron Rookery

A Note on the Othello Sandhill Cranes

by Tim Hillebrand



Yesterday (3/24/15) I went to Othello to check out the annual migration of Sandhill Cranes. They were there in abundance. What a treat. I love to see them fly with their seven foot wingspan and hear their rattling calls.

I learned a couple of new things I didn't know and thought I would share the information.

There are two kinds of Sandhill Cranes, the Greater Sandhill Crane, and the Lesser Sandhill Cranes. The ones that come to Othello are mostly the Lesser variety. The Greater variety is found in the central flyway.

Another thing I didn't know is that the cranes that come to Othello are from California where they winter in the Sacramento Valley. I was born and raised in California but never saw a Sandhill Crane, probably because I didn't live in the San Joaquin Valley.

The first Sandhill Crane I ever saw was in Salmon, Idaho out in a field. I was astonished to see such a big bird and had to research what it was.

I hope you treat yourself to a visit to Othello before birds leave. You should check out the official Othello Sandhill Crane Festival Website:

<http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/>

Telephone contact: 1-866-726-3445

Kleptoparasites

Jaegers, Skuas, and Frigatebirds are aggressive seabirds that repeatedly harass other seabirds until they disgorge their latest meal. The birds then catch the food in midair and fly off. In a slightly odder twist, American Wigeons—perfectly capable of feeding on their own—are known to swim up to canvasbacks or coots diving for wild celery and snatch their food away. The reason? American Wigeons can't dive as effectively as those they steal from, but they want the benefits of the lifestyle.

PALOUSE AUDUBON PROGRAMS

On April 15, Kevin Pullen will present a program on "Photographing Birds and Other Wildlife." The program will begin at 7:30pm and will be held in the Fiske Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow.

Kevin Pullen was born and raised in northeast Oregon where he spent much of his time on his grandparent's ranch. There he was able to experience the outdoors and learn an appreciation for hard work and the natural world. As a child, his grandmother would take him on walks down the country road, stopping to peer into wild rose bushes at the young blackbirds in their nests. He continued his interest in nature as a field biologist, presenter and university zoology instructor.



On May 20, Dr. Leona Svancara of the University of Idaho will present a program on "Managing Wildlife in Climate Change." The program will begin at 7:30pm and will be held in the Great Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow.



Further details on these programs will be forthcoming on the PAS website, Facebook page, and on PAS-Announcements.

Bird Hibernation—The Common Poorwill of the American West patrols arid landscapes for insect prey. Uniquely among birds, this species actually goes into a full state of hibernation as the cool desert landscape becomes devoid of insect life during the winter season. The Poorwills wedge themselves into desert rock crevices and wait out the winter in a manner very similar to a bear.

Beginning Birding Class in May 2015

Palouse Audubon Society's Beginning Birding Class will be offered again this spring. Class sessions will be held in the 1912 Center, Moscow, from 7:30 to 9:00pm, on May 5, 7, 12, and 14, with morning field trips on May 9 and 16. One additional field trip will be added this year, although the date has not yet been determined. The class will be taught by local birding expert Kevin Pullen and is designed for adults of all ages who want to learn how to identify birds or how to bird better. This session will highlight spring migrants, and you will learn how to identify a variety of birds in migration: warblers, sparrows, thrushes, hawks, and others. A donation of \$50 (\$40 for Palouse Audubon members) is requested. For more information, or to register for the class, contact Diane Weber at catbirdz@roadrunner.com or 509-334-3817. NOTE: Class size is limited and advanced registration is required



The common phrase "eat like a bird" should mean something quite different. Many birds eat twice their weight in food each day.

WENAS AUDUBON CAMPOUT Memorial Day Weekend (May 22-25, 2014) | Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg)

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

The annual Wenas Audubon Campout takes place on Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26) at the Wenas Creek Campground. This casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website: (www.wenasaudubon.org) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information. Pre-registration is not required. The campout is free and open to all ages; however, donations are encouraged. Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass (<http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/>). Contact: Doris Johnson dellenj@comcast.net

Collective nouns for herons include: battery, hedge, pose, rookery, and a scattering of herons.

MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society (PAS), PO Box 3606, Moscow ID 83843-1914, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society (NAS) with its own dues. New NAS members in our chapter area receive one year's free membership in PAS, along with the chapter newsletter and other benefits of membership.

PAS dues of \$15 are payable in September. Members may receive the chapter newsletter, The Prairie Owl, either by mail or by email notification of its posting on the chapter's website. Members are encouraged to read the newsletter online to save printing and postage expenses. PAS members who have not renewed and NAS members who have not paid dues after one year of membership are removed from the newsletter distribution list on December 31st.

General membership meetings are held at the 1912 Building, FISKE ROOM, 3rd and Adams St, Moscow ID, at 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month, September through May. The board of directors meets at the 1912 Center at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month.

The Prairie Owl is published every other month, August through April. Material for the Owl should be sent to the editor, Tim Hillebrand, 857 Orchard Ave., Moscow ID 83843, 805-518-9612, tshphd@gmail.com by the 20th of the month. Subscription problems should be addressed to the membership chair, Ron Force, PO Box 3606, Moscow ID 83843-1914, 208-874-3207, ronforce@gmail.com. Visit the Palouse Audubon Society website at <http://www.palouseaudubon.org/> or find us on Facebook.

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
Moscow ID 83843-1914



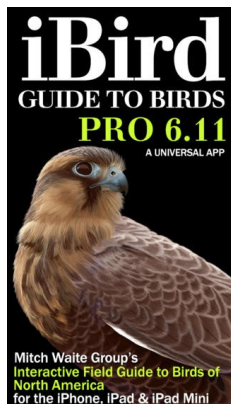
**Get to know our local owls
Give a Hoot. Go Owling.**

The mission of the Palouse Audubon Society is to promote education, conservation, and the restoration of natural ecosystems--focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats--for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity

We're on the Web:
www.palouseaudubon.org
and on [Facebook](#)

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From the Prez (continued from page 2)



aged) so we tote binoculars that cost what a family used to pay for a month's rent. If we're "hard core" our twice-as-expensive spotting scope on a sturdy carbon-fiber tripod rests in the back seat.

Of course, rare bird committees no longer accept sight records without corroboration, so a digital camera ranging from a super zoom to a digital SLR with a lens the size of a bazooka accompanies us everywhere. Our carbon footprint is the size of Godzilla's as we drive miles in search of the elusive "lifer".

Fortunately, as spring comes to the Palouse, and the migration is underway, we can return to the simpler days with a pair of binoculars and a quick walk in the park to greet familiar returning species and, we hope, some unexpected ones. The thrill is the same. Good Birding!

Ron Force

The Kestrel Catastrophe



Populations of American Kestrels in North America have declined by an estimated 47% since 1966. In an effort to prevent further losses, the American Kestrel Partnership enlists volunteers to build nest boxes and report the number of hatchlings and other findings. Scientists hope to use the information to model the small fal-

con's breeding success in the face of threats like habitat destruction, severe storms, and environmental contaminants. Participants post observations to the web-site, where they can also chat with other kestrel fans. Visit

<http://kestrel.peregrinefund.org/> for more information. [from Audubon magazine]

Ed. Note: when I was a lad there was no such thing as a Kestrel. They were Sparrow Hawks. The Sparrow Hawk's common name was changed to American Kestrel because the bird eats few sparrows and it isn't a hawk. That's right. It is more closely related to the European Kestrel, which is a falcon, not a hawk.