

# The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 44 ISSUE 2

December 2015-January 2016

## EVENT CALENDAR

**December 17:** Juliaetta-Lower Potlatch R CBC

**December 19:** Moscow-Pullman CBC

**December 20:** Lewiston-Clarkston CBC

**December:** no meeting-

**January 20, 2016:** Dr. Neff on Crop Biotechnology

**February 12-15, 2016:** GBBC

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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208-874-3207

ronforce@gmail.com,

**Vice President:**

Marie Dymkoski,

509-595-1650

Marie-dymkoski@msn.com

**Secretary; Program Chair:**

Diane Weber

509-334-3817

catbirdz@roadrunner.com

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p\_meserve@yahoo.com

**Membership:** Ron Force

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Tim Hillebrand

208-310-1341

tshphd@gmail.com

**Outreach:** Diane Weber

**Conservation Committee:**

Mike Costa

509-332-1793

majcosta@live.com

**Field Trips:**

Mike Clarke

transvolcanic@gmail.com

**Members at Large**

James Storms

509-635-1272

nbutte@pullman.com

Paul Schroeder

509-334-2470

schroede2003@yahoo.com

## January 20 Program

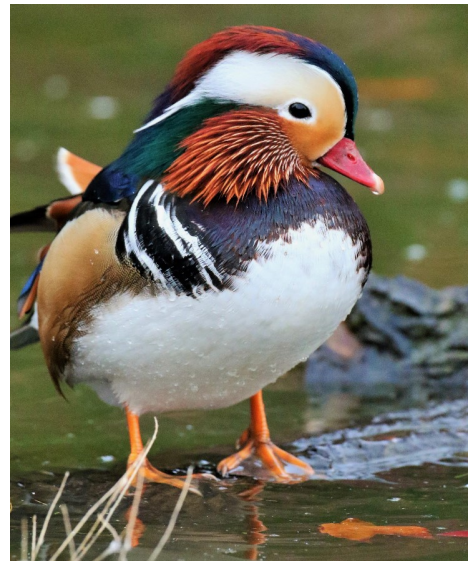
Dr. Michael Neff, Professor of Crop Biotechnology at Washington State University, will present a program on Crop Biotechnology on Wednesday, January 20, 2016, at 7:30pm in the Fiske Room of the 1912 Center in Moscow, Idaho. Dr. Neff will discuss genetically modified organisms (GMO's); the methods, pros, and cons of GMO's; and why communication is the key to understanding this controversial subject. Dr. Neff is also Director of the Molecular Plant Sciences Program, which was recently ranked as one of the top four in plant-related research by the U.S. National Research Council. This program is sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society and is free and open to the public.

## Cornell Webcams

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has one of the best websites dedicated to birds. It offers citizen science projects (FeederWatch and the Great Backyard Bird Watch), online tutorials to help people become better birders, an online bird guide, and bird cams. If your winter birding-watching needs a pick-me-up, head to <http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/>. Current live cams include the Ontario (Canada) FeederWatch, where you can watch Blue Jays, Pine Grosbeaks, Common and Hoary Redpolls, other eastern and boreal birds, and even a flying squirrel! The feeder cam at the Lab in Ithaca, New York, hosts birds like Pileated Woodpeckers and Cardinals. You can see the breeding pair of Barn Owls in Texas roosting in their nestbox during the day, and the popular breeding pair of Red-tailed Hawks—Big Red and Ezra—make regular visits to their nest on the Cornell campus. Other cams include the condor cam in California, hummingbird cam in Texas, barred owls in Indiana, and Laysan Albatrosses on Kauai, Hawaii. Some of the cams are currently of-

fline and will be activated when breeding season begins.

**Mandarin Duck at Sunnyside Park, Pullman, Washington**  
Photo by Charlie Wheeler



## Help with KEA Bird App

App developer Chis Duke gave a program for Audubon members September 16. He is asking for your help in adding content. If you are interested, contact Chris at [keabirdlearninginfo@gmail.com](mailto:keabirdlearninginfo@gmail.com) or [chris@kealearningbirdsthroughplay.com](mailto:chris@kealearningbirdsthroughplay.com).

If you want to try it free, grab it from iTunes. It will be available for Android soon.





## Photo Contest continued from page 2

The judges had a difficult job in selecting the winners from all of the wonderful and captivating entries. They provided the following insights as to what guidelines the final selections were based on. The main criteria for a winning candidate included aspects such as whether the photo was in focus, proper size resolution, good subject lighting (both behind and on the subject) and color saturation, good composition and focal point, and emotional appeal. Other factors considered were the difficulty in taking the photo, the background or setting, and how the subject was portrayed with regards to how well the photo captured the moment. Over-sharpening or other digital manipulations that looked unnatural were counted off. Hopefully, these can serve as useful pointers for strategies in taking photos for future photo contests.

Please visit the PAS website photo contest page to see more of the soon-to-be-posted 2015 entries. PAS would like to thank everyone who submitted photos to make the contest a successful event!

## Palouse Audubon Society Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Platform

The Palouse Audubon Society proposed to construct an artificial nesting platform on private property in the scabland area near Little Cove Canyon. The exact location chosen is Township 47.06858 N, Range 117.756834 W. The landowner, Read Smith, owns Little Cove Can-



yon and surrounding scabland.

Mike Costa and Jim Storms met with the landowner, Reed Smith, on November 24, 2013 to tour possible sites for a tower in the Winona – Lancaster, WA areas. We marked GPS numbers for three sites for consideration. Site #3 at Township 47.06840 N., Range 117.76834 W was selected.



The nesting platform materials were gathered and placed at the farm of Richard and Judy Olson near Garfield, WA. This couple graciously offered the use of their shop and tools for our use in the fall of 2013. The upright posts were drilled and pre-assembled with one set of cross pieces. The next step was to cut several lengths of 1" x 4" boards that were given two (2) coats of clear outdoor satin stain. Also the cross braces, 1" x 6" x 8 ft. were given two coats of clear outdoor satin stain.



The building materials were hauled to the Storms' garage in Garfield in January 2014. The nest box was fabricated and pre-assembled on the pallet that was used as the platform in March of 2015. The materials were moved to the site for assembly there in the first week in April.

The nesting platform was erected next. Using one of the cross piece boards as a straight edge and a compass, corner stakes were located to orient the tower in a North-South direction. Volunteer Mike Costa helped with the heavy lifting and assembly. The scaffolding was assembled first. Then the North-South frames were tilted up and leaned on the scaffolding. (Cont. on page 6)

## A Look Back

In 1971 Palouse Audubon Society was chartered as a chapter of the National Audubon Society, and in the same year held the first Moscow/Pullman Christmas Bird Count. In celebration of the 45th anniversary of the chapter, during 2016 we will take a look back at some of the chapter's activities during its early years through the pages of The Prairie Owl newsletter. The January 1972 issue includes the results of the first Christmas Bird Count. If you would like to compare the 1971 sightings with recent results, visit the CBC website, <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>. Click on Historical Results by Count, select start and end years, then enter country United States, State Idaho, and Count Code IDMP. See the next page.

# The Prairie Owl

THE PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME I NUMBER 5

JANUARY 1972



4,999 BIRDS, 41 SPECIES SPOTTED DURING FIRST  
PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

PROGRAM FOR THE JANUARY 20 MEETING

by Gary J. Schroeder, chairman

Twenty-four enthusiastic birders participated in the first Palouse Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count held on Dec. 27, 1971. A total of 4,999 birds in 41 species were sighted. During 54.5 party-hours of observation, 406 miles were traveled by vehicle, 13 by foot. Two bird feeders in Moscow were also under observation.

Fresh snow had fallen on Sunday and the count day was bright and sunny. Bohemian waxwings took quantitative honors, but some "rarer" sightings would have to include the water pipit, American goldfinch, snow buntings and common redpoll. The consensus of the birders indicated this was a successful and enjoyable outing.

Participating persons, who willingly donated their time, vehicles and expertise, were Irven O. and Katherine Buss, Ruth Campbell, Tanny Campbell, Ruth Carson, Don and Nancy Erman, Mrs. H.C. Harmsworth(\*), Dave Holick, Donald R. Johnson(\*\*), Loring M. Jones(\*\*), Dennis Lawrence, John Lawrence(\*\*), G. Elbert McProud, Levi Moore, Thomas F. and Kathleen Ogle, Ruth Ownbey, Carol Renfrew(\*), Gary and Nancy Schroeder, H.S. Telford, Jeffrey Zucker, Milton Zucker. (\*) Bird Feeder Observation, (\*\*) Section leader.

The results of our count will be published in AMERICAN BIRDS. To help cover publication costs, the National Audubon Society asks each observer to donate \$1. I would appreciate it if those few persons I have not yet been able to reach would send me their donation. Many thanks and happy birding.  
617 Taylor Street  
Moscow, Idaho 83843

The January membership meeting of the Palouse Audubon Society will be held at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 20, at the University of Idaho Life Sciences Building 301.

Prof. Richard L. Day, Palouse Audubon program chairman, will present a program in two parts--"The Seasons in Maine" including scenes at the Audubon Camp of Maine and "Nature from the Vista Dome" including movies made from a train.

Refreshments will be served after the meeting which is open to the public.

\* \* \*

The January board meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 18, at the Boehmes.

\* \* \*

The species of birds sighted, in AOU Check-	
list order, include:	
1 MALLARD	3 COMMON CROW
2 SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	21 BLACK-CAPPED CHICK-
1 COOPER'S HAWK	9 MOUNTAIN ADEES
5 RED-TAILED HAWK	4 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH
1 SWAINSON'S HAWK	1 BROWN CREEPER
26 ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	12 ROBIN
3 MARSH HAWK	1 WATER PIPIT
14 SPARROW HAWK	2137 BOHEMIAN WAXWING
1 RUFFED GROUSE	8 NORTHERN SHRIKE
9 CALIFORNIA QUAIL	539 STARLING
131 RING-NECKED PHEASANT	1148 HOUSE SPARROW
122 GRAY PARTRIDGE	14 BREWER'S BLACKBIRD
2 COMMON SNIPES	36 HOUSE FINCH
3 GREAT HORNED OWL	24 COMMON REDPOLL
12 SHORT-EARED OWL	10 PINE SISKIN
2 SAW-WHET OWL	12 AM. GOLDFINCH
25 RED-SHAFTED FLICKER	2 VESPER SPARROW
295 BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE	11 SLATE-COLORED JUNCO
39 COMMON RAVEN	139 OREGON JUNCO
	2 FOX 22 SONG SPARROW
	150 SNOW BUNTINGS



## Crow Mystery Solved

Researchers for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority found over 200 dead crows near greater Boston recently, and there was concern that they might have died from Avian Flu. But a bird pathologist confirmed that it was definitely not Avian Flu. The cause of death appeared to be vehicular impacts. During detailed analysis it was noted that varying colors of paint appeared on the birds' beaks and claws. Ninety eight percent of the crows had been killed by impact with trucks while only 2% died from collisions with cars. MTA hired an ornithological behaviorist to look into the problem. He concluded that while eating carrion crows always have a lookout crow to warn of impending danger. It seems that while lookout crows could shout "Cah", not a single one could say "truck".

**Question:** What is a crowbar

**Answer:** A place where crows go to drink.

### Wing Tip

The most yokes ever found in a single egg was nine. They were found in a chicken egg. Who knows you might get lucky some morning.

### 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.

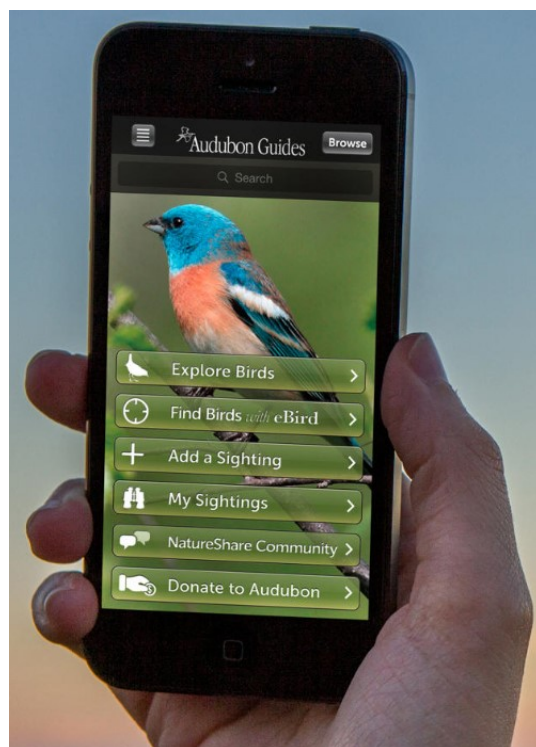
The Prairie Owl is published every other month, August through April. Material for the Owl should be sent to the editor, Tim Hillebrand, 857 Orchard Ave., Moscow ID 83843, 805-518-9612, tshphd@gmail.com by the 20th of the month. Subscription problems should be addressed to the membership chair, Ron Force, 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.

## Free Audubon Birding App



You will want to take advantage of this opportunity to get a great birding app from Audubon absolutely free. When it first came out a few years ago, I paid \$10 for it. Sibley's app will cost you \$29.

The Audubon app is all that you would expect it to be with lovely photographs, lots of information on each bird and bird calls. In addition it acts as a diary and allows you to record your sightings. You can even add your own photos and it's all in your pocket for easy access.



### Wing Tip



The Hooded Pitohui, *Pitohui dichrous*, which is widespread throughout New Guinea is the only poisonous bird known to exist. The natives eat them, but they must be prepared very carefully.

### Wingtips

A group of Pileated Woodpeckers is known as a "crown".

**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](http://www.palouseaudubon.org)  
**and on Facebook**

PSRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
COLTON, WA  
PERMIT NO. 4

## Platform (cont. from page 3)

With some effort, the cross beams on the east and west were added to the side frames. The 4 x 4 posts and beams were assembled using ½" x 8" Cap Screws, Flat Washers and Nuts.

The legs of the posts were pulled out and symmetrical-ly located at 88" inside to inside. Next the 1" x 6" x 96" cross pieces were added creating stability. Steel T-posts were driven into the ground at each corner and wired to the upright posts. This results in a very stable platform. The pallet for the nest box was added next and was wired to the East-West cross beams. The nest box itself was re-assembled on the pallet.



**JIM STORMS,  
APRIL 5, 2015**



The nesting platform was completed on April 9, 2015 with the installation of wind break panels.