

# The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 44 ISSUE 4

February-March 2015

## EVENT CALENDAR

Feb. 13-16 GBBC  
Feb. 18: Program—Birds of the Kalahari  
Mar. 18: Program—Birding in Nome, Alaska  
Mar. 27-29: Othello Crane Festival ([www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org](http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org))  
March 28-Field Trip  
April 1-PAS Photo Contest begins  
May-Beginning Birding Class (dates to be announced)  
watch Website  
[www.palouseaudubon.org](http://www.palouseaudubon.org)

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## Annual Christmas Bird Count Results

The Moscow-Pullman CBC was held 20 Dec; 44 participants, including 10 feeder watchers, tallied 68 species on count day (pending approval of Cackling Goose; one species more than the 2004-2013 average of 67) and 15593 individuals, besting the old record of 15219 seen in 1996. This was a bit surprising given the very low activity reported at feeders and the cloudy/rainy conditions. But the count was bolstered by a record 14 parties in the field (13 in 2012) and huge counts for American Robin (new record, see below) and European Starlings (3858, 39 shy of a new record). Participants spent 50.5 hours driving 496 miles, 43 hours walking 38 miles, 22 hours watching feeders, and 2 hours driving 7 miles looking for owls.

New/tied high counts (old record; year) included 1 CACKLING GOOSE (1; 2013); 22 BUFFLEHEAD (17; 2012); 4 Accipiter spp. (4; 2000); 452 EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES (258; 2013); 4 GRAY JAYS (2; 1960); 8 PACIFIC WRENS (6; 2013); 2895 AMERICAN ROBINS (1442; 1987); 1 WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (1; 1999); and 137 LESSER GOLD-FINCHES (25; 2012).

Rare bird documentation was provided for CACKLING GOOSE (report + photo); DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (CW; report + photo); GRAY JAY (report; first sighting since 1960); WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (report + photo); and LESSER GOLDFINCH (reports + photos). Of these, only the Cackling Goose is still being debated. Also sighted was a Northern (Red- x Yellow-shafted hybrid) Flicker.

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue their invasion. First observed as a CW species in species in 2007, numbers tallied on count day have exponentially increased: 2, 11, 90, 162, 200, 258, and 452. But what about Mourning Doves? This year's count (151) is just a smidge lower than the 20-year average of 157, but quite a bit lower than the 2004-2013 average of 208 species in 2007,

numbers tallied on count day have exponentially increased: 2, 11, 90, 162, 200, 258, and 452. But what about Mourning Doves? This year's count (151) is just a smidge lower than the 20-year average of 157, but quite a bit lower than the 2004-2013 average of 208.

Thanks to everyone who participated! Kas and Marie



**Cackling Geese** resemble Canada geese in appearance. Male cackling geese are slightly larger than females, with both sexes having black necks with white chinstraps. The breast, abdomen and flanks range in coloring from a light gray to a dark chocolate brown, either blending into the black neck or being separated from it by a wide white collar. The back and scapulars are darker brown, the rump is blackish and the tail is blackish-brown with a U-shaped white band on the rump. The bill, legs and feet are black. The call is a "honking" sound, high-pitched yelp or distinctive squeaking "cackle." They are somewhat smaller than Canada Geese and a smaller bill.

See the detailed results of the **Christmas Count** on our Website at [www.palouseaudubon.org](http://www.palouseaudubon.org)



## THE 2015 PAS PHOTO CONTEST

Do you have some interesting photos of wildlife? Now is your chance to share those photos in the PAS



Photo Contest. The Palouse Audubon Society will soon call for entries for its second annual photo contest. Entries can be submitted starting from April 1 until midnight on July 31, 2015.

The contest will be open to anyone who is an amateur photographer, whether a PAS member or non-member. Contest entry

rules and guidelines will be posted on the PAS Website and in the PAS Newsletter in the near future. The main emphasis will be on photos of birds, other wildlife, and other aspects of nature related to the Palouse region. Entrants are encouraged to use this opportunity to express their creativity in photographic compositions on nature.

The purpose of the photo contest is to further the mission of the PAS by enhancing our awareness of the wonders of the wildlife and nature that surrounds us, with consideration of the environment, conservation, and sustainability, and to give local amateur photographers an opportunity to express their impressions of nature. The first contest held in 20-14 was a great success with a fantastic assortment of award-winning photos entered. The photos captured images that represented a portrayal of nature. We anticipate that this year's contest will entice an even wider audience to enter.

So get out those cameras and capture photos of your favorite wildlife scenes. Consider submitting any interesting 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. The possibilities are endless.

Prizes will be awarded for the best entries in each category. But remember that the best prize will be the opportunity to share your award-winning photos with the PAS community.

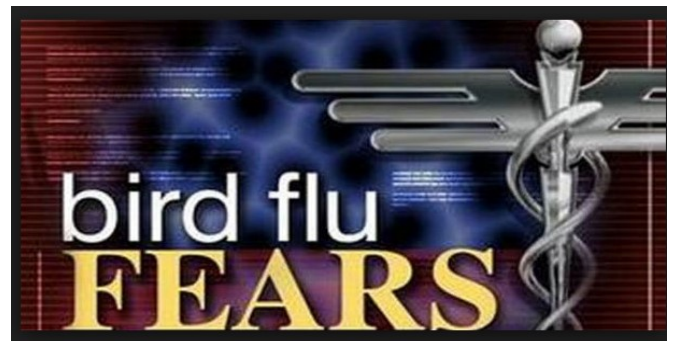
If you need ideas for photographic subjects, check out the entries from the 2014 photo contest on the [2014 Contest Results](#) page of the PAS Website.



## Avian Influenza in Washington and Idaho

Both the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game have issued public announcements concerning a highly contagious strain of avian flu. The current outbreak, which killed tens of thousands of chickens and domestic turkeys in British Columbia in early December, began showing up in western Washington and Oregon in mid-December. In eastern Washington, a domestic poultry flock in Benton County was recently euthanized after 1/3 of the flock died within one week. In southern Idaho, wild ducks, three captive falcons which had recently been fed wild duck, and backyard chickens in Canyon County all tested positive.

Domestic birds become infected by contact with wild birds: some studies have shown that up to



10% of wild waterfowl may be carriers of the virus, even though they show no symptoms. The current strain of avian flu has not caused any human illnesses to date, and the virus is not transferred to eggs or meat products.

Birdwatchers, hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts are encouraged to report sightings of sick or dead wild birds to their state's wildlife agency, which are particularly interested in waterfowl and birds such as eagles, hawks, falcons, ravens, and gulls that prey on them or scavenge their carcasses. In Washington call Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-606-8768. In Idaho, call Fish and Game at 208-454-7638.

Sick or dead domestic poultry can be reported to the Washington State Department of Agriculture at 1-800-606-3056. Idaho producers who observe bird flu symptoms should call the Idaho State Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian's office at 208-332-8540 or the US Department of Agriculture at 1-866-536-7593.



## Olympic Birdfest 2015

Dates: April 10-12, 2015

Location: Sequim, WA

Description: The festival with the most spectacular setting! Visit the rain shadow of the Olympic Peninsula to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest—Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, dippers, Black Oystercatchers, Long-tailed Ducks, and more. Guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, silent auction, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker is Lynsy Smithson Stanley: "Climate change as a 'Bird Issue'." Join the Birdfest Pre-trip on April 8-9, 2015, two days exploring northwest coastal Washington, a region rarely seen by birders.

Immediately following BirdFest, join us for a three-day, two-night birding cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 12-14, 2015. Cruise registration: separately at [www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon](http://www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon).

Birdfest website address:  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org) E-mail address:  
[info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org) Contact name: Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, 360-681-4076



Rhinoceros Auklet

## Nominations for Palouse Audubon Chapter Officers

Palouse Audubon is now accepting nominations for chapter Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Election of officers will take place at the program meeting in February, where nominations will also be accepted from the floor. If you are interested in serving in one of these positions, please contact Marie Dymkoski ([marie-dymkoski@msn.com](mailto:marie-dymkoski@msn.com), or 509-595-1650). More information can be found in the chapter Bylaws posted on the Palouse Audubon Society website, [www.palouseaudubon.org](http://www.palouseaudubon.org), at the link "About Us, Mission".

## Program: Birds (and Beasts) of the Kalahari

The Kalahari Basin and desert is a large semi-arid area in Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe which supports a wide variety of wildlife and birds. It features the Okavango Delta, an inland river delta that serves as an oasis in an otherwise dry area. Ron Force traveled on safari there in August 2013, and will present a travelogue on the birds, animals, environment, and conservation issues of the countries visited. This program will be presented February 18 at 7:30 PM in the Fiske Room at the 1912 Center in Moscow.

## Program: Birding in Nome, Alaska

Sarah Walker and Jerry Cebula will talk about their trip to Nome, Alaska on March 18 at 7:30 PM in the Fiske Room in the Moscow 1912 Center. Watch our Website ([www.palouseaudubon.org](http://www.palouseaudubon.org)) for forthcoming details.



The Willow Ptarmigan is the state bird of Alaska.

## Columbia Plateau Songbird Survey Takes Flight

The survey will consist of several teams with assigned sites during the months of April, May, and June. There will be a one day training session April 4 from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM in the Spokane Falls Community College Science Building. For complete details, visit our Website at [www.palouseaudubon.org](http://www.palouseaudubon.org). Contacts: [ron-force@gmail.com](mailto:ron-force@gmail.com) or [cnorman@audubon.org](mailto:cnorman@audubon.org).



Sage Thrasher

## MEET THE BOARD PETER MESERVE



Peter Meserve and his wife Jan are both native Californians who have now made Moscow their home. They were first introduced to life in the Inland Empire in 1975-1976 when he taught at the University of Idaho for a year. Earl Larrison and Don Johnson graciously showed them around and shared their extensive knowledge of its birds and mammals then. After leaving the area in 1976, Peter ended up at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL, and taught Biology of Birds and Mammals, Ecology and Biogeography for 35 years there until his retirement in 2011. They moved back to Moscow in 2012. Peter keeps busy collaborating with his colleague Doug Kelt at the University of California, Davis, on a long-term field study in north-central Chile which recently completed its 25th year of monitoring. He is also book review editor for the *Journal of Mammalogy*, and reviews manuscripts for several scientific journals. He is very happy to be here and now can root for either the San Francisco 49ers or the Seattle Seahawks in his newly adopted home after years of suffering with the Chicago Bears! Peter joined the board in December 2014 as PAS treasurer. Peter was one of the original founders of the Palouse Audubon Society in 1971.

### IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO DO...

Here's a website dedicated to the worst bird photos:  
<https://storify.com/audubonca/worst-bird-pics>

## RED-TAILED HAWK ATTACKS DRONE

Christopher Schmidt was flying his quadcopter at Magazine Beach Park in Cambridge, Mass, when a hawk decided he wasn't too happy with the invasion of his airspace. To see the video recording of this event, go [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smv7cBzg-Ok):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smv7cBzg-Ok>



### Wingtips

A group of Robins is known as a "worm" of Robins.

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

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**From the Prez (continued from page 2)**

*ly disappeared from the Pacific coast...In autumn...the Trumpeter gathered in mighty flocks, circled high in the air and moved southward in great flights...This is written in the past tense as there are no longer any great flights of the species...The reason for the rapid decrease of the Trumpeter is not far to seek. It is the largest and most conspicuous of waterfowl. Wherever, in settled regions, swans were seen to alight, every kind of firearm that could do duty was requisitioned and all men turned out to hunt the great white birds...*

He goes on to recount how the Arctic populations were hunted to commercial extinction for feathers and down by 1890. He ends on a sad note: *So the demands of fashion and the blood lust will follow the Trumpeter to the end.*

Although protected from hunting, the Trumpeter now faces the increase in outdoor recreation and the encroachment of humans on its habitat. Extremely sensitive to disturbance while nesting, the growth of of campgrounds, fishing, and recreational boating on the wildlife refuge may be the demands that follow the Yellowstone Trumpeter to the end.

Ron Force

**Birds of North America Online at Local Libraries**

Birds of North America is the largest encyclopedia detailing the life histories and distribution of North American birds. Compiled and published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The printed version runs 18,000 pages. It is now published as an Internet database, and is regularly added-to and updated. Thanks to an anonymous contribution from one of our members, it's now available from the Whitman County, Neil Public, and Latah County Libraries. Look under their database lists. You'll need a library card to log in.

