



THE PRAIRIE OWL

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 46, Issue 3, Dec 2017-Jan 2018

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

PROGRAMS

Monday, December 4 - The White Pine Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society and Palouse Audubon Society will co-sponsor a program by Charles Swift at 7:00 p.m. in the Great Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow. "Citizen Science: A Primer for the Amateur Naturalist" will discuss the opportunities that now abound for the amateur naturalist to contribute to science. Citizen science is not a new idea but more recent projects, such as eBird and iNaturalist, have made use of technological advances to provide powerful new citizen science tools. These connect naturalists from beginners to experts, and provide great opportunities for education and enhancing enjoyment of nature. Data from these projects are informing large-scale efforts to study global biodiversity and can also be leveraged for more locally focused projects. This program will briefly review the history of citizen science with a focus on more recent projects. It will provide some useful tips on what's available, how to get started, and how organizations can benefit from these tools. Charles Swift is an enthusiastic promoter of citizen science and has been involved since his first Christmas Bird Count as an early teen birder over 40 years ago. He has been an avid "eBirder" for 10+ years and recently got hooked on iNaturalist which has rejuvenated his interest in plants, bugs, herps and other flora and fauna. The program is free and open to the public.

Wednesday, January 17- Palouse Audubon Society president Ron Force will present a program on "Ethiopia, the Roof of Africa." The program, sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society, will be held in the Fiske Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow, at 7:00pm. Ethiopia is a country of contrasts: it contains some of the highest terrain in Africa and some of the lowest elevations. It boasts ancient empires that dominated the Horn of Africa and trade with the Middle East. Ethiopians founded and still practice some of the oldest Christian traditions (including churches carved from solid rock by angels, as the legend relates) and founded monasteries in the Middle Ages that contain precious artifacts. It was the only African country never to be colonized but struggled against war and famine in the 20th century. Its high plateaus and low Rift Valley lakes provide a range of habitats for rare mammals, birds, and plants semi-protected in national parks and preserves. Please join us as Ron Force presents an overview of his travel through the country in February of 2017, emphasizing the scenery and natural history. The program is free and open to the public.



Ron Force

FROM THE PREZ

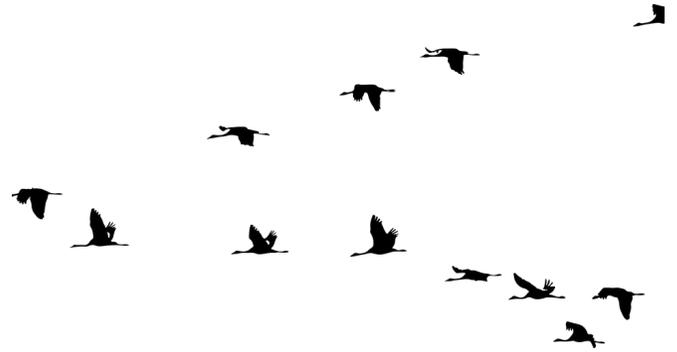
I hope you're all enjoying the holiday season and looking forward to 2018. Although we don't usually have a December program meeting we had an opportunity to co-sponsor an event with the Idaho native Plant Society. And, there's other Audubon activities on tap. The Christmas Bird Count is going strong with Pullman-Moscow scheduled on December 16, and Lewiston-Clarkston on December 17. If you're not up to rising early and birding outside, you can choose to "feeder watch" through your own window.

You can continue this citizen science project by joining the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Project Feederwatch (<https://feederwatch.org/>) and report local observations through the winter.

Join us for our next program meeting January 17, 2018-- Happy New Year!

On another topic, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Paul Schroeder for his long service as a Board Member-at-Large. Although he's opting out from attending evening board meetings, he'll continue to write his Bird of the Month articles for *The Prairie Owl*. See his Bald Eagle article and drive up to Wolf Lodge Bay on Lake Coeur d'Alene to get up close and personal with a "convocation" of eagles.

SAVE THE DATE
Great Backyard Bird
Count February 16-19,
2018



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FIELD TRIPS

Christmas Bird Counts are happening around the region. If you don't see one listed here that you might be interested in, check with their Audubon Chapter.

<http://wos.org/cbc/>

Moscow Pullman CBC-Saturday, Dec 16

Lewiston Clarkston CBC-Sunday, Dec 17

Cle Elum CBC-Monday, Dec 18

Sandpoint CBC-Wednesday, Dec 20

Bonnars Ferry CBC-Thursday, Dec 28

Spokane CBC-Saturday, Dec 30

The 117th Christmas National Audubon Bird Count Summary

For the eighth straight season a record number of counts were submitted to the Audubon database—2,536 counts (447 in Canada, 1,933 in the United States, and 156 Latin America, Caribbean, Pacific Islands) and are included in the 117th Christmas Bird Count database.

<http://bit.ly/2kdp22F>



MEET THE BOARD

I am a 21 year old student in my final year of undergrad at Washington State University. My major is Zoology but my specialty is birds. I have been a birdwatcher since I was 8 years old or so. My grandma introduced it to me when she took me on an Audubon trip near San Diego, CA. We saw many birds including the locally rare California Gnatcatcher and ever since those trips I've been hooked. In 2007 I moved from California to the little farm community of St. John, Washington. I then began to get more serious about birding and even took up photography to help identify the birds I was seeing. Since then I have had the opportunity to extensively bird around much of the West including Idaho, Montana, Oregon, California and Arizona. I have also spent the last 3 summers working with birds by doing surveys in the mountains of Idaho. However, as some of you may know from Inland NW Birders (email listserv) I spend most of my time birding the Palouse. With my knowledge of the area I hope to make some bird filled field trips and I look forward to meeting some of you on them!

Good birding,

RJ Baltierra, Field Trip Chair



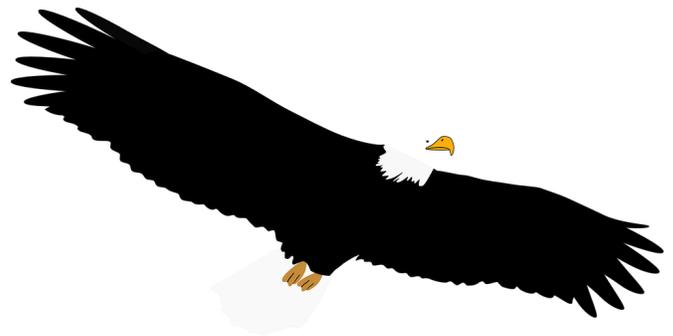
BIRD OF THE MONTH

The Bald Eagle

Since we have just completed observing a national holiday honoring our war veterans, I thought it might be interesting to look at our national symbol from a more ornithological point of view. Our bald eagle is, of course, not bald. (Few birds are!) It's named after the white feathers on its head. Since the birds are primarily fish eaters, they are most easily found close to water, both fresh and salt. These are among our largest birds, and they take advantage of their size to steal fish from other species, especially, but not exclusively, from ospreys. They are not above feeding on carrion if the opportunity presents itself. I recall seeing a group of eagles feeding on a dead deer which had washed up on the banks of the Methow River a number of years ago. It was winter. I stayed in the valley for several days, and the eagles were still hanging out near that carcass when I drove past the site to return to Pullman.

In the 1960's, populations of the bald eagle were declining rapidly due to the effects of DDT, accumulated from the carcasses of the fish they eat, on the thickness of the shells of the eggs laid by the females. In many cases, the eggs had become too fragile for the female to put her weight on them, and were broken open prematurely. After DDT had been banned, the birds began to recover, and the Fish and Wildlife Service went to extraordinary lengths to protect breeding pairs. In the mid-nineties, I and a graduate student were led about a mile out of our way to avoid an active nest when we were walking on the Nisqually delta near Olympia. This effort has been extremely successful, and in 2007 the bird was removed from the threatened list and has become fairly abundant once again, especially here in the northwest. Although in our area the birds can

generally be found year round, many from other areas migrate north in the summer and breed in Canada and Alaska, where they can be quite abundant. (In Sitka, they are called "Sitka Gulls".) While I was on a boat in Alaska's Glacier Bay, our group watched a bald eagle swimming to shore towing a fish (almost certainly a salmon) which was too heavy to permit the eagle to take off from the water. This bird reached shore safely and we were able to see the fish. A ranger told us that in that area drowning was a major cause of mortality for bald eagles. Apparently they won't give up that fish under any circumstances! (I haven't been able to find confirmation that the talons lock on the fish so that the eagle is unable to release it.)



These eagles are part of a group called sea eagles, a group of fish-feeding eagles. In Northern Europe, the related White-tailed Sea Eagle is being reintroduced to many places where it had gone extinct, and there are several other sea eagles as well. The most impressive, I think, is the Steller's Sea Eagle, which occurs in northwestern Asia, especially on the Kamchatka Peninsula in northern Russia. I have found the article on Britannica (britannica.com/animal/bald-eagle) to have good information, along with good photos and a couple of spectacular videos of bald eagles stealing food from other species, and of the Steller's Sea Eagles.

Paul Schroeder

Bald Eagles are gathering again at Wolf Lodge Bay.

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/fish-and-wildlife/wildlife/about/idaho/lake-coeurdalene-eagle-watch>

Nominations for Palouse Audubon Chapter Officers

Nominations are being accepted for chapter President, 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, or 509-595-1650). More information can be found in the chapter Bylaws posted on the Palouse Audubon Society website, www.palouseaudubon.org, at the link "About Us, Mission".

The annual meeting of Palouse Audubon Society will be held at the March program meeting, where installation of officers and other chapter business will be conducted.

“Once upon a time, when women were birds, there was the simple understanding that to sing at dawn and to sing at dusk was to heal the world through joy. The birds still remember what we have forgotten, that the world is meant to be celebrated.”

— Terry Tempest Williams, When Women Were Birds: Fifty-four Variations on Voice

National Audubon Society Recipe for Suet

With this vegetarian version of suet (traditionally it's made from rendered animal fat) you can provide the perfect winter substitute for birds that normally feast on insects. This lipid-rich treat can help prepare year-round residents for the long winter and is quite the draw for birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, and nuthatches.

Materials:

1 1/2 cups shortening (look for palm oil free options)
3/4 cups nut butter (any kind)
3 1/2 cups wild bird seed
1 cup quick oats
1/2 cup cornmeal
Ice cube tray

Steps:

1. Mix the dry ingredients of bird seed, oats, and cornmeal together and set aside.
2. Combine the shortening and nut butter in a separate bowl and melt. Stir until completely combined.
3. Pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients and stir until combined.
4. Spoon mixture into the ice cube tray.
5. Freeze for one to two hours and place in your suet feeder!



OCTOBER BIRD PLANTING AT THE TONY KETTEL SKATE GARDENS

There is a new space above the Palouse Skatepark that is being transformed from a construction debris dumping ground into a beautiful nature park. Over 1,200 volunteer hours have been given toward site cleanup, team planning sessions, site preparations and development of the "Parisian Avenue" concept at the Tony Kettel Skate Gardens in Palouse, Washington during the last two and a half years. New to the space this fall is a bird habitat area planted with help from the public, thanks in large part to Palouse Audubon Society.

Palouse Audubon Society partnered with the Tony Kettel Skate Gardens to provide financial support for these plantings, and to lend a hand in choosing specimens attractive to native birds. In the future, there may be bird identification classes hosted in the space, and perhaps a featured "Bird of the Month" for nature-lovers to learn about. The future is bright for this partnership, and our project thanks **Palouse Audubon Society** for their support!

Tony Kettel Skate Gardens
Nicole Flansburg, Co Chair
Marie Dymkoski, Co Chair



MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society (PAS) 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 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month, September through May. The board of directors meets at the 1912 Center at 7:00 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, Marie Dymkoski marie-dymkoski@msn.com by the 20th of the month. Subscription problems should be addressed to the membership chair, Diane Weber 509-334-3817 or catbirdz@roadrunner.com.

Visit the Palouse Audubon Society website at <http://www.palouseaudubon.org/> or find us on Facebook.



THE PRAIRIE OWL

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 the Palouse Audubon Society.

Annual Membership **\$15.00**

Donation _____

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Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, Moscow ID 83843.

Please include this form with payment.

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(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

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
Moscow ID 83843-1914

The 47th consecutive (and 64th overall) Moscow-Pullman
Christmas Bird Count will be on Saturday, Dec 16.

Birders interested in counting birds at their feeders or spending the day on a field crew should contact the local coordinators in advance of the count.

Birders interested in participating on the Idaho side should contact Kas Dumroese at kas.dumroese@gmail.com. Moscow participants will meet at the Starbucks in the Palouse Mall parking lot at 630 am.

Birders interested in participating on the Washington side should contact Marie Dymkoski at Marie-Dymkoski@msn.com