



THE PRAIRIE OWL

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY
Volume 46, Issue 1, Sept 2017

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

Wednesday, September 20 - Landscaping for Birds 1912 Building Great Room, 3rd and Adams, Moscow, 7:00 p.m.

Kevin Pullen will present a program on "Landscaping for Birds". Birds add an ever-changing parade of color, music, and activity to your yard. Learn how to select the trees, shrubs, and plants that provide shelter and safety to design a bird-friendly yard. Kevin is a well-known bird enthusiast who has taught Palouse Audubon's Beginning Birding class for the past seven years, as well as the Birding by Ear class for the past two years. Kevin is the nursery manager at SYG Nursery and Landscaping in Pullman. Please join us for this informational program co-sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society and the Moscow Tree Commission. The program is free and open to the public. You are not required to register with Moscow Parks and Recreation to attend.



Wednesday, October 18 - TBA
Wednesday, November 15 - TBA

FIELD TRIPS

RJ Baltierra will be leading several field trips during the month of September. **All field trips will meet at Umpqua Bank located at 225 N. Grand Ave, Pullman, WA.**

Saturday, September 9-Shorebirds in NW Whitman. Sheep Lake and surrounding area to look for migrating shorebirds. Full-day trip. Leave at 7:00am, return 4:00pm. Bring water, food, and dress appropriate for the weather.

Saturday, September 16- Kamiak Butte. We'll be looking for migrant warblers and other passerines. Leave at 7:00am, return at noon. Bring water, snacks and dress appropriate for the weather and trail walking.

Sunday, September 24- Mann Lake. Meet at Umpqua Bank, we'll be following the leader to other stops on the way back from Mann Lake. Leave at 7:00am, return 4:00pm. Bring water, food, and dress appropriate for the weather.

Saturday, September 30- Steptoe Butte and Steptoe Sewage Ponds. Migrant raptors and passerines. Full-day trip. Leave at 7:00am, return at 4:00pm. Bring water, food, and dress appropriate for the weather.

Please contact RJ at 509-332-9043, for any further information.



Ron Force

From the Prez:

It's always difficult to lose a friend, and I'm sad to tell you that we lost our newsletter editor, **Tim Hillebrand**, in June. Tim was born and raised in Santa Barbara, California as a ninth generation Californian, and received his PhD in Archaeology from UCSB. He directed the Santa Barbara Historical Society Museum, then moved to Los Angeles where he taught at a number of leading universities.

He became vice-president of a company that produced archaeological films and caught the travel bug. He founded a company that arranged archaeology tours all over the world, and eventually traveled to over one hundred countries. Some of his stories seemed like "Indiana Jones" dealing with foreign governments and military who suspected him of either spying or treasure hunting. He later turned these experiences into a series of six novels featuring an intrepid archaeologist as protagonist.

Tim retired in 1988, first moving to Salmon, Idaho, then moving to Moscow at his wife's urging where she taught English at WSU. He founded an electronic publishing company and wrote reviews on cell phones and electronic gadgets for magazines and blogs. He always had a drawer full of electronics, and particularly liked little helicopters to fly around the house. He served on a number of charitable boards, which was where I met him and recruited him to PAS. He was ever willing to lend a hand to worthy enterprises. Sadly, he lost his wife Ramana to early-onset Alzheimer's, and nursed her at home until her death in 2010.

Under his editorship, *The Prairie Owl* was filled with interesting factoids, puns and corny

jokes, always interesting to read. The last e-mail I sent him posed the the question: "RU Old? If you fall down and everyone laughs, you're not old. If everyone panics comes running, you're old". He replied, "Last week I went to the post office on a rainy day and slipped on the floor. Lotsa people came running. IR Old".

RIP, Tim.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Ron Force, 208-874-3207, ronforce@gmail.com

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BIRD OF THE MONTH

The Great Blue Heron

I thought it would be fun to write a bit about a conspicuous bird that almost everyone in our area sees fairly often: the Great Blue Heron. This large bird (the largest of our wading birds) is likely to turn up even in small ponds, and one might occasionally notice one above, flying with strong majestic beats of its wide wings.. The herons are hunters, feeding mainly on fish and frogs, but also on snakes



small mammals and larger insects (like grasshoppers). Like most herons and egrets they can wait patiently for a long time without moving, thus reassuring their prey that there is no danger in approaching these motionless objects. The attack, when it comes, is swift and usually deadly, although sometimes for the unexpected party. These herons eat fish by flipping them into the air so that they come down head first, and swallowing them intact, and have been known to capture fish too large for them to swallow. If they lodge in the bird's throat, the heron can die from asphyxiation. I have also seen adult herons

which have been hit by vehicles; because of their long legs and wings, they can look like umbrellas turned inside out by the wind. Life is dangerous even for big birds!

Great Blue Herons are at home in both salt and fresh water and they may be seen along our coasts, mainly in rocky areas or sometimes standing on floating kelp and watching for a fish close to the surface. Inland, they are found throughout much of the United States (not in high mountain areas), and they extend into the Caribbean and Central America. An all white subspecies exists in southern Florida and the Caribbean, which resembles the Great Egret; the heron has a much heavier bill and lighter colored legs than the egret.

Despite their size, herons weigh only 5-6 pounds, thanks to the hollow bones that all birds have to help them to get off the ground. They are usually solitary, but in the spring the herons gravitate toward one another and prepare for breeding in groups, sometimes small but often in fairly large "colonies". One of these forms each spring on an island in the Clearwater River; the birds can be seen from the road (Hwy 95/12) when you are driving eastward. I recall a dilemma faced by the Washington Dept. of Natural Resources along Henderson Inlet on South Puget Sound. They try to protect colonies of breeding herons, but one such colony on Woodard Bay, Henderson Inlet, has been forming for years. In the 90's a pair of Bald Eagles set up housekeeping a few hundred feet to seaward, close to a good food source (heron chicks!) for their chicks (the eagles were being fiercely protected in those days, and you weren't allowed to walk to within a mile of a nest site if that was practicable). I think it was decided to leave things as they were and let nature take its course; the eagles had a higher priority.
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Throughout the Palearctic, a quite similar heron fills the niche of the Great Blue: the Gray Heron. In my travels, I have seen them in England, and also in Japan, so they span Eurasia completely, again except for high mountains. Their lifestyle seems to be successful, since they are not difficult to find in appropriate habitats on either continent. It's nice to hear of a biological success story every now and then!

Paul Schroeder

BOOK REVIEW

I read an article in May 2017 Smithsonian about W. H. Hudson (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/naturalist-ernest-hemingway-others-love-wilderness-180962775/>), early 20th century naturalist and ornithologist. His book "Far Away and Long Ago" is considered one of the 20th century's greatest memoirs! Of particular interest to me was the mention that the autobiography was used in Japan to teach English. Evidently because of this, Suntory the Japanese whiskey distiller donated funds to the W.H. Hudson Nature Reserve in Argentina located near Hudson's birthplace. Since I did not learn English from "Far Away and Long Ago", I checked it out from the WSU library and read it. It can also be read online for free at <https://archive.org/details/farawayandlongag019622mbp>.

Though it was published in 1918 a few years before his death, reading his accounts of early childhood in the Pampas of Argentina, where he spent the first 18 years of his life, made the scenery, bird behavior, and life in general back at the turn of the century very real. From his earliest childhood, he was a keen observer of flora and fauna of the Pampas. It is not surprising that as an adult, he produced important ornithological works of both

Argentinian and later British Birds. Because this autobiography was produced late in life, he compares the birds he observed as a child with birds in Britain. In addition to flora and fauna, he reveals the rough and tumble life of frontier life in Argentina and its wars, but from a child's perspective. His mother, though concerned about his solitary and taciturn ways, allowed him freedom to explore his surroundings. I expect this freedom led to his continued study of the natural world. This work was an interesting read from three very different perspectives from the natural world, interactions among English-speaking settlers with gauchos and a unique type of childhood.

Charlotte Omoto



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

September marks the time to renew your membership in Palouse Audubon Society. Annual membership is only \$15 and supports the programs and activities of the chapter, including an annual subscription to the Prairie Owl. For this year we are planning educational and entertaining programs and will offer a variety of field trips with our new field trip chair **RJ Baltierra**.

In the next few weeks you will receive a renewal request in the mail: please return the membership form and your dues as soon as possible. If you do not receive a letter, you may be one of the 20 PAS members who has already renewed through August 2018. On a paper copy of this newsletter, your expiration date will be printed on the mailing label. If you receive an electronic copy of the newsletter and have questions about your membership status, don't hesitate to contact me at catbirdz@roadrunner.com or 509-334-3817. The Board members of PAS thank you for your past support and encourage you to attend as many of our programs, field trips, and other activities as you can during the year. If you have comments about our activities or suggestions for the Board, please don't hesitate to share those with me. I hope to see you soon at a program meeting or on a field trip!

Diane Weber



KOPPEL FARM SPRING FAIR, 2017

The Koppel Spring Fair PAS booth, co-hosted by **Charlotte Omoto** and **Mike Costa**, was a festive event full of engaging activities and information and had an excellent turnout. The booth was attended by at least 30 visitors. Charlotte used a bird call program that she projected from her iPhone to her Bluetooth speaker set on the table. Mike prepared a poster that read "Take our bird song ID challenge and win a prize" and it was a great hit for attracting people. The bird call ID contest was an overwhelming success in drawing people to the booth for information and interaction. Participants appreciated the prizes, especially the Audubon tote bags and a hummingbird feeder, two bluebird houses, suet cakes and wire racks, packets of bird seed, and solar-powered flapping pink flamingos, among other items. Children were attracted to the yellow "happy face" balloons so we started giving those away. Numerous attendees showed an interest to join PAS and discussed various aspects of the organization, birds, bird sightings, and local birding areas. Many were enticed by the photo contest poster to go to the PAS website to search for additional information and activities. Some took information pamphlets and PAS membership application forms. Two pink flamingos on stilt legs completed the picture and a new local bird listing was born, the Palouse Pink Flamingo (PPF). Mike added a brush pile to the scene in front of the table. Also on display were posters and photos from previous PAS photo contests, local bird lists, potted native plants for backyard plantings, and PAS activities listings.

Mike Costa

PAS GRADUATE GRANTS 2017

Each year the Palouse Audubon Society awards two \$500 grants to graduate students one from The University of Idaho and one from Washington State University. The grant is intended to support research in line with the broad purposes of the chapter.

The winner from the University of Idaho is **Laura Ehlen** from the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. Her adviser is Kerri Vierling. She plans to investigate how shrub encroachment on grasslands affects bird community composition, habitat use behavior, and reproductive success. The research will be done on the Weippe Prairie, and will help determine management strategies by the National Park Service.

The winner from Washington State University is **Olivia Smith** who studies in the Department of Biological Sciences under William Snyder. She will evaluate the impact of birds on organic vegetable farms, both positive (pollinators, insectivores, and raptors) and negative (damage to crops and the spread of human enteric bacteria) and the importance of landscape composition on bird species mixtures.

We congratulate this year's winners, and hope to have them present the results of their research when completed.

"Did you ever see an unhappy horse?
Did you ever see a bird that had the blues?"

One reason why birds and horses are not unhappy is because they are not trying to impress other birds and horses." - Dale Carnegie

MEET THE BOARD



Charlotte Omoto, the new secretary of the Palouse Audubon Society, is an emeritus professor of Biology at WSU. Although professionally a biologist, she did not study birds, but microbes! She became interested in birds as an undergraduate at University of Washington. The first bird she tried to identify was a starling! Can't believe that it is her most hated bird, close to house sparrows and Eurasian Collared Doves.

In graduate school at University of Wisconsin in Madison, she admits that her motivation for joining the Audubon society chapter was that she didn't have a car and wanted to get out of town. Going on field trips that departed from campus parking lot was perfect. In the process, she learned birds. She became the chapter publicity person posting meeting notices across campus and putting notices in newspapers. Her most memorable moment as chapter officer was a chance to see a video of Snow Leopard! Midwest was a great place to learn warblers, sitting at the edge of the arboretum before trees leafed out as experts called out warblers as they came through.

As a post-doctoral fellow at Princeton, she got to help a volunteer mist net and band birds. Ever since, she's been hooked on birds.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, December 16 - Moscow-Pullman
Christmas Bird Count

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 or Great 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 September through May

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.

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Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
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Landscaping for Birds

Wednesday, September 20

7 pm – 9 pm

1912 Center, Great Room

Free admission

Birds add an ever-changing parade of color, music and activity to your yard. Learn how to select trees, shrubs and plants that provide shelter and safety to design a bird-friendly yard. All ages welcome.

Sponsored by the Palouse Audubon Society

And

The Moscow Tree Commission

