

The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 45 ISSUE 2

December 2016-January 2017

EVENT CALENDAR

December: no program
Happy Holidays

December 6: PAS Board
Meeting cancelled

December 17: Palouse
Audubon Christmas Bird
Count

January 18: Program:
Madagascar, the Eighth
Continent

February 17-20: Great
Backyard Bird Count
www.BirdCount.org

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Program Meeting January 18



Madagascar, an island off the coast of southern Africa, separated from the continent over 88 million years ago.

Since then it has

gone its own evolutionary way, with 90% of the plant and animal species found nowhere else on earth.

Unlike the Galapagos, it's heavily populated with people who have a strong and unique culture. In June of 2015, Ron Force and his wife JoEllen travelled to Madagascar on a tour looking for birds and wildlife, which they found. What else they found challenged their ideas about conservation and national development and raised questions which will become more common in a world of climate change and human population growth.

Ron's program "Madagascar, the Eighth Continent" will be presented on January 18, 2017 in the Fiske Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow at 7:00pm [please note the new, earlier start time!]. The program is sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society and is free and open to the public.



Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of citizen science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the US, Canada and many countries in the Western Hemisphere, go out over a 24 hour period on one calendar day to count birds. The Palouse Audubon Society will be holding count day on Saturday, December 17th.

Each count takes place in an established 15-mile wide diameter circle, and is organized by a count compiler. Count volunteers follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally--all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day. If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher. If your home is within the boundaries of a CBC circle, then you can stay at home and report the birds that visit your feeder on count day as long as you have made prior arrangement with the count compiler.

Contact Kas Dumroese
kas.birder@gmail.com compiler in Moscow and Marie Dymkoski marie-dymkoski@msn.com compiler in Pullman.



Owls in Myth and Legend

From ancient times to the present, owls appear in tales from many different cultures. Both the Greek and Roman goddesses of wisdom, Pallas Athene is often referred to as Zeus' favorite child, She was the Greek goddess of wisdom and the patron of household arts and crafts like spinning, weaving and textiles. Both she and Minerva were often pictured in the company of an owl. Owls in China were associated with thunder and lightning. Long ago in Europe, a dead owl was thought to ward away lightning, hail, and disease.

Other cultures associated owls with death in both good and bad ways. Some North American Indian tribes considered owls to be an omen of death. Other tribes thought owls were soul-bearers that transported the spirits of the dead to the afterlife. Members of the Hidatsa called owl the “keeper of game spirit” that watched over the bison herds. The burrowing owl was considered the protector spirit of warriors of this tribe.

Nowadays, we see owls in movies such as “Hoot” and read about them in books. The “Wise Old Owl” appears in many children's stories. The owls of Harry Potter deliver mail while the owl of Winnie-the-Pooh gives advice. A children's book series featuring owls, Guardians of Ga'hoole, is quite popular with upper elementary readers. Many younger readers learn about great horned owls in “Owl Moon”.



Statue of Minerva holding an owl in her right hand

From the Prez



Ron Force

In October Audubon Washington held an all chapters meeting to hear from David Ringer, the Chief Network Officer for the National Audubon Society. He laid out an ambitious plan to “turn the ship” and create a National Audubon Society capable of influencing environmental policy for the benefit of birds at the national, state, and local levels. The over four hundred Audubon chapters are expected to play a key role in contacting and influencing decision-makers.

A second initiative to increase the diversity of membership, of both race and age, relies on the use of technology and social media to attract those not included by our current offerings. Some pilot programs have shown promise.

A third program will revise their systems, cutting down on redundant mailings and modernizing the design of Websites and printed materials.

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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NAME	ADDRESS
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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

BIRD OF THE MONTH:

Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis*

Many of you have probably been seeing our annual winter guests, the "Oregon" Juncos, at your feeders during the past couple of weeks. These friendly little sparrows prefer cool to cold weather, and come south or to lower elevations as winter approaches (The hyemalis in their scientific name refers to winter.). They will remain with us until they migrate in the spring either into the mountains or to the north to breed in conifer or mixed forests.

These birds are quite variable, and a number of subspecies has been described based primarily on color variations in the plumage. The Oregon Junco is easily recognized by the black head and brown back of the males.

The head is gray in females, but males seem to dominate at our feeders. Most of the subspecies can be readily recognized as dark-eyed juncos in flight by the pair of dual white feathers on the outside edges of the tail. This applies to most of the subspecies. The "Oregon" is widespread throughout the west, but the dominate "Slate-colored" Junco occurs throughout North America and is thus even more widespread. Males of the Slate-colored Junco are uniformly dark gray with a white belly. In our area, these show up occasionally, but are greatly outnumbered by the "Oregon" form. Sibley separates six subspecies, but other sources list as many as twelve, many of which were formerly considered distinct species; however, the Cornell University Website "All About Birds" (www.allaboutbirds.org/guide) does not even discuss the various types that have been reported. Since they readily interbreed where the races come in contact, the presence of hybrids in overlap areas has added to the taxonomic confusion. These birds prefer thinly wooded areas where they can find seeds (grass seeds in particular): back yards and small vacant lots in towns suit their winter needs well, especially if there are conifers in the mix. The only form which has been maintained as a separate species is the Yellow-eyed Junco, which occurs in restricted areas in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. They show differences in behavior and a yellow eye in a field of black which gives them a somewhat baleful appearance. I hope you enjoy having these native birds at your feeders. (They often mix with House Sparrows.)

Paul Schroeder



We Need You

The Palouse Audubon Society is in need of interested folks to get involved with the local organization. Currently, there are open board of director and committee member positions available. The board of directors meet monthly from September through May. Meetings usually last an hour to an hour and a half. Committees meet only when necessary and most committees would benefit with some new energy and ideas from members of PAS. Help fulfill the mission of the Palouse Audubon Society: 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. For more information, contact Marie Dymkoski, Vice President at marie-dymkoski@msn.com

Olympic Birdfest

Olympic Peninsula April 7-9, 2017
BirdFest
Come bird with us!

- ▣ San Juan Island Cruise
- ▣ Neah Bay Birding Excursion
- ▣ Guided Birding Trips
- ▣ Bird Drawing Class
- ▣ Photography Workshop
- ▣ Gala Banquet with Speaker Bonnie Block

For more information:
www.olympicbirdfest.org
info@olympicbirdfest.org
or 360-681-4076

Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

For lodging and visitor information, call 800-942-4042 or click www.olympicpeninsula.org

SEQUIM WASHINGTON
www.visitsunnysequim.com
800-737-8462

Olympic Birdfest, April 7-9, 2017. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction & raffle, gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker: noted nature photographer Bonnie Block. Join our festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 4-6, 2017. Register separately at www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon. Extend your festival with our Neah Bay post-trip on April 9-11, 2017: two days exploring northwest coastal Washington. BirdFest registration at www.olympicbirdfest.org.

PAS Website Updated



Have you visited the PAS website lately? Have you noticed the updated and cleaner format? It has taken time to fix errors resulting from the transfer of information from the previous website to the new one, and at the November Board meeting, we decided the final clean-up of the website was our top priority for the remainder of 2016. By the time you receive this newsletter, most of these final corrections should be completed. Please take a few minutes to stop by at www.palouseaudubon.org and check out the pages of the website. Tell us (email@palouseaudubon.org) if the information posted on the website is relevant to you and what new information or additional sections we could add. We are particularly interested in adding new material to the Conservation section and welcome your suggestions.

PAS Board of Directors



Birds of North America Online

Birds of North America is an authoritative compendium to bird species that breed in United States, Canada, and northern Mexico.

It began as species accounts written by experts and published by the American Ornithologists' Union in partnership with Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia in 1992.

However, as more information and the internet and digital storage became available, it made sense to convert them all to what is now called Birds of North America Online sponsored by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology with the support of American Ornithologists' Union.

The advantages of it being online is that updating information can occur on a continuous basis as data become available. Each species is authored by specialists in the species. For example, Professor Emeritus Dick Johnson of WSU is the author for the species account of Black Rosy-Finch. Further, the huge audio collection in the Macaulay Library at Cornell makes audio of vocalizations available. Behavior can be seen in video files. Now with more birders entering information into eBird, the database includes interactive data visualization of occurrence in real time. Indeed Birds of North America encourages birders to get involved in updating the information.

This database is available at no cost to staff, students and faculty at both WSU and U of I and to all patrons in the Latah County, Whitman County, and Pullman Public Library systems. Of course, anyone can walk into any of these libraries and use the library computer to access it. Though these are compilations of scientific studies, there are some pretty cool images and information so check it out next time you are at the library or via remote access from home.

Charlotte Omoto

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
© Cornell University



Double Crested Cormorant

Phalacrocorax auritus ORDER: SULIFORMES FAMILY:
PHALACROCORACIDAE



The gangly Double-crested Cormorant is a prehistoric-looking, matte-black fishing bird with yellow-orange facial skin. Though they look like a combination of a goose and a loon, they are relatives of Frigatebirds and Boobies and are a common sight around fresh and salt water across North America—perhaps attracting the most attention when they stand on docks, rocky islands, and channel markers, their wings spread out to dry. These solid, heavy-boned birds are experts at diving to catch small fish. This species gets its name from the presence of tufted feathers on both sides of the head, just above the eyes, that are referred to as “crests.” These are present only during the nesting season.

Size & Shape

Double-crested Cormorants are large waterbirds with small heads on long, kinked necks. They have thin, strongly hooked bills, roughly the length of the head. Their heavy bodies sit low in the water.

Color Pattern

Adults are brown-black with a small patch of yellow-orange skin on the face. Immatures are browner overall, palest on the neck and breast. In the breeding season, adults develop a small double crest of stringy black or white feathers.

Behavior

Double-crested Cormorants float low on the surface of water and dive to catch small fish. After fishing, they stand on docks, rocks, and tree limbs with wings spread open to dry. In flight, they often travel in V-shaped flocks that shift and reform as the birds alternate bursts of choppy flapping with short glides.

Habitat

Double-crested Cormorants are the most widespread cormorant in North America, and the one most frequently seen in freshwater. They breed on the coast as

well as on large inland lakes. They form colonies of stick nests built high in trees on islands or in patches of flooded timber.

Similar Species

[Neotropic Cormorants](#) occur alongside Double-crested Cormorants in an expanding area of the southern United States. The Neotropic is smaller with a longer tail, and the area in front of the eye is covered by feathers instead of bare facial skin. [Brandt's Cormorants](#) and [Pelagic Cormorants](#) overlap with Double-crested only along the Pacific Coast. Brandt's Cormorants are slightly larger with a shorter tail; adults have bright bluish facial skin. Pelagic Cormorants are smaller, with very thin necks and a tiny head; breeding adults show large white hip patches. The [Great Cormorant](#) overlaps with Double-crested on the northern Atlantic Coast. It is somewhat larger and thicker overall; breeding adults have prominent white flank patches and a less-obvious white patch around the bill. Juvenile Great Cormorants have a white belly instead of the pale brown of Double-crested. The [Anhinga](#) of the southeastern United States is more slender with a longer, straighter bill and longer tail. In flight at a distance, [Canada Geese](#) look much like Double-crested Cormorants, but their flocks don't change shape as much, and geese never stop flapping in direct flight.

Find This Bird

Look near lakes and coastlines for perched black waterbirds, smaller and with shorter legs than a heron, and a distinctive S-shaped crook in their neck. On the water they sit low, with the head and bill usually tilted slightly upward. You may also see them holding their wings spread-eagled and sunning themselves. Flocks of cormorants fly in irregularly shaped lines or sloppy V's. In flight, cormorants hold their head up, neck slightly bent, belly hanging low, and their wing beats are slow and labored.



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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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.

Nominations for Palouse Audubon Chapter Officers

Nominations are being accepted 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, 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.

