

The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 45 ISSUE 3

February-March 2017

EVENT CALENDAR

February 15: Program:
Steven Woodley: Conser-
vation Programs on the
Palouse

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

March 15: Program: Ron
Force: Madagascar, The
Eighth Continent

March 24, 25 & 26: Othello
Sandhill Crane Festival

April 1: Photo contest be-
gins

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Ron Force
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
Treasurer: Peter Meserve
p_meserve@yahoo.com
Membership: Ron Force
Newsletter Editor:
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
Paul Schroeder
509-334-2470
schroede2003@yahoo.com
Charlotte Omoto
omoto@pullman.com

Program Meetings

February 15

Steven Woodley, Watershed Conserva-
tion Planner for Palouse Conservation
District, and some of his co-workers will
discuss different conservation programs,
education, and outreach activities of the
district. Steven, who received a scholar-
ship from Palouse Audubon for his M.S.
research of invasive species on a Palouse
Prairie remnant, will also discuss this
research and how it led to his current
Ph.D. research. For the conservation dis-
trict, he has been involved in a variety of
restoration projects in the Palouse. This
program will be held in the Great Room
of the 1912 Center, Moscow at 7:00pm
(please note the new, earlier start time).
This program is free and open to the
public.

March 15

Madagascar, an island off the coast of
southern Africa, separated from the con-
tinent over 88 million years ago. Since
then it has gone its own evolutionary
way, with 90% of its plant and animal
species found nowhere else on earth. It is
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 look-
ing for birds and wildlife. What they
found challenged their ideas about con-
servation and raised questions about
climate change and human population
growth. Ron's program "Madagascar, the
Eighth Continent" will be in the Fiske
Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow at
7:00 pm: The program is sponsored by
Palouse Audubon Society and is free and
open to the public.

Christmas Bird Count

The 46th consecutive (and 63rd overall)
Moscow-Pullman Christmas Bird
Count was 17 December 2016. It was
cold; the high/low temps were 12 F and
-11 F, with 4 to 16 inches of snow cover.
All still water was frozen and only min-
imal amounts of moving water were
open. We had 51 participants (3 shy of
our all-time high; 34 as part of 17 field
teams and 17 watching feeders) who
spent almost 37 hours driving 266
miles, 46.5 hours walking 44.5 miles,
and 20.5 hours watching feeders. We
tallied 70 species, better than our 10-y
average of 67. New records include 11
BALD EAGLES (5; 2011, 2012, 2013),
1748 HORNED LARKS (695; 2008), 8
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS (3;
2002), and 124 VARIED THRUSHES
(58; 1987). One new species was added
to our record book: RED-BREASTED
SAPSUCKER photographed on the
Washington State University campus.
For the second straight year, an
ANNA'S HUMMINBIRD was seen
count day, this time on the Washington
side. Despite the lack of moving water,
we tallied a respectable 7 species of
waterfowl. We tied our NORTHERN
PINTAIL (1; 2006) and SHARP-
SHINNED HAWK (9; 2005, 2010) rec-
ords and recorded 3 Count Week spe-
cies: NORTHERN GOSHAWK, PRAI-
RIE FALCON, and BARN OWL. Com-
bined, we counted 15816 birds, edging
out our previous record of 15592 (2014).
Some other tidbits: (1) The number of
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES, hav-
ing increased exponentially since their
appearance in 2007, dropped precipi-
tously this year, whereas the number of
MOURNING DOVES was the second
highest count tallied (336; 389 in
(continued on page 4)

Announcing the Fourth PAS Annual Photo Contest

SHOW US YOUR WILD SIDE!



Palouse Audubon Society cordially invites you to enter your best bird and nature photos in our fourth annual PAS Photo contest.

Consider submitting photos you have captured during the

Christmas Bird Count or the Great Backyard Bird Count, as well as photos taken during hikes and birding trips. Photos related to the environment and conservation are also good topics. Check the PAS website for samples of previous photo contest entries and winning photos. Contest is open to the general public for amateur photographers only. There are no entry fees. Up to five entries per person will be accepted. Cash prizes will be awarded for each of the three categories. Winners will be announced at the September PAS program meeting.

Entries can be submitted from April 1 until midnight, Pacific Daylight Time, July 31. Detailed contest rules and an entry form will be posted on the PAS website in March. (see page 4)



From the Prez



Ron Force

Now is the winter of our discontent... W. Shakespeare

This has been quite a winter. For the first time in many years we were forced to cancel a program meeting because of inclement weather. Birds have crowded feeders and a flock of Bohemian Waxwings have pillaged the freeze-dried berries all over town. Large numbers of Varied Thrushes have been reported. Some of our common winter visitors-finches and crossbills-have been absent, and no reports of Snowy Owls.

On the other hand, our Siberian visitor--the female Red-flanked Bluetail caused a mass migration of birders to Lewiston.



Soon enough we'll be hearing the calls of migrating swans, geese and ducks. I have it on good authority:



Spring is just around the corner

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

NAME	ADDRESS
------	---------

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

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: The Red-breasted Nuthatch

As winter peaks and the days start (slowly) to get longer, one of the first species to respond to this universal sign of spring in our area is the Red-breasted Nuthatch. This native bird remains all winter in our area. As I've been out shoveling snow on our recent cold winter mornings I now frequently hear the rather nasal, somewhat monotonously repeated, call of this small, sprightly bird. Although they do come to the feeders (they like the suet as well as the seeds), they are cautious, and usually do not stay longer than a few seconds. But I enjoy hearing them, just knowing they are there and thinking spring already. There are four species of nuthatch in North America, three of which occur nearby. There are 20 species worldwide. These include the European Nuthatch, quite similar to our red-breasted, and, surprisingly, (at least to me) the Rock Nuthatch, which I was able to watch moving about on boulders, quite exposed to the open sky, while on a trip to Turkey. These were instantly recognizable as nuthatches though, despite their very different habitat. Although our nuthatches are somewhat solitary, they often appear at the feeders in pairs during the spring. In the autumn, they may be found coursing through the woods in mixed feeding flocks. In both situations they are often accompanied by chickadees (around the Palouse, mostly the Black-capped Chickadee, but with other species in more forested localities). Our other nuthatches, the White-breasted and the Pygmy, can be found in the woods on Moscow Mountain and points east, where the forests are denser. The Brown Headed Nuthatch occurs in the Southeastern part of the U.S. Kamiak Butte is a good place to find our three local species. I hope you can hear the "call of the nuthatch" once-in-a-while where you live!

Try calling them with your birding app. They are very responsive.

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

19th Annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival



This three-day festival will be held March 24, 25 & 26, 2017. The highlights of the festival are the tours to view the cranes, the distinctive volcanic geology, the lectures

at the Othello High School, children's programs and the art contest. Also, don't miss the WSU Raptor Club live birds, Smokey Bear and Jimmie Firefighter.

The Festival starts Friday, March 24th, at Stevens Funeral Home. Pre-register for a variety of specialty and Crane tours. Have a Spaghetti dinner at the Eagles Lodge, 127 E Larch Street for \$10. Come enjoy a FREE entertaining lecture.

Saturday is the main Festival day for the whole family held at the Othello High School Gym. Pre-register for specialty tours including a Biking for Cranes tour or the popular Ice Age Floods and the Channeled Scablands tour and morning or evening Crane tours. Starting at 9 AM and ending at 5 PM, enjoy a variety of lectures ranging from wildlife to insects to geology, all are free with Paid Admission into the Festival. For more information contact: www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org or call 1-866-726-3445

Christmas Bird Count

(continued from page 1)

2003); (2) our 6 "Harlan's" RED-TAILED HAWKS bested our former record (4; 2015); (3) 2 odd NORTHERN FLICKERS were observed (one a pure Yellow-shafted [Count Week] and one showing traits of Yellow-shafted and Red-shafted); (4) we potentially tallied 3 "Cassiar" DARK-EYED JUNCOS (and discovered how tricky it is to differentiate them); and (5) 2 SNOW BUNTINGS on the Moscow side were the first recorded in Latah County since 1994.

Thanks to everyone who participated!

Aumen, Adrian; Ball, George; Baltierra, RJ; Besser, Tom; Bockino, Alida; Boersma, Jordan; Bright, Ben; Cassidy, Kelly; Chevalier, Peggy; Clark, John; Costa, Mike; Dahl, Kristen; Darnell, Lynda; Duke, Chris; Dumroese, Deb; Dumroese, Kas; Dymkoski, Marie; Eder, Renee; Ellsworth, Patrick; Flansberg, Doug; Folwell, Joan; Folwell, Ray; Gray, Christine; Gray, Terry; Hammond, Alex; Hammond, Barbara; Harriety, Eamon; Hilpman, Evan; Holderby, Wayne; Hudak, Andy; Johnson, Richard; Kramer, John; Lundblad, Carl; Marney, Heather; Moore, Bill; Moore, Gabe; Pinto, Jeremy; Pinto, Rhoda; Porubek, Jade; Saxton, Michael; Scott, Mike; Scott, Sharon; Spitzer, Ken; Spitzer, Nancy; Charles; Weber, Diane; Wenger, Brent; Wenger, Trish; Werner, Mike; Wolff, John; Zenier, Susan.

For a complete listing of the count, please visit our website at www.palouseaudubon.org.



Yellow-shafted Flicker

Photo Contest (continued from page 2)

Photos must be taken in any outdoor location in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, but cannot include images of people, pets, domesticated or captive animals. Three categories will include 1) Birds, 2) Other (animal) Wildlife, and 3) Plants, Scenic, and Natural Landscapes (includes sustainability, ecosystem, environment and conservation).

Photo entries will be judged on aspects including technical merit (focus, sharpness, detail, depth of field, color, brightness, contrast, saturation, Photo Contest (continued from page use of light); composition (visually balanced); creativity; and visual impact. Photos should not be digitally altered beyond basic adjustments to lighting, color, contrast, and cropping. Photographers will retain full copyright to images submitted, while granting permission for PAS to use the photographs in various publications and media (e.g., website, brochures, flyers, posters, presentations, communications, calendars, book-markers, ecards, etc.).

Each photograph submitted must include the following information: your first and last name, mailing address, email address, phone number, photo title, and location where the photograph was taken. A panel of judges will be appointed by the PAS board. Winners will be contacted and confirmed by mail, email, and/or telephone in September 2017.

In case you missed it, last year's contest was a very rewarding event. The winning photos have been posted under the "Photos" tab on the PAS website. Additional exceptional photos were also acknowledged with honorable mention.

We hope that you will join us for this year's fun and engaging event!



Stop the Killing of Thousands of Cormorants

Federal agencies have been scapegoating Double-crested Cormorants for the decline of salmon on the Columbia and Snake Rivers in the Pacific Northwest and have refused to address the primary cause of salmon declines, which is the Columbia River Hydro-power System and the many dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Over the next four years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is committed to killing more than 11,000 cormorants and destroying 26,000 cormorant nests on East Sand Island—the largest Double-crested Cormorant colony in the western United States.

For nearly 20 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, and National Marine Fisheries Services have lost and then ignored a series of five federal court cases in which they have been chastised for failing to adequately protect federally listed salmon in the Columbia River system. Many of these salmon populations continue to be in perilous condition, but the agencies have failed to consider strategies addressing root causes, such as removing four obsolete dams on the lower Snake River. Instead, the federal agencies have focused on risky, unproven actions, such as killing Double-crested Cormorants at the East Sand Island colony, the largest cormorant colony in the western United States.

The Army Corps has already killed 5,328 cormorants and destroyed 6,181 Double-crested Cormorant nests

TAKE ACTION: Tell the Army Corps and other federal agencies to stop killing cormorants and to develop a plan that really protects salmon.



Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher?

I was delighted to read in our local listserve that a Scissor-tailed flycatcher was sighted in Adams County, Washington recently. What a treat, as it's one of my favorite birds. When I visit Texas I know I have arrived when I start seeing them on the fences and wires. They are a hoot to watch fly with their ridiculously long tails. I hope they will become regular visitors.

The scissor-tailed flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), also known as the Texas bird-of-paradise and swallow-tailed flycatcher, is a long-tailed bird of the **genus** *Tyrannus*, whose members are collectively referred to as **kingbirds**. The kingbirds are a group of large **insectivorous** (insect-eating) birds in the **tyrant flycatcher** (Tyrannidae) **family**. The scissor-tailed flycatcher is found in **North and Central America**.

At maturity, the male may be up to 15 in (38 cm) in length, while the female's tail is up to 30% shorter. The wingspan is 15 cm (5.9 in) and the weight is up to 43 g (1.5 oz). Immature birds are duller in color and have shorter tails. A lot of these birds have been reported to be more than 40 cm (16 in).

They build a cup nest in isolated trees or shrubs, sometimes using artificial sites such as telephone poles near towns. The male performs a spectacular aerial display during courtship with his long tail forks streaming out behind him. Both parents feed the young. Like other kingbirds, they are very aggressive in defending their nest. Clutches contain three to six eggs.

In the summer, they feed mainly on insects, which they catch by waiting on a perch and then flying out to catch them in flight. For additional food in the winter they will also eat some berries.

Their breeding habitat is open shrubby country in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas; western portions of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri; far eastern New Mexico; and northeastern Mexico. Reported sightings record occasional stray visitors as far north as southern Canada and as far east as Florida and Georgia. They migrate through Texas and eastern Mexico to their winter non-breeding range, from southern Mexico to Panama. Pre-migratory roosts and flocks flying south may contain as many as 1000 birds.

The scissor-tailed flycatcher is the state bird of Oklahoma, and is displayed in flight with tail feathers spread on the reverse of the Oklahoma Commemorative Quarter.

Tim Hillebrand

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](#)

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

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 7:00 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, 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.

