

# THE PRAIRIE OWL

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 46, Issue 5, April-May 2018

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*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

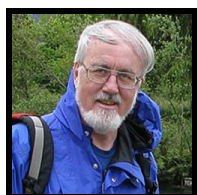
**Wednesday, April 18** - Migration in Pine Siskins.

Facultative migrations, which occur relatively unpredictably in time and space, are an important but understudied form of migration. On Wednesday, April 18, at 7:00pm in the Great Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow, Dr. Heather Watts, Associate Professor in the School of Biological Sciences at Washington State University, will discuss research being conducted with pine siskins, a nomadic and irruptive finch. The goal of the research is better understanding of migrations, particularly the environmental cues that birds use to time facultative migrations. Dr. Watts recently relocated her lab to WSU, where she conducts research at the interface of animal behavior, physiology, ecology, and evolution. The lab currently focuses primarily on songbirds, which are particularly well-suited for addressing their research questions and to the lab's approach of combining field and laboratory studies. She is currently recruiting graduate students, both MS

and PhD. This program is sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society and is free and open to the public.

**Wednesday, May 16** - The program for the May 16 meeting has not been confirmed. Please check the PAS website for an update on this meeting. The monthly meeting email message will be sent a week before the meeting to confirm the date, time, and speaker.





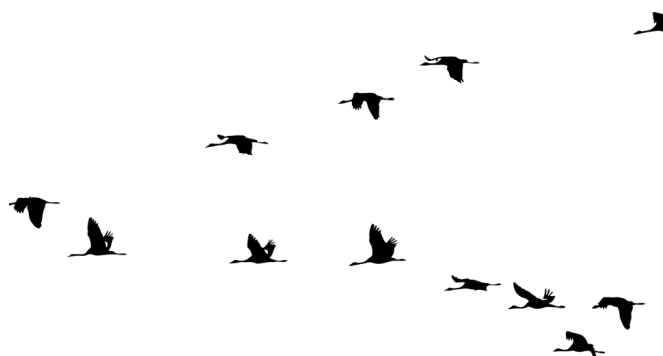
Ron Force

## FROM THE PREZ

As I write this, the waterbirds are on the move, ducks, geese and swans call in the early morning air as they head for their breeding grounds in the Arctic. When you read this, the our native birds will be claiming nesting territories and calling from trees and meadows. As part of our educational mission, we try to introduce people to the pastime (or sport) of birding.

Each spring we've presented a beginning birding class, with classroom study and field trips. However, this year our instructor, Kevin Pullen, is taking a break. If you want to learn about birding, where to find and identify birds, what can you do?

Join our spring field trips and bird walks! You don't need to feel intimidated by being out with "experts", most of us have modest skills and are quite happy to guess along with you. And, you'll get to see the Palouse at its most beautiful and probably discover places you didn't know existed. Keep an eye on our Web and Facebook pages for trip announcements.



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## FIELD TRIPS

**April 28, Saturday** All day field trip organized with the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Audubon Society. Our first stop will be Sprague Lake, then we will move on to Rock Lake, Steptoe Butte, Palouse Park in the town of Palouse, Kamiak Butte, Rose Creek Nature Preserve, and finally on to Pullman. You must contact Marie for more information on start time 509-595-1650 or marie-dymkoski@msn.com. This will be a full day trip with a lunch stop in Palouse. Bring water, snacks and appropriate clothing for the weather along with good shoes or boots.

**April 15, Sunday** Join RJ Baltierra on a trip to Spring Valley Reservoir. Meet at 8:00am at the Safeway lot in Moscow, ID. This will be a half day trip. Dress for the weather with appropriate shoes, lunch and water. Contact RJ for more information at 509-332-9043.

Look for Monday or Wednesday afternoon bird walks through May. If interested in leading any walks, please let us know! More information will be found on our website and Facebook page: *Palouse Audubon Society*

## BIRD OF THE MONTH

We are starting to see signs of spring! One of the signs I enjoy is the song of our cute but tough little Black-capped Chickadee, which has stayed here with us through the winter. The song usually consists of two high, clear, drawn out notes, the first higher than the second, which I have always thought resembled the sound of a rusty gate; in fact, we used to call it the "rusty-gate bird"! The Black Caps are mainstays at our feeder

during the winter, but are less frequent there during the summer, when seeds are easier to find.

This species ranges from Alaska to the east coast, mostly in the northern third of the US, but ranging a bit further south in the Rockies and the Appalachians. Its range overlaps that of the very similar Carolina Chickadee, a bird which I do not know. In Europe, there is a series of species with color patterns similar to those of the Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees.

Both these birds, and a number of other chickadees, including the European ones, along with the "tits" of England and Europe and the titmice of the southwest, belong to the family Paridae, and many of our species were assigned to the genus *Parus*. This name has been changed relatively recently to *Poecile*.

There are other species of chickadees which remain in quite northerly latitudes for the whole year (e.g. the Boreal and the Gray-headed), which we rarely see, two other species are just as tough and also stay here all winter, the Mountain and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Both species occur in our area, but are not as comfortable in towns as the Black-capped, but they can often be found in the woods east of Moscow. In my experience, outside of the breeding season, most of the chickadees travel through the woods in small groups, often joined by other small songbirds, in a process called mixed-flock foraging. Walking along a trail through the woods, you occasionally realize (if you are paying attention!) that you are surrounded by birds, flitting rapidly from limb to limb. It's difficult to identify them all, since they move so quickly. And then suddenly, within a disappointingly few minutes, all is silent again and the flock has moved on. Thus, if you encounter a diverse flock of songbirds on a hike, work fast because they won't stay long!

*Paul Schroeder*



Thank you to **RJ Baltierra** for leading several field trips this past winter and spring. RJ is knowledgeable and knows the birding hotspots on the Palouse. Here is a group of birders, both experienced and novice, who joined RJ on a field trip to Lewiston and Clarkston in March. Look for upcoming trips and grab your binoculars and come along!



## PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY AT KOPPEL GARDEN SPRING FAIR

Palouse Audubon Society will once again be hosting an information table at the Koppel Garden Spring Fair being held in Pullman on Saturday, May 12 from 10 am until 2 pm. Please drop by and visit us and find out more about current PAS activities and involvement and get filled in on the latest events. Chat with us about any environmental or conservation issues that you may have. Tell us about your favorite birding locations or some interesting or unusual sightings. Test your skill at identifying bird calls. We will have some handouts and prizes so come on by and join in the fun!

## PAS GRADUATE STUDENT GRANTS

Each year, the Palouse Audubon Society awards two grants of \$500 each in support of research supporting the chapter's mission of promoting education, conservation, and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. One grant is available for a graduate student at Washington State University (WSU) and the other for a graduate student at the University of Idaho (UI). The winners are usually invited back to present a program on the outcome of their research. There are no restrictions on how the money is used.

The deadline for applications is **April 30** with the awards to be presented at the May program meeting. For information and entry forms, visit:

<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/activities-events/student-grants/>





SHOW US YOUR WILD  
SIDE!!!  
Share your nature  
adventures with us!



PAS members - It's time to enter the PAS annual photo contest! It's all about nature and wildlife! Please Join us for our fifth annual photo contest. This is your chance to enter your best shots of Palouse wildlife and nature in our unique photo contest. This year the contest is open to Palouse Audubon Society MEMBERS ONLY who are amateur photographers. And, once again, we have set the boundaries for photos to be only from the Palouse Region. As a refresher, the Palouse Region is defined as "a region of the northwestern United States, encompassing parts of southeastern Washington, north central Idaho and parts of northeast Oregon. More specifically, Wikipedia describes the Palouse Region as being traditionally defined as the hills and prairies north of the Snake River, which



separated it from Walla Walla County, and north of the Clearwater River, which separated it from the Camas Prairie, extending north along the Washington and Idaho border, south of Spokane, centered on the Palouse River. To help you visualize those boundaries, please search the web for a map of the Palouse and be sure that your photos



are taken within those boundaries. The contest will be open for photo submissions starting from April 1 through midnight Pacific Daylight Time July 31, 2018. There will be cash prizes presented for first and second places in each of three categories. A further detailed description and entry rules are presented on the Photo Contest Entry Page of the PAS website. If you are not a member and would like to join PAS, please contact us or follow the link on the PAS website home page.

You can get some great bird photo tips and pointers at this Olympus website:

[http://www.getolympus.com/us/en/learn\\_center/an-eye-for-birds?](http://www.getolympus.com/us/en/learn_center/an-eye-for-birds?)



# JOIN THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, AND THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY IN A YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF BIRDS.

Help build a better world for birds by taking a simple but meaningful action each month.

(excerpt taken from the National Audubon Society's website)

**We never need a reason** to celebrate birds here at Audubon, but in 2018 we're making an *especially* big deal of them. That's because not only is it the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)—a pivotal piece of legislation that continues to save countless birds' lives—but birds are also facing many new and serious threats, including attacks on the MBTA itself. And so it's with great excitement that we've teamed up with National Geographic, BirdLife International, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to officially make 2018 the Year of the Bird.

What exactly is Year of the Bird? Good question! Throughout the year, all of us partners, along with more than 150 other participating organizations, are celebrating birds across all of our channels—magazines, television, social media, and more. To make Year of the Bird a true success, though, we need you. You can find out more ways to **#birdyourworld** over at the official Year of the Bird website: [www.birdyourworld.org](http://www.birdyourworld.org), but you'll also want to keep checking [Audubon.org](http://Audubon.org), to find new Year of the Bird-related stories every month.

## April's Featured Action: Speak Up for Migratory Birds

One-hundred years ago, our country's first and most important bird-protection law was signed and ratified. Since then, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act has saved countless birds' lives from human threats. Back then, hunters and poachers were the biggest concerns. Now, industrial hazards such as oil pits and power lines endanger birds daily. Thanks to the MBTA, to avoid fines and possible prosecution, industry must work to prevent bird deaths caused by their activities and equipment. Despite all of the MBTA's success, though, the Trump Administration wants to weaken the law. From nefarious language in bills to a new interpretation of the Act, the MBTA is under attack. So, as migrants return this spring, don't just help them with bird seed and water.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:catbirdz@roadrunner.com).

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



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## 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**

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