



THE PRAIRIE OWL

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 47, Issue 2, Oct-Nov 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

Wednesday, October 17-7:00pm in the Great Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow, Tracey Johnson will present a program about her research, highlighting the work being conducted on greater sage-grouse. Tracey is an Assistant Professor of Wildlife Habitat Ecology in Rangeland Systems in the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Sciences at the University of Idaho. She primarily studies avian ecology, and her lab focuses on applied questions regarding the effects of land management and restoration on bird populations. She is also interested in bird communities, specifically how species interact with each other and how altered habitat influences those interactions. Tracey's graduate students are working on greater sage-grouse studies, as well as sagebrush and juniper songbird populations. Greater sage-grouse is a species that currently plays an important role in the management of public lands in the western United States, and an example is found in proposed projects throughout the Great Basin to remove juniper trees from the landscape as a way to support sage-grouse populations. One of Tracey's students is collecting pre-removal data on a population of greater sage-grouse in Owyhee County in anticipation of a very large juniper removal project scheduled to begin there in the next year or so. This large juniper removal project is expected to affect other species of birds that occur in the area, and these effects are the

focus of another student's project. This program is sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society and is free and open to the public.



Wednesday, November 14- 7:00pm in the Great Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow, Peter Meserve will present a program on his travels in Antarctica.

Antarctica is the highest, coldest, windiest, and yes, the driest of the world's continents. Despite permanent ice and snow, average annual precipitation in the interior is only 2 inches (~8 inches on the coast). Antarctica holds 90% of the world's fresh water in ice reaching 1.2 miles thick.

To the casual observer, there is little physical evidence of climate change in much of this area. Perhaps the most obvious consequence of climate change has been changes in seabird populations. The Adélie Penguin was formerly the most common penguin in the Antarctica. It is thought that the decline in their food, krill, may explain this decrease.

In this presentation, Meserve will show pictures from his journey as well as share some experiences and impressions. This program is sponsored by Palouse Audubon Society and is free and open to the public.

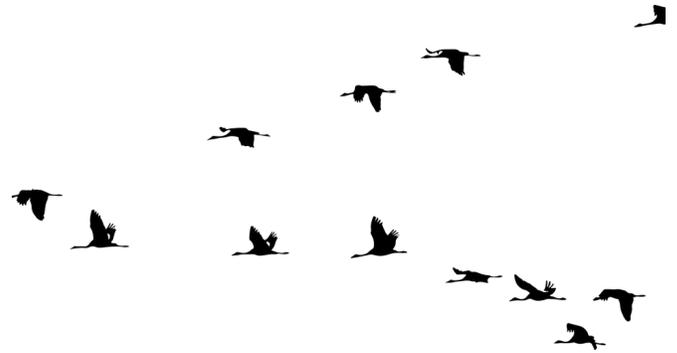
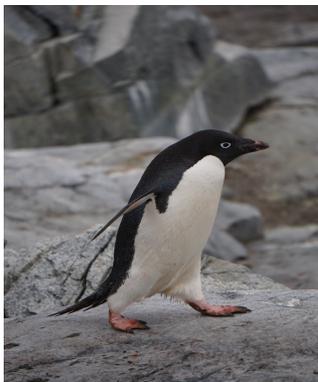


Ron Force

FROM THE PREZ

Fall has fallen, and the the parade of birds headed south is passing. It's a cue that it's time to renew your Palouse Audubon Society membership. Our fiscal and meeting year runs July-June, with an hiatus from June-August which is contrary to the usual calendar year. It makes it hard for people to remember whether they renewed. If you're not sure, you can call Diane Weber, Membership, or me. Our numbers are on the Website, as is another copy of the membership form in case you don't want to slice up your newsletter.

Speaking of the newsletter, I've been asked whether it would be better for the environment to read the *Prairie Owl* online and save paper. Well, yes, with one caveat: we mail our newsletter by bulk rate which saves us a large amount for postage. Postal service regulation require a minimum of 200 copies for bulk rate. Since we have about 165 paid members, the rest is made up of first-year national Audubon members, who get a complimentary copy for one year. It's always a close-run thing, so don't feel guilty about requesting a printed copy.



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FIELD TRIPS

We are looking for a Field Trip Leader! Sometimes getting outside just takes someone to say “hey, let’s go!” We would like to find someone who is willing to schedule a few evening or weekend trips that we can promote on Facebook and in our newsletter. You do not need to be an ornithologist or ‘professional’ birder, but someone who is willing to lead a group of birders on local trips. Please contact **Marie Dymkoski** if you’re interested in scheduling fall dates!

BIRD OF THE MONTH: The Common Loon

A week or so ago (in early September), Alice and I were boating on Lake Coeur d’Alene with friends, when, out in the middle of the Lake, we encountered more loons than I had ever seen together in my life. We estimated that there must have been two to three dozen birds on the water, swimming and diving, and in breeding plumage. We were about equidistant from the two banks of the lake, a short distance north of Harrison, ID. Previously I had seen loons only as singles or in pairs, but no more. We assumed that this must be a group migrating to the sunny shores of California (actually, they can be pretty foggy at times), and it prompted me to look into the biology of loons a little more deeply.

The Common Loon occurs throughout northern North America in the summer, and moves to the ocean during the winter. Thus our assumption about what our loons were up to last week is probably correct. They also occur, though more sparsely, in Europe, where they are called “divers” in England.

Most loons breed on lakes in the north woods of Canada, although some are known to breed in far northern Washington and Idaho. A few stragglers breed as far south of the Canadian border as the Spokane area, but

the southern limit was said to be 48 degrees north latitude, just one degree south of the border (which is the 49th parallel).

I was surprised to find that the loon is considered to be one of our most well-studied birds. They are long-lived birds with low fecundity, but they seem to be resilient to disturbance, both as individuals and as populations. (cf. Birds of North America). They are protected from much human disturbance because the Canadian north is thinly populated, although there are plenty of lakes up there. Smaller populations further south have more problems raising their chicks because of habitat destruction and human disturbance. Mercury levels in loons are monitored to determine the threat of mercury pollution at multiple locations in the U.S. and Canada.

One of my first encounters with loons was back in 1969, when Alice and I were driving to the east coast via Canada. We camped in a still closed campground north of Lake Superior (it was only June, after all), and lying in our tent we were awakened by the unearthly calls of several lovesick loons, which carry for miles. Creepy, it was, since neither of us had heard it before. It had something of the cackle of an unhinged person, so we could understand why some people are thought to be loony! Once you know what it is, it becomes, for many, a call of the wild and a treasured memory.

Some years later, while visiting friends in northern Minnesota, where they had a cabin on a lake where the loons were breeding, we found a loon swimming by in stately fashion carrying 2 chicks on its back. This interesting habit seems to make catching a small fish and immediately feeding it to one of the chicks downright convenient! And the birds are well-known for it.

The loon is popular in Canada, so much so that one of them is pictured on the Canadian dollar coin, which, upon issue, promptly became known to one and all as a loonie (I

think that how they spell it when they are speaking of the coin]. The two dollar coin which appeared soon after the loonie, of course, became known as a “toonie”. Which just goes to show you that loons have penetrated Canadian culture in significant ways!

Paul Schroeder, Member

MY FIRST HAWKWATCH

Every fall dozens of hawkwatches are conducted throughout North America, at spots where unique geography concentrates significant numbers of migratory raptors. These hawkwatches provide long term data which is useful for analyzing population trends in different species of raptors. Hawkwatches also provide great opportunities for the public to learn about the biology and identification of raptors. Due to school I never really had much time to go and visit a hawkwatch but when I graduated from WSU this past spring I finally had the time and so I applied to be a counter for HawkWatch International. HawkWatch International has sites all over the western US and when I found out I was hired they did not know where they were going to put me. You can only imagine how thrilled I was to find out that I was going to Corpus Christi, Texas to count! As someone who has never been that far east I was already adding up all the possible life birds I could get. However, the coolest part about that hawkwatch is that it averages around 600,000 raptors a season, which makes it the biggest watch in the US and Canada. In 2004 the watch recorded over 1 million birds which was the first time anywhere north of Mexico that has happened. It is also the most diverse with 30 species of raptor recorded passing over the site. Since I have started on August 1st I have seen more than 50 new life birds, many of which were viewed from the hawkwatch's platform. Beautiful south Texan specialties visit the feeders and the water drip which are all right next to the platform. Bird species seen on almost a daily basis include Buff-Bellied

Hummingbird, White-tipped Dove, Great Kiskadees, Black Crested Titmice, the stunning Green Jays, and much more. Of course, raptors aren't the only birds migrating past the platform, many species of shorebirds, warblers, flycatchers and others have all stopped by while on their journey south. Even a good portion of the raptors that we count have been lifers, like Harris's Hawk, Mississippi Kite, and Swallow-Tailed Kite. As I mentioned before Corpus Christi averages a huge number of migrating raptors with most species having their own time to peak. For instance, late August and early September is peak for both species of kite, with Mississippi Kites averaging about 12,000, and Swallow-Tailed Kite around 100. It looks like we should just barely reach average for Mississippi Kites thanks to a massive day of over 4,000 birds in early September. As for Swallow-Tailed Kites, our most graceful migrant, we have had 173 birds so far, the third best season for them on record. However, our biggest peak is in late September and early October when the Broad Winged Hawks show up in truly massive numbers. Broad Winged Hawks are our most numerous migrant comprising more than 90% of the birds we count, over 500,000 on average. We are just starting the peak and have already had our first big day with over 19,000 birds counted. It was an amazing sight to witness as huge groups of birds, numbering in the 1,000s, kettle up and stream past the platform. At times we had to count by 50s because they were coming by in a such dense river of birds. The crazy part is this was a relatively small total compared to what we expect to see later in the peak. It is not too uncommon to have a 100000 bird day during peak, and during the 1 million bird season they had a 500,000 bird day! I have still only gotten little tastes of the big numbers, and it has been mind blowing, so the anticipation is really building as we get more into peak. My first hawkwatch has been incredible so far, I cannot wait to see what the rest of the season brings!

RJ Baltierra, Member

What conservationists have learned through Christmas Bird Count data

- [Audubon's 2014 Climate Change Report](#) is a comprehensive, first-of-its kind study that predicts how climate change could affect the ranges of 588 North American birds. Of the 588 North American bird species Audubon studied, more than half are likely to be in trouble. Our models indicate that 314 species will lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has included Audubon's climate change work from CBC data as one of 26 indicators of climate change in their [2012 report](#).
- In 2009 CBC data were instrumental in the collaborative report by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - [State of the Birds 2009](#).
- In 2007, CBC data were instrumental in the development of [Audubon's Common Birds in Decline Report](#), which revealed that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years.

Copied from the National Audubon Society Website: audubon.org

SAVE THE DATE!

Moscow-Pullman Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 15, 2018

Moscow Contact: Kas Dumroese, kas.birder@gmail.com

Pullman Contact: Marie Dymkoski, marie-dymkoski@msn.com

GARFIELD LIBRARY PRESENTATION

Children make great audiences for a presentation on birds. I along with Mike Costa included presentations on bird calls for children for two years in a row for the Koppel Farm Spring Fair. I took that presentation recently to the Garfield Public Library for their end of their summer reading program. Dana Hogan arranged for me to present to ~12 children. The presentation began with discussing how knowing bird calls can help identify birds that are hiding in the bushes, too small, too fast, or too far away up in the sky. I was quite pleased to hear them enthused about birds, and how much even the younger children knew. So I first challenged them that they probably know some bird calls, then I made the beep beep sound of the cartoon roadrunner. That got them more involved, then I offered a number of calls from my phone app iBird played on my bluetooth speaker. They all tried guessing which birds they were, and sometimes, they were right. After playing each or couple of a bird's calls, I showed a photo of the bird. I did this with a number of birds, and I was pleased that they asked about some birds that I hadn't printed out and had not thought to play the calls of such as killdeer and turkey. I will certainly add those birds to the collection of bird calls that I will present in the future. At the end of the bird call presentation, the children wanted the printout of the birds, and fortunately, I had enough bird printouts so that each child

could take one home. I had no idea how thrilled they would be to have a picture of a bird. The youngest child was so thrilled about having a photo of a bird that it was hard for him to let go of the photo when it came to an activity of making a simple bird feeder. I assured him that that photo was safe with me while he made the bird feeder. I appreciate the librarian, Heather McArthur enabling me to do the presentation and I had a great time! They suggested that later in the Fall, I return to Garfield to give a presentation about feeding birds.

Charlotte Omoto, Secretary

Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?

David Attenborough



MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society (PAS) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 and 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 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, 3rd and Adams St, Moscow ID, at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month, September through May, except in December. 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. Any questions about membership should be directed to Diane Weber 509-334-3817 or email catbirdz@roadrunner.com.

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

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership includes an annual subscription to *The Prairie Owl* newsletter. Please consider a donation in support of the programs and activities of the Palouse Audubon Society. Membership renewals are due in September and current members will receive renewal notices at that time. PAS is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

Annual Membership **\$15.00** Donation _____

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Mail this form along with payment to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, Moscow ID 83843-1914

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(You will be notified by email when a new issue is posted on the website)

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Any questions, please email palouseaudubon@gmail.com

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