

THE PRAIRIE OWL

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 48, Issue 4 Feb-March 2020

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

On Wednesday, February 19, 2020, join us as we hear from local organization, **The Phoenix Conservancy with Ben Stone**.

The Phoenix Conservancy was founded in late 2016 with the mission of restoring endangered ecosystems globally for the communities that depend on them and the conservation of biodiversity. We believe that the global problem of biodiversity loss, as exemplified by the recent news about the loss of North American bird species, is a threat that is best solved at a local level. Through research, direct environmental restoration, and educational outreach, we aim to find science-based solutions to community problems that can also increase native biodiversity in a sustainable and scalable way. In collaboration with other NGO's, government agencies, research institutions, and local stakeholders, the Phoenix Conservancy has undertaken projects on local, national, and global scales. Our work on the Palouse aims to increase native biodiversity in Conservation Park in Pullman, survey biologically rich areas of Palouse Prairie such as Smoot Hill, and protect local waterways through collaboration with Palouse Conservation District. On the other side of the world the Phoenix Conservancy's projects in the species rich rainforests of Madagascar create conservation employment opportunities for local communities through a Malagasy

NGO, flipping the script so that local communities have the opportunity to provide for their

families through the protection and restoration of this biodiversity hotspot. In every ecosystem that we work in, meaningful connections with communities of passionate individuals serves as a force multiplier for conservation. We will meet in the Arts Workshop at the 1912 Building in Moscow, ID with presentation beginning at 7:00pm.

Program Date Change!

On Wednesday, March 4, Joel Sauder, Regional Wildlife Biologist leads the Diversity Program for Idaho Fish and Game based in Lewiston, and he will present a program on bumblebees jointly sponsored by the **Palouse Audubon Society** and the **White Pine Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society**. He has presented a number of programs educating the public about bumblebees and to encourage citizen scientists to help monitor bumblebees. This includes fascinating information on the biology and life cycle of bumblebees. Bumblebees are important in our ecosystem and gardens. Especially in early spring when the queen bee alone must get food, nectar and pollen, for herself and her first batch of worker bees. Come join us to learn about bumblebees and the key role they play in pollinating flowers and veggies! We will meet in the Arts Workshop at the 1912 Building in Moscow, ID with presentation beginning at 7:00pm.



Marie Dymkoski

FROM THE PREZ

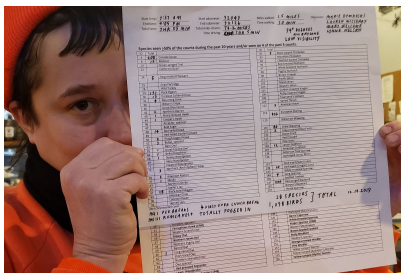
This issue of the *Prairie Owl* contains the results from the 2019 Christmas Bird Count for the Moscow-Pullman count area. What it doesn't show is the camaraderie and friendship that also goes along with the outing.

I've enjoyed several years of the CBC, and in a few different areas of our region, including the Coeur d'Alene bird count. But for the past 7 years I've shared the day covering 'my region of the circle' with some very dear friends.

We start off early morning, first with a group photo. Those photos show snow and fog, or blue skies and frosty mornings, each year being a bit different. We then load up all our gear: binoculars, books, notebooks, food and drink along with many layers of clothing, for the 'just in case' scenario.

There is so much laughter, and the 'shushing' to hear birds in the distance. We take our job seriously, but we recognize the day is also for fun and friendship.

This year's count was no different! We invited a new member to join us and I'm sure she'll be back. Low fog may have dampened our morning, but the laughs quickly warmed our hearts and souls.



WSU Arboretum

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FIELD TRIPS

Tom Fischer of the Palouse Audubon Society will be leading some field trips during the winter months. More information will be found on our Facebook page as well as trip updates on our website.

Interested in carpooling to **Othello, WA** for a look at sandhill cranes?

We'll be meeting at Umpqua Bank parking lot in Pullman, leaving at 8:00am on Saturday, March 28. This will be an all day trip, with travel time approximately two hours to location and two hours back as well as travel in the birding area. Bring drinks, food, and clothes appropriate to the weather as well as walking shoes/boots. There will be some walking on mostly flat surfaces with some incline on pathways.

Contact Tom at 334-1181.

We currently have several members who are volunteering to facilitate "raptor runs" throughout the Palouse. The **Winter Raptor Survey Project** has been extended throughout our region and trips generally cover an area of 50-60 miles per route. More than 90% of all birds counted on these surveys consist of the following species: Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, and Rough-legged Hawk. If you are comfortable with identifying these 5 species and would like to participate in a raptor run, contact us at palouseaudubon@gmail.com.



MENTORING YOUTH TO BE STEWARDS OF NATURE

Mentoring youth to be stewards of the environment can build a lifelong attitude of

caring and compassion for nature and people. Don't you agree that many people who care about nature also care about the folks in their communities? Some of my closest interpersonal connections were initially developed through activities related to nature. The individuals with the greatest impact on my life were naturalists or outdoor leaders.

So how do we instill environmental stewardship in children? What does it take for a child to care about all organisms, not just cute and cuddly charismatic megafauna? If all humans could connect with their natural world in some way, maybe the Earth can be saved from human impacts. Teaching children to care about nature does not require a large budget, just adults who are enthusiastic and understand how to communicate with youth.

Informal learning programs are well suited to communicate the joys of the natural world to youth. Informal learning is any learning occurring outside of a traditional classroom setting that does not use grades or scoring as an extrinsic motivator. Afterschool programs, summer camps, and clubs are examples of informal learning settings.

The Adventure Club, the elementary out-of-school time program operating under the auspices of the Moscow School District, brings outdoor science to its participants through informal education provided by the Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute during the Summer Program. However, year-round nature education is not provided.

The Adventure Club is developing a program that will bring small chunks of information about a variety of organisms to its kindergarten through fifth grade participants. Included in the lessons would be life history, geography, and population change over time. All facts and no preaching, and maybe something weird or disgusting about the critter, too.

If you are interested in teaching children about nature in a school setting, please contact me at garnett@msd281.org. I am excited to hear your ideas. The students enjoy interacting and learning about new adult leaders, and no formal training or experience working with youth is required.

Submitted by David Pierce-Garnett

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



The **Great Backyard Bird Count** is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period and enter these numbers on the GBBC website. As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or from anywhere in the world.

For more information, see [The Great Backyard Bird Count](https://birdcount.org).

ON THE ROAD WITH RON

In January 2020 we were on a tour of Egypt and learned something about the ancient Egyptian religion. Each of their gods had an earthly animal avatar). The goddess of beauty and motherhood, Hathor, was a cow. In one tradition she married Osiris, the god of agriculture, fertility and the afterlife. Naturally, they had a child, the god of the sky and

protector of Egypt, Horus, who was represented as a falcon-headed man. In visiting the Horus temple at Edfu, I posed with the biggest falcon I've ever seen.



Later, in a garden in Cairo, I was visited by a little falcon, a female Eurasian Kestrel, a fun way to round out the trip.



Submitted by Ron Force

SURVEY RESULTS 2019-2020 **43 responses**

- *80% are current members, 10% were but aren't currently
- *67% think the membership price is just right, 19% think it's too low
- *80% have attended one or more programs with the PAS, 14% are interested in

programs but haven't attended a PAS program yet

*Of the 65% that responded to a preferred evening for program nights, most chose evenings, with some saying the 3rd Wednesday wasn't good

**What type of programs would be of interest and pick all that apply:

88% like birding programs of local areas

67% like environmental programs in general and other wildlife

52% birding programs of North America

33% birding programs of other continents

Others included landscaping for birds, hawk ID and bird research

*52% have participated in our field trips

*38% are interested but haven't participated

*60% prefers anytime for field trips, but 15% want early morning and 15% want later afternoon or evening

*71% would like more field trips and 62% would like shorter trips while 37% would be interested in longer and even overnight field trips

*39% would be interested in birding classes with 19% already have taken classes with PAS

*34% are not interested in birding classes

*83% believe the price of bird classes is reasonable with 5% saying the cost of class is too high

*66% are interested in hands-on workshops: landscaping, native plantings and birdhouses, bird apps, especially eBird and bird song identification

Other:

- what bird seed to use (birds seem to ignore the seeds in my feeder)
- We need to think of ways to attract young people to the club and bird watching, but I don't have any ideas.
- I really enjoyed the mid week, evening bird field trips during spring migration you used to have
- For those of us who don't do Facebook, could you send out earlier notice on coming field trips

- list of good field guides
- how to pay dues
- Developing backyard bird habitat
- Maybe emailing special local sightings
- It would be nice to have some closer to Moscow field trips if there are any local birding hot spots
- Seasonal bird watching tips

33% find out about programs and field trips from the PAS website and 29% find out from newspaper notices. The rest find out from newsletter and email announcements.

SPRING BIRD CLASSES

Last year's birding class was a great success with our new instructor **Chris Duke**. He will be teaching two classes again this spring from 6:30-8pm at a new location, Pullman Parks and Recreation. *The Beginning Birding* class will be held April 14, 16, 21, 23 followed by *Birding by Ear* class on April 28, 30, May 5, 7. We plan to have 3 field trips associated with the class. Through our survey last fall, most participants felt that the price was reasonable, so we will keep the cost to \$50/class. If you are interested in learning more about bird identification, mark the dates! Class will be limited to 20 participants. Registration for the class will be in the next **Prairie Owl**.



NOMINATIONS FOR PALOUSE AUDUBON CHAPTER OFFICERS

Nominations are being accepted for chapter officers: *Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer*. Election of officers will take place at the program meeting on February 19, 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 the Palouse Audubon Society will be held at the March 4th program meeting, where installation of officers and other chapter business will be conducted.

Are you interested in a trip to Sisters, Oregon to attend the 2020 Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival? We are looking to visit prior to or just after the actual Festival and will provide more information in our April-May issue of the Prairie Owl. The Festival is held on June 4-7, 2020.

BIRD OF THE MONTH SNOWY OWL

Even though I have not heard of any sightings of this iconic bird in the northwest this year, I thought it appropriate because it *is* winter, relatively new information has led to greater concern about their future, and they are so interesting. Snowy Owls vary considerably in their winter behavior. Some winters (such as this one), most of them remain in the north, although south of their breeding grounds north of the Arctic Circle. In other years some appear in the northern U.S., such as those occasionally reported from northern Washington. When that happens, most of the local reports seem to me to be from locations north of Highway 2, although there are exceptions. This happens all along our northern border, and the birds arrive in New York, New England, and the central states of the northern tier. In 2014, however, an exceptional number of Snowy Owls arrived in the northeast, and along the Atlantic Coast. A number of people capture and band the owls

while they (the owls) are in the U.S. (Canadians do too.) People who keep track of them at Logan Airport in Boston usually band between 6 and 8 owls in a winter. In 2014, they caught a record 103! That winter there were snowy owls everywhere from Wisconsin east, and south along the Atlantic Coast. One showed up in Florida, and another in Bermuda! This irruption has not been satisfactorily explained. One theory offered for irruptions in general included severe fluctuations in the populations of lemmings in the far north, which force the birds to seek food further south. But birds found in the U.S. are not starving for the most part, which seriously weakens the case for that explanation. Snowy owls will eat lots of other prey, including other rodents, and larger items, including even, in one documented case, a Canada Goose! (If this subject interests you there are more details at www.allaboutbirds/news/season_of_snowy_owls/ from the Cornell Lab.

Lemmings play a key role in the life cycle of the owls. In years when the lemming populations are low, those owls that arrive on the breeding ground (*very* far north!) do not attempt to breed, even though other food may be available. What the lemmings offer that other prey animals do not remains unexplained.

Recent estimates of the total population of Snowy Owls have dropped considerably, due perhaps to earlier overcounting. Whatever the cause, the birds are declining in numbers from the recently dramatically lowered figure and the outlook for arctic birds in general is not good. In the face of arctic warming, the owls can scarcely go further north, since that area is mostly covered by the waters of the Arctic Ocean. Warming will probably render much of the currently used area (flat, open tundra) unusable, unless the birds can adapt to a different habitat for breeding, their numbers are bound to decline. Small trees and bushes may appear, which will impair the broad view of the area the owls prefer.

Submitted by Paul Schroeder

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 Ron Force 208-874-3207 or email ronforce@gmail.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 _____

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

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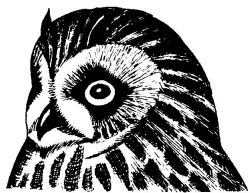
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