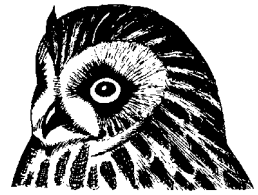


# THE PRAIRIE OWL



PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 31, Issue 4, March 2003

## FROM THE “NEW” EDITOR

In the words of the great New York Yankee Yogi Berra, “It’s deja vu all over again”. After being editor of *The Prairie Owl* for a couple of years I stepped down when I went on sabbatic to Oxford in 1999/2000. Now at the request of our president Tom Weber I am glad to resume the editorial reins of *The Prairie Owl*. The feeling of deja vu comes from leaving things to the last minute then having to furiously get everything completed in time for the mailing. A sign in our school office reads: “If it wasn’t for the last minute nothing would get done”. Once again I am grateful for that last minute.

Spending my sabbatical at Oxford was a great experience. In addition to many “lofty” academic goals I set for myself I also set a few personal ones. One of which was to try to see all the “common” species in the UK in one year. That would amount to seeing about 250 species. I didn’t quite see them all, but I did see many of them, visited some wonderful places, and had a lot of fun. Some of the birding highlights were:

**Dartford warbler:** Until recently Britain’s only resident warbler. The bird gets its name because it was first described from a small village near Dartford in Kent, in 1773. It is now confined to a minute area in the far south of the country. It is difficult to find because it usually stays well hidden and for a small bird they have large territories.

**Bearded tit:** Tits are in the same family as our familiar chickadees. But the bearded tit belongs to an Asian family, the parrotbills. The range of the bearded tit is quite small and most birds are found in East Anglia. The bearded tit was an exciting life bird for me on this trip.

**Hobby:** A graceful falcon that spends the winter in Africa and is present in Britain for about five months during the summer, arriving in May. It is fascinating to watch hobbies catching dragonflies and other insects on the wing and eating them.

**Chough** (pronounced “chuff”): Once common but now the scarcest of Britain’s crows with only 1,000 breeding pairs. They’re very similar in size and appearance to our American crow, except they have a bright red bill and feet.

I

saw a flock of fifteen on a boat trip to Ramsey Island off the coast of Wales.

**Red kite:** Every weekend when I drove to London I would look for red kites above the M40 near Oxford. The red kite was reintroduced to England and Wales after it was almost wiped out about 100 years ago. The red kites near Oxford are one of the two places where you can find this bird. The other is in Wales. Fans of Inspector Morse may recall how the red kite helped Morse to solve a murder.

There were some disappointments. Even after several attempts I never did see my first UK Golden Eagle. And the corncrake eluded me (I’m pretty sure I heard one but never got the all-important sighting). The search for the corncrake was made in one of the small western Scottish islands—Islay. The disappointment was softened somewhat by indulging in the most important product from that wonderful island!

I welcome news items, articles, and comments from fellow Audubon members for the newsletter. The most up to date information on meetings and field trips will always be found on our web page.

## CALENDAR

### MARCH

- 5 PAS Board Meeting – 7:30pm, 414 S Lincoln, Moscow
- 8 Asotin County Field Trip - 8:00am
- 12 PAS Program Meeting - 7:30pm, *The Shrub Steppe Habitat of Washington*, Andy Stepniewski, Yakima
- 29 Rock Lake & Turnbull NWR Field Trip - 8:00am

### APRIL

- 2 PAS Board Meeting – 7:30pm, location TBA
- 16 PAS Program Meeting - 7:30pm, *Forest Service Planning and the Terms of the Potlatch Corporation Conservation Easement*, Ihor Mereszczak
- 26 NW Whitman County Field Trip - 7:00am

Program meetings are held at the 1912 Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Adams, Moscow. Everyone is welcome.

Meetings begin at 7:30pm.

The mission of the National Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems  
- focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats -  
for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

## From the Prez:

For the past two months, the feeling of spring seems to wax and wane with every storm. Yesterday felt like winter - today it feels like spring. Today the birds are singing and a few flowers are appearing on southern exposures. The appearance of several Say's Phoebes on the Palouse over the weekend is surely a sign that migration has begun. I know everyone is anxious for the return to warmer temperatures, blooming flowers and our neo-tropic travelers.

It is always a pleasure to recognize individuals who have lifted a hand to help our mission during the past two months. Certainly a big thank you goes out to our returning newsletter editor, Grant Norton. Grant has had the newsletter on my desk since mid-February - plenty early for our mailing at the end of the month. I know that Grant would appreciate material for future issues, so if you have news, announcements, or an article that you would like to share - please drop him a line.

The three individuals who presented programs at the general meeting - Deb Stenkamp, Diana Stone, and Erik Stauber - also deserve our gratitude. Deb's program, *A Bird's Eye View: Adaptations of the Avian Visual System* and the program by Diana and Erik on the *West Nile Virus* were well attended and of great educational value. I wish to thank all three for their contributions toward our mission. A recap of the West Nile Virus program may be found later in the newsletter.

Finally, thanks to all who have continued to make donations toward our Audubon Adventure classrooms. With the great response received over the past few months, the chapter may well be able to expand the offering to more schools. If you have information about schools located in Lewiston, Clarkston, Cottonwood, Grangeville, or beyond that may be interested in using the Audubon Adventure course material, please contact Cathy Willmes, our Education chairperson.

With thoughts of spring and great birding,

*Tom Weber*

## PROGRAMS

**Wednesday, March 12:** *The Shrub Steppe Habitat of Washington* - Andy Stepniewski, author, Yakima fruit grower and Washington bird authority, will present a program on Washington's shrub steppe and avian life. This is a must see presentation that everyone will enjoy.

**Wednesday, April 16:** *Forest Service Planning and the Terms of the Potlatch Corporation Conservation Easement* - Ihor Mereszczak, planning team leader for revisions to both Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests, will speak to how, when, and what organizations can do to be helpful in their planning process. This is a joint meeting with the **Idaho Native Plant Society**. Everyone is welcome.

**You can always find the latest information about program meetings on our website**

<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/>

**Notices are also posted in the *Pullman-Moscow Daily News* and the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*.**

## FIELD TRIPS

**ASOTIN COUNTY** - Saturday, March 8

Sponsored by the *Washington Ornithological Society*, this trip is limited in the number of participants per WOS guidelines. We will explore as much of Asotin County as possible with particular attention devoted to the Snake River canyon, Chief Timothy State Park, Swallows Nest Boat Launch and Park, and the Clarkston landfill (to look for gulls).

Participants should call Charles Swift, trip leader, at (208)883-0553 to register.

**ROCK LAKE AND TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AREA** - Saturday March 29

Our trip to Cheney, Washington, will be in search of waterfowl, nesting raptors, and early spring migrants in the ponds, marshes, and ponderosa pine stands around Turnbull.

Participants should meet at Dissmore's IGA parking lot on N Grand Avenue and Stadium Way in Pullman. **Meet at 8:00 am.** Plan for a full day and bring a lunch - Charles Swift trip leader, (208)883-0553.

**NW WHITMAN COUNTY** - Saturday, April 26

This trip will concentrate on the scabland area of northwest Whitman County. We will visit Winona, Texas Lake, Revere, Lamont, Sheep Lake, Rock Lake, Ewan, St. John and Steptoe - to name a few.

Participants should meet at Dissmore's IGA parking lot on N Grand Avenue and Stadium Way in Pullman. **Meet at 7:00 am.** Plan for a full day and bring a lunch - Tom & Diane Weber trip leaders, (509)334-3817.

**MIGRATORY BIRD DAY BIRDATHON** - Saturday May 10

Still in the planning stages, our hope is to divide into teams by county with designated leaders. Participants will have the option to choose which team they wish to accompany in a friendly birding competition. Additional information will be available as the event draws near.

Participants should meet at Rosauer's in Moscow. **Meet at 7:00 am.** Contact Charles Swift coordinator, (208)883-0553 if you have any suggestions for the event.

**LANDBIRD SURVEY VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**

The US Army Corps of Engineers is soliciting volunteers to conduct land bird surveys on property surrounding Dworshak Reservoir (near Orofino, Idaho). The surveys are to be conducted in May and June following a specific protocol. Volunteers have a choice among 19 transects along the reservoir. Each transect consists of 6-15 count stations located at least 300m apart. Surveys start at or about sunrise (0430 hrs) and end no later than 1055 hrs. Each count station is sampled for 10 minutes during which all land-bird species located visually or aurally are recorded. Each transect is sampled twice annually.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Russ Davis, the Wildlife Biologist in charge of the program, at (208)476-1203, [Russell.L.Davis@nww01.usace.army.mil](mailto:Russell.L.Davis@nww01.usace.army.mil)

## OTHELLO SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual festival is March 21st, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23rd. This year's theme is the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge system and the Bureau of Reclamation and the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt.

The Festival has many tours for crane viewing along with specialty tours. Specialty tours include Columbia National Wildlife Refuge/Potholes area wildlife tour, Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scablands geology tour, Sage Grouse Lek tour, Lower Grand Coulee birding tour and Wahluke Slope/Shrub Steppe birding tour. Pre-registration is suggested as some tours fill up quickly.

With admission price into the Festival on Saturday, you may attend free lectures which are repeated throughout the day. Lectures include falconry, Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scablands, Woodland Park Zoo, Grouse of Washington, Othello History within the Drumhellar Channeled Scablands, Shrub-Steppe Flora and Fauna, Owls of Eastern Washington and Spring Migration in the Columbia Basin. For more information call (509)488-2802 extension 100 or visit the web at <http://www.othello-wa.com/sandhillcrane.htm>

## FREE GMA TRAINING WORKSHOP HELP PROTECT WASHINGTON'S WILDLIFE

The Growth Management Act was first passed into law in 1990 with the explicit goal of protecting the environment. Every county and city in Washington was required to adopt "critical areas ordinances" to protect wetlands, streams and other valuable wildlife habitats. The 1995 amendments to the GMA required all counties and cities to revise their critical areas ordinances using Best Available Science, and legislation that passed in 2002 sets deadlines for updating GMA plans and regulations. The Whitman County deadline is Dec. 1, 2007.

Audubon-Washington, 1000 Friends of Washington, and the Washington Environmental Council are sponsoring a regional workshop in Spokane on April 5, 2003 to train

citizens for effective participation in their local government Critical Areas Ordinance updates to protect wetlands, streams, and other fish and wildlife habitats. The workshop will include:

- How GMA policy and law requires protection of fish and wildlife habitats
- How to use Best Available Science to protect habitat
- How to use GMA to create habitat networks to support biodiversity conservation
- Hands-on training to evaluate GMA development plans and regulations
- An opportunity to get answers to your questions

The workshop runs from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and space is limited. If you would like to attend please e-mail your registration to: [caoregistration@1000friends.org](mailto:caoregistration@1000friends.org) Please include your name, address, e-mail address, county and city you are interested in, and the workshop location. Contact Naki Stevens, Audubon Washington Conservation Director for more information. [nstevens@audubon.org](mailto:nstevens@audubon.org)

## LEAVENWORTH SPRING BIRDFEST

On May 9th, 10th, and 11th, celebrate spring and International Migratory Bird Day in Leavenworth. North Central Washington Audubon Society, the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and the Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth Ranger Districts of the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forest are working together to create the Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest. This event will feature field trips, a bird-a-thon, workshops and inspiring music.

The Leavenworth area is noted for spectacular habitats, ranging from snow-capped mountains to sunny Ponderosa pine forests, attracting a wide variety of birds. You might see Calliope Hummingbirds, White-headed Woodpeckers, Harlequin Ducks, Osprey and MacGillivray's Warblers. While birding is the heart of the weekend, activities will also include geology, wildflowers, river rafting on Icicle Creek and conservation trips to nearby restoration areas. Professionally guided trips and activities range from leisurely strolls to active hikes. Fun for experienced and novice birders of all ages!

The Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest has chosen the Western Tanager as its mascot and "SpokesBird." This yellow, black and red tanager is a neo-tropic migratory bird, coming from its wintering grounds as far south as Mexico and Costa Rica. Here in the breeding range, they feed on wasps, ants, scale insects, grasshoppers, wild cherries and elderberries. Their loosely built twig nests (lined with hair and plant down) are found on the outer ends of conifer and aspen limbs. An interesting aside, the Western Tanager was first discovered by the Lewis and

Clark 1804-06 expedition, making this bird a wonderful part of our western heritage.

For information on the area, including lodging and other activities, call the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce at (509) 548-5807 or visit us on the web at:

<http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/>

## WHERE TO FIND BIRDS

Spring is a great time to look for birds. Here are some of the best birding areas in our region.

### TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Turnbull is located about 4 miles South of Cheney Wa. on Cheney Plaza Rd. (DeLorme, Washington Atlas & Gazetteer page 72, coordinates A-4). The Wildlife Refuge is a wonderful year-round birding hotspot. In it there are varieties of habitats, wetland, aquatic and terrestrial types. There are many observation trails that are easily accessed from the parking lot. Also there is a short road loop for access to more of the refuge. Turnbull also has restricted areas that we should all respect by staying out. These restricted areas are clearly posted. Look for the signs.

During breeding season for water-fowl this area can offer great opportunity for observing a large number of species. Some water-fowl use this area for stopover during fall and spring migration. In winter when the ponds are frozen most water-fowl move out of the area but the terrestrial habitats contain resident birds and other wildlife for observation. In the winter this can also be a good place to tour on X-country skis while birding. The ponds do freeze over during the cold spells of winter but ice can be very thin. It is best to stay off the ice.

### KAMIAK BUTTE COUNTY PARK

Kamiak Butte County Park is located off State Highway 27 about 12 miles outside of Pullman (DeLorme, Washington Atlas & Gazetteer, page 57 coordinates B-7). It is one of the few wooded areas of Whitman County surrounded by an expanse of wheatfields. With its cover of dense coniferous forest on the north and open forest and grassland on the south, it is an island of unique habitat. The 298-acre park provides some of the best birding opportunities in southeastern Washington. With its hiking trails and picnic/camping facilities, it is a welcome retreat for birders and hikers.

Birding in the park can be divided into several sections. You can choose which section(s) you wish to cover depending upon the time you have and/or your level of hiking ability. These sections are identified as:

1) **Picnic and campground area.** Look for warblers, woodpeckers, nuthatches, wrens, flycatchers, spotted towhees, and perhaps even a Gray Catbird. Black-headed Grosbeaks should also be seen in the spring.

2) **Top of ridge and return** (about 1 mile round-trip). Look for bluebirds and wrens. Near the top if you look carefully in the tops of the conifers, you may spot Western Tanagers and Red Crossbills. In the summer you can usually hear and perhaps see Western Wood Pewees in the

conifers. You should also see Dark-eyed Juncos along this trail.

3) **Pine Ridge Trail** (a loop of about 3 miles).

Along these open woods you may see soaring hawks or American Kestrels. You should also see flickers, Black-billed Magpies, Common Ravens, and perhaps Red Crossbills. As you near the summit, check for wrens and nuthatches (White, Red-breasted, and Pygmy). Further up the trail is a branch: the left branch leads to the summit. It is only about one-tenth of a mile to the top, but it is steep. The right branch continues the loop back down the hill to the parking lots. Keep on the lookout for Cooper's Hawks. Also, in the winter, owls often roost in the park.

### WAWAWAI AND STEPTOE CANYONS

The upper end of Wawawai Canyon attracts a number of migratory species in late spring and summer, and the lower end may have wrens, goldfinches, California Quail, geese, ducks, Song Sparrows and White-crowned Sparrows a good part of the year. Also Red-tailed Hawks, Robins, and Black-billed Magpies may be seen at any place along the canyon at any time of the year. It is best to bird the canyon early in the morning when the birds are most active and the canyon traffic is light. (Pullman location, DeLorme, Washington Atlas & Gazetteer page 57 coordinates C-7. Wawawai location, page 57 coordinates C-5).

## WNV PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

On February 19, Drs. Diana Stone and Erik Stauber, from the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine, presented a well-attended program on West Nile Virus (WNV). Dr. Stone began the presentation by clarifying two important items: the virus is called **West Nile** and the disease it causes is **West Nile encephalitis**.

First discovered in New York City in 1999, WNV spread quickly across North America. It affects humans and other mammals only incidentally. It is transmitted by mosquitoes and its primary target is birds. In scientific terms, mosquitoes are vectors and birds are reservoir hosts.

The risk to humans of WNV is small: most mosquito bites will not lead to infection, and most humans, even when infected, will not develop the disease. The elderly and individuals with compromised immune systems are more at risk. Horses seem to be more susceptible to WNV: over 14,000 cases were reported in 2002. A horse vaccine has been developed, is being used extensively, and is being adapted for use in other species, including birds. Confirmed infection of other animals has been reported: bats, chipmunks, squirrels, dogs, cats, and llamas, among others.

The effects of WNV on birds is another story. To date, over 150 wild bird species have been affected: there are few viruses known that have affected so many species. The introduction of WNV is an example of the effect that diseases can have on naïve populations, i.e., populations with no natural immunity

Crows and other corvids, hawks, and owls are birds that seem to be especially susceptible to WNV. These species are not thought to be important transmitters of the disease, because they generally die too quickly. Information from 2002 indicates that extensive mortality in these species occurred; however, it is difficult to determine the total effect because most dead birds are not found. Birds that are infected but do not die may be important transmitters. Migratory birds may also be responsible for transmitting the disease. Unlike humans, older birds seem to be less susceptible. However, stresses such as migration and defense of territory during breeding season may affect susceptibility.

For 2003, even the experts do not know what to expect. The virus spread much faster across North America than had been expected; it will probably continue to spread throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean. However, to quote Dr. Stauber: "There is no way we can protect our wildlife." We can only hope for the best: that wildlife will be able to adapt to this disease and that it will not have devastating effects on birds such as the Bald Eagle, California Condor, Whooping Crane, and Trumpeter Swan. According to the American Bird Conservancy (*Bird Calls*, December 2002) captive condors have been treated with a newly-developed vaccine, and there are plans to vaccinate the condors that have been released into the wild.

This year many studies will be conducted during the migration and breeding seasons. Federal scientists, university researchers, and others will be in the field collecting data on the effects of WNV on wildlife

populations, mapping the spread of the disease, and investigating vaccination programs.

Additional information about West Nile Virus can be found on these web sites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, West Nile Virus Home Page. This web site has a wide range of information for the general public and public health professionals, including preventative measures. Cases of WNV in humans is updated weekly.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>
- Cornell University, Center for the Environment. Another site with a wide range of information concerning WNV that is updated frequently. Also included is a page with links to state and federal web sites dedicated to WNV.  
<http://www.cfe.cornell.edu/erap/WNV/>
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, West Nile Virus Home Page  
[http://www2.state.id.us/dhw/cdp/westnile/west\\_nile\\_index.htm](http://www2.state.id.us/dhw/cdp/westnile/west_nile_index.htm)
- USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The web site contains resources for veterinarians including information on WNV infection in horses.  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/wnv/wnv.html>
- USGS National Wildlife Health Center. This web site details information on WNV on wildlife populations, especially birds.  
[http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/west\\_nile/west\\_nile.html](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/west_nile/west_nile.html)
- Washington State Department of Health, West Nile Virus Home Page  
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WNV/WNV.html>

## **Sponsor Audubon Adventures**

The cost to sponsor a classroom is \$45.00. This award winning environmental education program really gets the Audubon message out to the students, teachers, and parents. Your support is greatly appreciated.

For more information, contact: Cathy Willmes, (208) 882-2649

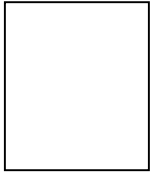
I am enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help sponsor Audubon Adventure classrooms.

If you know of a teacher or classroom that would like to participate in AUDUBON ADVENTURES, please note the information below. We will attempt to contact the teacher about future programs.

\_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone

Please make your tax-deductible donation payable to "Palouse Audubon Society" and send it to:  
Cathy Willmes, 2152 Arbor Crest Rd, Moscow ID 83843-9106

Palouse Audubon Society  
PO Box 3606, University Station  
Moscow ID 83843



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### WEBSITE

<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/>  
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(208) 882-6195

### MEETINGS

**BOARD** - 1st Wednesday (normally)  
2/5, 3/5, 4/2, 5/7, 6/4  
**MEMBERSHIP** - 3rd Wednesday  
1/15, 2/19, 3/12, 4/16, 5/14

### PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY - NEW MEMBERSHIP ONLY

Includes *National Audubon Society* membership, subscriptions to *AUDUBON MAGAZINE* and *THE PRAIRIE OWL* Newsletter.  
Send your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, University Station, Moscow  
ID 83843. Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 334-3817

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