

# The Prairie Owl



Volume 36 Issue 5

April-May-June-July 2008

## EVENT CALENDAR

### APRIL

- 1—Board Meeting, 7:30pm, 1912 Center, Moscow
- 5—Field Trip; *Bluebird Trip*
- 16—Program; *Connor Natural History Museum*
- 19—Field Trip; *Turnbull*

### MAY

- 4—Field Trip; *NW Whitman County*
- 6—Board Meeting, 7:30pm, 1912 Center, Moscow
- 17—Field Trip; *Joseph Plains*
- 21—Program; *SE Washington Birding Trail*
- 31—Field Trip; *Rose Creek and Steptoe Butte*

JUNE Field trips, page 3

## PALOUSE AUDUBON

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## Lazuli Bunting

(Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

The Lazuli Bunting is a beautifully colored bird, common in shrubby areas throughout the American West. Each male Lazuli Bunting two years of age and older sings only one song, composed of a series



of different syllables, and unique to that individual. Yearling males generally arrive on the breeding grounds without a song of their own. Shortly after arriving, a young male de-

velops its own song, which can be a novel rearrangement of syllables, combinations of song fragments of several males, or a copy of the song of one particular older male. Song copying by young male Lazuli Bun-

tings can produce song neighborhoods, in which songs of neighboring males are similar.

The Lazuli Bunting has a unique pattern of molt and migration. In-

dividuals begin their pre-basic molt during late summer on the breeding grounds, then interrupt this molt and migrate to one of two known molting "hotspots" in southern Arizona and New Mexico and northern Sonora, or the southern tip of Baja California where they finish molting before continuing their migration to wintering grounds in western Mexico.

The Lazuli Bunting is 5-6 inches in size with a wingspan of 9 inches. It has a short thick bill and two wing bars. The breeding male has a blue head and back, red chest, and white belly. The female and non-breeding male are dull brown. The bunting's upper bill is black and the lower mandible light blue. The eyes are black and the legs and feet blackish. The male's song is a high, stri-

(cont on page 5)

## FROM THE PREZ

The upcoming May 21st Program Meeting will feature Christi Norman, Audubon Washington Birding Trail Program Director. She will be talking about developing the SE Washington Birding Trail.

What's a birding trail? A driving trip with stops at special places where birds are most likely to be seen.

Why birding trails? Trails attract nature tourists to rural locations, which spurs sustainable economic development and helps protect natural areas.

Are birding trails successful? More than 30 states have birding trails, Research shows that every 100 new bird watchers create a new full-time job, generate

\$2,500 in revenue, and return \$2,600 in taxes.

We need your help to complete some of the goals in order to make this project successful. So far the Palouse Audubon Society members involved in making this happen are Idaho residents. Keith Carlson and myself are beginning to work (cont on page 5)

## Programs

April 16—*Behind the Scenes at the Connor Museum*; Dr. Michael Webster, Biological Science Professor and Curator of the Charles R Connor Natural History Museum at Washington State University. During the

past months many of the displays at Washington State University's Connor

Museum have been updated and improved. Professor Webster will serve as our guide through the natural history museum. He has also promised to take us behind the



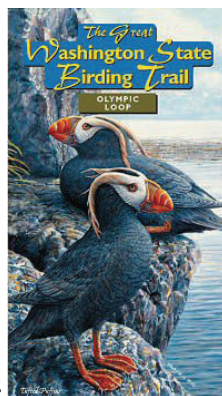
scenes to show us some of the extensive collection of bird and mammal species.

NOTE that this program will be held at the museum on the Washington State University campus. Directions to the museum and parking information are available at: [palouseaudubon.org/DIRECTIONS.pdf](http://palouseaudubon.org/DIRECTIONS.pdf)

May 21—*SE Washington Birding Trail*; Christi Norman, Washington Audubon Birding Trail Program Director. To date, four of the seven Birding Trail loops have been completed: Cascades

Loop, Coulee Corridor, SW Loop and the Olympic Loop. A Federal grant has been received to help pay for the remaining trails—two in Eastern

Washington. The goal is to finish the loops by the 2010 Olympics. The goal for the coming year is to complete the



SE (or Columbia River) Loop. The Blue Mountain, Lower Columbia Basin, Palouse, Yakima Valley, Central Basin and Kittitas chapters will be involved in the process. Don McIvor and Mike Denny have also been tasked with identifying the IBA

sites in Eastern Washington.

Christi Norman will present a program on the sites to be included in the SE Washington Loop and the activities of the Chapter Birding Trail Committee (Terry Gray and Keith Carlson).

## Field Trips

April 5—*Canyon Birders Annual Bluebird Trip to Troy, Oregon*; Jerry Cebula. Spring arrivals will be showing up and maybe some surprises such as a Snowy Owl could appear again. Hopefully we will see White-headed Woodpeckers as well, along with elk, deer and bighorn sheep. This is a long all day trip so bring plenty of food, water and warm clothing. Meet at 8:00 am at Swallows Park Marina.

April 19—*Turnbull National Wildlife Area*; Tom Weber. Turnbull NWR was established in 1937 to provide productive breeding and nesting grounds for migratory birds and other wildlife. The refuge encompasses approximately 16,000 acres of scabland infused in a diverse landscape of over 130 marshes, wetlands and lakes. The wetlands represent some of the last high-quality breeding habitat available in eastern Washington. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Dissmore's in Pullman. A full day trip.

May 4—*NW Whitman County* (Sunday); Tom Weber. This field trip takes us into the heart of Whitman

County's channeled scabland. We will visit the shallow lakes near Sprague, the Rock Creek drainage and the Palouse River area. Specific targets are burrowing owl, long-billed curlew and ferruginous hawk. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Dissmore's in Pullman. A full day trip.

May 10—*International Migratory Bird Day Celebration*; Moscow and Lewiston. Joel Sauder, non-game biologist for Idaho Fish and Game, will have activities and free posters at the Moscow Farmers Market from 8:00am until Noon. The WSU Raptor Club will be exhibiting live raptors from 9:00am until 11:00am. Activities will also be held at the Lewiston City Mall from 1:00pm until 5:00pm. The WSU Raptor Club will be exhibiting live raptors from 2:00pm until 4:00pm. Come join in the celebration!

May 28—*Wednesday Evening Bird Walks*—The first of 5—Each field trip will visit a different local area. Among them are: Phillips Farm, Spring Valley Reservoir, Wawawai Canyon, Genesee Wetland and Kas Dumroese's property. Participants should meet at 6:30 p.m. at Safeway

### Treasurer's Report— 3/17/08

Checking Balance 1/28/08	\$11,987.32
Local Dues	\$30.00
Waterfowl Survey	\$150.00
Christmas Bird Count	(\$75.00)
Bank charges	(\$7.52)
Norcross Grant	(\$1,716.23)
Checking Balance 3/17/08	\$10,368.57

Certificate of Deposit	\$5,000.00
Liabilities (Grants)	(\$5,848.73)

Total Assets: \$9,519.84

### Membership Report—3/17/08

National & Palouse Audubon	196
Palouse Audubon (only)	45
National Audubon (only)	129
Total Membership	370

PAS Membership Year—Sep 1 to Aug 31

in Moscow. For more information contact Terry Gray at (208)882-1585.

May 17—*Graves Creek to Joseph Plains*; Terry Gray. This trip has beautiful scenery and a large list of birds. Some target birds are White-

(cont on page 3)

## Birding Festivals

April 4 - 6: **John Scharff Migratory Bird Festival and Art Show**, Burns, Oregon—Spend an amazing week-end witnessing the spectacular spring migration in the Harney Basin of Southeast Oregon. View thousands of migratory birds as they rest and feed in the wide open spaces of Oregon's high desert. From waterfowl to shorebirds, cranes to raptors, wading birds to songbirds, you'll see it all! The festival offers non-stop birding activities as well as historical and cultural information sure to entertain you and your family. The festival will celebrate 100 years of conservation at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Contact: Harney County Chamber of Commerce, 76 E Washington St, Burns OR 97720, (541) 573-2636, <http://www.migratorybirdfestival.com/>

April 4—6: **Olympic Peninsula Birdfest**, Sequim, Washington—Visit the rain shadow of the Olympic Peninsula to discover the birds of the

coastal Pacific Northwest - Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, dippers, Black Oystercatchers, Long-tailed Ducks, and more. Guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and a Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal salmon banquet. Contact: Dungeness River Audubon Center, PO Box 2450, Sequim, WA 98382, (360) 681-4076, [info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org), [olympicbirdfest.org](http://olympicbirdfest.org)

May 2—4, 2008: **Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival**, Hoquiam, Washington—The 13th Annual Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival will be held the first weekend in May. The date has been moved to May because of daytime low tides. Hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed in Grays Harbor estuary on their migration northward. This concentration of birds offers people a great chance to view large numbers of shorebird species.

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

## MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606 University Station, Moscow ID 83844, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Our mission 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.

General membership meetings are held at the 1912 Building, 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 meet at the 1912 Center at 7:30 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, Tom Weber, 230 SE South St, Pullman WA 99163, or email [tweber@wsu.edu](mailto:tweber@wsu.edu) by the 20th of the month. Subscription problems should be addressed to the membership chair, James Storms, PO Box 235, Garfield WA 99130, (509) 635-1272 or email [nbutte@pullman.com](mailto:nbutte@pullman.com). Visit the Palouse Audubon Society website at <http://www.palouseaudubon.org/>

## Field Trips (from page 2)

throated Swift, Lewis's Woodpecker, bluebirds and Mountain Quail. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Sports Authority parking lot in Lewiston. This will be a full day trip, so bring a lunch.

May 31—**Rose Creek and Steptoe Butte**; Tom Weber. Steptoe Butte State Park is a 150-acre, 3,612-foot-tall natural monument. The picnic area at the entrance to the park has always yielded a wide variety of species and the butte itself has produced sage sparrow, brewer's sparrow, black-throated sparrow and clay-colored sparrow. Rose Creek Preserve is recognized as containing one of the best black hawthorn/cow parsnip riparian areas left in the entire Palouse. The preserve is also home to more than 250 species of vascular plants and 100+ species of birds. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Dissmore's in Pullman. A partial to full day trip.

May 31—**Benewah County Century Count**. Coeur d'Alene Audubon has invited birders from Palouse Audubon to participate in their Cen-

tury Count Big Day. They will be renting a cottage at Heyburn State Park for the two nights on either side of the big day. Contact: Lisa Hardy, [basalt@earthlink.net](mailto:basalt@earthlink.net), if interested.

June 7—**Pittsburg Landing**; Terry Gray. Terry will lead this trip to the Camas Prairie and into Hells Canyon. The trip will explore new regions to many of us and should yield some interesting Snake River species. This is an all day excursion, so bring a lunch. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Safeway in Moscow. For more information contact Terry Gray at (208)882-1585.

June 14—**Mica Mountain**; Terry Gray. This field trip through low elevation mountain meadows will travel east of Moscow visiting habitat on Spence Road, Lenville Road, Spring Valley Reservoir, Mica Mountain, Vassar Meadows and the East Fork of the Potlatch River. Target species include: redstarts, water thrush, goshawk, ruffed and blue grouse, great gray owl, jays and nutcrackers and bobolink. Participants should meet at

7:00 a.m. at Safeway in Moscow. For more information contact Terry Gray at (208) 882-1585. A full day trip.

June 21—**Craig Mountain**; Terry Gray. Target species will include: chukar, Williamson's sapsucker, western bluebird, red-naped sapsucker, Lewis's woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, northern goshawk, Lincoln's sparrow and Clark's nutcracker. Possible species include: great gray owl. Expect some great views into Hells Canyon and the Salmon River. Meet at the Sports Authority parking lot in Lewiston at 8:00 a.m. This will be a full day trip, so bring a lunch.

June 28—**Asotin Creek and the Blue Mountains**; Jerry Cebula. This is an all day trip into the Blue Mountains. Target birds are woodpeckers, mountain nesting birds and hopefully the Green-tailed Towhee. This trip should produce nearly 80 species as well as abundant wildflowers and beautiful scenery. Meet at Swallows Park Marina in Clarkston at 7:30 a.m.

## MAGNETIC BRAINS GIVE BIRDS AN INNER COMPASS

Birds have good vision, but their brains turn out to be even more eagle-eyed. Having previously found that molecules called cryptochromes embedded in bird's retinas both respond to light and detect magnetic fields, scientists at the University of Oldenburg in Germany recently showed that avian brains incorporate clever mechanisms for processing the geomagnetic information.

By using tracer chemicals in experiments with live garden warblers (a species occurring in Europe), the researchers followed a circuit of neurons from the cryptochrome molecules to the "cluster N" area of the brain, which is active during navigation, showing for the first time that cluster N uses information from

the retina.

Scientists aren't sure how such compass directions appear in the eyes of migratory birds, but team member Dominik Heyers has a guess. "If a bird looks north or south, it somehow has a light spot or a dark spot there," he says.

Another navigational tool: bird's beaks, which contain bits of magnetite, a mineral that may allow them to sense Earth's magnetic field. Since the field is stronger near the poles, the magnetite gives birds crucial information about their latitude.

Discover Magazine Article—Jan 2008, by Eli Kintisch

## PRESENCE OF BIRDS INCREASES TREE GROWTH

A study by the University of Colorado at Boulder found that the mountain chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, pygmy nuthatch, and yellow-rumped warbler spurred the growth of pine trees in the West by as much as one-third by removing damaging insects such as beetles, caterpillars, ants, and aphids from tree branches. This is the first study to show that birds can affect the growth of conifers and illustrates the importance of preserving ecological communities.

Kailen Mooney, who conducted the study as part of his doctoral research, said that it indicates that "forest managers really need to look at the big picture of ecosystems and not just focus on trees when implementing regulations aimed at encouraging the growth of healthy forests."

He also said that this study has implications for

areas of the West affected by forest fires in recent years. Many mature ponderosa stands that were burned and logged were replaced by smaller pines which offer limited breeding opportunities for cavity nesting birds, such as the chickadee and nuthatch. These birds nest and lay their eggs in the holes of large trees and snags.

The study found that birds can improve the "immune system" of the trees by removing insects and changing the terpene "flavor" in the conifers. Terpenes are chemicals that give plants distinctive odors and have been implicated in the resistance of trees to parasites and plant-eating insects, such as the bark beetle.

To read the press release issued by the University of Colorado at Boulder, go to:

<http://www.colorado.edu/news/releases/2007/282.html>

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Y05-7XCH

#### NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY (New only)

Includes *National Audubon Society* and *Palouse Audubon Society* membership and subscriptions to *AUDUBON MAGAZINE* and *THE PRAIRIE OWL* newsletter. Send check payable to **National Audubon Society**

**Introductory Membership** \$20.00

**Student & Senior Citizen (62+)** \$15.00

#### Palouse Audubon Society

Financially supports the programs and activities of the Palouse Audubon Society and includes an annual subscription to *THE PRAIRIE OWL* newsletter. Send your check payable to **Palouse Audubon Society**

**Annual Membership** \$15.00

For additional information call: (509) 635-1272

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form with your check to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, University Station, Moscow, ID 83844

## THE LAWS OF BIRDING

Provided by the North Cascades Audubon Society and the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

### Laws Concerning Rare Birds—

Rare birds reported on Wednesday are usually gone by Saturday.

During spring and fall, all major flights will occur on a weekday.

The farther you travel to see a particular bird, the less likely you are to find it.

Good birds appear when you have a bagel with cream cheese in your hand.

### Laws Concerning Field Marks—

Whenever you are out birding without a field guide and see a new bird, the field mark you think is the important one is never the important one.

A bird will always fly before you can look at the important field mark.

### Laws Concerning Life Birds—

You might look for a particular bird for 20 years without finding it, but once you DO find it, you find them everywhere. They turn up in your driveway, on your porch - they turn up EVERYWHERE! They suddenly become robin-like in their numbers.

The bird that you struggle through difficult terrain, endure multiple injuries, and screw up your schedule for, will be waiting for you above your car in the parking lot.

### Laws of Identification—

If a small brown bird flies across the road, it's a Song Sparrow.

If the bird sits there all day and lets you look at all its field marks, it is not

a rare bird.

If there are two or more birds in a tree and one is a rarity, the only one you can't see is the rarity.

Dull birds with difficult plumage are always seen on overcast days.

Woodpeckers and creepers spend more time on the far side of the trunk

A bird is most visible when you look in your field guide and least visible when you go back to look for the next field mark.

Birds are most visible when your binoculars are down.

The rarer the duck or goose, the farther from shore it will be.

Birds which can be distinguished by voice only sing when aircraft are overhead.

If you have seen the bird before, it's an escapee. If it's a lifer, it's a wild bird.

### Laws of Photographing Birds—

Your best photographic opportunities will occur when you do not have a camera.

The lens you have with you is never long enough.

If the lens is long enough, the bird will be too close to focus.

### Law of Scopes—

If you need the scope, it's in your trunk. If you do not need it, it's on your shoulder.

### Number One Law of Birding—

Common species are more common than rare species.

### You are a birder if. . . . .

Your kids are named Accipiter and Buteo.

Your spouse says, "It's either me or the birds and you have to think about it."

You try to talk your kid into going to college in Belize so you can have an excuse to go and bird there.

You get up earlier on weekends to go birding than you do during the week to go to work.

Your children have not had new shoes in two years but you own a Swarovski.

The most prevalent items in your wardrobe are your birding t-shirts.

You keep a list of birds seen out of the bathroom window while on the toilet.

You have a trip list from your honeymoon.

You have a list of lists

You go to the beach only during nor'easters and after strong cold fronts.

You have a callus on your finger from the focus knob.

**Last but not least**, you know you are a birder if you did not laugh at any of these because they are true.

## Lazuli Bunting *(from page 1)*

dent series of warbled phrases - call is a dry chip. Their habitat is bushy hillsides, riparian habitats, wooded valleys, sagebrush, chaparral, open scrub, recent post-fire habitats, thickets and hedges along agricultural fields, and residential gardens. They eat seeds, fruits, and insects and will come to bird feeders. The nest is a open cup of coarse grasses, rootlets, strips of bark, and leaves, lined with fine grass, rootlets, and animal hairs. The nest is wrapped in silk and located in a shrub, close to the ground. The eggs (3 to 4 on average) are pale greenish blue.

## Prez *(from page 1)*

on soliciting sponsorship from different agencies in Whitman and Asotin Counties. It would be wonderful if several members that live in Washington would volunteer to help with some of the planning, developing, and recruiting supporters for the birding trail.

*Terry Gray*

## SPRING ACOW 2008

The scenic elegance of the Sleeping Lady Mountain retreat near Leavenworth is the setting for Spring ACOW 2008 on April 11—13. Friday evening will feature a reception and art show. Saturday will be dedicated to workshops and breakouts on advocacy, leadership/board development, and fundraising. Saturday evening's banquet speaker will be Dr. Terry L. Root of the Woods Institute for the Environment. Sunday will feature field trips to local areas. For more information, visit the Audubon Washington website at:

<http://wa.audubon.org/>

**PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY**

Palouse Audubon Society  
PO Box 3606  
University Station  
Moscow ID 83844-3606



## International Migratory Bird Day—May 10

*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.*

**We're on the Web at:  
[palouseaudubon.org](http://palouseaudubon.org)**

## Ten Bird Feeding Myths - Courtesy of Bird Watchers Digest

**Feeders Keep Birds from Migrating.** Birds migrate when their natural internal "clocks" give them the urge, driven by instinct and factors such as sunlight and weather, not by the availability of food at feeders. In fact, migrating birds require more food, so keep your feeder open in case they pass through.

**Bird Feeding is Really Bad/Good for Birds.** Let's face it, birds did just fine before we decided, a few hundred years ago, to feed them. Yes, messy feeding stations can harbor disease, and food can sometimes spoil at our feeders, but if these scenarios are avoided, bird feeding is enjoyable for us and attractive to the birds.

**Birds Will Starve if You Stop Feeding in Winter.** Birds have evolved as incredibly adaptive, mobile creatures. Unless a bird is sick or debilitated, it can use its wings or legs to range far and wide in search of food.

**The Mixed Seed at the Grocery Store is Bad.** Some seed producers are getting the message that quality seed is worth selling. Junk seed has almost none of the following: black-oil sunflower, peanut bits, safflower, millet, or sunflower hearts. It will have lots of milo, wheat, barley and cracked corn.

**Birds Won't Eat Red Milo.** Red milo is a staple of western bird feeding, especially in the Southwest where a variety of quail, doves, towhees, and sparrows readily eat it. In the East and upper Midwest, birds don't seem to eat milo much at all.

**Blackbirds/Squirrels Won't Eat Safflower Seed.** It's not really true anymore, but nobody knows why.

**Red Dye in Hummer Food is Bad.** The fact is, we don't have any scientific proof to that effect. So it's one of those innocent-until-proven-guilty things.

**Only One Hummingbird Species is Found East of the Rocky Mountains.** In winter there can be as many as 10 different hummingbird species visiting feeders throughout the southeastern states.

**Perches on Hummer Feeders are Bad.** It started out as anecdotal evidence that hummers would drink very cold nectar, and go into torpor, but by being forced to hover while feeding would generate body heat. There is no scientific evidence for either case.

**This Feeder is 100% Squirrel Proof!** Squirrels are more resourceful than any bird feeder designer, because a squirrel thinks of nothing else but the seed inside that feeder and how to get at it. The feeder designer, meanwhile, is thinking about lunch and next Tuesday's staff meeting and bowling league. That's why the squirrels win every time.