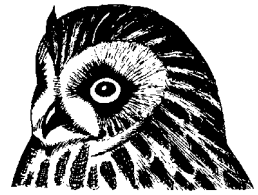


THE PRAIRIE OWL



PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 32, Issue 5, May 2004

SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME

The American robin is a familiar backyard bird across the vast majority of North America. It is also a bird that most of us probably take for granted. When I walk to work I will usually see half a dozen or so American robins during the 20-minute journey. Some will be looking for earthworms on a newly cut lawn, whilst others will be sitting on branches or fence posts, and some might be enjoying juicy berries. I rarely give each one more than a brief look – just to make sure it isn't something really interesting – then keep on walking.

Birders in England regard the American robin as a top-class vagrant and this winter one showed up on the English mainland; the first since 1966. Thousands of birders headed down to westernmost Cornwall to look at and photograph one of North America's commonest birds. A second American robin showed up a little later in an industrial estate near Grimsby on the English east coast. This caused a great stir as it was Lincolnshire's first ever American robin. It was found near dusk by two birders looking for waxwings. Both robins were first-winter females and the Grimsby bird seemed to enjoy the attention of the large crowds. She was described by the UK magazine *Bird Watching* as being "first ridiculously showy, then more coy, she was the ultimate film star, probably being photographed and videoed by more people than any female in the history of the world!"

The Grimsby American robin stayed in the area for over two months before it met a sad end when it finally succumbed to the attentions of a local sparrow hawk (an *Accipiter* similar in appearance and behavior to a sharp-shinned hawk). The robin's grizzled end was fittingly captured on videotape.

This sighting of American robins in England is just one of many illustrations of birds turning up in unusual places: turning up in places where they really shouldn't be.

The African-American artist Romare Bearden (1911-1988) was a master at placing unlikely objects in juxtaposition—putting things where they wouldn't be expected. In some of his collages during the 1970s and 80s Bearden made extensive use of birds. The birds were often placed in habitats/regions that they would not usually be found in and he often used sizes that were not consistent with the actual relative sizes of the birds. In his wonderful collage *Conjur Woman and the Virgin* (1978) Bearden uses three American robins. These are placed in a woodland scene by a stream with a black tern in breeding plumage in the foreground. In *In a Green Shade* (*Homage to Marvell*),

Bearden depicts many different birds including an "English" robin by a pool of water with other animals and a woman in the foreground. The habitat is unusual for the robin and it is close to a night heron, which is not a UK resident. These collages are rich and lush with wonderful uses of color and texture. Each time you look at them you see new things that you had not previously noted. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art presently has a large Bearden exhibit, which is well worth a visit.

The Editor

CALENDAR

MAY

- 1 — *U/I Arboretum Bird Walks* at 8, 9, 10 and 11:00 am with Terry Gray
- 2 — *COYOTE GRADE and EAST CLEARWATER RIVER FIELD TRIP* with Terry Gray
- 3 — PALOUSE AUDUBON BOARD MEETING 7.30pm.
- 8 — *KAMIAK and STEPTOE BUTTE FIELD TRIP* with Tom & Diane Weber
- 19 — PROGRAM: *My Backyard and Beyond: Wildlife of the Palouse and Inland Empire* - Terry Gray
- 23 — *HEYBURN STATE PARK & HARRISON FIELD TRIP* with Charles Swift
- 26 — *WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALK* – 6:30pm

JUNE

- 2 — *WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALK* – 6:30pm
- 4-6 — *WOS Conference*, University Inn, Moscow
- 9 — *WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALK* – 6:30pm
- 16 — *WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALK* – 6:30pm
- 19 — *BOVILL, ELK RIVER and UPPER ELK CREEK BASIN FIELD TRIP* with Terry Gray
- 23 — *WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALK* – 6:30pm
- 26 — *BUTTERFLY & DRAGONFLY FIELD TRIP* with Charles Swift
- 30 — *WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALK* – 6:30pm

PROGRAMS

MAY

Wednesday, May 19 *MY BACKYARD and BEYOND: Wildlife of the Palouse and Inland Empire* by Terry Gray. Terry has taken hundreds of digital photos during the past several years. His program will feature bird and mammal photos taken during many of our field trips. His photos have often been used on the Palouse Audubon website. This should be a great program of local interest.

FIELD TRIPS

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIRD WALKS - May 26 and June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 - Join trip leaders Charles Swift, Terry Gray, or Tom Weber for evening birding on the Palouse. Destinations will be up to the trip leader but expect to visit areas such as Idler's Rest, Coyote Grade, and various local parks. **Meet at 6:30 pm** at the Safeway Parking Lot on Blaine in southeast Moscow. Expect to return to Moscow by 9:30 p.m. For additional information, contact Charles, Terry, or Tom (see contact information in the Officer section).

MAY

Sunday, May 2 *COYOTE GRADE and EAST CLEARWATER RIVER FIELD TRIP* - This field trip will venture down Coyote Grade and up Winchester Grade in search of birds and mammals. The group will also spend time at Spalding Park, Winchester Lake and Mann Lake. Last year's trip produced nearly 70 species including both Snow and Ross's Geese at Mann Lake. This is an all day excursion, so bring a lunch. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Rosauer's in Moscow. For more information contact Terry Gray at (208) 285-1639.

Saturday, May 8 *KAMIAK and STEPTOE BUTTE FIELD TRIP* - Enjoy excellent spring foliage and a nice walk through these 2 Whitman County natural areas. Expect to see a variety of raptors and resident songbirds - including a variety of woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, and sparrows. Excellent views of the Palouse are likely. Expect some moderate walking. This is an all day excursion, so bring a lunch. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Dissmore's IGA at 1205 N Grand in Pullman. For more information contact Tom Weber at 334-3817.

Sunday, May 23 *HEYBURN STATE PARK and TRAIL OF THE COUER D'ALENES* - Our trip will include Heyburn State Park and portions of the new trail in Benewah and Kootenai counties. We will bird on foot in the morning. Bring your bike for an optional ride along the trail to Harrison after lunch. Participants should meet at 7:00 a.m. at Rosauers. For more information contact Charles Swift at (208) 883-0553 or charless@moscow.com

JUNE

Saturday, June 19 *BOVILL - ELK RIVER and UPPER ELK CREEK BASIN FIELD TRIP* - This field trip will venture East to Bovill and then South to Elk River. Stops along the way will include Elk Creek Falls and Elk Creek Reservoir. North of Elk River we will walk through Morris Creek Cedar Grove and stop to see the Giant Western Red Cedar in the Upper Basin. It is a good time to see many trees, wildflowers, mammals, reptiles, insects, and birds of Northern Idaho forests. This will be an all day excursion so bring a lunch and be prepared to do some walking. Participants should meet at Gart's Sporting Goods in Lewiston at 8:00 am to carpool - or at 8:30 am at the Genesee STP Holding Pond. For more information contact

Terry Gray at (208) 285-1639.

Saturday, June 26 *BUTTERFLY and DRAGONFLY FIELD TRIP* - Join Charles Swift on a combination insect and birding field trip through eastern Latah County. Contact Charles Swift at (208) 883-0553 if interested.

Program meetings are held at the 1912 Building, 3rd and Adams, Moscow. Everyone is welcome. Meetings begin at 7:30pm.

IDAHO BIRDING TRAIL

The Idaho Birding Trail project is underway to create a descriptive map of the best birding locations in Idaho. Its objectives are to increase awareness of these locations for birding and wildlife conservation and to promote ecotourism throughout Idaho.

Palouse Audubon is working on the north-central Idaho portion of the trail and we have identified 20 sites to be included from our region. We now need volunteers to visit these sites to prepare site descriptions and nominations.

In addition to helping the project this is a great excuse to do some birding in some of these areas! Please contact Charles Swift at 208/883-0553 or charless@moscow.com for more information and site forms.

LEAVENWORTH SPRING BIRD FESTIVAL

North Central Washington Audubon hosts the second annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, May 7th - 9th, 2004 featuring field trips, workshops, art shows and many other nature-related activities.

Leavenworth's Bird Fest caters to beginning bird watchers and Master Birders, children and adults, with trip with events ranging from Owl Prowls and Wildflower Walks to Birding-by-Boat trips and photography workshops. Most events are free.

The future Leavenworth Audubon Center, headquartered in a 100-year-old mansion on the riverbank adjacent to the city's Waterfront Park, will be open for tours. Bird Fest will conclude with a special Songbird Concert at Icicle Creek Music Center's Canyon Wren Recital Hall. New this year an all-day "Birding in the Basin" trip with Dan Stephens, Banding workshops with Beth & David St. George, a concert by Danny O'Keefe and a "Birds at Home" workshop that includes feeders, birdhouses and shade-grown coffee information.

In honor of International Migratory Bird Day, May 8th, Bird Fest will present programs on the conservation of Washington's migratory birds, particularly our neotropical songbirds that come each spring to the Wenatchee River watershed. These small creatures spend their winters from South America to Mexico and come north on the Pacific Flyway to Washington and points further on to nest. For more information, contact the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce at 509-548-5807 or visit us on the web at: <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/>



**CHAIRMAN
PROFILE**
James Storms
Membership Chairman

Hello, members. My name is James (Jim) Storms. I am managing an Access Data Base program with the mailing addresses and National Audubon Society records for the Palouse

Audubon Society. My background for this task comes from my 30 year involvement with the Inland Empire Christmas Tree Association. I have been maintaining their mailing address and annual dues listing for nearly 20 of those years. My early computer skills with data base management were painfully learned trying to adjust the member addresses from the IECTA mailing lists to standard mailing label formats and to the IECTA's special member list reports.

If, or when, you have a problem with your NAS membership or your mailings from either NAS or PAS, please call or email me and I will go to bat for you.

I try very hard to list your addresses in accordance to USPS guidelines and I try to get NAS member records to agree with that format. I also try to verify your address on the web at the USPS Zip + 4 website. You may notice these changes on your mailing label on your copy of *The Prairie Owl*. The approved method of address listing is to put your physical, delivery address in the second line and the place of business or building in the first line. If you have an apartment, Postal Box, or trailer space, that designation goes in the second line of your address. The street that your apartment is on, your company or building, and the street that your trailer park is on is entered on the first line of your address. I will run the USPS web site for Zip + 4 standard addresses for any listing that come to me that does not have the final 4 digits listed. I have found that unless we have a standard USPS address for you, you may receive your mail just fine until your local Postmaster is replaced with a stranger. Then we will start getting returned newsletters as "Incorrect Address" even though you have been at the address you are using for many years. JGS, email at jgstorms@IdahoVandals.com or nbutte@pullman.com.

FROM THE PREZ

Greetings from the Palouse - and how wonderful it is in spring time. Diane and I explored Steptoe Butte last weekend. It was just bursting with wildflowers and new growth. The scabland areas will never look better than in the next two weeks. You owe it to yourself to get out and enjoy the grandeur of the season.

PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENT

As a method of offsetting the loss of income caused by National Audubon Society's abandonment of the membership dues share, the Palouse Audubon Board submits the following resolution to the membership for approval.

Be it Resolved; That Article I of the Bylaws of the Palouse Audubon Society, Inc. be stricken in its entirety and replaced with the following:

**ARTICLE I
MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1: Any person interested in the purpose of the Palouse Audubon Society is eligible for membership.

Section 2: Annual dues of membership shall be \$15 with the exception of new National Audubon Society members who will be assessed dues following their first year of membership.

Section 3: All members shall enjoy all the rights and privileges pertaining to the members of this society.

Section 4: Membership dues shall be payable in September.

Section 5: Should renewal of membership dues not be paid within six months after the time they are payable, a member so in default shall forthwith be dropped from the rolls.

Article XI (Amendments) of our bylaws provides: The Constitution and bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of members in good standing present at any regular meeting, or at any special meeting thereof, regularly called, provided a quorum is present, and provided further that notice of such amendments shall be mailed to each member of the Society at the member's last known address at least fifteen days before said meeting.

A vote on the resolution will be held during our regular program meeting on Wednesday, May 19, at 7:30 p.m. at the 1912 Building, 3rd and Adams in Moscow.

Much will happen within the chapter during the next month. For one, a new slate of officers will be voted on. Terry Gray and Charles Swift have been nominated to serve as co-President. In addition, Deb Stenkamp has been nominated as Secretary and Henry Willmes as Treasurer. All four of these individuals will serve our chapter well. They are dedicated and committed to lead the chapter. Election of officers will take place at our next Program Meeting, May 19 at the 1912 Building in Moscow.

A business item being voted on during that same evening is an amendment to our bylaws instituting chapter dues. The amendment would break new grounds for the chapter. Until now, we have relied on the National Audubon Society's dues share program to fund chapter activities. These activities include: Audubon Adventure Classroom sponsorship, the Prairie Owl newsletter, the Rare Bird Report Hotline, and all conservation and educational activity sponsorships. Due to the loss of a share of your National Audubon annual dues, the chapter will need to generate enough money to maintain a basic existence. We hope that, should this amendment pass, that you will

continue to support the Palouse Audubon Chapter through payment of an annual membership. The proposed amendment is re-printed above and will be voted on at the May 19 Program Meeting at the 1912 Building in Moscow.

As this may well be my last message as president, I wish to close in thanking you for allowing me to serve. I also wish to thank the many individuals who have assisted



me during the past four years - along with those you have stepped forward to lead in the coming months and years. We have a great chapter. We accomplish much with a corps of active participants. My hope for the future is that you will continue to support the Palouse Audubon

Society through your financial and personal commitment. Good birding,

Tom Weber

A MESSAGE FROM THE RARE BIRD ALERT HOTLINE COORDINATOR

I've been chatting with Dave Trochlell about his work as regional editor for *North American Birds* and the Christmas Bird counts. He is tired. I've been doing the RBA for 10 years. I'm getting tired too. Would any of you have an interest in any of these three tasks?

The **CBC responsibility** is writing a short (500 word) summary of the Idaho CBCs, and thumb-upping or thumb-downing the most unusual sightings.

The **NAB task** is writing a 1500 to 1800 word (I think) summary of interesting bird sightings for Idaho and Montana, 4 times each year. Dave can provide all of the background sighting info that can be used as a jumping off place. NAB has a fairly rigid style so it's pretty much cookbook to put together. I have been editing those reports prior to their submittal for 6 or 7 years, and would be willing to continue to do that--in other words I can help you get started, as can Dave. In fact, the usual mode is for the current editor (Dave) and the new editor to co-edit reports for a year as a sort of apprenticeship. No Trump puns please.

The **RBA** is fairly straight forward as well. For about the past 2 years, it's been mostly summarizing the sightings that come in over the Internet. The phone system and recording system are all automated. It's simply dial up, hit a few key strokes, and record. I wouldn't mind coming back to this in a couple of years, but looking at my current summer schedule makes this job more and more difficult to complete.

If you're interested, or can think of some volunteers, please let me (or any of the officers) know.

Kas Dumroese

UPDATE ON REARDAN SLOUGH

Great news! Inland Northwest Land Trust and Spokane Audubon raised the \$50,000 needed for the option to purchase Reardan's Audubon Lake.

Even better news!! On Friday March 26th, INLT and Susan Eastman signed the option agreement. The purchase price is \$350,000 and we have until March 26, 2006, to raise the \$300,000 balance.

Inland Northwest Land Trust and Spokane Audubon Society wish to thank the many generous donors who contributed. At last count we had more than 130 donations.

We appreciate the notes of encouragement that accompanied your gifts and also the efforts of the many Audubon chapters throughout Washington and north Idaho that promoted this project to their membership. The Audubon chapters and their members were major contributors to this effort. Thank you to the Yakima chapter for issuing the challenge letter early on. Thank you, also, to Dean Schwickerath, from Gray's Harbor Audubon, for his outstanding work bringing this project to the attention of some major contributors.

Over the next year or so we will also be applying for other grants and foundation gifts, but will need to count on additional support from individual donations as well. The challenge is before us and we hope we can count on your continued support for this very important project. Again, thank you for helping us save Reardan's Audubon Lake so that it will remain outstanding bird habitat for generations to come!

Vicki Sola, Inland Northwest Land Trust

WASHINGTON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY – 16th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 16th Annual Conference of the Washington Ornithological Society will be held at the University Inn and Conference Center in Moscow, Idaho, from Friday, June 4 through Sunday, June 6. Field trips, led by local and experienced birders, will be conducted on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The conference also features interesting local speakers who will address topics relevant to the Pullman/Moscow/Palouse area on Friday and Saturday evenings.

The University Inn and Conference Center is located in Moscow, Idaho, 10 minutes driving time east of Pullman. It is 288 miles east of Seattle, 193 miles east of Yakima, and 76 miles south of Spokane. We are offering a number of excellent field trips - space is limited, so register early!

Field trips include local birding hotspots such as: Turnbull NWR, Field Springs State Park, Kamiak Butte, and many more. For more information visit the website at: <http://www.wos.org/>

REGISTRATION DEADLINE MAY 20

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES TURNBULL NWR

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge needs at least 2 volunteers to help with songbird point count surveys. Volunteer needs to be expert in identification of songbirds

by both sight and sound and have the ability to walk at least 2 miles over uneven ground. Surveys are conducted in the early morning at 1-2 week intervals over a 6-week period beginning May 16th. Volunteers need to commit to at least 3 surveys and provide their own transportation.

Contact: Mike Rule, Wildlife Biologist, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, 26010 S. Smith Rd, Cheney WA 99004 (509) 235-4723

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is looking for

MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606 University Station, Moscow ID 83843, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. The mission of Audubon 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 member homes at 7:30 p.m. on the first Monday of each month.

The Prairie Owl is published every other month, September through May. Material for the Owl should be sent to the editor, Grant Norton, 1225 NW Clifford St, Pullman WA 99163, or email norton@mme.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, or email nbutte@pullman.com. Visit the Palouse Audubon Society website at <http://www.palouseaudubon.org>

volunteer birders and professional biologists to participate in the *Birds in Forested Landscapes* (BFL) Project. This project is a good way to gain in-the-field experience, and can be easily combined with current research.

The BFL project is working to determine the effects of forest fragmentation and acid rain on North American forest birds. Participants choose BFL species that breed locally (48 species throughout NA) and select (a) study site(s) in fragments or contiguous forest. They visit the site(s) twice during the breeding season, look for evidence of breeding, and record habitat characteristics about the site in the field and from maps. Participants receive a research kit and CD to use in the field for playback. Visit www.birds.cornell.edu/bfl to find out more about the project and to sign up to participate this season.

BIRDING BY EAR

Simulate the Situation (the last of a three part series)

By now you should be recognizing some of the birds you hear. For others, you may have a suspicion of which family of birds (i.e. chickadees, finches, thrushes, etc.) you're hearing. And if you aren't getting that yet, you should be getting the feeling that you've heard many of the sounds before.

Consider any of the above as progress toward your goal of becoming proficient at identification by ear. And be patient. After you've spent the time to expose yourself to the sounds you want to be able to recognize, the next step is to put yourself as much into the situation of hearing just a single bird sound and attempting to figure out what it is as possible. This is largely the problem you face in birding by ear in the field. Of course, there are other complications in the field like wind and water noise and

artificial noises as well as visual distractions. In any case, you can just practice the identification by ear part.

There are three ways to do this; one requires an assistant and the other two you can do by and for yourself. The first method is to have an assistant operate a cassette tape player or CD player to play your recording so that you can't hear the announcement of the species you want to practice. They play the sounds, you guess the species and then they tell you whether you were correct. This method has the advantage of being pretty cheap unless you have to pay your assistant. The biggest problem with this method is that your assistant may get tired of helping you practice this way so it's good if you can find an assistant who is willing to reciprocate with you: you play some for them; they play some for you.

The second method is to use a personal computer equipped with the ability to play sound files to act as your assistant. This can be accomplished by buying a program to help you practice. I use a program called Bird Song Master made by Micro Wizard. It works with a number of popular bird sound CDs. There are other similar programs like it available. One advantage of this method is that you can conduct your own training at times that are convenient for you and go as fast or slow as you need to. You can set up tutorials to do small groups of birds (just the owls or just the thrushes for example). Also, don't have to

have Internet access for this. The disadvantage is that a PC may be too expensive if your only reason to have it is to learn to bird by ear or the PC you own might not be able to play a CD or reproduce sounds.

The third method is to visit a number of websites, which permit you to play bird sounds interactively. The Bird Song Matcher at www.virtualbirder.com is an example of an internet-based tutorial you can use to test yourself. Its location on the internet is: <http://www.virtualbirder.com/vbirder/matcher/matcherDirs/SONG/index.html> The advantage to it is that you can just visit a PC at your local library or use your home PC if you have one to log in to this or other sites and not have to bother with getting and installing PC software. The critical part of this approach is to attempt to guess what you're hearing and make sure to get accurate feedback about your guesses.

Harold Ward

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

OFFICERS

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Vice-President: Jane Westervelt (208)882-8597, jwesterv@uidaho.edu
Treasurer: Henry Willmes (208)882-2649, willmes@adelphia.net

DIRECTORS

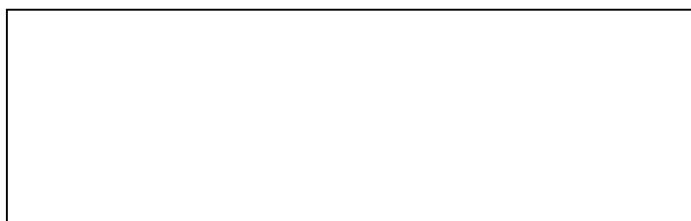
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Membership: James Storms, (509) 635-1272, nbutte@pullman.com
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Program & Website: Tom Weber, (509) 334-3817, tweber@wsu.edu
Publicity: Diane Weber, (509) 334-3817, catbirdz@adelphia.net

Palouse Audubon Society

PO Box 3606
University Station
Moscow ID 83843



PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY - NEW MEMBERSHIP ONLY

Includes *National Audubon Society* and *Palouse Audubon Society* memberships; and an annual subscription to *AUDUBON MAGAZINE* and the *THE PRAIRIE OWL* newsletter. Send your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to: James Storms, PO Box 235, Garfield WA 99130-0235. Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 635-1272

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE (____) _____

Membership Category (mark ONE):

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introductory Membership (1 yr) \$20.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership \$1,000.00 | Y05 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student & Senior Citizen (62+) \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> PAS Membership only \$15.00 | 7XCH |