

THE PRAIRIE OWL

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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BIRDING ACROSS THE POND

As we move slowly towards the summer months, thoughts begin to turn towards planning vacations and for some a vacation means a chance to go birding in some new area of the country or even the world.

Birding, or “birdwatching” as it is referred to, in the UK can be a great experience. The geography of Britain makes it particularly suitable for rarities, especially during migration. On one side the island is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, on the other side the North Sea. The Isle of Scilly (off the far south-west coast) can have visitors from Bermuda. At the other end of the country, Fair Isle (off the north-eastern tip) is a place to look out for birds from Siberia that have been blown off course. There are about 220 regular resident species, but lists in excess of 300 are not unusual and there are many members of the “400 Club” — those that have seen at least 400 species in Britain and Ireland.

For any birder visiting Britain the first place to make for is one of the 30 bird sanctuaries run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). These refuges are spread throughout the country and offer a wide variety of habitats and the opportunity to see many species of birds. The RSPB was founded in Manchester by a group of ladies concerned about the use of feathers from egrets and great crested grebes in hats. It is now the largest organization of its type in the world with over 1 million members. [Interestingly, there are more members of the RSPB than the three main political parties in the UK combined.] Sadly, the rise in the number of RSPB members has coincided, not coincidentally, with a decline in the native bird species in Britain. With a population density of 246 people per square kilometer there isn't a lot of spare countryside for birds. Although some species can adapt to living in urban areas or in areas that are intensely farmed others simply cannot. And it is the decline of once familiar species that has led to the growing popularity of the RSPB.

Birding in a new or unfamiliar location is almost always rewarding. One of the reasons is that even locally common species seem exotic. A walk in any English wooded park or along a farmland hedgerow will produce a long-tailed tit—a tiny bird with a long black tail and pink feathers on

its back and sides. The multicolored chaffinch is as common in Britain as the House Finch is in the Northwest.

This summer I am looking forward to my first experience of birding in Asia. I am going to attend a conference in Singapore and will, of course, pack my binoculars and try to spend a few days birding.



Chaffinch
(Copyright Arthur Grosset)

Singapore is located in southeastern Asia between Malaysia and Indonesia and is only slightly more than 3.5 times the size of Washington, DC. Despite its size and limited natural resources there are some good opportunities for birding. Singapore is one of only two cities in the world to have a significant area of primary rainforest within its boundaries—the other being Rio de Janeiro. The Bukit Timah Nature Reserve located in the rainforest contains more species of trees than the entire North American continent and over 140 bird species have been recorded.

Grant Norton
Editor

If you would like to write an article for inclusion in the *Prairie Owl*, or if you have an interesting bird story, or a field trip report please send it to me at norton@mme.wsu.edu.

Thanks!

Palouse Audubon Society Calendar

March-April, 2005

(see www.palouseaudubon.org for calendar updates and additional information)

MAY

- 4, 11, 18, 25 (Wednesdays) noon bird walks, meet at 12 PM at the entrance to the UI Arboretum (next to UI Golf Course)
14 – **International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) Event** – Lewiston Mall, Thain Grade 10AM, inc. field trip to Mann Lake
18 - **PROGRAM: *Natural History of the Palouse*** – Kas Dumroese - 7:30 PM 1912 Center, Moscow.
21 - **FIELD TRIP:** Steptoe Butte Dissmore's IGA in Pullman at 7:00 AM. Contact Tom Weber.
22 - **FIELD TRIP:** Upper Palouse River, Latah Co. Rosauers in Moscow at 7:00 AM. Contact Charles Swift.
28 - **FIELD TRIP:** Eastern Latah Co. Rosauers in Moscow at 7:00 AM. Contact Terry Gray.

SUMMER

- June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 – Wednesday evening birding, 6:30 PM at Safeway Parking Lot, Eastside Mall, Blaine St. in Moscow, local spots such as Phillip's Farm, Lenville Rd., Spring Valley Res., usually returning to Moscow by 9:30 PM.
August 6,13,20,27 – Mann Lake fall migration trips, starting August this year to follow shorebird migration! Meet at 8:30 AM at the Mann lake boat ramp (see PAS web site for directions).

Contact Information: Charles Swift, (208) 883-0553, charless@uidaho.edu; Terry Gray, (208) 285-1639, clgtlg@genesee-id.com; Tom Weber, (509) 334-3817, tweber@wsu.edu

FIELD TRIPS

May 21 - STEPTOE BUTTE - Steptoe Butte State Park is a 150-acre, 3,612-foot-tall natural monument. Thimble-shaped, the quartzite butte looms in bald grandeur over the prevailing flat lands. The picnic area at the entrance to the park has always yielded a wide variety of species, among them warblers, catbirds, wrens, sparrows, orioles and grosbeaks. The butte itself has also produced Sage Sparrow and Black-throated Sparrow along with a multitude of raptors, Rock Wren, Brewer's Sparrow and Lazuli Bunting. **Participants should meet at 7:00 am at Dissmore's IGA at 1205 N Grand in Pullman.** For more information contact leader Tom Weber at 509-334-3817.

May 22 – UPPER PALOUSE RIVER – The Palouse River flows out of the Hoodoo Range east of Potlatch, ID and west through Whitman Co. to the Snake R. We will explore its upper reaches from the ID/WA line east to Laird Park. We will start out in pine/hawthorn habitat and explore upstream to wet mixed conifer forests in the Laird Park area. We should see a wide variety of swallows, flycatchers, warblers, and others species. American Dipper, Barred Owl, and Pileated Woodpecker are possible. The stretch near the border has been relatively unexplored by local birders and could hold some surprises. **Participants should meet at 7:00 am at Rosauers, N Main St in Moscow.** For more information contact leader Charles Swift at 208-883-0553.

May 28 - EASTERN LATAH COUNTY – 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. Stops

may involve some easy walking. If time permits, we will travel North from Bovill to the meadows near Clarkia.

Probable species include: Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel and Wild Turkey - as well as a variety of land birds. **Participants should meet at 7:00 am at Rosauer's, N Main St in Moscow.** For more information contact leader Terry Gray at 208-285-1639

Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest: May 6 - 8

www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com

Kettle Valley Songbird Festival: May 20 – 22

<http://www.ferrycounty.com/kettlevalleysongbirdfestival/>

PROGRAMS

MAY 18 – *Natural History of the Palouse Country*, Kas Dumroese
1912 Building, 3rd and Adams, Moscow, 7.30PM

What makes this area so unique? Why, in the midst of these fertile hills, do we also find expanses of barren rock, granite outcrops and deep canyons? Kas will attempt to answer many of these questions with his entertaining and highly educational program. Participants will surely leave with a new appreciation and understanding of the natural wonder of the Palouse.

Everyone is welcome. The program is free and open to the public.

FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Spring is now upon us and with that we are coming to the end of our schedule for the 2004-2005 year. But fear not, we still have another excellent program and a plethora of field trips coming up. We continue this June with our Wed. evening trips from Moscow and this year we are starting Mann Lake Saturday morning trips in August to capture the full range of shorebird migration. The end of our year also makes a good time to review our past year and look forward to our 2005-2006 season.

Palouse Audubon members responded generously last fall when we implemented a local dues program. Thanks to your support we are now operating well in the black. We have a healthy local membership of over 150 members which when combined with National Audubon only members swells to over 350. We've had an excellent series of programs and field trips with steady participation. We thank you for your support! We, the presidents, are especially grateful for the hard work of the PAS board which makes our jobs that much easier!

We ask for your support again in volunteering to take a role in the operation of Palouse Audubon. We are grateful to volunteers like our Education Chair, Cathy Willmes. Cathy has provided a great service to PAS but has decided to move on to other things. We therefore have an immediate need for an Education Chair to coordinate our Audubon Adventures program for the upcoming school year (Cathy will help you get started!). We have a number of other positions (see below) and projects and as always, member participation is welcome at all board meetings. We all have busy lives but if we take a turn and share the work and we can be confident that Palouse Audubon Society continues well into the future!

Education Chair: Primary responsibility is to coordinate our Audubon Adventures program with our local schools. We would also like to offer birding classes to the general public which this person could help coordinate.

Conservation Chair: Primary responsibility is to inform the board and chapter on local conservation issues. Other duties might include coordinating with other groups, writing articles for the newsletter, and corresponding on issues of interest.

Field Trip Chair: Primary responsibility is scheduling, coordinating, and advertising field trips.

Charles Swift and Terry Grey

BIRD OF THE MONTH

The Barn Swallow

This month the featured bird is the Barn Swallow. It was an easy choice as the swallow is really a summer's child. Its arrival marks the end of winter and already I have seen this graceful bird with its long forked tail and long pointed wings flying over fields and along streams in Pullman. The weather may make us feel that the chilly grip of winter is still here but the swallow tells us otherwise.



The Barn Swallow

(Credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

The barn swallow is common in summer throughout North America. It nests almost exclusively on manmade structures such as bridges and, of course, barns. A barn will usually contain the nests of six to eight pairs, although on rare occasions up to 50 pairs have been found. The nest will be made of mud and straw and lined with grass and feathers. The female swallow will lay 3 to 8 dark spotted white eggs, which will hatch in about two weeks. The young birds will leave the nest about three weeks later.

As the summer fades away the barn swallow will migrate south through Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies to their wintering range in South America. During migration barn swallows have been found to fly up to 250 kilometers a day.

The barn swallow is about 5 to 7 inches long, blue black above, whitish to orange underneath, and with a dark rufous throat. The adult has a long forked tail, which is diagnostic. Juveniles have shorter forked tails. The barn swallow is constantly on the move as it dives and wheels in dizzy spins low over fields in pursuit of flying insects.

Grant Norton, Editor

UPDATE FROM IRAQ

It is springtime here in Iraq, the grass is green, what little there is, and there are some flowers blooming. As many of you may already know I got deployed with the Idaho Army National Guard in July 2004 for several months of training followed by a one-year tour in Iraq. I am here in the Kirkuk region of Northern Iraq and have been here since mid December and things here are as well as could be expected. With a little luck I should be home for next Christmas. The elections were a success for both the citizens of Iraq and the United States Armed Forces alike, and once again the terrorists have lost! What does the future hold for Iraq? The new government can evolve and mature, and the free people of Iraq can taste freedom and prosper. On a personal note, one of the things that I wanted to do while I was here for me was write a journal of daily happenings and events and look at birds.

Some of the Forward Operating Bases, or FOBs as we military professionals like to call them, have gray water evaporation ponds. These ponds have been established for a couple of years now since coalition forces have been here and these ponds have grown into bird magnets! They have well-established vegetative cover, provide water for drinking, and insects for eating. Unfortunately, this FOB isn't one of them. On a brighter note, being in Northern Iraq there is a littler more moisture in the form of winter rainfall and there are some mature groves of trees on this base. I have been and will continue to explore these areas for new birds. There are also few leaky water pipes around that can provide needed sustenance for any parched bird, and I keep my eye on those areas also. You are probably asking what kind of trees grow here. Well there is quite the diversity of species. Off the top of my head, I have seen lots of Black Olive along with other Olive species, Orange, Pomegranate, Date Palm, a Pinyon Pine, a Mesquite looking sticker bush, and some other "really strange, I have no idea" trees.

There is an amazing sight at 0630 hours every morning. I am awakened to the sound of thousands of crows flying overhead. I

am not sure where they are going but to look into the sky and see this flock of crows stretching all the way to the horizon is an amazing sight. Then once again just before sundown they are heading back the other direction. I here reports of them roosting on the ground at the other end of our FOB. I plan on checking this out. I had an interesting conversation with our interpreter, Sarkaut, the other day. We were outside and seen a few straggler crows flying overhead. He commented that crows are kind of a pest bird and are a big nuisance to Iraqi people. I told him, "Some feel the same about crows in America." Then we saw some Starlings fly overhead. "Now those are good eating", says Sarkaut. My jaw dropped. "You eat those things", I said. "They are a common bird here and easy to catch." I decided to end that subject right then and there by asking about his family! Anyway, here is a list of birds that I have seen so far.

House Sparrow	Steppe Eagle
Desert Wheatear	Crested Lark
Magpie	Spur-winged Plover
Collared Dove	Laughing Dove
Levant Sparrow hawk	Red-Footed Falcon
Great Tit	Black Redstart
White Wagtail	Great Cormorant
Starlings	Common Rose Finch
White-Cheeked Bulbul	Chaffinch
Black Francolin	Spanish Sparrow
Stone Chat	Goldfinch

Some other neat animals that I have seen so far are camels and desert fox. What do I have to look forward to in the coming summer months? Camel spiders, scorpions, and snakes, oh my!

If you feel the need to write me and ask any other questions, I check my email daily and would be overjoyed to hear from any fellow birders on the Palouse.

David Woodall

david.trent.woodall@us.army.mil

PALOUSE AUDUBON Board of Directors

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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 meets at member homes at 7:30 p.m. in the first week 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/>

American Birding Association

Principles of Birding Ethics

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

Code of Birding Ethics

1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.

- 1 (a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.
- 1 (b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.
Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area.
Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.
Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.
- 1 (c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance can be minimized, and permission has been obtained from private land-owners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.
- 1 (d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

2. Respect the law and the rights of others.

- 2 (a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- 2 (b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.
- 2 (c) Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

- 3 (a) Keep dispensers, water, and food clean and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.
- 3 (b) Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

- 3 (c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member.

- 4 (a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as those of people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.
- 4 (b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.
Group Leader Responsibilities [amateur and professional trips and tours].
- 4 (c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.
- 4 (d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment and does not interfere with others using the same area.
- 4 (e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.
- 4 (f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (eg, no tape recorders allowed).
- 4 (g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.

Please follow this code—distribute it and teach it to others.

Additional copies of the Code of Birding Ethics can be obtained from ABA. The ABA Code of Birding Ethics may be reprinted, reproduced, and distributed without restriction. Please acknowledge the role of ABA in developing and promoting this code.

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
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Moscow, ID 83844

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY – ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Financially supports the programs and activities of the Palouse Audubon Society and includes an annual subscription to *THE PRAIRIE OWL* newsletter. Send your **\$15.00** check payable to **Palouse Audubon Society** to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, University Station, Moscow, ID 83844. Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 635-1272

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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY – NEW MEMBERSHIP ONLY

Includes *National Audubon Society* and *Palouse Audubon Society* membership and 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 83844.

Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 635-1272

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Membership Category (Mark ONE):

Introductory Membership (1 yr) \$20.00

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