

# The Prairie Owl



Volume 37 Issue 1

August-September 2008

## EVENT CALENDAR

### AUGUST

2, 9, 16, 23 and 30—Field Trip;  
*Mann Lake*

20—Picnic; *Klemgard Park*

### SEPTEMBER

2—Board Meeting, 7:30pm,  
1912 Center, Moscow

6, 13, 20 and 27—Field Trip;  
*Mann Lake*

17—Program; *To Be An-  
nounced*

### OCTOBER

7—Board Meeting, 7:30pm,  
1912 Center, Moscow

## PALOUSE AUDUBON

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## Swainson's Hawk (Audubon)

Swainson's Hawks have the second longest migration of all raptor species; this species migrates over 10,000 km every spring and fall between its breeding grounds in North America to its wintering grounds in South America.

When not breeding, Swainson's have an unusual diet among raptors—they feed mostly on insects! Unfortunately, Swainson's are in decline because of habitat destruction, a reduction in its main prey species, and pesticide use.

Swainson's are a slender buteo with a long tail and pointed wings compared to other buteos. The tail is grayish with narrow, dark bands. The last dark band is the widest and bounded below by a white or buffy

band. When seen from below, pale morphs have darker flight feathers than wing-linings. Pale morphs also have a dark breast band or bib. Dark morphs appear to be uniformly colored underneath, except



for the tail. All morphs have uniform coloring on their upperparts. Juveniles have a similar underwing pattern as the adult of the same morph and streaking on the underparts with spotting on the breast.

Swainson's Hawks breed throughout much of the Rocky Mountains and western Great Plains from southern Alberta and Saskatchewan to northern Mexico. They spend the winter mainly in the Pampas of Argentina, but also in other South American countries, southern Mexico, California, and Florida. Their population took a big hit around the turn of the century, when it went from being repeatedly described as being an abundant and even nuisance species in the late 1800s, to rare and obviously missing from the skies by the 1910s and 1920s.

It is now reduced in numbers throughout its range and considered to be declining in Utah, Nevada, and Oregon. Reproductive success in Alberta and Saskatchewan is at a low, most

*(cont on page 3)*

## FROM THE PREZ

I hope everyone has been enjoying our cooler than usual summer. Fall migration seems to have started earlier this year. There have been reports of shore birds and some passerines moving south since mid-June.

There may be some changes in *The Great Washington State Birding*

*Trail*. There is a good possibility that the Southeast Loop will be combined into the Spokane Loop which would cover the entire east side of the state. The current Palouse Audubon Committee, consisting of David Woodall, Keith Carlson and myself, and the Clarkston Visitor and Convention Bureau staff and the Chamber

of Commerce staff are recommending that since many visitors are from Spokane it makes sense for Palouse sites to be on the NE/Spokane Area map. This is not finalized yet so I will keep you posted on any changes to the loop maps for this area. The plan is to have the next l o o p *(cont on page 3)*

## Field Trips

**MANN LAKE**—August 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30; and September 6, 13, 20 and 27— These birding trips every Saturday morning during August and September are sponsored by Palouse Audubon and Canyon Birders, and will focus on the fall migration of waterfowl and shorebirds through our region. Field trip leaders will be there from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. This is a great time of year to observe migrants at the lake. Participants are to meet at the Mann Lake boat ramp at 8:30am.

### To get to Mann Lake:

**THE SCENIC ROUTE** (Lindsay Creek Road): From the north end of Lewiston, follow US 12 south into town, cross the Clearwater River on Memorial Bridge and immediately

take the first left (east) toward East Lewiston. Turn left (east) onto East Main Street and go about a half mile to the flashing yellow lights. Turn right (south) onto Lapwai (a.k.a. Lindsay Creek) Road. When the road forks stay right on Lindsay Creek Road (Nez Perce County Road 460) and follow it about 5 miles to its terminus at Grelle Avenue. Turn left (east) onto Grelle Avenue and just past the sharp right curve, turn left (east) onto East Powers Avenue (a.k.a. Lapwai Road). Continue straight (east) past the grain towers to the main parking lot of the lake. Kiwanis Park is between Snake River Avenue and the Snake River, just south of the US 12 bridge between Lewiston and Clarkston. ID DeLorme 54, A-1.

**THE URBAN ROUTE** (Powers Avenue): From the north end of Lewiston, follow US 12 south into town, stay left at the first light and

cross the Clearwater River on Memorial Bridge. The left lane directs you up 21st Street at the next light. Follow it up the hill, through the Lewiston Orchards until it turns into a 2-lane road. Turn left on Powers Avenue and follow it all the way to the grain towers and the boat launch.

### Treasurer's Report— 7/28/08

Checking Balance 3/17/08	\$10,368.57
Local Dues	\$75.00
Donations	\$41.00
Newsletter Expenses	(\$720.06)
Post Office Box	(\$68.00)
Norcross Grant	(\$1,376.99)
Audubon Washington	(\$300.00)
Checking Balance 7/28/08	\$8,019.52
Certificate of Deposit	\$5,129.71
Liabilities (Grants)	(\$4,471.74)
Total Assets:	\$8,677.49

### Membership Report—5/31/08

National & Palouse Audubon	219
Palouse Audubon (only)	47
National Audubon (only)	121
Total Membership	387

PAS Membership Year—Sep 1 to Aug 31

## AL STAGE, Moscow

Albert Randall Stage, 79, of Moscow, former Project Chairman for the Palouse Audubon Society and president of the White Pine Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society died of a brain tumor July 12 at his home.

Al was born June 2, 1929 in Springfield MA. He grew up in Massachusetts and graduated from West Springfield High School in 1947. He married Marjory Meyer Roller of Ludlow MA on Aug. 24, 1954.

He received an M.S. in mathematical statistics in 1961 and a Ph.D. in forest mensuration in 1966, both from the University of Michigan. He served in the U.S. Army from 1952 to 1954 in the Philippines and South Pacific, and then was in the Army Reserve until 1961.

Al began his career in 1950 with a summer job at the Fort Valley Experimental Forest in Arizona. In 1951, he was hired by the Northern Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station where he worked when not on military or educational leave.

In 1954, he became the superin-

tendent of the Priest River Experimental Forest in North Idaho until 1956. Following that, he worked at the Inland Empire Research center in Spokane. He was one of the original inhabitants of the Moscow Forestry Sciences Laboratory when it opened in 1963. It was there that he was appointed to his dream job as a project leader, a position he maintained until retirement in 1995.

Al received several awards and honors during his career, including the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources, the USDA Superior Service Award, the Forest Service Forest Insect and Disease Award for Research Excellence, and in 2006, the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Award in Forest Science. He was elected a Fellow of SAF in 2000.

The University of Idaho's College of Natural Resources honored him with an Associate Alumni Award in 2001. He also served as president of the White Pine chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society for multiple terms.

Survivors include his wife, Marjory

Roller Stage of Moscow; a daughter, Helen S. Stroebel-Unruh of Boise; a son, Morgan R. Stage of Eagle, and two grandchildren, Landon W. Stroebel of Arlington, Va., and Teal M. Stage of Charleston, S.C. He was preceded in death by two children, Winfield R. Stage and Ben R. Stage.

In lieu of flowers, the Stage family suggests that memorial gifts be made in Al's name to the American Cancer Society (920 N. Washington St. 200, Spokane, WA 99201), the White Pine Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society (P.O. Box 8481, Moscow, ID 83843) or the Palouse Land Trust (P.O. Box 8506, Moscow, ID 83843).

## SWAINSON'S HAWK (from pg 1)

likely caused by a reduced prey base, decay of prairie trees, and plowing of grasslands. Up until the 1930s, this hawk was shot by ranchers and farmers, even though it preys upon agricultural pests.

Swainson's no longer breed along the southern California coast because it is too highly developed and it no longer occurs in the Mojave Desert. The California population is estimated to be only 90% that of its historical population. Transients to Baja California are decreasingly observed. The main prey species for hawks in the western Canadian prairie, Richardson's ground-squirrel, is in decline, and is correlated with reduced reproductive rates. Pesticide use on alfalfa and sunflower fields in Argentina resulted in the death of some six thousand birds in 1995 and 1996. The alfalfa and sunflower fields were sprayed with organophosphate insecticides to kill grasshopper infestations. Hawks died immediately if they were sprayed while foraging in the fields or within several days after consuming the chemical-ridden grasshoppers.

Swainson's Hawks inhabit grassland, shrubland, and agricultural areas where it has open areas to forage for its small prey and where roost sites are available. They eat mostly insects, mainly grasshoppers and dragonflies, but also butterflies, moths, and leaf beetles. It forages by soaring over open areas and by searching from perches. It may forage in groups, especially if hunting ground squirrels, grasshoppers, crickets, and bats.

Pair bonds form as soon as the individuals return from the wintering grounds between February and April. Nest-building ensues for another week, and 1-4 eggs are laid soon after. They only have one brood per season. Parents feed their young rodents, rabbits, and reptiles. ***Some pairs are intolerant of human disturbance near the nest while nest building and incubating.***

Swainson's Hawks leave their breeding range in August or September and arrive in Argentina in November. Migratory flocks sometimes number from five to ten thousand. Migration from North to South America passes over land and one can imagine the great numbers seen in Central America as the hawks are funneled by the narrowing land mass. Veracruz, Mexico has seen up to 845,000 Swainson's Hawks in one fall. Their high numbers are joined by flocks of Turkey Vultures, Broad-winged Hawks, and Mississippi Kites, making one spectacular sight of migrating raptors. The round-trip migration can cover more than 20,000 km.

*Editor's Note:* Diane and I have been fortunate to have had Swainson's Hawks nesting near our home in Pullman for well over a decade. Our observations are many, in particular the species love of evening

flight. They seem to congregate above our house each evening, screeching loudly and playing in the winds. They are oftentimes joined by other pairs in the region and spend time kettling and diving. In the fall of the year, kettles of over 40—Swainson's have been noted.

Another observation recently related to us by our neighbor who works for Schweitzer Engineering on the north end of Pullman, is that Swainson's Hawks DO attack people. There have been several instances of attacks near the Schweitzer buildings—to the point of employees being concerned about enjoying their lunch out of doors. Mike Denny also reported of an attack in Walla Walla earlier this year. These observations tend to support the statement above, however we have never experienced this behavior near our home—even though the birds oftentimes dive and fly at roof top.

We anxiously await their arrival each spring which is announced with loud screeching and roof top dives.

## Prez (from page 1)

ready for print and be available for stocking stuffers by this Christmas.

Mann Lake Saturday morning field trips start on August 2nd. Come join us any Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m. through the end of October. I am hoping to have at least one monthly trip that starts at Mann Lake and continues on to some close birding location. This will provide some alternative birding areas to enjoy during migration. I will email those that are on my field trip list about additional places to be visited that day.

For those of you that would like a reminder about field trips please let me know if you are not already receiving a reminder email. My email address is [clgtlg@moscow.com](mailto:clgtlg@moscow.com).

Terry Gray, President

## 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/>

**PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY**

Palouse Audubon Society  
PO Box 3606  
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Moscow ID 83844-3606



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**We're on the Web at:  
palouseaudubon.org**

## PALOUSE AUDUBON PICNIC

Palouse Audubon and National Audubon members are invited to a picnic on Wednesday, August 20 at Klemgard County Park, located west of US 195 between Colfax and Pullman. The park straddles Union Flat Creek and contains a shelter (with electricity), playground equipment, ball fields and pine forest trails. It is also a great place to view birds!

Attendees are asked to bring a salad or dessert and their own beverage. The chapter will furnish freshly grilled hamburgers and hot dogs. Buns, condiments, plates, flatware, napkins and cups will be provided.

**Everyone is urged to attend!**

**DATE:** Wednesday, August 20

**TIME:** 6:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Klemgard Park

**R.S.V.P:** ctgtlg@moscow.com  
or tweber@wsu.edu

**Directions to Klemgard County Park:** From Pullman, travel 10 miles north on **Highway 195** (5 miles south of Colfax). Turn left on **Hamilton Hill Road** and drive 2.5 miles to the bottom of the canyon. Turn west (right) on **Union Flat Road** and travel 1 mile to the park entrance.

