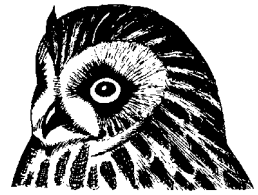


THE PRAIRIE OWL



PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 32, Issue 2, November 2003

You are invited to attend an evening of fun and merriment.

HOLIDAY SOCIAL AND SILENT AUCTION

Wednesday
November 19, 2003
Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

1912 Building, 3rd and Adams,
Moscow

An evening with the *Birds of the Blue Mountains*; delicious desserts and beverages; and a silent auction for an assortment of quality gifts, merchandise and birding trips.

SEE YOU THERE!

WHY DO WE DO IT?

Here is part of a recent job advertisement circulated by the zoology department at Oxford University:

“Wanted, Eagle research biologist to study breeding of New Guinea Harpy Eagle in cloud forest of Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea. Torrential rain, bitter cold, tropical diseases and risk of attack by bandits very high. Prospects of success very low. Self-reliance and a high degree of competence in tree-rope access essential...”

The advertisement is very similar in theme to that placed by the great explorer Ernest Shackleton when he was recruiting for his first trip to Antarctica:

“Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.”

Shackleton’s advertisement resulted in a great many applicants. I don’t know how many applicants they got for the Oxford position but my guess is that they filled the position.

The risks of birding in exotic locations have been well documented in the marvelous book *Birding on Borrowed Time* by Phoebe Snetsinger. During her second trip to Papua New Guinea (PNG), Phoebe and her birding companion, David Bishop, were brutally attacked and lucky to have survived. But that incident did not stop Phoebe continuing to go to locations where there were potential dangers and even back to PNG where she did see a New Guinea Harpy Eagle [New Guinea Eagle]. For many of the same reasons that Phoebe Snetsinger was prepared to face danger to watch birds I am sure that some research biologist took the Oxford position and flew out to PNG.

Although many of us who love watching birds would be somewhat reticent about exposing ourselves to tropical diseases and attack by bandits we are all prepared to put up with a considerable amount of discomfort in pursuit of our passion.

The question is why do we do it? The recent film *Winged Migration* (released in the US in 2002 and shown in Moscow earlier this month) provides, I think, the answer. Birds are probably the most fascinating, amazing, and wonderful of all creatures. They are also animals that we attribute with possessing many of our own feelings and emotions. Whatever we endure to watch birds is small in comparison to what they endure just to survive from year to year. The migration process is thwart with dangers, some of them natural and some due to human activity. One of the

saddest scenes in the film is of a Red-breasted Goose trapped in a puddle of industrial muck and unable to take off and re-join the migration. It is easy for us when looking at that scene to imagine that the goose was experiencing fear. When the Red-crowned Crane slips on ice, in one of the most comical scenes from the film, was it embarrassed?

Marc Bekoff of the University of Colorado, Boulder and author of *The Smile of a Dolphin* is in no doubt that animals can experience a range of both simple and complex emotions. Many neuroscientists support this view.

If the person who accepts the Oxford job is a member of the Palouse Audubon Society and reads *The Prairie Owl* I send them my very best wishes.

Even if your birding activities don't take you as far as PNG, the late Fall and early Winter are great times to get out in the field and, particularly, to look at ducks. By early December the mature males will be in their handsome breeding plumage. Although our area is not overly blessed with water the lakes and ponds in northwest Whitman County routinely turn up a wide range of ducks. Mann Lake and the levee ponds at Lewiston are also local birding hotspot for shore and water birds.

The Editor

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- 3 PAS Board Meeting – Grays, Genesee - 7:30pm
- 15 Palouse Discovery Science Center Grand Opening - PAS exhibit, Pullman, 10:00am - 5:00pm
- 19 PAS Membership Meeting - 7:00pm, *Holiday Social and Auction - Birds of the Blue Mountains*
- 27 Thanksgiving Bird Count (see page 3 for details)
- 29 Asotin Creek - Snake and Grande Ronde River Field Trip

DECEMBER

- 1 PAS Board Meeting – Webers, Pullman – 7:30pm
- 17 PAS Membership Meeting - 7:30pm, *African Safari in Kenya*
- 20 Pullman-Moscow Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY

- 1 Anti-Football/Pre-CBC Field Trip, Lewiston
- 3 Lewiston-Clarkston Christmas Bird Count
- 5 PAS Board Meeting – location TBA
- 21 PAS Membership Meeting - 7:30pm

Check the web site for additional field trip information for November and December.
<http://www.palouseaudubon.org/fieldtrip>

PROGRAMS

Wednesday, November 19 - *HOLIDAY SOCIAL and AUCTION - BIRDS OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS* with Mike and MerryLynn Denny, Walla Walla

Mike Denny, popular field trip leader and birding authority, will present a stimulating program on *Birds of the Blues* with photographs by MerryLynn, wildlife photographer. Mike has just completed a ten-week small vertebrate survey for the Forest Service in the Blue Mountains and is guaranteed to have an interesting and enthusiastic presentation of the bird life observed during the field work season.

In addition to the wonderful program, we will be holding our 3rd annual **Holiday Social and Auction**. Proceeds from the silent auction are used to support programs and our many Audubon Adventure classrooms. A variety of items will be available including birding trips, books, artwork and Christmas gifts. Desserts, coffee, and punch will be served. Support of Audubon activities is tax-deductible, so bring your checkbook and help the cause. **The program and social are open to everyone – BRING A FRIEND.**

Wednesday, December 17 - *The Challenge of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya's National Parks* - Ed Krumpe, Principal Scientist in Resource Recreation and Tourism at the University of Idaho.

Mr. Krumpe visited a former graduate student in Kenya last summer and took over 500 digital photos during three safaris. Come and experience the excitement of a safari in beautiful Kenya.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO DONATE FOR THE AUCTION?

If you have items or services that could be included in our annual Auction, please notify president Tom Weber. Bird feeders (new or slightly used), nest boxes, birdseed, artwork, books, field trips, restaurant coupons, wine, most anything of small or large value would be appreciated. A list and description of auction items will be presented to bidders before the auction so please, if possible before the event, notify Tom at (509)334-3817 or tweber@wsu.edu

FIELD TRIPS

Thursday, November 27 - *THANKSGIVING BIRD COUNT* - The Thanksgiving Bird Count takes place for one hour on Thanksgiving Day. Counters choose the location and time that best fits their holiday schedule. Birds that pass through a 15-foot diameter cylinder are counted. The count circle is usually located around whatever attracts birds – feeders, baths, cover, etc. Many participants select a count area visible from a comfortable spot near a window. Others select water areas or a favorite birding location. Whatever the case, the same count circle should be used each year.

Individual birds are to be counted only once during the hour, even if they pay repeated visits to the count area. Flocks should be counted only once, when the largest number are inside the area. Last year, 472 people made 486 counts in the Western states, Alaska and Hawaii. One hundred seventy-six species were tallied.

If you wish to participate, forms are available on our website or by request to Tom Weber, 334-3817.

Saturday, November 29 - ASOTIN CREEK-SNAKE RIVER-GRANDE RONDE RIVER FIELD TRIP, Jane Westervelt - Participants should meet at 8:00 am at Rosauer's in Moscow or at 9:00 am at Swallow's Nest boat ramp in Clarkston. For people wishing to meet Jane in Clarkston, she will remain at the boat ramp until 9:15 am.

Thursday, January 1 - 2nd ANNUAL ANTI-FOOTBALL - PRE-CBC SCOUTING FIELD TRIP, Jane Westervelt - Participants should meet at 8:00 am at Rosauer's in Moscow or at 9:00 am at TERMINAL 2 in North Lewiston. For people wishing to meet Jane in North Lewiston, she will remain at TERMINAL 2 until 9:15 am.

104th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - The National Audubon Society calls on volunteers everywhere to join with birders across the western hemisphere and participate in Audubon's longest-running winter-time tradition, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year, nearly 2,000 individual counts are scheduled to take place throughout the Americas from December 14, 2003 to January 5, 2004. Local counts include:

Saturday, December 20 - PULLMAN-MOSCOW CBC, Dave Holick, coordinator - Come join local birders as they participate in the 33rd annual count of the *Pullman-Moscow Circle*. Count assignments are being coordinated by Dave Holick and Tom Weber. Please call (208)882-5556 or (509)334-3817 for additional information. All birders are welcome.

Saturday, January 3 - LEWISTON-CLARKSTON CBC, Charles Swift, coordinator - Join us in the banana belt for a great day of birding. The *Lewiston/Clarkston Count* always yields large numbers of waterfowl, raptors, and wintering land birds. Novice birders are welcome and will be teamed with experienced counters. Meet at 7:00am at the Lewiston Jack in the Box, 19th St, Lewiston. Contact Charles Swift at (208)883-0553.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Washington, DC, October 11, 2003 - A new federal economic report found that 46 million birdwatchers across America spent \$32 billion in 2001 pursuing one of the Nation's most popular outdoor activities according to a report from the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The report, *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis*, is the first of its kind

analyzing data from the 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

"Nearly one in five Americans is a bird watcher," said Service Director Steve Williams. "This report recognizes what we always thought to be true. Birdwatching is very popular and contributes greatly to our economy, so it is important that we continue to work with our partners to restore and protect habitat to ensure healthy bird populations."

FROM THE PREZ

In this issue there is notice of our 3rd Annual Holiday Social and Auction. I want to impress upon everyone the importance of supporting this event – not only for sponsorship of our many programs but for the very existence of our chapter as well. Please let me explain.

Several years ago, National Audubon decided to shift emphasis from support of grass root endeavors through local chapters to an upper tier approach of funding State Audubon Chapters and metropolitan based nature centers. The mission was to advance conservation through legislative action on the state and national levels and through education in areas of high population density with the nature centers. In adopting this approach, funding was shifted away from the local chapters. Local chapter funding has been phased out. We expect less than \$500 support from NAS this year with zero support in future years.

What does this mean to our chapter? Primarily it means that we need to raise money in order to offer any and all services to our members and communities - money for Audubon Adventure classrooms, which we feel creates a sense of responsibility towards nature among our youth; money for the newsletter, the all important communication link among our members to detail local activities and needs; money for our outreach programs, which provide education through monthly programs, activities and through our local libraries. A graphic display of chapter income and expenses has been included on page 5 of the newsletter.

No longer can we as a chapter, spend all of our energy on service and education – we now need to devote most of it on raising funds for survival. We are not alone. It is estimated that 200 chapters will fold during the next few years because of the situation. Several of the national directors are fighting for returned support to the local level. Their proposals and issues have resulted in the formation of a group called *Take Back Audubon* (TBA). You can learn more about TBA by visiting: <http://www.smbas.org/tba>

Earlier this month you received a Proxy ballot from National Audubon. Your vote and return of the Proxy ballot can make a difference. Proxies may be difficult to figure out, so what follows is a brief summary:

- (1) You are being asked to give your vote to one of two sides of an issue - one side's proxy cannot be used by the other;
- (2) A NAS proxy will be used by John Flicker, Carol Browner and Ruth Russell who will vote for the

NAS slate of directors and against the five TBA resolutions;

- (3) A TBA proxy will be used by Marsha Cannon, John F. Gallagher, Andrew L. Mason, and Darrel K. Whipple in favor of a TBA director slate and the five TBA resolutions;
- (4) Once you know which side you support, sign and send the proxy to the appropriate address - destroy the other proxy.

If you have lost or discarded the Proxy postcard and wish to make your voice heard, the TBA proxy can be downloaded at the following:

<http://www.smbas.org/tba/proxy.htm>

Most certainly, future funding will remain an ongoing topic among the Board and members. For now, however, I ask that you please support our Holiday Social and Auction on November 19. Last year, \$1100 was generated – up from \$366 during the inaugural year. Your support in donating and in purchasing items is truly needed. And besides, I guarantee that you will love the program by Mike and MerryLynn Denny. They are an enthusiastic and great couple. Until then, I hope the birding is great.

Tom Weber

BINOCULARS FOR BEGINNING BIRDERS - PART II (Harold Ward)

In this second part of our series on binoculars Harold Ward discusses the issue of cost when buying binoculars. He also describes some of the things to avoid and gives tips to beginning birders in the use of binoculars.

PRICE - You can usually tell whether an author is selling binoculars by the price of the least expensive ones recommended. Although there is a relationship between the overall performance of a pair of binoculars and their price, consider your skills at binocular use and handling. It is possible to buy binoculars costing more than most people pay for a car or even a house. Until you have become proficient using and caring for a pair of binoculars, remember a less expensive pair of binoculars will provide very good service. Also with decent but low cost binoculars, it won't hurt your feelings nearly as much the first time you drop them on hard pavement or into a puddle. It is possible to obtain a good pair of binoculars for moderate price (usually \$50 or less) and, if you don't manage to drop them, otherwise destroy them or lose them, you can always keep them around for a friend to borrow when you go out for bird walks.

THE LEARNING CURVE - Bear in mind where you are on the learning curve. Unless you have already extensively used binoculars for some other purpose, you will need to acquire the skill of pointing your binoculars at something to get a better look at it. You should also practice following moving objects with your binoculars. With practice not only will you be able to more quickly get to see birds you've spotted through your binoculars, you will also

begin to be able to make better use of the observations you make (collect more and finer details, etc.).

As with many personal possessions, your needs and desires will differ from the next person's. They may also vary as you gain more experience and as the kind of birding you do changes. Try out a variety of binoculars and see for yourself what works best for you. The best trials are actually using a candidate pair of binoculars for some hours of birding.

Practice using your binoculars to view birds in your back yard until you can quickly view a spotted bird. You should also "warm up" each time you get started birding by spotting a few points around you near and far and quickly viewing them with your binoculars. That way when you first spot an interesting bird you won't miss it because it's the first thing you tried to view that morning. If you have good stereo vision, you should be able to get a much better view of "the bird in the bush" than with your unaided eyes but this also requires some practice focusing at the right depth in the shrubbery.

Bring your binoculars along even when you're just going to be listening for owls; binoculars are an invaluable tool for star gazing and planet watching. You can even practice following satellites.

WHAT TO AVOID - Considering all of the suggested Do's mentioned above, it's worthwhile to point out some of the Don'ts. I'm pleased to say that, although it did take me over a year to decide that I even needed binoculars, I haven't personally made all of the following mistakes.

Doublers or Zoom Binoculars - These are binoculars with a zoom feature which permits you to change the magnification often from around seven to fifteen or twenty. The problem with them is that they are usually more expensive than fixed magnification binoculars, often heavier, way too dim and shaky at the higher magnifications and often have "rainbow" fringes. A better strategy is to get a decent pair of fixed magnification binoculars and save the money you didn't spend on doublers for a nice telescope and tripod.

Opera glasses - These binoculars chief use is watching a well lit stage performance or sporting event. They usually are too low magnification. Although they're very attractive from the weight perspective, they're usually way too dim for birding and other nature watching.

Fixed focus binoculars - These binoculars eliminate focusing as a problem by completely eliminating it as an option. This means that they will have a very large near focus and you will need to view all your close encounters with interesting wildlife without them.

Colored lenses - These are often sold to hunters and some military surveillance optics have the ability to select colored lenses to be better able to look for illegal immigrants, drug smugglers, terrorists, etc. They filter out most colors and make colorful birds hard to recognize.

Rainbow fringes - Low quality optics often give the object of interest a rainbow colored fringe.

Misaligned binoculars - You may be briefly able to adapt your vision to a pair of binoculars which don't point to the same spot but don't do it. After a few minutes of birding, it becomes very uncomfortable and may lead to headaches, nausea, etc.

Binoculars you can't quite focus - Extremely low cost binoculars are usually so inexpensive because they aren't worth bothering with. If you can't immediately adjust a pair

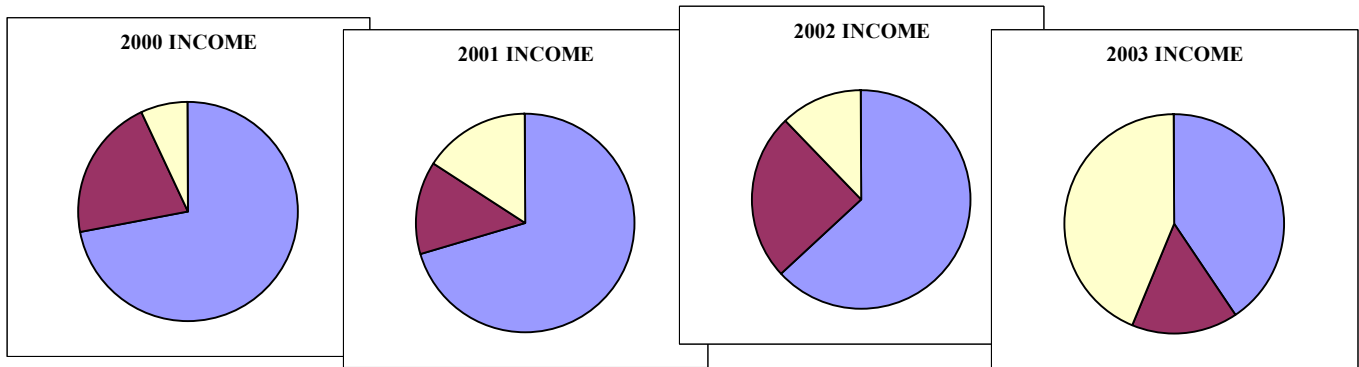
of binoculars for your eyes including eyeglasses if you normally wear them, don't buy them.

Separate focus binoculars - Even some name brand binoculars used to be manufactured with a focus dial on each eyepiece. This may have been adequate for fire spotting or other purposes but it's unsuitable for birding...by the time you finish getting the spot you want to look at in focus, the bird is likely to have flown.

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.

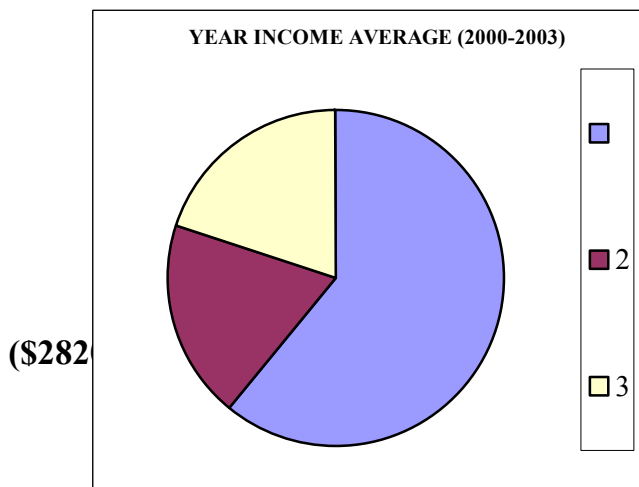
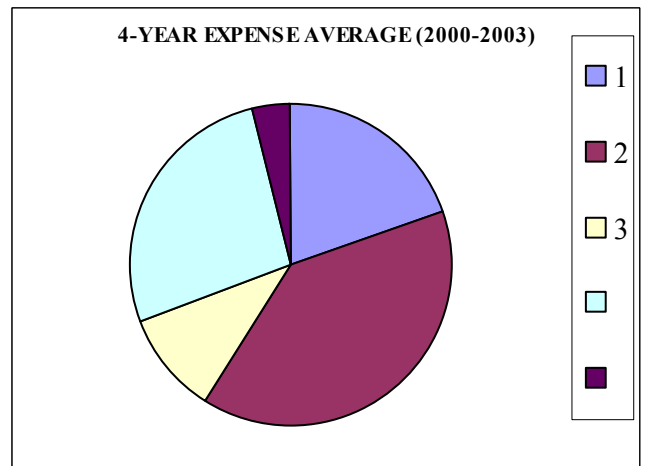
CHAPTER INCOME COMPARISONS

White – Chapter Fund Raising; **Gray** – National Audubon Dues Share; **Black** – Member Donations



CHAPTER EXPENSE, 4-YEAR AVERAGE (\$2630)

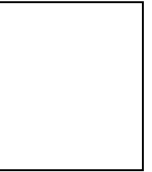
- 1 - Administrative – Birding Hotline, PO Box, etc. (\$520)
- 2 - Newsletter (\$1030)
- 3 - Insurance (\$270)
- 4 - Audubon Adventures (\$710)
- 5 - Donations, etc. (\$100)



CHAPTER INCOME, 4-YEAR AVERAGE

- 1 - National Audubon Dues Share (\$1720)
- 2 - Audubon Adventure Donations (\$540)
- 3 - Chapter Fund Raising (\$560)

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
University Station
Moscow ID 83843



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

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 Newsletter Only \$10.00 | 7XCH |

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WEBSITE

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

BIRDING HOTLINE

(208) 882-6195

MEETINGS

BOARD - 1st Monday (normally)
8/25, 10/6, 11/3, 12/1

MEMBERSHIP - 3rd Wednesday
9/17, 10/15, 11/19, 12/17

DIRECTORS