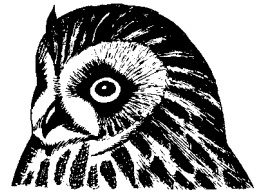


THE PRAIRIE OWL



PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 33, Issue 2, November 2004

BIRDING IS GOOD FOR YOU

A large sign at the entrance to a wildlife refuge in India has the following important information:

A Tip For Longevity

“People say you can’t make a living from bird watching. That is perhaps true, but it is also true that man doesn’t live by bread alone. Just look at the people who have no such hobbies and spend all their time solely in earning a living. After 50, when they retire from official chair warming they don’t know what to do with all the time in their hands and just spend it watching the clock! If they had cultivated a hobby like bird watching—remember it is very health giving because you have to be out of doors to watch birds—they would have lived longer to enjoy their pension.”

There is certainly scientific evidence to support this claim. Birding is a healthy pursuit not only because it entails getting out of doors but it also provides a mental challenge in correctly identifying the species that are seen. The other benefit of birding, much like gardening, is that there is a sense of harmony with the seasons and recognition of the natural cycle of the earth. Each season provides its own unique possibilities for what species may be found. As we move through fall we see birds that are traveling towards their wintering grounds. We also welcome birds that will spend the winter with us.

During fall we can find migrating sandpipers, such as western sandpipers and least sandpipers, feeding on mudflats on regional lakes and ponds. These species soon move to their wintering grounds. Christmas Bird Counts in the Southeast, and the Texas and California coasts often find both western and least sandpipers. The semipalmated sandpiper can be found in our region but migrates to spend the winter in South America and is rarely found wintering in the United States.

Winter brings many interesting species into our region. The gyrfalcon and merlin are two species of falcon that can be found during the winter. We also welcome back the rough-legged hawk that replaces the Swainson’s hawk, which has spent the summer months with us and moves to

the grasslands of Argentina’s pampas region for the winter.

One of the reasons I, like many others, enjoy birding so much is that there is always the possibility of the unexpected. Will I see a new State bird? Will I see a new life bird? Will I see a rarity? I was fortunate enough to be in Seattle last week and went down to North Cove in the hopes of seeing the very rare black-tailed gull. Arriving in North Cove at about 8 o’clock on a blustery and very wet Saturday I scanned the array of gulls that were arranged in the shallow surf and on the sand. No black-tailed gull to be seen. When the rain started to soak through my hat and run down my neck I decided to look around some of the neighboring areas for other species. Over the course of the next couple of hours the rain began to subside, I began to dry out and decided to drive back to North Cove. The number of gulls had increased significantly and my hopes soared. I carefully scanned the assembled masses, which included several hundred California and Heermann’s gulls as well as mew, ring-billed, herring, and Thayer’s gulls, and there it was—the black-tailed gull. The small gull, a very rare visitor from Asia that would be more at home in Japan than coastal Washington, was standing on the edge of the surf. Through my spotting scope I could clearly make out the characteristic broad black tail-band. The gull was smaller and more slender than the California gulls and altogether more exotic. A life bird, a state bird, a great bird!

Fall and winter can be very rewarding times to get out and do some bird watching and remember it’s good for you.

Bird and Live Long!

The Editor

P.S. 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!

NOVEMBER

- 3 – **BOARD MEETING.** All interested members are welcome. Contact Charles Swift 208-883-0553 for information.
- 6 – **MANN LAKE:** 8:30 AM at Mann Lake boat ramp. Lewiston.
- 13 – **MANN LAKE:** 8:30 AM at Mann Lake Boat Ramp (last Mann Lake trip of fall)
- 14 – **HEYBURN STATE PARK:** A perennial favorite and now w/ better access! Waterfowl, Bald Eagles, conifer species. Meet at Rosauers, N. Main in Moscow at 8:00 AM. All day trip. Contact Terry Gray at 208-285-1639.
- 17 – **HOLIDAY SOCIAL and AUCTION** *Churchill Polar Bears*, Daniel Poleschook Jr. 7:30 PM Moscow
- 20 – **NEZ PERCE COUNTY** w/ Canyon Birders: Meet at 8:00 AM at Gart Sports in Lewiston (across Rt. 12 bridge and just up Thain). Contact Carole Vande Voorde 509-243-4388

DECEMBER

- 4 – **FIELD TRIP:** TBD (leader’s choice). Meet at Rosauers, N. Main in Moscow at 8:00 AM. Contact Charles Swift at 208-883-0553.
- 7 – **BOARD MEETING:** All interested members are welcome. Contact Charles Swift 208-883-0553 for information.
- 15 – **PROGRAM.** *Asian Vulture Crisis* J. Lindsay Oaks, DVM, Washington State University. 7:30 PM Moscow
- 18 – **PULLMAN-MOSCOW CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** (see below for more information)

JANUARY

- 2 – **LEWISTON-CLARKSTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** (see below for more information)

PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER

17 - *HOLIDAY SOCIAL and AUCTION – CHURCHILL POLAR BEARS:* Daniel Poleschook Jr.

A great program will be featured at our fourth annual *Holiday Social and Auction*. Daniel Poleschook Jr. and Ginger Gumm of Loon Lake, Washington will present a program on *CHURCHILL POLAR BEARS*. Daniel became a professional nature photographer in 1990, after a career in geology, when he formed a nature photography workshop company conducting about 15 workshops per year in the western United States, Florida, Canada, and Africa.

Dan's program will surely be a great attraction to our auction, which helps to raise funds in support of the chapter's many Audubon Adventure classrooms. Auction items include a wonderful variety of 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.

December

15 - *ASIAN VULTURE CRISIS:* J. Lindsay Oaks, DVM, Washington State University.

Dr. Oaks' primary research interest is persistent viral infections, in particular the mechanisms of persistence and

gene expression in subclinical equine infectious anemia (EIA) lentivirus infections. EIA is an important disease of horses, and a good model for persistent infections by other lentiviruses, including HIV. Other research interests include viruses of exotic birds, in particular adenoviral and herpesviral infections of birds of prey.

Dr. Oaks has discovered the cause of decline of Asian vultures, the topic of his presentation. The program is free and open to the public. Everyone is welcome.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The Christmas Bird Count is a fun day for both the birding enthusiast and the novice alike. Held between December 14 and January 5 each year, the CBC is an opportunity to see wintering birds rarely seen by most people. All count data is incorporated into a national database. This will be the 105th annual Christmas Bird Count and the Palouse Audubon Chapter's 34th annual year of participation. More information including recent years count results available at www.palouseaudubon.org.

Count day for the Pullman-Moscow Circle is December 18, 2004. Contact Dave Holick at 208-882-5556.

Count day for the Lewiston-Clarkston Circle is January 2, 2005. Contact Charles Swift at 208-883-0553

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

(see www.palouseaudubon.org for updates)

LETTER FROM TEXAS

Hello Fellow Birders,

Well by the time you read this I will have been to the desert of West Texas and will be in the Bayou of Louisiana training for my deployment later this fall to the northern portion of Iraq, near the city Kirkuk.

Although the schedule has been very hectic with training events every day and little to no time off I did manage to sneak away with my binos and a field guide. It was very interesting because for the most part everything I have seen is new! The first thing that I noticed once arriving in El Paso Texas, in July, there were no American Robins around. Well, actually that was the second thing; the first I noticed was the heat! What I thought was the most common city park bird all across America, to include Moscow Idaho, was vacant from this area. But to take its place were Grackles. Related to the Black Birds, they are Black to Bronze in color and are about the size of a magpie. There are several species of Grackles but I believe these were the Great-tailed Grackle because of their size and long, wide tail that acts as a rudder as they fly.

I have seen a total of 38 birds in Texas, but the neat thing is that of those 21 are new to my life list

Listed below is the list of birds that I have seen:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Verden* | Grackle* |
| Western King bird | Cassin's KingBird* |
| House Sparrow | Band Tailed Pigeon |
| Mourning Dove | White Winged Dove* |
| Ground Dove* | Lesser Nighthawk* |
| Scaled Quail* | Gambel's Quail* |
| Common Raven | White necked Raven* |
| Barn Swallow | Phainopepla* |
| MacGillivray's Warbler* | Curve Billed Thrasher* |
| Black Vulture* | Harris's Hawk* |
| Lark Bunting* | Roadrunner |
| Rough Legged Hawk | Swainson's Hawk |
| Hummingbird Spp. | Killdeer |
| Kiskadee Flycatcher* | Gila Woodpecker* |
| Yellow Bellied Sapsucker* | Bridled Titmouse* |
| Golden Eagle | Bendire's Thrasher* |
| Mexican Duck* | Cooper's Hawk |
| Great Horned Owl | Ruby Crowned Kinglet |
| Say's Phoebe | |

* denotes a new addition to my life list

Although there were other birds I saw as I was passing from one place to the next, I could not fully identify them so they had to go undocumented in my life list. Looking through my field guide it was a disappointment to see that

there were so many more interesting birds in the area, with a beautiful array of colors, that that I did not get to see. This may be the motivation I need to return here in the future for a more detailed birding expedition.

I want to give a big thanks to Charles Swift and the rest of the Palouse Audubon society for the purchase of "Birds of the Middle East" Field guide for me and my journey. It is small enough to easily fit into my cargo pocket and has some beautiful pictures to boot! All the birds over there will be new to me so I'm sure it will come in very handy in Iraq. I will be sure to record and send back any pictures I take for all of you to see. Anyway, so long and until next time, *ma es-salaama*. That is good-bye in Arabic.

David Woodall

Assistant Logistics Chief/S-4 Section
116 Engineer Battalion
Idaho Army National Guard

Saturday Mann Lake Trips

** editor's note: Terry Gray has led or co-led every Mann Lake trip this fall, sharing his enthusiasm and knowledge of birds. Mann Lake is one of the best birding spots and the only Important Bird Area (IBA) locally.

Mann Lake Field Trips began on September 4th. The weather has been fair except for one Saturday, when a heavy rain fell and only three of us braved the elements to see a total of 29 species for that day.

So far a total of 30 people have participated on one or more of eight trips. People have come from Spokane, Tacoma, Southern Idaho, and Alaska to join birders from this area. A total of 100 species were observed. An additional 6 species were reported between Saturdays bringing the total species list for the lake area to 106 for this period.

One morning there were two (or possibly three) Peregrine Falcons hunting at the lake. One Peregrine pursued a Northern Flicker out over the water and every time it was attacked from underneath, the Flicker would roll out of the way. The Peregrine must not have been very hungry because the Flicker managed to elude it. The Peregrine tried to attack a Canada Goose. There was no match there but it was fun to watch.

Most Saturdays there were no geese at the lake when we first arrived and they would all fly in various groups later in the morning. Then everyone would try to spot a Greater White-fronted Goose. One morning there were two separate families of Greater White-fronted Geese and we

observed 12 total. They migrated through our area early and seeing more than a few birds was a real treat.

Some of the interesting Fall migrant species seen include Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Black-bellied Plover, American Golden Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Short-billed Dowitcher, Pectoral Sandpiper, Common Tern, Merlin, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Bluebird, and American Pipit.

The Saturday trips will continue through November 13th, and all are welcome to meet with us at the Mann Lake boat ramp at 8:30 a.m. to observe the fall migration.

Terry and Christine Gray

BIRD OF THE MONTH

The Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) is a close cousin to our familiar Steller's Jay. Most years a small number of Blue Jays spend the winter in our region, particularly in towns. They depend on feeders and acorns from planted oak trees for food. This year a large number of Blue Jays have been appearing in our area as well as other parts of Idaho, and eastern Washington and Oregon since late September. The best guess is that the Blue Jays are coming from areas to

our northeast, particularly Alberta and perhaps further east. Movements like this are thought to be responses to a shortage of food in their normal winter range. Sometimes after large irruptions like this, a few Blue Jays may stay around and nest in the area. Blue Jays have become regular breeders in parts of northwest Montana and there is some evidence that they are expanding their range somewhat. So don't be surprised if you see a Blue Jay in your yard or neighborhood this year! They have been widely reported in Moscow, Pullman, and Lewiston so far. If you do find a Blue Jay please email me with the details at charless@moscow.com. (photo of Blue Jay by Terry Gray, 1 of 4 seen in his yard in Genesee recently).



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Charles Swift

FROM THE PRESIDENTS

We would like to thank all of those who have responded in support of Palouse Audubon Society with a local membership. Many have sent in more than the suggested amount, which is very heartening.

It is good to know that there are so many who share our passion for wildlife and its conservation. We value your support and will continue working for the birds!

We'd also like to thank the board for their hard work the past few months and especially James Storms, our membership chair, who has been keeping our membership files up to date and implementing our new local membership. Our treasurer, Henry Willmes, has also been kept busy processing dues (a task we are happy to have him do!).

As always, we are interested in your input on the direction of the club. Please send suggestions to charless@moscow.com or call one of the presidents with your ideas (numbers below). Or even better let us know in person at a board meeting, general meeting, or field trip.

Fall and winter are great times for birding on the Palouse. We look forward to seeing you on a field trip, a Christmas Count, or general meeting (especially our upcoming fall social). We wish you a joyous holiday season and good birding!

Charles Swift and Terry Grey

Audubon's "State of the Birds" (from National Audubon)

On Tuesday, October 19, The National Audubon Society released the "The State of the Birds", a report documenting the health and abundance of North America's birds. Appearing in the October issue of *Audubon Magazine*, "The State of the Birds" paints a disturbing picture. Almost 30% of America's bird species are in "significant decline," a situation that signals seriously degraded environmental conditions in the habitats these birds call home.

The bottom line: the state of the birds in 2004 is not sound. In particular, a disturbing 70 percent of grassland species; 36 percent of shrub-land bird species; 25 percent of forest bird species; 13 percent of wetland species; and 23 percent of bird species in urban areas are showing "statistically significant declines."

According to "State of the Birds," these declines are abnormal. Not part of the natural, cyclical rise and fall of bird populations, "statistically significant declines" are due to outside factors such as loss of native grasslands, overgrazing, development of wetlands, bad forest management, invasive species, pollution, and poor land use decisions.

Audubon's President John Flicker sees a clear message in this report. "Like the canary in the coal mine warning the miner of danger ahead, our birds are an indicator of environmental and human health," he said. "Birds signal that we are at risk next."

But, Flicker also sees a clear path out of trouble. "People may have created these problems, but people can solve them, if we act now," he stated. To that end, Audubon is now addressing the findings of "State of the Birds" in its conservation agenda at the legislative and policy making level, and in the states where the greatest conservation challenges exist.

Compiled by Audubon Scientist Greg Butcher, "State of the Birds" analysis makes the case for private and public action. Based on the report's findings, Audubon is advocating for improved grassland, forest, and wetland protecting, stronger pollution controls, partnerships with private landowners, and backyard habitat programs for homeowners.

A digest of the report was published in the October issue of *Audubon* magazine and a further analysis is available on the Audubon website, www.audubon.org/bird/stateofthebirds.

****editor's note:** The board is looking for a conservation chair to help set conservation priorities and direction for Palouse Audubon. This position has a great deal of flexibility and the person responsible will determine much of what it entails. If conservation is your area of interest please contact one of the Presidents for more information!

BIRD BRAIN

Think you know about birds? Then try our bird quiz.

1. A Swainson's hawk lives for about 10 years. During its lifetime about how many miles will it have migrated?
(A) 1,800 (B) 18,000 (C) 180,000 (D) 1,800,000
2. Which species of hawk can be seen year round in the Palouse?
(A) Red-tailed (B) Swainson's (C) Rough-legged
3. Short-eared owls are ground dwellers. What is the other owl species that spends a lot of time on the ground and can be often seen in daylight?
(A) Northern Saw-whet (B) Barred (C) Burrowing
4. What is the smallest owl species in the US?
(A) Flammulated (B) Elf (C) Northern Pygmy (D) Barn
5. The common loon is seen frequently along the Washington coast during winter. What is this species called in Europe?
(A) Great Northern diver (B) Great Northern dipper (C) Great Northern grebe
6. Gioachino Rossini's 1817 opera is titled the *Thieving ---* -- ?
(A) Crow (B) Starling (C) Raven (D) Magpie

PALOUSE AUDUBON Board of Directors

Officers

Co-President: Charles Swift, (208) 883-0553 (charles@moscow.com)

Co-President: Terry Gray, (208) 285-1639 (clgtlg@genesee-id.com)

Conservation: Position Open

Education: Cathy Willmes, (208) 882-3782, willmes@adelphia.net

Field Trips: Charles Swift, (208) 883-0553, charless@moscow.com

Membership: James G. Storms, (509) 635-1272, nbutte@pullman.com

Newsletter Editor: Grant Norton, (509) 334-1219, norton@mme.wsu.edu

Program: Thomas L. Weber, (509) 334-3817, tweber@wsu.edu

Publicity: Diane Weber, (509) 334-3817, catbirdz@adelphia.net

Treasurer: Henry Willmes (208) 882-2649, willmes@adelphia.net

Webmaster: Thomas L. Weber, (509) 334-3817, tweber@wsu.edu

Secretary: Deborah Stenkamp

Quiz Answers: 1. C; 2 A; 3 C; 4 B; 5 A; 6 D

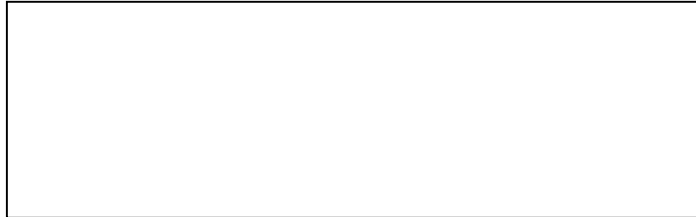
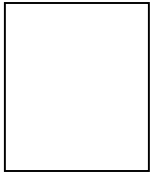
MEMBERSHIP

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/>

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
University Station
Moscow ID 83843



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 83843. Please include this coupon. For more information call: (509) 635-1272

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE (____) _____

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY - NEW MEMBERSHIP ONLY

Includes *National Audubon Society* and *Palouse Audubon Society* membership, and an annual subscription to *AUDUBON MAGAZINE* and *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 \$10.00 | 7XCH |