

The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 40 ISSUE 3

December 2011—January 2012

EVENT CALENDAR

DECEMBER

6—Board Meeting; 7:30pm, Fiske Room, 1912 Center

17—Pullman-Moscow Christmas Bird Count

18—Lewiston-Clarkston Christmas Bird Count

THERE WILL BE NO PROGRAM MEETING IN DECEMBER

JANUARY

3—Board Meeting; 7:30pm, Fiske Room, 1912 Center

18—Program; **INVASIVE SPECIES**, 7:30pm, Fiske Room

FEBRUARY

7—Board Meeting; 7:30pm, Fiske Room, 1912 Center

15—Program; **PENGUINS**

PALOUSE AUDUBON

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Field Trips: Vacant

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica nutalli*)

When I moved to Idaho, I thought there was something wrong with the ubiquitous Magpies here--they all had black bills. Where I come from Magpies only had yellow bills. I thought maybe the Idaho Magpies were aberrant or diseased. Then I learned that Yellow-Billed Magpies exist only in California, specifically in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo as well as in the Central Valley (San Joaquin).

They are identical to the Black-Billed Magpie except for the yellow bill and a yellow stripe on the head. Members of the crow family, they share some of the annoying characteristics such as a raucous call and thievery plus their preference for carrion.

These large birds can range up to 18 inches in length with a long tail that is usually longer on males. Their choppy flight is unmistakable as they navigate from one Valley Oak to another. They seem to prefer habitats near water, which means mosquitos, which means West Nile Virus. Unfortunately, the population is threatened now and is only half of what it was in 2004.

Magpie nests are dome-shaped, composed of twigs and mud, and can be found in communal colonies or by themselves. They take about 40 hours to construct, and the male and female share in the labor. The male brings nesting material while the female arranges it.

Five to seven eggs are laid in April or May, and incubated for up to 18 days. After hatching, the chicks stay in the nest for 22 to 27 days, and rely on their parents for food for up to eight weeks after leaving the nest. The fledglings stay with their parents throughout fall and winter. During the breeding season, they kill the nestlings of songbirds such as blackbirds to feed their young.

The origin of the name is somewhat obscure, but nevertheless interesting. Pie

is supposedly a corruption of the Latin word *Pica* (*Pica pica*, *Pica nutalli*). But, it is also a play on words. As most birders

know, pie or pied means dual colored, usually black and white, which describes the Magpie. But pie is also a popular dessert treat. Apparently in the Middle Ages Magpies were



an esculent pie ingredient. Remember the nursery rhyme "four and twenty black birds baked in a pie"? Well, those black birds were probably Magpies.

It wasn't until the late 16th century that the diminutive for Margaret was added to pie, hence Magpie. Until then, they were simply referred to as Pies. Mag probably comes from a French word imitative of the bird's call. "Mag, mag, mag."

The term "Magpie" can also be used to mean an indiscriminate collector and refers to an extremely loquacious individual. This stems from the fact that, like its noisy cousin, the crow, Magpies are known to collect miscellaneous objects and deposit them in their nests. There is even a Magpie wedding cake that has edible treasures embedded in it.

In European folklore, the Magpie is an evil omen associated with the devil. When you encounter a single Magpie, superstition requires that you salute it and cross yourself to show respect without looking directly at it. In the Middle Ages and during the witch-hunts in Europe, the bird was considered to be connected with witchcraft - just like crows, ravens and black

(continued on page 4)

PROGRAMS

January 18—INVASIVE SPECIES; Dr. Richard Zack, Department of Entomology, Washington State University.

The program description was unavailable at printing. When available, information will be posted on the website.

Board and Program meetings are held in the FISKE ROOM at the 1912 Center, 3rd and Adams, Moscow at 7:30 pm

EAGLE WATCH on Lake Coeur d'Alene

Bald Eagles congregate in Wolf Lodge Bay, on Coeur d'Alene Lake, from November through early January, and the largest number of eagles are there during the last week of December. If you have never seen this gathering of up to 250 eagles feeding on spawned kokanee salmon, there are several opportunities for you to do so this year. From December 26th through January 1st, the Best Western Coeur d'Alene Inn is offering an eagle-watch special, with rooms starting at \$69 plus tax and a lake cruise at \$15.75 per person. For more information, contact the Best Western at 800-251-7829 and ask for the Audubon Special. Tickets can be also purchased individually for eagle-watch lake cruises [week-ends and daily at 1:00 p.m. from Dec. 26 through Jan. 2] from the Coeur d'Alene Resort at http://www.cdareort.com/activities/lake_cruises

The Bureau of Reclamation also sponsors special eagle-watching activities during the last week of December. BLM employees and volunteers will be located at the Mineral Ridge Boat Launch and Mineral Ridge Trailhead (10:00am—3:00pm) with telescopes and educational displays. For more information visit the Coeur d'Alene offices of the BLM at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/coeur_d_alene/special_areas.html

FIELDTRIPS

December 17—PULLMAN-MOSCOW CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

New participants of all experience levels are welcome to join us for a day of bird identification and counting in the field. Since the Count Circle is evenly divided between Idaho and Washington, depending on which state you wish to participate in, please note the following arrangements.

Washington participants and feeder watchers should contact Tom Weber in advance of count day for further information and assignment to an area and team. He can be contacted at tweber@roadrunner.com or (509) 334-3817.

Idaho participants will meet at the Moscow Jack-In-The-Box at 6:30 AM on Count Day. It is located in the Mall close to the intersection of Pullman Road and Line Street. We will form teams and finalize count areas at that time. We will also share information on recent sightings in the area. Feeder watchers should contact Dave Holick prior to Count Day.

Anyone with questions, bird sighting, etc. should email or call Dave Holick at: daveholick@moscow.com or (208) 882-5556. The Pullman-Moscow Christmas Bird Count is sponsored by the Palouse Audubon Society.

December 18—LEWISTON-CLARKSTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

After a year's hiatus, and new compilers stepping forward, the count has been resurrected for it's 11th undertaking. We enthusiastically request your expertise, cooperation, and company for the count. Local experts and seasoned veterans are needed, but we also want to encourage the participation of all who are interested—regardless of your birding skill levels. Co-organizers and compilers Charles Swift, Bryan Jamison, *(continued on page 4)*

Treasurer's Report—11/30/11

Checking Balance (9/20/11)	\$3,422.62
Dues	\$690.00
Donations	\$255.00
NAS Baseline Payment	\$909.25
Printing & mailing	(\$557.95)
Brochures & bird lists	(\$161.47)
Conner Museum donation	(\$25.00)
Stateline Wetlands project	(\$117.68)

Checking Balance (11/30/11)	\$4,414.77
Certificate of Deposit	\$4,000.00
Remaining Grant Funds	(\$122.69)
Net PAS Assets:	\$8,292.08

Membership Report—11/30/11

National Audubon	393
Dual National & Palouse Audubon	82
Palouse Audubon (only)	70
Palouse Audubon (total)	152

PAS Membership Year—Sep 1 to Aug 31

FROM THE PREZ

Diane and I have had an interesting Fall. First, we had a young male Anna's Hummingbird take up residence from October 9 to November 1. What fun, and how relieved we were when he left fattened but before the cold weather hit. Also, a Pileated Woodpecker (or two) has been hanging around Palouse. We have yet to find them, but will as their continued presence is still being reported.

During mid-November, we visited the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. It is a remarkably beautiful area and of course we saw the beautiful, although common, Blue Jay and Northern Cardinal. What was most surprising however was the number of birds seen that so closely resembled birds of our area. The Northern Flicker (although yellow-shafted); the Yellow-rumped Warbler (but of the Myrtle race); the Carolina Chickadee and Wren which strongly resemble our Black-capped Chickadee and Bewick's Wren; the Brown-headed Nuthatch, which strongly resembled our Pygmy Nuthatch; and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which is nearly identical to our Red-naped Sapsucker. Birding was really easy—with the assistance of an eastern bird identification book. What an enjoyable trip—with new, although very familiar, birds.

I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas—with my hope that you will have an opportunity to join us for an activity during 2012.

Tom Weber

ALBINO MAGPIE—MOSCOW, IDAHO

You may already know the little poem about Magpies that starts with "One for sorrow...". I wonder if that applies to albino Magpies as well.

Somehow I think it should be the reverse. I had never heard of an albino Magpie until my friend Janice Hill, a Moscow attorney, told me she had



seen one at the feeder on her deck. She even had a photo to prove it.

Janice reported that the other Magpies in the accompanying tribe seemed most deferential by surrounding it as if for protection. The other birds also allowed the albino to eat from the feeder first.

A little research reveals that while not at all common, other citings have

been reported in the UK, Canada, Colorado, and Washington state. There are several videos of albino Magpies on YouTube that you may wish to look at.

For example, here is a nice video of an albino magpie taken in Union Gap, Washington: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Of0Tm365-_Q

In Littleton, Colorado, a brood was discovered with two albinos and five normal Magpies. In Edmonton, Canada, albinos have been reported since the 1940s. Apparently the albinos have interbred with the normal pied Pies to the point where there is now a grey mutation in the population.

Of course albinism is not all that uncommon in the bird world, but it is unusual to find an albino Magpie in Moscow, Idaho. Keep your eyes open. You may spy one too, and we'd all like to know about it.



Tim Hillebrand

BYLAW REVISIONS

We will once again plan to vote on the Palouse Audubon Society Bylaw revisions at our January 18 program meeting. The revisions were originally scheduled to be voted on at our October program meeting. Unfortunately the meeting was cancelled due to the last minute hospitalization of our speaker.

The 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 have been mailed to each member of the Society at the member's last known address at least fifteen days before said meeting.

The proposed Bylaw revisions have been published on the chapter website. You will find a link on the home page to our Business page. Three copies of the Bylaws are found on the Business page: the current Bylaws; the current Bylaws with proposed amendments; and the resultant amended Bylaws. If you are unable to use the website for review, please contact Tom Weber by email at <tweber@roadrunner.com> or at (509)334-3817 and he will mail you copies of the proposed amendments.

A vote on acceptance of the revised Bylaws will be conducted at our January 18 Program meeting - 1912 Center, Fiske Room, 3rd and Adams, Moscow.

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

If you haven't gotten around to renewing your membership—the time is now. Palouse Audubon dues are only \$15 and payable in September.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Financially supports the programs and activities of the Palouse Audubon Society and includes an annual subscription to THE PRAIRIE OWL newsletter.

Annual Membership \$15.00 Donation _____ For questions call: (208) 874-3207

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ State _____ Zip _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Return this form with your check to: Palouse Audubon Society, PO Box 3606, Moscow, ID 83843-1914

Check one: I PREFER TO READ THE PRAIRIE OWL ON THE WEBSITE
(notice will be sent by email after a new issue is posted on the website)

PLEASE SEND A HARD COPY OF THE PRAIRIE OWL

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE (from page 1)

cats. When Jesus was crucified, the birds sang to give him comfort and ease his pain, with the exception of the Magpie. Magpies refused to enter Noah's ark, and roosted on the roof and swore throughout the entire voyage.

In the 19th century book, *A Guide to the Scientific Knowledge of Things Familiar*, a proverb concerning Magpies goes like this: "A single Magpie in spring, foul weather will bring". The book further explains that this superstition arises from the habits of pairs of Magpies to forage together only when the weather is fine. Magpies have even been attributed with the ability to be changelings and to transform themselves into the human form.

Here is a poem about the Magpie: *One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl, four for a boy, five for silver, six for gold, seven for a secret never to be told, eight for a wish, nine is a kiss, ten is a bird you just can't miss.*

Note that there are many versions of this poem. If you want to hear a song about Magpie Eggs, go here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzXY9iYQG5g>

Magpie-like species have a wide distribution around the world with names such as European Magpie, Black-Billed Magpie, Yellow-Billed Magpie, Korean Magpie, Formosan Blue Magpie, Red billed Blue Magpie, Gold Billed Magpie, White Winged Magpie, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Green Magpie, Yellow Breasted Magpie, Short Tailed Magpie, Azure Winged Magpie, Black Magpie, Australian Magpie. Some are Corvids, some are not, but all share some common characteristics and hence the Magpie appellation.

iBird suggests that the ancestors of the Yellow-Billed Magpie probably became isolated in California soon after Magpies colonized North America some three to four million years ago. The Pleistocene Ice Age and uplifting of the Sierra Nevada no doubt contributed.

There are several interesting collective nouns for Magpies: charm, gulp, mischief, tittering, tribe, and parliament. I think I favor tribe, and am not too fond of gulp.

The Magpie is a social bird that often hangs out in family groups or tribes to defend a proscribed territory. Nests can be isolated or in communal clusters. It seems to me, however, in my last visit to Santa Barbara, that I only encountered one or two birds at a time, never large groups. This could be a function of the demise in population, which makes me sad. Despite the bad rap Magpies seem to have acquired throughout history, I cannot help but admire these handsome, bold, iridescent creatures. And, I am certainly not tempted by Magpie for dessert. Besides, it's supposed to be very bad luck to kill one.

Tim Hillebrand



FIELD TRIPS (from page 2)

and Justin Barrett will be assigning the sectors and sector leaders in the next few weeks. Please let us know if you have a preferred area to cover - we will try hard to accommodate you.

Counters should plan to meet at the Lewiston Jack-in-the-Box at the bottom of Thain Grade (21st Street) at 7:00 a.m. unless separate arrangements have been made with compilers. Feeder watchers are also encouraged to participate and should contact one of the compilers. At this time there are no plans for a post-count tally/pot luck although we will let you know if something develops. You can find more information about the CBC online here: <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count> and on the Palouse Audubon website.

Please email (preferred) or call either Charles, Bryan, or Justin to let us know if you can join us—Justin Barrett, justin.barrett@idfg.idaho.gov (208-799-5010); Charles Swift, chaetura@gmail.com (208-883-0553); Bryan Jamison, Jami9191@aol.com. The Lewiston-Clarkston Christmas Bird Count is sponsored by the Palouse Audubon Society.

PALOUSE WINDFARM UPDATE

First Wind representatives Bob Roy (biologist) and Irina Makarow, Northwest Environmental Permitting Manager, met with Tom and Diane Weber on October 12. They reported that avian surveys were conducted on 4 sites (2 on Steamshovel and 2 on Naft Ridge) during the spring and summer. Fall data is being collected until December 31. The final report will be sent during January 2012. They have completed the eagle nesting survey as well as field reconnaissance of Palouse Prairie Remnants. Originally they had anticipated up to 10 acres of Palouse Prairie destruction (valued at \$2,000 per acre) but have revised the actual destruction down to only a few hundred square meters. \$20,000 is still being paid for Palouse Prairie remediation. Joan Folwell has suggested using the funds on a Whelan Cemetery project. A second aerial raptor nest survey was conducted in May and another is scheduled for next year. The survey will be used for construction buffers. The final report will be issued in May 2012.

Ridge road construction will begin in October on the north end of the project. The construction contractor is RMT with the road building sub-contracted out. Road construction will continue as long as weather permits. The turbines will begin arriving in July 2012 with project completion scheduled for the end of the year. Invitations for TAC membership will be offered sometime during September 2012 – with the first meeting likely in December 2012.

WINGTIPS

Collective nouns for Pelicans are *Brief*,
Pod, *Pouch*, *Scoop*, *Squadron*.

COMING THIS SPRING— BEGINNING BIRDER CLASS

Kevin Pullen, former lab technician for the avian studies program at Washington State University, will conduct a Beginning Bird Identification Class during the spring of 2012. Detailed information on the class will be available in our next newsletter.

Kevin is a very knowledgeable birder and an equally great teacher. If you would like to learn more about birds and bird identification—don't miss this great opportunity to learn from one of the best.

BIRDING ON THE WEB PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Do you feed birds at your home during the winter? Then you may be interested in joining Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey of birds that visit backyard feeders, nature centers, and other locations in North America. FeederWatchers count the birds seen at their feeders from November through April, and the data help scientists track movements of winter bird populations. Information is available on the Project FeederWatch website <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html> where you can review instructions, register, and submit data. The annual fee of \$15 provides project support to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology as well as the cost of materials. Materials provided include a research kit, wall calendar, guide to bird feeding, and bird identification poster. If you are looking for a new activity for the winter, join Project FeederWatch!

MEMBERSHIP

Palouse Audubon Society (PAS), PO Box 3606, Moscow ID 83843-1914, is a chapter of the National Audubon Society (NAS) with its own dues. New NAS members in our chapter area receive one year's free membership in PAS, along with the chapter newsletter and other benefits of membership.

PAS dues of \$15 are payable in September. Members may receive the chapter newsletter, *The Prairie Owl*, either by mail or by email notification of its posting on the chapter's website. Members are encouraged to read the newsletter online to save printing and postage expenses. PAS members who have not renewed and NAS members who have not paid dues after one year of membership are removed from the newsletter distribution list on December 31st.

General membership meetings are held at the 1912 Building, FISKE ROOM, 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 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, Tim Hillebrand, 857 Orchard Ave., Moscow ID 83843, 805-518-9612, tshphd@gmail.com by the 20th of the month. Subscription problems should be addressed to the membership chair, Ron Force, PO Box 3606, Moscow ID 83843-1914, 208-874-3207, ron-force@gmail.com. Visit the Palouse Audubon Society website at <http://www.palouseaudubon.org/> or find us on Facebook.

CHARLIE (from page 6)

Raptor Club, made up mostly of student volunteers who feed, exercise and monitor non-releasable raptors. WSU Raptor Club members walk Charlie almost daily. Today, one of them is animal-sciences major Sarah Monzel, a self-described "bird nerd" who has nurtured Charlie for 3 years. Talk about fans of a feather. On her touch-screen cell phone is a photo of Charlie. "Isn't he beautiful?" she asks upon entering Charlie's mew inside the Carver Raptor Facility.

Inside a room with skylights, pine branches and a pumpkin carved into a rodent shape, Charlie stands majestically on his perch, his tail feathers marbled in brick-red and gray. His deep brown eyes, registered squarely on his two guests, are arched by large ridges that make him look all-knowing. "Hi Charlie. How's my old man today?" asked Monzel as she approached. Then, holding out her hand covered in a thick leather glove extending to the elbow, she instructed: "Step up." Charlie, with his injured left wing drooping slightly, stepped off his perch and onto her arm.

For Monzel, Charlie symbolizes the resiliency of injured raptors cared for by the very creatures who harm them: Humans. Too often, birds of prey are killed or left permanently disabled by hunters' bullets (despite laws making this illegal), speeding cars, electrocution and poison, she said. Which is largely why WSU's Veterinary Teaching Hospital treats roughly 100 injured or ill raptors each year, said WSU exotics and wildlife veterinarian Nickol Finch, the Raptor Club's advisor since Stauber retired. While many of those birds heal and get released back to the wild, others, like Charlie, would die.

"Not only did Charlie survive - he thrived," said Monzel, who, along with other club members, gives him walks, feedings, medicine for mild arthritis and a supplement called Vitahawk.

And so, as Pale Male soars from his classy digs in New York to find food and a new girlfriend, Charlie's role is more down to earth. For three decades, he has perched patiently during dozens of presentations at schools, fairs and 4-H events, allowing people to see a two-pound force of nature up close and personal, said Monzel. And each new day that she walks in and says, "Hi Charlie. How's my old man today?" a new record will be set.

[Article from the WSU News Center]

WINGTIPS

Did you know that collective nouns for Hummingbirds includes *bouquet*, *glittering*, *hover*, *shimmer*, and *tune of Hummingbirds*?

**ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT ADDITIONAL
FIELD TRIPS WILL BE POSTED ON THE WEB-
SITE OR ON THE *pas-announce* LISTSERV**

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
Moscow ID 83843-1914



**MERRY CHRISTMAS and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

*The mission of the Palouse
Audubon Society is to promote
education, conservation, and the
restoration of natural ecosystems--
focusing on birds, other wildlife,
and their habitats--for the benefit of
humanity and the Earth's
biological diversity*

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

CHARLIE—THE RED-TAILED HAWK

The planet's most famous red-tailed hawk is Pale Male of New York City, whose home is a ledge on a posh high-rise overlooking Central Park where a "Hawk Cam" entertains his adoring fans. But make way for Charlie, a red-tailed hawk whose home is Washington State University. Charlie may not have a fashionable perch or books and a documentary film made about him. But Charlie—who lives at WSU's Carver Raptor Facility—deserves celebrity status for being one tough old bird. At age 30, he has lived longer than any red-tailed hawk on record. And he's healthy to boot.

News of Charlie's age has been trickling out among bird experts around the country. "What a terrific story – truly amazing," said George Fenwick, president of the American Bird Conservancy in Plains, Va. "Very interesting," responded John Blakeman, a raptor biologist from Ohio who said he plans to write about Charlie's achievement in a comprehensive book about raptors.

The average life span for a red-tail in the wild is 10-15 years—for those in captivity, 20 years—according to research. The oldest recorded red-tailed hawk died at 30.8 years last February in Michigan, according to "Longevity Records of North American Birds," compiled by the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland.

With Charlie still alive and healthy at 30.9 years, he appears to have broken the posted record, said ecology biologist Charles Preston, a leading expert on red-tailed hawks in Cody, Wyo., who wrote "Wild Bird Guides: Red-tailed Hawk." (Stackpole Books, 2000)

Charlie was brought to WSU's College of Veterinary Medicine in 1981, the year Ronald Reagan became president, a first-class stamp cost 18 cents and "Raiders of the Lost Ark" was released. At 3 months old, he was found injured at the side of a road after being struck by a car, said Erik Stauber, retired WSU veterinary professor and raptor specialist who treated Charlie's wing and skull fractures. "After his injuries healed, we saw that he could no longer fly. Knowing he'd never survive on his own, we made him our first permanent raptor resident," said Stauber, who became Charlie's primary trainer.

Charlie's injuries may have left him permanently disabled but, like all birds of prey, he's armed with powerful talons for piercing and crushing his target. And like any wild bird, he got ornery when approached by humans. "He didn't like me much," recalled Stauber. "He'd glare, open and close his beak and fluff up." But that didn't bother Stauber, a falconer since 1956 licensed by the state of Washington to handle raptors.

As Charlie became used to people, "He became a gentle bird," said Stauber, who used him to teach veterinary students about raptors and also to teach the public about the important role they play in the ecosystem by eating pesky rodents.

Why has Charlie lived so long and in such good health? "I think that Charlie's advanced age is a credit to all of the folks who have taken good care of him in captivity," said Preston, the red-tailed hawk expert and author in Wyoming. Those folks include a gaggle of devoted students. The year Charlie came to campus, Stauber organized WSU's *(continued on page 5)*