

The Prairie Owl



VOLUME 41 ISSUE 1

September 2012

EVENT CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- 4 & 6—Beginning Birding Class, 7:30 pm
- 5—Board Meeting, 7:30 pm
- 8—Beginning Bird Class Field Trip
- 11 & 13—Beginning Birding Class, 7:30 pm
- 15—Beginning Bird Class Field Trip
- 19—Program, *GALAPAGOS ISLAND BIRDS*, 7:30 pm

OCTOBER

- 2—Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

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

PALOUSE AUDUBON

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Field Trips: Vacant

The Pileated Woodpecker *(Tim Hillebrand)*

When I was a young lad I remember seeing Woody Woodpecker cartoons in the theater and later on TV. But, having grown up in Southern California, where the common woodpecker is the Acorn Woodpecker, I thought Woody was a mighty goofy looking woodpecker indeed with his outrageous topknot. He didn't look anything like a woodpecker is supposed to look.

Curiously, the entry in Wikipedia for Woody Woodpecker says that the cartoon character is based on an Acorn Woodpecker, which is not true at all and needs correction.

It wasn't until I moved to Idaho and became more serious about birding many years later that I realized that Woody was based on the gorgeous, magnificent Pileated Woodpecker. Of course, I had never seen one, and made it a life goal to see one as soon as possible. I spent a lot of time and effort in trying to see one.

I checked out places near and far where they are reputed to hang out in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. I heard them at Idler's Rest, calling and pecking, same at Hobo

Cedar Grove. I thought I heard them at Laird Park. I saw evidence of them with their characteristic rectangular holes in old growth forests like Mica Mountain. I even went as far as the Seattle area where a friend claimed to have seen on outside his front door. I tried Fields Spring Park in Washington—all to no avail. I even checked out reports of their being sighted in Palouse on several occasions, but never saw or heard them.



Then, finally, on the last Sunday in July I tried Fields Spring again determined to see something. What do you know, I could hear them calling—most likely a pair. I could hear them drilling. Then a whole family of Turkeys distracted me as they walked right in front of me with about 10 babies.

Out of the corner of my eye something caught my attention. I *(continued on page 2)*

FROM THE PREZ

It's difficult to believe that summer is about to end. It seemed to take such a long time getting here, and already the students have returned to their various campuses. Perhaps we will experience another one of those great autumns for which we are noted. Diane and I have had Pine Siskins throughout the summer and now the feeders are being over run by fledgling siskins and goldfinches. We have also enjoyed hummingbirds all season long – I guess it pays to leave up your feeders. There was only a single female Calliope Hummingbird during the early summer—now there are many of all three species. They seem to multiply daily. Our local (and very vocal) Swainson's hawk has been busy evicting interlopers. Kettles of hawks are due to show up very soon now—only adding to his efforts.

Our newsletter describes a few of this fall's events. You will also notice a reminder that annual chapter dues are due (you may have also received an earlier mailing notice). Your support means so much to our success, and I hope that you respond early.

Looking forward to seeing you at our September 19 program

Tom Weber

Pileated Woodpeckers (continued from page 1)

thought a flying black sock had landed on a snag and hung down about 100 feet away. The sock turned into the sunlight and transformed into a magnificent, male Pileated Woodpecker in its full glory. It stayed there for at least 30 seconds while I marveled at the surrealistic sight I was experiencing. The female flew deeper into the forest and the male followed.

Pileated Woodpeckers live in mature deciduous or mixed deciduous-coniferous woodlands of nearly every type, from tall western hemlock stands of the Northwest to beech and maple forests in New England and cypress swamps of the Southeast.

As non-migratory birds, you stand a good chance of seeing them year round in their favorite haunts. Their populations seem to have increased over the last several decades in the West and Central U.S., but have declined in the Southeast.

If you've never seen a Pileated Woodpecker before, you are in for a treat. First of all, they are huge, almost prehistoric looking creatures, the size of a crow, but much sleeker, measuring up to 19 inches from head to tail, with a wingspan of over 20 inches. Its flight resembles the characteristic undulating woodpecker flight. The tail can be seven inches long.

While similar to other woodpeckers, the drumming of the Pileated is unmistakably louder and deeper sounding and perhaps a little slower than other species. They gouge out rectangular holes in trees where they raise their young and then abandon the nests after only one use. Other birds such as ducks, swifts, owls, as well as bats, raccoons, and pine martens may use the forsaken nests. They also drum to declare their territories, often using hollow trees for louder sound effect.

These birds are well-equipped as jackhammers with a 2.5 inch long reinforced bill. You'd think they would get headaches from banging their heads against trees all day, but they have special cartilage-reinforced brain cases to withstand the impact.

The hole excavated in a snag by the male attracts a female for mating and raising the young. Sometimes there are multiple entrances to their lairs. While the male starts excavating the nest, the female usually helps finish it. Pileated Woodpeckers are also known to nest in boxes 15 feet or so off the ground.

The nests are unlined except for wood chips. Both parents help incubate from 3 to 5 eggs for 12 to 16 days. The young can take up to a

month to fledge. Pileateds can live up to 12 years.

Their favored food is carpenter ants, but they eat just about any insect—along with fruits and berries—which makes them omnivorous opportunists. Equipped with inordinately long tongues that extend three times the length of the bill, they are well adapted to chasing and spearing ants with rasp-like barbs along the tip. The tongue is so long it would be a storage problem if it did not retract and wrap about the brain in the cranial cavity.

The Pileated Woodpecker is slightly smaller than both the Ivory Billed and Imperial woodpeckers, which are probably both extinct now. There are more than 200 species of woodpeckers with a worldwide distribution, excluding New Zealand, Australia, Madagascar, and the polar regions.

After that initial encounter at Fields Spring, I never saw them again except a silhouetted glimpse. I could hear them calling and pecking. But my day was complete. I had achieved my goal. I'll never stop looking for them because the Pileated Woodpecker has become my sacred totem and has captured my rapture forever.

Programs

September 19—*Birds of the Galapagos*—Ron Force will present a program on Birds of the Galapagos at 7:30 pm in the Fiske Room of the 1912 Center, Moscow.

Ron, retired Dean of Library Services at the University of Idaho, visited the Galapagos in December 2011 and January 2012. He will discuss birds of the Galapagos, the environment of the islands, research on evolution being conducted there, and effects of invasive species.

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

Field Trips

Canyon Birders will lead Saturday morning field trips at Mann Lake through October. In September, the field trips will be held on September 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29.

Meet at the boat ramp parking area at 8:30am for a guided viewing of shorebirds, waterfowl, and other birds that stop at Mann Lake during fall migration.

Spotting scopes will be available.

WINGTIPS

A group of Pileated Woodpeckers is collectively known as a crown.

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

September marks the time to renew your membership in Palouse Audubon Society. Annual membership is only \$15 and supports the programs and activities of the Palouse Audubon Society—and includes an annual subscription to *The Prairie Owl* newsletter. We hope that you will renew your membership in Palouse Audubon. The membership form is printed below. Dues received by October 10 will be entered in a drawing for a beautiful Downy Woodpecker sculpture. Thank you for your continued support.



ALEA GRANT RECEIVED

Earlier this spring, members Mike Costa and Tom Weber submitted a grant proposal to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to build a Ferruginous Hawk nesting platform near LaCrosse. The nesting platform will be installed on the property of Jerry and Karen Maley. A \$500 grant was awarded through the ALEA Volunteer Cooperative Grant Program. Construction and installation will be completed later this fall, in time for the next nesting season.



WINGTIPS

Collective nouns for other Woodpeckers include a decent, a drumming, and a gattling.

BIRD FESTIVALS

Bird festivals are an enjoyable way to travel to new places, see new birds, make new friends, and just get away from it all. Most festivals are well-organized, usually with guided field trips and presentations by experts in various subjects. Participation at bird festivals supports birding and habitat conservation in the local areas where they are held. There are numerous bird festivals in Washington and the adjoining states: here are two September festivals in Washington.

September 7-9—Puget Sound Bird Fest, Edmonds, Washington.

Puget Sound Bird Fest is a celebration of birds and nature in Edmonds, on the shore of Puget Sound. Keynote Speaker will be Paul Bannick for this 3-day event.

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

September 18—Third Annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival, Pateros, Washington.

This festival coincides with the peak of southbound migration of raptors at Chelan Ridge. From 8:00 am—3:00 pm, shuttles will run from Pateros to Chelan Ridge where visitors over the age of 10 can see raptors.

Details and registration for the shuttle to Chelan Ridge can be found at:

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

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

PALOUSE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Palouse Audubon Society
PO Box 3606
Moscow ID 83843-1914



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**FALL BIRDING RETURNS
TO THE PALOUSE**

*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**

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**BIRDTAPE—
IT REALLY WORKS** *(Tom Weber)*

Diane and I have tried everything from bird decals to large stained glass panels in an attempted to reduce or prevent bird strikes to our front windows. Nothing seemed to work – aside from the time that I fastened ribbons to the outside of the window. They worked too well – permanently scaring all birds away from the feeders. It took weeks to get the birds to return following removal.



Our last newsletter featured a new product endorsed by the American Bird Conservancy. BirdTape is a ¼” translucent adhesive tape that is applied to the outside of the window (it appears like frosted glass from both sides of the window). We initially applied it to the window near our bird feeders where frequent bird

strikes occurred – especially when the birds would flush from the feeders in mass. It really worked! Bird strikes are rare to non-existing now. We have BirdTape installed on all of our front windows now. We highly recommend its use on your ‘problem’ windows.

To learn more or to order BirdTape, visit:
<http://www.abcbirdtape.org/>

**Palouse Audubon Society to Offer
Beginning Birding Class**

Due to the success of the class held last spring, the Palouse Audubon Society is offering another Beginning Birding Class in September. This class will cover basic bird identification skills, with an emphasis on migratory birds and local waterfowl and shorebirds.

The class will be held from 7:30 to 9:00pm on September 4, 6, 11, and 13, with morning field trips on September 8 and 15. The class will be taught by local birding expert Kevin Pullen and is designed for adults of all ages who want to learn how to identify birds and how to bird better. Class sessions will be held in the 1912 Center, in Moscow. Registration is now open. A donation of \$40 for Palouse Audubon Society members and \$50 for non-members is requested.

To register for the class, contact Lavon Frazier at (509-595-1913), lavon_frazier@roadrunner.com. For additional information contact Diane Weber at (509-334-3817), catbirdz@roadrunner.com

WINGTIPS

*Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a
songbird will come. [Chinese proverb]*