



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society  
[www.cdaudubon.org](http://www.cdaudubon.org)

February 2014

Volume 23 Number 6

## FEBRUARY PROGRAM

**DATE:** February 11, Tuesday

**PLACE:** Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 N. Ramsey, CDA

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

**SPEAKERS:** Lisa Hardy and Carrie Hugo

**PROGRAM:** Lisa's topic is Cat-lovers vs Bird-lovers: Is there common ground? A brief overview of how the cat overpopulation issue is viewed by animal welfare organizations and conservation groups. Carrie will talk about National and State Laws and how they do, or don't protect birds and their habitats. Highlights will include the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, The Endangered Species Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

### BOARD MEETING

**DATE:** February 4, Tuesday

**PLACE:** Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 N. Ramsey, CDA

**TIME:** 4:30 p.m.

It is true that April has many rewards, for example we will have our major fun-filled fund raising banquet near the end of the month, and our April program features Kate Davis, a nationally known speaker and director of Raptors of the Rockies, a non-profit devoted to raptor care and public education programs to protect wild birds.

## President's Ponderings

George Sayler

April is the antidote to February! The second month of the year is for me, the dreariest, the one I would like to skip. It seems like the sky is usually gray, the bird feeder ignored, and one uneventful day yielding to another.



**Chestnut-backed Chickadee**  
*Photo by James Prudente*

And yet, there it was, a Chestnut Backed Chickadee making a quick check of the aforementioned birdfeeder. Regretfully it was empty (my bad) and it quickly left. Guess I got tired of feeding the squirrels.

Ahh, for April, for newness of life and spirit, when birdsong again fills the air and the swallows pierce the sky in search of a meal. Soon they will be looking for a nesting spot – will they chose my birdhouse? Oh to see a Towhee and to feel the warming sun. And yet - there was that Chickadee today.

Perhaps it's not the birds that are absent. Maybe it is me. Could it be that neglected birdfeeder is symptomatic of my lack of effort to engage with our feathered friends?

Continued on page 2

## President's Ponderings

Continued from page 1

To be fair and honest though, February does have its rewards. The days get longer, there are birds to enjoy, and we will have a great program from two of our own members, Lisa Hardy and Carrie Hugo. With no snow to shovel and yard work months away there is time to brush up on our life lists, study our field guides - and to keep the bird feeder filled.

February may be a month of waiting, but waiting doesn't mean idleness, and nature is still there to be enjoyed. Robert Frost wrote: "Nature is always hinting at us. It hints over and over again, until suddenly we take the hint." Thank you little chickadee.

There are two broad categories of cats, pet cats and unowned cats, though in reality, the distinction is blurred, and the status of an individual cat can occur anywhere in the spectrum from indoor-only pet to loosely-owned cat to feral, never-been-touched-by-a-human cat.

Indoor-only pets do not impact native wildlife, and the Cats Indoors! program of the American Bird Conservancy is endorsed by National Audubon. Indoor/outdoor pet cats are significant predators (see the Kittycam project at the University of Georgia), but for the remainder of this article, I will be discussing only unowned cats - those that live entirely outside of the home and do not receive regular veterinary care. Colonies of unowned cats form in locations where they are fed more or less regularly, and are the focus of TNR efforts.

### What is TNR?

The debate over unowned cats revolves around a management protocol known as "Trap-Neuter-Return", or TNR. There are variations on the acronym, including TNVR (Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return), TNRM (Trap-Neuter-Return-Manage), TTVAR (Trap-Test-Vaccinate-Alter-Return), and so on. In this country, TNR as a formal concept began in Massachusetts in 1980, and has since been adopted by many animal welfare groups across the country. TNR is the practice of surgically sterilizing as many cats in a colony as possible, and releasing them after the surgery, usually back to the same place they were trapped. Most cats are trapped in the place where they are fed. TNR protocol additionally calls for on-going management of the colony.

Continued on page 3

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## Too Many Cats 🐾

Lisa Hardy



The last few decades have seen an

increasingly polarized debate over how to address the problem of cat overpopulation. The debate centers around the effects of predation by domestic cats on wildlife, especially songbirds, and the efficacy of a population control method known as TNR. The paucity of scientific data has allowed both sides to make forceful claims that are only suggested, or at best partially supported, by research.

There are a few points that nearly everyone can agree on. The first is that there are too many cats.



# Too Many Cats

Continued from page 2



*One of 5 kittens that were abandoned along with their mother along Fernan Lake Road. Loving homes were found for all of them. The friendly mother was adopted by one of our members, Theresa Potts, She was neutered and became an indoor cat. One kitten was adopted locally and the other 4 went to two homes in Seattle where they live indoors.*

## Does TNR work?

The premise of TNR is that the population will decline once the cats are no longer reproducing, but in practice, there are many hurdles to successfully implementing a TNR program. The main problem is that litters of kittens continue to be born because it is difficult to sterilize all of the cats. Some cats will evade trapping. New cats continue to be added to the colony, attracted by the food. Caretakers must manage the colony by continually watching for the appearance of new cats, and trapping them for surgery.

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These difficulties probably account for the differing conclusions of research: some studies show that TNR works, and other studies show that TNR does not work, to reduce cat populations over time. It would seem reasonable that TNR would work in certain circumstances that include, at a minimum, the consistent and intensive management by caretakers. Other factors that would be expected to influence success are the climate, natural attrition rates by predators, cars, disease, etc., and rate of influx of new cats.

The "Neuter" part of TNR is not the main point of contention: it is the "Return" part that conservationists are most concerned about.

Unowned cats supported by regular feeding are non-native predators existing in concentrations far higher than occurs in natural systems. Cats hunt whether fed or not. In the UGA KittyCam study, 44% of pet cats were observed hunting, and if the same is true of unowned cats, then cats are responsible for killing millions of birds, mammals and herptiles each year in this country. All the estimated mortality numbers are highly controversial, but here are the ranges: there are an estimated 60 to 100 million unowned cats in the United States, while the number of birds killed by cats each year in the United States is estimated to range from 1.14 to 4.2 billion, with 890 million to 2.7 billion of those being killed by unowned cats and the remainder by pet cats.

If TNR does not reduce the cat population over time, then this toll on wildlife populations will continue.

## What are the alternatives to TNR?

Before TNR became established, the standard method of controlling free-roaming cat populations was to round them up and kill them.

**Continued on page 4**



## Too Many Cats

Continued from page 3

Animal welfare organizations fought to have the killing done in a humane way, i.e., euthanasia. TNR advocates want to end euthanization by allowing cats to live out their lives in colonies. Opponents of TNR note that this is done at the expense of wildlife populations, and perhaps of the cats themselves, when the brutal ways in which unowned cats typically die are considered. Currently, euthanization lacks widespread public support.

Another alternative is to round up the cats and contain them in a sanctuary. This has been used successfully in at least one case where feral cats were removed from San Nicolas Island in California to a sanctuary on the mainland. This option is expensive, and there is an aversion to spending tax dollars on cats due to a widespread belief that cats are "free spirits" and able to look after themselves.

While the entire solution to the overpopulation of cats is not clear, a cultural shift in public attitudes towards cats is required as a part of the solution. This shift will be brought about by "responsible pet ownership" education, namely the need to fix pet cats to prevent unwanted litters, and ending the mistaken belief that cats can be dumped in the woods to live "free and natural" lives. Only by these means will we stop replenishing the unowned cat population.

Sources:

<http://www.kittycams.uga.edu/index.html>

[http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/outdoor\\_cat\\_white\\_paper.pdf](http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/outdoor_cat_white_paper.pdf)



## What have you done for birds today?

Carrie Hugo



Along with your coffee or tea each morning, or while brushing your teeth after getting out of bed, I urge you to ask yourselves what you might do to benefit birds today? All of us are busy, we lead busy, hectic, and often distracted lives. But a simple way to

help birds is to incorporate a thoughtful act into each day, one that you do with such frequency and ease that you don't even have to think about it.

George Saylor asked us at our last meeting who might be interested in purchasing bird friendly coffee? I have to say, I was surprised to see so few hands go up! Perhaps there are not too many coffee drinkers amongst us? But I doubt that! This is such an easy way to do something significant that has direct effects on the birds you know and love. And you get a benefit as well! Delicious, gourmet, organic coffee! Everyone wins when you make an investment in bird friendly coffee! Birds win, you win, and the coffee growers win because they get a reasonable price for their product, which cannot be said of traditional but smaller scale coffee growers.

Over 2.25 billion cups of coffee are consumed worldwide each day. To produce that, 30 million acres of land are planted in coffee plantations worldwide. That is 30 million acres of rainforest that are now gone. Rainforest that supports thousands of plant and animal species.

Continued on page 5



## What have you done for birds today?

Continued from page 4

Yes, bird friendly coffee costs more, but it also tastes far superior and it is better for your body. I know that no one likes a guilt trip, but as Audubon Members you have expressed a desire and interest in learning more about birds as well as helping to conserve them! If all of the benefits of bird friendly coffee are not enough to persuade you, perhaps the sour taste of guilt that comes along with your Folgers, Nestle, or Kirkland coffee will do the trick! Each cup of cheap coffee you drink contributes to deforestation, and that means loss of habitat for hundreds of species, not just birds.

According to the Smithsonian Museum study after study showed that habitat on shade-grown coffee farms outshone sun-grown coffee farms with increased numbers and species of birds as well as and improved bird habitat, soil protection/erosion control, carbon sequestration, natural pest control and improved pollination. While sun-grown systems can have higher yields, the shaded farms easily outperform them in sustainability measurements with the trees providing an array of ecological services that offer both direct and indirect "income/payback" to farmers and the environment.

Here is a partial list of the birds you love and enjoy that winter in or migrate through shade-grown coffee plantations: Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Lesser Nighthawk, Hammond's Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Violet-green Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, American Redstart, MacGillivray's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager and Indigo Bunting.

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*Shade grown versus traditional industrial coffee plantation, the difference is clear!*



But it's so expensive! True, shade grown coffee averages \$10-13 dollars per pound. Sun-grown, pesticide-laden coffee that is bad for birds averages \$5-\$7 per pound. But an average coffee drinker will pay only about \$100-\$150 dollars more per year for better, healthier coffee. What??!! \$150 dollars you say! That's too much! Well, let's investigate this further? What is the average income of birders in the United States? How much money do birders spend to travel and watch the birds they so adore and enjoy?

**Continued on page 6**



## What have you done for birds today?

### Continued from page 5

A 2006 survey conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that over 56% of birders have an income over \$50,000. In 2006 bird watchers spent over \$12 billion dollars in travel related to bird watching. They spent \$23 billion dollars on equipment related to bird and wildlife watching. For the average birder, the argument that the extra \$100-150 dollars per year it would cost to drink Bird Friendly Coffee just doesn't "fly". Investing in birds and your health would amount to .3% of yearly income for most birder lovers who converted to a charitable cup of joe!

Please, don't kill the messenger! I consider you all to be my friends and family. But I thought it might be time for an "intervention" and the cold, hard truth about the consequences of one of the most simple and enjoyable daily rituals for many of us. George will hopefully be putting together a group order for Bird Friendly Coffee soon. Birds and Beans is another great source of Bird Friendly Coffee and they will also offer us discounted coffee as a fundraiser as well. Show your LOVE for birds this Valentine's Day: switch your coffee to an organic, shade-grown, guilt free blend! If you would like more information don't hesitate to contact me! 661-9777 or [carriehugo@wildblue.net](mailto:carriehugo@wildblue.net)

Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17, 2014. Anyone anywhere in the world can count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org). The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://www.CornellLabofOrnithology.org) and the [National Audubon Society](http://www.NationalAudubonSociety.org) with partner [Bird Studies Canada](http://www.BirdStudiesCanada.org).

"People who care about birds can change the world," said Audubon chief scientist Gary Langham. "Technology has made it possible for people everywhere to unite around a shared love of birds and a commitment to protecting them."

In North America, GBBC participants will add their data to help define the magnitude of a dramatic irruption of magnificent Snowy Owls. Bird watchers will also be on the lookout for the invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove to see if it has expanded its range again. GBBC observations may help show whether or not numbers of American Crows will continue to rebound after being hit hard by the West Nile virus and whether more insect-eating species are showing up in new areas, possibly because of changing climate.

Last year's Great Backyard Bird Count shattered records after going global for the first time, thanks to integration with the eBird online checklist program launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab and Audubon. Participants reported their bird sightings from all 7 continents, including 111 countries and independent territories. More than 34.5 million birds and 3,610 species were recorded—nearly one-third of the world's total bird species documented in just four days. **Continued on page 7**

## Get Geared Up For the Great Backyard Bird Count!



*New York, N.Y. and Ithaca, N.Y. —*

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great



## Backyard Bird Count!

Continued from page 6

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature and make a difference for birds. It's free and easy. To learn more about how to join the count visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) and view the winning photos from the 2013 GBBC photo contest. The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible in part by sponsor [Wild Birds Unlimited](#).

## Mica Bay Survey

**Date:** February 11, Tuesday (held 2nd Tuesday of each month - times vary depending on month)

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. - **Note the time change**

**Meet:** Fairmont Loop and Highway 95

**Leader:** Shirley Sturts 664-5318

We spend about 3 hours once a month counting birds at Mica Bay. Beginner birders are welcome. We will help you with identification skills.

## Raptor Survey

**Date:** February 15, Saturday

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Meet:** K-Mart parking lot

**Leader:** Doug Ward 762-7107

We limit this outing to one car. If interested, register ahead of time with Doug.

We drive a set route across the Rathdrum Prairie and record hawk species and numbers. This a regional survey being coordinated by the East Cascades Audubon Society. Please join in the survey and help spot hawks. Beginners are welcome. This is an excellent way to learn hawk identification. The survey takes around 2-3 hours. Bring water and snacks if you wish. .

## Lincoln County Winter Bird Trip:

**Date:** February 22, Saturday

**Time:** 8:00 a.m.

**Meet:** K-Mart parking lot, south side.

**Leader:** Roland Craft 457-8894

This will be a full-day trip, bring lunch and water. We will travel the roads in the Davenport area in search of winter birds including Great Horned and Snowy Owls; Horned Larks and Snow Buntings.



## Field Trips 2013-2014

PLEASE

REGISTER: *Watch the website or newsletter for updates to our field trip*

*schedule. Participants should contact the trip leader at least 24 hours in advance of the field trip to find out if the meeting place, time or destination has been changed. Participants will share in a mileage reimbursement for the driver*

## Pend Oreille River, Lake and Priest River;

**Date:** February 1, Saturday

**Time:** 8:00 a.m.

**Meet:** K-Mart parking lot, south side.

**Leaders:** Lisa Hardy 783-282 and Janet Callen 664-1085

This will be a full-day trip, bring lunch and water. Target birds primarily waterfowl and eagles.

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