

THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society
www.cdaaudubon.org

March 2013

Volume 22 Number 7

March Program



Photograph by Kris Buchler

Date: March 12, Tuesday

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

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: **Speaker: Denver Holt**, founder and president of the Owl Research Institute, a non-profit organization located in Charlo, Montana. Named Montana's "Wildlife Biologist of the Year", by the Wildlife Society of North America, Denver Holt has conducted 21 years of research on Snowy Owls in Barrow, Alaska. He is the author of numerous publications, a noted speaker at various national and international bird festivals and had his research covered in *National Geographic* and several PBS documentaries

Program: "Breeding Ecology of Snowy Owls"

Learn about the natural history of the Snowy Owl as well other research conducted by the Owl Research Institute on other owl species including Long-eared Owl, Flammulated Owl, Barn Owl, Northern Hawk Owl and Short-eared Owl.

President's Report

March, 2013

George Saylor



In my first newsletter article as President of the Coeur d'Alene Audubon Society I expressed my excitement and enthusiasm as I considered the strengths of our club and the events being planned for the coming year. I also expressed appreciation to our past leaders and board for their work, and said that an organization needs active members to be strong, and asked you to consider how you could be involved. Finally, I stressed the need for good communication and promised regular reports about our activities. After six months, it seemed a good time to recall that message.

I am pleased with the quality of the programs we have offered this year, and I hope you are too. I am also appreciative of the many people who have volunteered to make the monthly meetings a success and provide field trip opportunities. I am grateful to have a board willing to take on responsibility and members who support our activities.

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President's Report

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I have not heard any concerns or questions from you so I am assuming you are generally satisfied with our programs and activities, but if you do have concerns or questions, please contact me or other board members.



The best way to keep informed is to read the monthly newsletter and check in on our website at www.cdaaudubon.org. It is always informative to come to the meetings, and interesting and enjoyable as well. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please let me know that also.

We have worked to fulfill our mission to protect birds and their habitat through members' participation in the Christmas Bird Count, the Backyard Bird Count, Project Feeder Watch, Bluebird Trail monitoring, and individual and club contributions to the Idaho Bird Observatory in support of their Long-billed Curlew recovery program. We also became a member of the Idaho Bird Conservation Partnership, and we continue to spread our message through the Audubon Adventures curriculum used in elementary schools, with the material placed in well over 100 classrooms. In these and other ways, we strive to preserve, protect and perpetuate Idaho's birds and wildlife..."

On another note, we elected to join the Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce this year. Our goal is to increase our presence in the community, particularly the business community, and to grow our membership. Becoming a member of the chamber also gives us an opportunity to have a seat on their Natural Resources Committee, where our voice is

needed. If you feel you have the background and are interested in serving on that committee, let me know.

There are two other positive developments of note. First, we recently received a \$300 grant from the Norcross Foundation. The money will allow us to purchase a new set of radios for use on field trips. Thanks to Eula Hickam for her work on that. Second, Shirley Sturts continues to improve our website, so please check it out. It is now possible for you to pay dues or make donations on-line. From our home page, click on "Membership" at the top of the page.



Snow Geese – Photograph by Wayne Tree

Those are just a few highlights from the year so far. Others are coming up, including a field trip to Freeze Out Lake in Montana, April 5th -7th. It will be an opportunity to see thousands of Snow Geese as well as other waterfowl in large numbers. We will travel to Great Falls on Friday and are planning to stay at La Quinta Inn where we will have a social hour Friday evening, go to the Freeze Out Lake on Saturday, and return to CDA on Sunday at your leisure. I have a full sheet of information and if you would like a copy simply send me an e-mail and I will send it to you.

If you are unable to commit to a three day trip, another much closer but worthy opportunity for birding is the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival that same time period. Finally, in May many of our members are planning to attend the Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest in Leavenworth, Washington. I've done it once and it was great. I would urge you to consider it.

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President's Report

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Beside protecting and promoting birds and other wildlife, and learning more about them, we exist as an organization to enable

our members to participate in and enjoy bird-watching. Today, thanks to a tip from Bill Gundlach, I had the great pleasure of some up-close and extended viewing of a pair of Dippers, aka Water Ouzels, at the bridge over Wolf Lodge Creek. It was a real delight watching them feed in the creek without any concern for how cold the water was. The bonus view was a great look at a Belted Kingfisher, followed later at Beauty Bay of a nice view of a pair of Horned Grebes in winter plumage. It was a fine way to enliven a rather humdrum February day. I hope you are getting out and having similar experiences.

2012 Yardlist Challenge

Doug Ward

After over 10 years of compiling the annual "Yardlist Challenge" for Coeur d'Alene Audubon, Lisa Hardy has passed the torch to Doug Ward this year. Thank you Lisa for keeping this fun project going and setting it up for future "Challenges".

This year (2012) was a good one for birding in Kootenai County with a record number (209) species seen during the year! While our yard watchers didn't break any records this year, an impressive 110 species were seen in and around our collective yards. We had 9 contributors scattered throughout the area with some in town, and others on our lakes, which led to a wide range of birds from Tundra Swans

to Pacific Wrens. There were 7 species seen at everyone's place (Calliope Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco, and Pine Siskin) while a whopping 25 were only seen in one yard.

The Hansons had the only American White Pelican as well as a nice Bullock's Oriole, the Sturts turned in a couple of grebes (Horned & Western), the Buchlers had Northern Harrier and Common Loon (in the bird bath...just kidding), a Gray Jay showed up at the Moen's, and the Ward's had an immature Chestnut-sided Warbler. In addition to these single yard birds, several other nice ones showed like the Warings and Zagars and their Bohemian Waxwings,



Killdeer at the Callens, the Sheridans getting one of only two Brewer's Blackbirds reported, and Northern Pygmy-Owls found by the Hansons and Buchlers.

There were a few surprises too. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were only seen in two yards, but Common Redpolls showed up in four - I'll take that trade.

(See the individual yard totals on our Website www.cdaudubon.org look under "Projects")



Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Common Redpoll Photographs by Wayne Tree

So if you haven't already, start keeping track for 2013 so we can all see what shows up in your yard this year.

World's Oldest Known Wild Bird Hatches Another Chick

From "The Birding Wire" February 6, 2013



A Laysan albatross known as "Wisdom" - believed to be at least 62 years old - has hatched a chick on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge for the sixth consecutive year. Early Sunday morning, February 3, 2013, the chick was observed pecking its way into the world by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, Pete Leary, who said the chick appears healthy. Wisdom was first banded in 1956, when she was incubating an egg in the same area of the refuge. She was at least five years old at the time.

"Everyone continues to be inspired by Wisdom as a symbol of hope for her species," said Doug Staller, the Fish and Wildlife Service Superintendent for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, which includes Midway Atoll NWR.

Staff and volunteers stationed on Midway are responsible for monitoring the health of the beautiful seabirds that arrive every year by the hundreds of thousands to nest. Upon the seabirds' arrival, field staff monitor them and gather information for one of the longest and

oldest continuous survey data sets for tropical seabirds in the world.

Wisdom has worn out five bird bands since she was first banded by U.S. Geological Survey scientist, Chandler Robbins, in 1956. Robbins estimated Wisdom to be at least 5 years old at the time, since this is the earliest age at which these birds breed. Typically, they breed at 8 or 9 years of age after a very involved courtship lasting over several years so Wisdom could be even older than 62.

"As Wisdom rewrites the record books, she provides new insights into the remarkable biology of seabirds," said Bruce Peterjohn, chief of the North American Bird Banding Program at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD. "It is beyond words to describe the amazing accomplishments of this wonderful bird and how she demonstrates the value of bird banding to better understand the world around us. If she were human, she would be eligible for Medicare in a couple years yet she is still regularly raising young and annually circumnavigating the Pacific Ocean. Simply incredible."

Peterjohn said Wisdom has likely raised at least 30 to 35 chicks during her breeding life, though the number may well be higher because experienced parents tend to be better parents than younger breeders. Albatross lay only one egg a year, but it takes much of a year to incubate and raise the chick. After consecutive years in which they have successfully raised and fledged a chick, the parents may take the occasional next year off from parenting. Wisdom is known to have nested in 2006 and then every year since 2008.

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World's Oldest Known Wild Bird

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Sue Schulmeister, Manager of the Midway Atoll NWR, said, "Wisdom is one of those incredible seabirds that has provided the world valuable information about the longevity of these beautiful creatures and reinforces the importance of breeding adults in the population. This information helps us measure the health of our oceans that sustain albatross."

Almost as amazing as being a parent at 62 is the number of miles Wisdom has likely logged - about 50,000 miles a year as an adult - which means that Wisdom has flown at least two million to three million miles since she was first banded. Or, to put it another way, that's four to six trips from the Earth to the Moon and back again, with plenty of miles to spare.

About Albatross

Albatross are legendary birds for many reasons - in Samuel Coleridge's poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a sailor has to wear an albatross around his neck as punishment for killing the bird. According to seafaring legends, albatross are the souls of lost sailors and should not be killed. However, as reported by James Cook, sailors regularly killed and ate albatross.

Albatross are remarkable fliers who travel thousands of miles on wind currents without ever flapping their wings. They do this by angling their 6-foot wings to adjust for wind currents and varying air speeds above the water.

Nineteen of 21 species of albatross are threatened with extinction, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Present threats to the birds include lead poisoning of chicks on Midway from lead paint

used in previous decades; longline fishing, where the birds are inadvertently hooked and drowned, though conservation groups have banded with fishermen and dramatically lowered the number of deaths from this cause; and pollution, especially from garbage floating on the ocean.

The birds ingest large amounts of marine debris - by some estimates 5 tons of plastic are unknowingly fed to albatross chicks each year by their parents. Although the plastic may not kill the chicks directly, it reduces their food intake, which leads to dehydration and most likely lessens their chance of survival. In addition, albatross are threatened by invasive species such as rats and wild cats which prey on chicks, nesting adults and eggs. Albatross evolved on islands where land mammals were absent, so they have no defenses against them.

For more information on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge/Battle of Midway National Memorial go to: <http://www.fws.gov/midway/> For more information on Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument go to: <http://www.fws.gov/hawaiianislands/monument.html>

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations. Three co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i - joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010. For more information, please visit www.papahānaumokuākea.gov

Outdoor Cats

Single Greatest Source of Human-Caused Mortality
for Birds and Mammals, Says New Study
Media Release from American Bird Conservancy



Cat with American Coot
Photograph by Debi Shearwater

Washington, D.C., January 29, 2013) A new [peer-reviewed study](#) published today and authored by scientists from two of the world's leading science and wildlife organizations – the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – has found that bird and mammal mortality caused by outdoor cats is much higher than has been widely reported, with annual bird mortality now estimated to be 1.4 to 3.7 billion and mammal mortality likely 6.9 – 20.7 billion individuals.

The study, which offers the most comprehensive analysis of information on the issue of outdoor cat predation, was published in the online research journal, *Nature Communications*, and is based on a review of 90 previous studies. The study was authored by Dr. Peter Marra and Scott Loss, research scientists at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and by Tom Will from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Migratory Birds.

According to Dr. George Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy, one of the leading bird conservation organizations in the U.S. and a group that has called for action on this issue for many years, "This study, which employed scientifically rigorous standards for data inclusion, demonstrates that the issue of cat predation on birds and mammals is an even bigger environmental and ecological threat than we thought. No estimates of any other anthropogenic [human-caused] mortality source approach the bird mortality this study calculated for cat predation."

"To maintain the integrity of our ecosystems, we have to conserve the animals that play integral roles in those ecosystems. Every time we lose another bird species or suppress their population numbers, we're altering the very ecosystems that we depend on as humans. This issue clearly needs immediate conservation attention," he said further.

"The very high credibility of this study should finally put to rest the misguided notions that outdoor cats represent some harmless, new component to the natural environment. The carnage that outdoor cats inflict is staggering and can no longer be ignored or dismissed. This is a wake-up call for cat owners and communities to get serious about this problem before even more ecological damage occurs," Fenwick said.

The study's estimate of bird mortality far exceeds any previously estimated U.S. figure for cats. In fact, this magnitude of mortality may exceed all other direct sources of anthropogenic bird and mammal mortality combined. Other bird mortality sources would include collisions with windows, buildings, communication towers, vehicles, and pesticide poisoning.

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Outdoor Cats

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The study estimated that the median number of birds killed by cats annually is 2.4 billion and the median number of mammals killed is 12.3 billion. About 69 percent of the bird mortality from cat predation and 89 percent of the mammal mortality was from un-owned cats. Un-owned cats are defined to include farm/barn cats, strays that are fed but not granted access to human habitations, cats in subsidized colonies, and cats that are completely feral.

Free-ranging cats on islands have caused or contributed to 33 (14 percent) of the modern bird, mammal, and reptile extinctions recorded by the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of threatened animals and plant species.

Native species make up the majority of the birds preyed upon by cats. On average, only 33 percent of bird prey items identified to species were non-native species in 10 studies. Studies of mammals in suburban and rural areas found that 75–100 percent of mammalian prey were native mice, shrews, voles, squirrels, and rabbits, all of which serve as food sources for birds of prey such as hawks, owls, and eagles.

The study charges that, “Despite these harmful effects, policies for management of free-ranging cat populations and regulation of pet ownership behaviors are dictated by animal welfare issues rather than ecological impacts. Projects to manage free-ranging cats, such as Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) colonies, are potentially harmful to wildlife populations, but are implemented across the United States without widespread public knowledge, consideration of scientific evidence, or the environmental review processes typically required for actions with harmful environmental consequences.”

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to conserve native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas.

Events and Field Trips

Chain Lakes --Tundra Swan migration

Date: March 10, Sunday

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Meet: 7:30 a.m. Fernan Ranger Station

8:00 a.m. meet leader at Rose Lake exit

Leader: Lisa Hardy 783-1262

Activity: A three-quarter day trip to experience the swan migration and look for other spring migrating waterfowl. Bring lunch, water and spotting scopes.

Mica Bay Survey

Date: March 12, Tuesday

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Fairmont Loop and Highway 95

Meet: Leader: Shirley Sturts 664-5318

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

David Douglas Exhibit

A field trip to visit the David Douglas Exhibit at the Northwest Museum of Art and Culture is planned. Date and time will be announced in email or check on our Website

Freeze Out Lake WMA

Date: April 5 Friday – April 7, Sunday

Meet and Time: See Details on our Website

Leader: George Saylor 664-2787

Activity: Freeze Out Lake is 45 minutes northwest of Great Falls, just a few miles from Fairfield Mt. Each year in is visited by thousands of Snow Geese (as high as 300,000) and thousands of other waterfowl and shorebirds.

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