

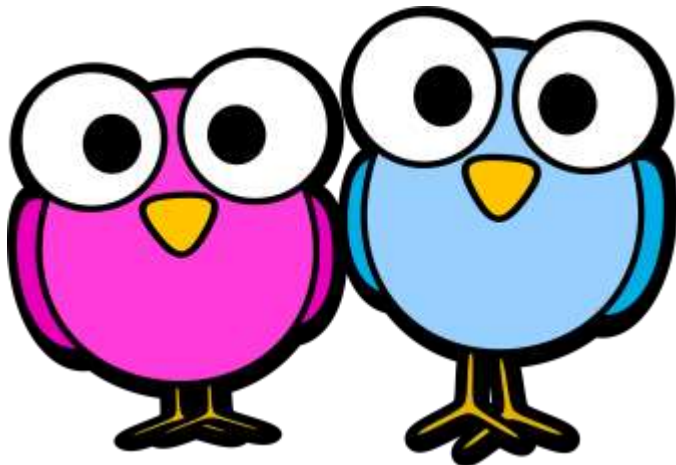
THE FISH HAWK HERALD



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

September 2020

Volume 31 Number 1



Meetings:

Our next regular meeting will be announced pending COVID-19 protocol



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President: Richard Cripe

Vice President: Ralph Kerr

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Treasurer: Janet Callen

Board Members: Ted Smith, Pam Gomes

There are vacancies for more board members. If you are interested in being on the board or want to nominate someone, contact Dick Cripe 208 665-0010

President's Message



Here I am writing a message for the September newsletter; this was the summer that almost didn't happen. The weather has been beautiful, no smoke for once. But nobody came to visit, and we didn't go anywhere. No concerts in the park, no parade, no Art On The Green, no International Migratory Bird Day, no field trips, and not very much personal birding.

Just hunkering down and "staying safe". I don't stay out late, nowhere to go. I'm home about eight, just me and the radio. Ain't misbehavin', savin' my love for you.

(Fats Waller)

But your stalwart Audubon Chapter has been busy. The HooDoo Valley Bluebird Trail project, directed by Nancy and Rob Kroese, is just wrapping up as I write this. All indications are the bluebirds and swallows were quite active this summer. That information will be reported into a national data base Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Janet Callen continues to lead birding trips to Mica Bay once a month. The results of these bird surveys are reported online to eBird.

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President's Message

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The Kris Buchler Memorial sign project that you have been hearing about for two years, is coming to a close. The committee of Ed Buchler, Janet Callen, Pam Gomes, Jenny Taylor, Shirley Sturts, and myself, working in close collaboration with the management at Farragut State Park, will have put together four signs regarding birds to go in Farragut, and two signs to be placed at Higgins Point. This relationship with Farragut was set up by Past President Midge Marcy Brennan.

Meeting

The September meeting, which we earlier thought might be the picnic, which didn't happen in June, is cancelled. The board will meet shortly to discuss options for meetings later in the fall. I have talked to a couple of board members about the possibility of Zoom meetings. Antje and I have participated in family Zoom meetings as well as local organization meetings. Please let us know of your interest in Zoom meetings and your willingness to participate.

Richard Cripe, President

"In the Moment"

George Saylor

It was an early May morning, with an overcast sky and the threat of rain when I learned a good lesson about "being in the moment." As a birdwatcher I was on a

mission to see at least one new and interesting bird for the year, enjoy that experience, and not become caught up with creating the longest list I could of birds seen (ah! Goal oriented or experience oriented). This state of mind was sparked by a book I started reading called Zen Birding, a new concept that I thought might be helpful to a long-time birdwatcher looking for a deeper level of experiencing birds. It is about really being present, appreciating birds for what they are, realizing our connection with them, and appreciating in a more profound way our experience of them. The author advocates really being present, in the moment, with all our senses, an open mind, and a focus outward, not inward. What I learned anew, was that the concept of being in the moment can enhance all of our contact with the natural world.



As I strolled the path on the east side of the hill, I was awed by how green the hill was. Everywhere I looked it was as if a giant irregularly shaped and textured quilt had been laid over it. It was the profusion of new spring growth stimulated by rain earlier in the week, and yes, temporarily in the moment I was aware of how beautiful it was, and how connected to it I felt. As I continued on, pausing often to take snapshots of the wildflowers, I also continued to look for birds. Not seeing any, I began to lose focus on being fully present and more preoccupied with finding a bird, any bird (goal oriented again).

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"In the Moment"

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Western Wood-Pewee – photo by Bill Linn

As I headed back down the hill past the water tanks, I resigned to myself that the birds just weren't there and I should just deal with it. Just then, a flash of yellow streaked by on my right side into a tree ahead of me. With luck and excitement, I was able to see and identify a beautiful Western Tanager, its orange and yellow head and breast glowing in the subdued light. A moment later I spotted a Western Wood-Pewee, another interesting bird, and at the bottom of the trail, a glorious Yellow Warbler offered a song and a view while singing in the blossoms of the Chokecherry tree at the entrance to the trail (experience oriented). Renewed in spirit I headed home, trying to puzzle out how this experience related to the idea of Zen birding and being in the moment.

At its heart Zen birding is a journey into greater awareness of the world around us through watching and truly experiencing not only birds, but the world. It asks us to take the focus off ourselves, our unconscious scramble of thoughts and preoccupations, to see beyond ourselves to a broader context. It can help us connect more fully to nature and to other people and restore a sense of calm. In our time of present trouble if we all are able to take such an approach to life perhaps, we could be less stressed and more hopeful. The natural world can be a healing presence if we let it.

I am no Zen master nor a practitioner of Zen, but I encourage you to take a walk on Tubbs Hill with a Zen attitude. A Zen master once said: "If you want to see, open your eyes". In my wandering on Tubbs I had failed, at times, to see what was there, a beautiful world that I was a part of. When my eyes were opened by the glorious Tanager, it was a transforming moment. There are birds that visit Tubbs Hill, more than 70 species, but there is also an abundance of other life asking for your attention. Try having your own moment by focusing your attention on the beautiful environment Tubbs Hill provides us. It will lift your spirit! -



Why are big, insect eating birds disappearing? Maybe we're running low on bugs.

by [Brandon Keim](#) - March 14, 2018

From: www.anthropocenemagazine.org/2018/03/running-out-of-bugs

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...Maybe we're running low on bugs

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No guild of North American birds is declining so rapidly as aerial insectivores: acrobatic marvels whose maneuvers make our hearts soar, and who provide a vital ecosystem service. Why are their numbers plummeting? A leading explanation is a widespread decline in insect populations — a troubling possibility, hinted at by anthropocene studies but also one difficult to pin down. There are few records of historical insect numbers against which to compare our own.

In a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, researchers led by biologist Philina English of Simon Fraser University describe their ingenious workaround: they used museum specimens of whip-poor-wills, a medium-sized insect-eater whose populations are falling by 3.5 percent each year, as biological time machines. By contrasting the chemical composition of their bodies with the composition of living whip-poor-wills, the researchers could extrapolate how the birds used to eat.

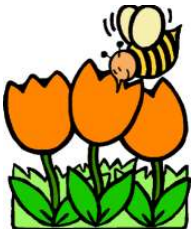
"These results are consistent with the hypothesis that aerial insectivore populations are declining due to changes in abundance of higher trophic-level prey," wrote the researchers. To translate that into normal speak: the birds are suffering because there seems to be a lot fewer big bugs than there used to be.

If insect populations are indeed falling, surmised the researchers, it stands to reason that bugs higher up the food chain, who consume insects smaller than themselves, would be declining even faster. This would push whip-poor-wills, who prefer to eat larger, more nutrient-rich insects, to eat smaller and less-sustaining fare.

As it happens, smaller bugs and their insect predators accumulate subtly different forms of nitrogen in their tissues. The presence of these nitrogen signatures in bird bodies thus becomes a record of their own diet. When English and colleagues compared the chemistry of claw and feather samples from whip-poor-wills caught recently in Ontario to specimens collected for Ontario museums during the late 19th and 20th centuries, they found a "significant decline" in chemical traces of larger insects. The pattern "is consistent with contemporary whip-poor-will populations feeding lower in the food web than in the past," wrote the researchers. While English cautioned that more testing is necessary to be absolutely certain that something else wasn't responsible for the chemical shift, the findings fit with other observations of insect decline.

An important next question is where the decline is happening: on southern wintering grounds, northern breeding grounds, or along migration routes? English noted the importance of the Gulf Coast, a crucial migratory stopover region. If insects are in short supply there, at a time when migrants need all the fuel they can get, it would be especially harmful.

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...Maybe we're running low on bugs

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In addition to where, another question is: why are insects in decline? Climate

change and habitat loss are possible culprits. Collisions with automobiles are also an underappreciated problem, says English. And hovering over it all is the issue of pesticide pollution, and in particular neonicotinoids, the world's most widely-used class of pesticides. Initially thought to be environmentally benign, they've been described accumulating in soil and water, where they're toxic to insects and linked to insect-eating bird declines.

The implications of this are not restricted to whip-poor-wills. They are, wrote the researchers, a "case study." The same may well be happening in other members of their guild, such as nighthawks and swifts and swallows. An entire way of being — and one that humans rely upon to control insects we consider pests — is threatened.

"Aside from admiring the beauty and grace of birds like swifts and swallows," says English, "I genuinely fear a world where we are compelled to rely on controlling agricultural and disease-carrying pest insects exclusively through the use of chemicals and technology because too many of their natural predators have been effectively eliminated." If people wait too long, the only aerial insectivores left might be in museums.

Source: English et al., "Stable Isotopes from Museum Specimens May Provide Evidence of Long-Term Change in the Trophic Ecology of a Migratory Aerial Insectivore." *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 2018.

About the author: [Brandon Keim](#) is a freelance journalist specializing in animals, nature and science, and the author of [The Eye of the Sandpiper: Stories From the Living World](#).

Field Trips

Thanks to Janet Callen our Chapter continues to offer you one bird outing this month - Distancing followed

Mica Bay Survey

Date: September 8, Tuesday (Held 2nd Tuesday of each month - times vary depending on the month)

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Meet: Fairmont Loop and Highway 95

Leader: Janet Callen

Activity: We spend about 3 hours once a month counting birds at Mica Bay. Beginner birders are welcome.

Mica Bay Survey for Tue, Aug 11, 2020

Participants: Janet Callen, Dalene Carlton, Karen Williams, Carol Ogle, and Patty Rabe.

Goldfinch-1

Tree Swallow-10+

Gray Catbird-2

Western Wood Pewee-2

Pacific Wren-2

Common Yellowthroat-1

Cooper's Hawk-1

Am Robin-2

Black-headed Grosbeak-1

House Wren + chicks-Yesterday

Evening Grosbeak-4

Black-cap Chickadee-1

Wood Duck-1

Mallard-10

Red-breasted Nuthatch-1

Pine Siskin-5

Common Raven-1

Black-chin Hummingbird-1

Great Blue Heron-2

Canada Geese-50

Osprey-2

Gull species-1

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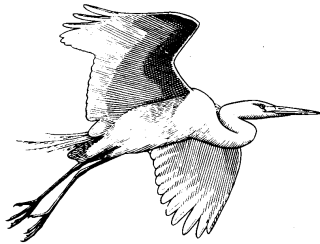
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