

THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society
www.cdaaudubon.org
September 2023 / Volume 33, Number 1

Upcoming Events

Chapter Meeting September 12

The regular monthly chapter meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, September 12 at the Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road in Coeur d'Alene. Note that this time is 30 minutes earlier than before.

Mica Bay Survey September 12

The Mica Bay Survey will take place September 12. Interested birders are asked to meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Fairmont Loop parking lot near Highway 95.

President's Message

Greetings! I hope you have all have had a good summer with lots of exciting bird sightings. As your new club president I look forward to working with all of you to assure the club meets your expectations.

First I would like to extend my personal thanks to Ralph Kerr for the wonderful job he did as club president over his term. Secondly, I would like to thank Ralph on behalf of the entire club. Maintaining our operations through Covid and beyond was not easy but Ralph was able to gather the right folks to help him keep meetings and programs happening. Thanks buddy, and well done. Finally a big thank you to our board members and other volunteers who have worked tirelessly to improve the operations of our club.

I hope this coming year will see us fulfill some of the dreams the board has for our club. On the agenda are tasks like improving /

rebuilding our website, getting Audubon in the Classroom up and running again, putting together a field trip schedule well in advance of trips, and supporting a robust series of programs for monthly meetings. We are also discussing supporting a "Beginning Birding" class series to introduce folks to bird watching in a welcoming environment.

If that isn't enough we are going to introduce everyone to Ebird and other tech supported birding tools. Oh, and did I mention, we will also be working to improve our public exposure within the community - all in hopes of recruiting new members, especially some younger folks.

We are also making some trial changes to the way we meet. (I am hoping we will not have to do anymore Zoom meetings). As before, meetings will be on the second Tuesday of the month at the Lutheran church on the northeast corner of Ramsey and Kathleen. The first change to general meetings is start time. Meetings will be starting a 6:30 pm rather than 7:00 pm. The board felt this would get folks home earlier and support more driving in daylight hours.
(Continued on Page 2)

Inside This Issue

Albertsons 'Capture' A Very Rare Bird. . . . P. 2
Avian Awareness/States of the Birds P. 3
Northwest Shootists Take Their Toll. P. 4
Raptor Watching in Southern Idaho. P. 5

President's Message Cont'd

The second change is that we will not hold general meetings in January and February to avoid cold weather outings and hazardous driving conditions. Field trips and other club activities will still be taking place during this general meeting recess. If you have concerns with these changes or ideas to share please contact me or any of the club board members: Pam Gomes, George Sayler, Heather Smith, Patty Byers, Elle Emm, Dick Cripe, and Ralph Kerr.

Fall migration is underway and it's time to dust off the binoculars after the late summer doldrums of LBJs (little brown jobs - those pesky juveniles and fledglings). I would love to have you join me on Tuesday morning Sept. 12 for the Mica Bay survey.

Last year the September survey was really lively with lots of migrants, especially sparrows. Meet at 8am at the Fairmont Loop parking area off of highway 95. I look forward to seeing you all at our next general meeting, also on Sept.12. Until then. Happy Birding!

Ted Smith

Albertson Captures Image of Rare Steller's Sea Eagle

Chapter members Peggy and Doug Albertson, on a trip to Newfoundland, Canada, this summer, photographed an extremely rare Steller's Sea Eagle. This bird (pictured at right) is possibly the only one of its species currently in North America.

Peggy photographed the magnificent sea eagle on August 4 in Trinity Bay.

This eagle is one of the largest raptors overall, with females weighing up to 21 pounds and males somewhat lighter at about 11 to 15 pounds,

The female Steller's can be more than three feet in length while males average somewhat less. The Steller's wingspan is impressive—up to 8 feet—and is one of the largest of any living eagle. A few observers have reported seeing birds with wingspans of more than 9 feet. This would make the Steller's the raptor with the largest wingspan of all eagles.

This bird is unique among all sea eagles in having a yellow beak even in juvenile birds, and possessing 14, not 12, rectrices, the large, stiff feathers on its wings or tail.

The Steller's usual habitat is in western Siberia. This particular bird caused quite a birding brouhaha when it was sighted in 2022 and again in February 2023 in Maine. Birders flocked from all over to catch a glimpse of it.

There are only a few thousand sea eagles worldwide, and the recent sightings in North America are likely of a bird that somehow got "off course," according to a member of the Maine Audubon Society.

The Albertsons' sea-eagle sighting was an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime experience (unless they go back to eastern Canada next year!).



Steller's Sea Eagle/Photo by Peggy Albertson

Test Your Avian Awareness: State of our State Birds

Below, select the answer that correctly identifies that state's official state bird and current population status. (Answers on Page 4)

1. Arizona
 - A. Cactus Wren/60% loss in numbers
 - B. Roadrunner/listed as endangered
 - C. Vulture/increase in population
2. Lark Bunting
 - A. Wisconsin/listed as threatened
 - B. Colorado/85% loss in numbers
 - C. Oklahoma/threatened
3. Western Meadowlark
 - A. Idaho/50% decline in numbers
 - B. Utah/population stable
 - C. Kansas, Montana, Nebraska/population loss of almost half
4. Mountain Bluebird
 - A. Montana/stable population
 - B. Wyoming/increase in numbers
 - C. Idaho/decline by almost 1/4
5. Baltimore Oriole
 - A. Maryland/decrease by almost half
 - B. Ohio/threatened
 - C. Maryland/increase by 10%
6. Nene
 - A. Hawaii/extinct
 - B. Hawaii/recent increase in numbers
 - C. Oregon/threatened
7. Texas
 - A. Bobolink/threatened
 - B. Mockingbird/declined by 1/5th
 - C. Golden-Cheeked Warbler/endangered

8. Eastern Bluebird
 - A. Vermont/threatened
 - B. New York/population increasing
 - C. Massachusetts/population increasing
9. Brown Pelican
 - A. Texas/endangered
 - B. Louisiana/threatened
 - C. Louisiana/increase in numbers
10. Black-capped Chickadee
 - A. Massachusetts/threatened
 - B. Maine/population increase
 - C. Vermont/50% population drop

Birdbaths for Beginners

As summer temperatures continue to climb, even in North Idaho, it's important to remember that birds need "cooling centers" too. One of the easiest ways to help birds beat the heat is by putting a birdbath in the backyard. It's more important than birdseed in summer.

Birdbaths are sold locally at most garden stores and in some "big box" building suppliers such as Home Depot and Lowe's. The *New York Times* featured an article in July about how to select and equip a backyard birdbath. Below are some excerpts:

- Buy a concrete bath rather than an epoxy or glazed ceramic model. Concrete is sturdier, provides a better foothold, and doesn't leak toxins. Metal birdbaths heat up too easily.
- Tiered bird baths work best for smaller birds. Water should be less than three inches deep.
- Rocks give birds a place to perch and drink.
- Put the birdbath in a shaded area for more protection for birds and keep water cooler.
- Change water at least daily to keep it clean and free from debris. Clean the birdbath with a brush.

In addition to the birdbath itself, floating solar-powered mini-fountains aerate water. Several types are available online.

Answers to quiz: 1, A; 2, B; 3, C; 4, C;
5, A; 6, B; 7, B; 8, B; 9, C; 10, B

Shooting eagles in the Northwest—for fun?

It appears that some hunters in the Northwest are intentionally taking aim at birds of prey and other species sitting on power lines, killing hundreds, according to a recent study in the journal *iScience*.

According to the study, also reported on National Public Radio, researchers found that more than 65% of dead birds near had been killed by gunshots. The study examined 410 birds in Idaho, Wyoming, Utah and Oregon. Examinations of those carcasses determined that 42 ravens, 30 red-tailed hawks, 12 Swainson's hawks and six golden eagles had been sprayed with buckshot.

A related 2021 study found that gunshots were the top reason for human-caused mortality of golden eagles.

"This is not an educational problem," Brian Nesvik, director of the Wyoming Fish and Game Department said, "These people are intentionally shooting eagles."

Eve Thomasin, a wildlife biologist for a local power company, says the mortality study found that only 17% of birds had been electrocuted.

Although it's difficult to find and prosecute the shooters, Thomasin said that "in cases that people have been caught shooting protected birds, we have learned that some of them do this for fun. . . it's a hobby."

According to the Ted Katzner, US Geological Survey Supervisor Research Wildlife Biologist, "death by shooting has been shown to impact population growth of some species, including golden eagles, but we didn't know it is

relevant to so many species across such a large geographic area."

The study was funded by the Idaho Army National Guard, Avian PowerLine Interaction Committee, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, the Raptor Research Center at Boise State University, and the US Geological Survey.

How Some Birds Beat the Heat

Birds can't sweat to cool off, but they can use various processes to lower their body temperatures. For example, they've adopted a method called "gular fluttering," a combination of rapid, open-mouthed breathing and quick vibration of moist throat membranes to cause evaporation. Excess heat leaves the bird's body with each exhalation.

This behavior is particularly common among nocturnal birds such as nighthawks and whip-poor-wills. Cormorants, owls and mourning doves also use this technique as they rest during the day.

Scientists have determined that a bird's bill size correlates with outside temperature. Generally speaking, birds with bigger bills live in warmer climates. The tropical toucan uses its large bill to increase or decrease blood flow to its beak to either promote or prevent heat loss.

You've probably noticed that your usually "chirpy" backyard gets very quiet in the heat of the afternoon. Birds take this time to conserve energy and rest.

Researchers believe that on hotter days, soaring birds go higher in the sky to keep cool. This theory has yet to be proved, however, since it's difficult to measure and compare soaring altitudes.

Over the longer term, some birds are adapting to increases in temperatures by laying their eggs sooner in the spring, or shifting their habitats to more northern locations.

Southern Idaho Is Mecca for Birdwatchers—on Every Level

If you're fascinated by raptors, it's worth a trip to Boise to visit the World Center for Birds of Prey and the Morley Nelson Snake River Area Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA). The renowned research center in Boise and the NCA are dedicated to the preservation and protection of raptors, and provide visitors with opportunities to see and learn more about some of Idaho's most magnificent birds.

Together, the two destinations offer something for everyone, from strolls through galleries and live exhibits at the World Center to challenging hikes or mountain bike treks over rough desert terrain to glimpse an eagle soaring high above the Snake River.

For birders also interested in the history of Indigenous People in Idaho, nearby Celebration Park provides examples of prehistoric Indian rock art.

The World Center, near Boise, covers about 580 acres. It includes a breeding zone for the endangered raptors, a research center, a bird display and an archive gallery and library.

Visitors to the World Center can expect to see a variety of raptors--owls, falcons, eagles and hawks, to name a few.

About 15 miles from Boise is a destination resort of sorts for folks who don't mind "roughing it" a little to see raptors. The NCA covers 485,000 acres along the Snake River Canyon and is home to the greatest concentration of nesting birds of prey in North America—perhaps, in the world. This Conservation Area is home to

approximately 800 pairs of hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls nest in the lava cliffs and surrounding desert plateau. NCA's raptor population includes 150-200 pairs of Prairie Falcons—the highest breeding density of this species in the world.

The NCA is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and described as is "nature in the rough," with few public facilities. Here, visitors need to be "willing to experience nature on its own terms [and have] patience to fit into the natural rhythms of life in this special place."

But they will be rewarded for their efforts. In the NCA, 700-foot-high cliffs are the perfect habitat for nesting raptors seeking the protection of ledges, cracks and crevices. Visitors can watch these magnificent birds rise from the cliffs to soar and hunt on air currents rising from the canyon floor.

Bird watchers don't necessarily need to stray from the road in the NCA; they can drive along a 56-mile loop through this spectacular area. Those who would like to see the cliffs from the Snake River itself can take a raft or canoe trip during the spring. Equestrians can birdwatch on horseback. Adventurous souls who hike, ride horses or take mountain bikes over the NCA's trails are likely to return with stories of their incredible raptor sightings.

Prehistoric Indian rock art is a popular attraction at Celebration Park, located inside the NCA. Established in 1989. This is Idaho's only archeological park. Petroglyphs on the basalt deposits there are estimated to be from 100 to 10,000 years old.

The NCA was named in 1993 to honor Morely Nelson, a long-time advocate for birds of prey. He began documenting Snake River Canyon raptors in the 1940s and dedicated his life to protecting them and their southern Idaho habitat.

CDA Audubon Chapter Officers

President: Ted Smith
Vice President: Patty Beyer
Recording Secretary: Pamela
Gomes
Treasurer: Elli Emm
Board Members: All officers and
George Saylor, Dick Cripe, Heather
Smith, Ralph Kerr

Committee Chairs:

Publicity:
Field Trips: Ted Smith
Education: Barbara
Christofferson
208 667-3931.
Conservation:
Membership: Peggy Albertson
208 664-1616
Hospitality: Elli Emm
Newsletter: Alice Koskela
Mailing: Peggy Albertson
208 664-1616
Webmaster: Patricia Beyer
Historian:

Local Membership Dues

- Individual \$10.00
- Family \$15.00
- Individual \$25.00 - with hard
copy of the newsletter
- Family \$30.00 - with hard
copy of the newsletter
- Additional donation _____

Total \$ _____

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____
Mail this form and your check payable
to: Coeur d'Alene Audubon Chapter c/o
Membership
P.O. Box 361
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816

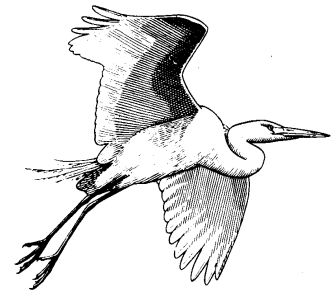
**National Audubon
New Member Application**

Join Online at:
<http://www.audubon.org>

or

Join by Phone:
1-844-428-3826

Reference our Chapter
Code G06



Coeur d'Alene Audubon Chapter
PO Box 361
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83816