

THE FISH HAWK HERALD



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

December 2023 / Volume 33, Number 4

December Events

Regular Monthly Meeting Program & Festivities

This month's Coeur d'Alene Chapter meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 12 at the Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 N. Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene. The scheduled presentation is entitled "Secret Life of the Desert: Deserts of the Pacific Northwest," by naturalists Daniel Biggs and Mike Denney. (See story on Page 2.)

Members are invited to bring two dozen cookies for the December meeting to share at the annual Cookie Exchange.

Higgins Point Eagle Watch December 2 & 9

The Coeur d'Alene chapter will hold a "Higgins Point Eagle Watch" event to educate the public about the bald eagles which congregate there every December, and provide information about the local Audubon organization.

Ted Smith, chapter president, said members are invited to sign up to participate in the Eagle Watch on December 2 or 9 or both. Visitors are welcome to look at these magnificent birds through spotting scopes and binoculars at the site. An information table will be staffed by volunteers. For more information, please contact Ted Smith at tedsmith@gmail.com.

Christmas Bird Count Set for December

The Coeur d'Alene Chapter's 33rd Annual Christmas Bird Count will be held December 16, CBC organizer Doug Ward has announced.

Ward, who has led the local CBC for many years, asks that volunteers who would like to participate phone him at 208-599-9327 or send an email to dougward@frontier.com to sign up or if you have any questions.

He will organize members into teams, assigning them various locations for bird-counting in the area. Participants can also sign up to watch their backyard feeders.

A kick-off breakfast for CBC volunteers will be held at 6:30 a.m. on the morning of the count at Michael D's Eatery, 203 Coeur d'Alene Lake Drive.

At the breakfast teams will be assigned and plans finalized for the count.

Ward says a "Compilation Potluck Dinner" will be held that evening at a location TBD, where participants can submit count results and "tell tall tales" about this and previous CBC adventures.

Inside this Issue

Biggs and Denny, Up Close.	2
Test Your Avian Awareness.	2
President's Message	3
Bird Banding Raises Awareness	3

Up Close and Personal with Naturalists Denny & Biggs

Mike Denny and Daniel Biggs, Washington naturalists/videographers met several years ago on—where else?—a nature hike, the beginning of a creative partnership that has resulted in two acclaimed films.

The two first collaborated on “Secret Life of the Forest,” about the northern Blue Mountains in Oregon, and then produced “Secret Life of the Desert: Deserts of the Pacific Northwest.” “Deserts” has been developed as a nine-episode series.

The film chronicles more than 450 species of birds, plants, animals and insects in the largely-unappreciated arid lands of central Washington and Oregon—focusing on what Biggs describes as “little treasures here and there.”

The series begins at the Wallula Gap, meanders through the Burnt River Canyon, travels Oregon’s highest mountain road up to Steen’s Mountain, and ends at Pueblo Mountain and the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Biggs, a graduate of the Art Institute of Seattle, shot the film. Denny, who grew up in southeast Africa and returned stateside to work for the Army Corps of Engineers and the US Forest Service, narrates.

The two are on a special mission: to educate the public about the often-maligned “Channeled Scablands” of the interior Northwest, proving that this area is beautiful, teeming with wildlife, and well worth preserving for the future.

Denny hopes their efforts will help to change not just the perception of this place, but its unflattering name as well. In an interview with Blue Mountain Television in 2022, he noted that the Puget Sound area of western Washington is now being called the “Salish Sea,” the name used by Native tribes in the area. He has visited several tribes in Central Oregon and Washington to get their suggestions on more culturally-appropriate ways to identify the inland desert areas in their historic territories.

Both “Secret Life” films have been shown in theaters and at events throughout the Northwest, and excerpts from the “Desert” film are expected to be presented (if the technology is willing!) at the December 12 chapter meeting, with Denny and Biggs in attendance via Zoom. Members are encouraged to attend this beautiful and inspiring program.

Test Your Avian Awareness: How Smart are Vultures?

(Answers on Page 3)

1. Egyptian vultures have learned to
 - a. Mimic human voices
 - b. Crack ostrich eggs by throwing rocks at them
 - c. Build nests with trapdoors
2. Some vultures have been observed
 - a. Luring eagles away from carrion by pretending to be injured
 - b. Teaching their young to fend off crows with sticks
 - c. Raking up wool from sheep shearing pens to insulate their nests
3. In breeding season vultures attract mates by
 - a. Using “makeup” from plants to paint their faces gold
 - b. Meticulously cleaning themselves with leaves
 - c. Building pyramids of “treats” in their nests
4. Black vultures in South America have learned
 - a. To help deliver seal pups by clipping the umbilical cord and taking the placenta
 - b. How to identify dangerously rotted meat
 - c. To unknot a cord with meat attached
5. Vultures figured out how to get to meat dangling from a long string by
 - a. Sucking up the string like a spaghetti noodle and temporarily storing it in their throats
 - b. Clipping the string with their talons and getting the meat on the ground
 - c. Winding the string around a twig to pull it up
6. Vultures have been tracked covering how many miles per year in search of food?
 - a. 100,000
 - b. 5,000
 - c. 20,000
7. Compared to any other animal, ever, turkey vultures have the best sense of –
 - a. Sight
 - b. Smell
 - c. Hearing

President's Message

Greetings, fellow birders:

Where on Earth did November Go? As daylight shortens it seems like the days go by more quickly. I am really excited about our upcoming club activities. I was really happy with the number of members that stepped up to help our Eagle Watch educational efforts. Additionally, I have had several people volunteer to do a "Bird of the Month" presentation. Thank you all.

I apologize to all for our program failure last month. We had worked for several days getting everything set up but hadn't tested the WIFI to see if it was robust enough to carry a high definition video. Obviously, it wasn't. I am working with our presenters to have the program available in December.

We have now reached that time of year when we start keeping a birder's eye peeled for unusual migrants from the north. Snow Buntings have already been reported and Rough-legged Hawks are already in the Columbia Basin and probably out on the Rathdrum Prairie. Will be fun to see what other species put in an appearance this year. Snowy Owls?? Lapland Longspurs?? Theresa Shaffer has agreed to be our field trip coordinator. I will work with her to get some fun and interesting winter field trips planned.

I know many of us are already feeding birds. I would like to remind everyone to take your feeders down periodically and give them a good cleaning. Avian influenza and other bird pathogens are easily spread to wild birds that are using our feeders. Personally, I don't start feeding until the ground is frozen or snow covered. This forces the little freeloaders to forage for themselves a little longer.

Hoping you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. All the best. Ted

Special Alabama Banding Nets 527 Birds in Nine Days

A special bird "catch and release" program in Fort Morgan, Alabama, the last land stop for some migratory species flying south, captured more than 500 birds (55 different species) in just over a week.

Fort Morgan is located on a narrow peninsula of land jutting into the Gulf of Mexico. Last month volunteers for the Banding Coalition of the Americas used mist nets to capture small birds and fit them with leg bands to help track their migratory paths.

Data collected by the project will be reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory, a program run by the US Geological Survey. It's hoped that this data will help scientists identify major trends in migratory birds.

This year, volunteers netted a few species that were "not supposed" to be in the southeastern US—a Western tanager, and two Western wood pewees.

The project raised awareness among volunteers of the need to protect these small migratory birds' "pit stops" from development.



American Redstart
Banded at Fort Morgan

CDA Audubon Chapter Officers

President: Ted Smith
Vice President: Patty Beyer
Recording Secretary: Pamela Gomes
Treasurer: Ellie 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: Ellie 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

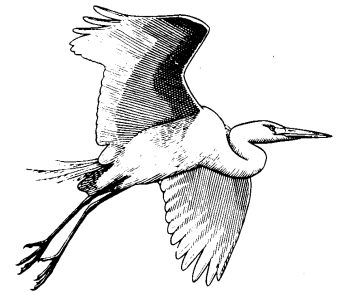
National Audubon New Member Application

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, Id 83816