

THE FISH HAWK HERALD



Coeur d'Alene Chapter of the National Audubon Society
www.cdaaudubon.org
January 2024 / Volume 33, Number 5

Upcoming Events

Regular Monthly Meetings To Resume March 12

As announced earlier this year, the Chapter will not meet in January or February due to likelihood of cold weather and unsafe roads. The next meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at the Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 N. Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene.

Higgins Point Eagle Watch was a Big Success

The Coeur d'Alene chapter held successful educational programs at Higgins Point on December 2 and 9, providing the public with information on birding and the opportunity to view the magnificent eagles through a spotting scope.

Chapter President Ted Smith estimates that about 150 people were on hand to talk about eagles and bird watching with chapter members who volunteered to assist with this event. In addition to seeing numerous eagles (including five in one tree), visitors were treated to the sight of a mountain goat on a hillside across Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Additionally the regularly scheduled Mica Bay Field Trip in December found 14 species, 45 total birds—and one otter doing some ice fishing. For more information on when the first 2024 field trip to Mica Bay will be held, please contact Ted.

Christmas Bird Count Completed Despite Covid "Monkey Wrench"

Doug Ward who has led the Chapter's annual Coeur d'Alene Christmas Bird Count for many years, reports that the 2023 CBC tallied 67 species and nearly 9,000 individuals—average numbers for the counts here over the past 32 years.

Although CBC plans had to be revised to address participant safety after an unexpected visit from the Covid virus at the December chapter meeting, Doug and his stalwart birders "worked through adversity to get the win."

Doug notes that counters didn't miss any of the 22 species which have been seen here since 1991, although they didn't locate a Red-necked Grebe and a Red Crossbill, birds that had been reported on three-quarters of previous counts.

Unfortunately the birders didn't add any new species to their tallies this year, but the "best bird" of the day was a relatively rare White-crowned Sparrow, a species which had been recorded on a CBC only twice before. (Continued, page 2).

In this Issue

President's Message.	2
"Nemesis Birds"—What's Yours?.	3
Test your Avian Awareness.	3
Higgins Point, Tubbs Hill Birder Pix.	4
What's in a Name?.	5

Ward Recaps '23 CBC Numbers

(continued from Page 1)

The birders had some "near misses"—in particular, elusive Marsh Wrens which were heard but not seen—this bird has never been counted before. Even so, the CBC birders set a new record for Mallard sightings. with more than 1,700 reported, beating the old record by about 500 birds. Other record-high counts were logged for 473 wild Turkeys, 12 Red-breasted Mergansers, 24 Western Grebes, 38 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and 8 white-breasted Nuthatches. The previous record for these birds was 3.

Every year Doug creates spreadsheets using current and historical CBC data; anyone who is interested in taking a "deeper dive" into this year's count and comparisons to the past may email him to request an electronic copy at dougward@frontier.com

President's Message

Hello, everyone,

Well, we've turned the corner and the days are now getting longer. We still have some cold and dark days to get through before the spring migration begins. I have always enjoyed winter. I like driving back country roads looking for birds without all the frantic traffic of summer. I think I see a couple of trips to the Reardan and Davenport area in my future.

December has proven to be an "interesting" month. We held a very successful eagle watch event at Higgins Point where about a dozen Audubon members staffed a table and had scopes set up to assist visitors in viewing the eagles. We estimated that we contacted over 100 visitors during our time there and many folks expressed their appreciation for our efforts. Probably the best part was when children stepped up on a stool and looked through the spotting scope to see a tree full of eagles. There were lots of "awesomes!" and "oh, wows!"

Our December meeting was well attended and we all got to enjoy Daniel Biggs and Mike Denny's video entitled "Secret Lives of the Desert. If you missed it, you missed some incredible photography and wonderful story telling. The flip side of our well-attended meeting was a graphic reminder that COVID is still with us. Our meeting was a small "super spreader" event with approximately 11 people coming down with the bug right after the meeting. Hoping all of you that joined Heather and me in coming down with it have gotten better without serious complications.

Topping the month was our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Doug Ward did his usual fine job of organizing and deploying the count even though the COVID outbreak thinned our numbers slightly. I really appreciate all of you who did turn up and put in the time to get the count in the books. I got to count LOTS of mallards. They were dispersed about 6 deep along both banks of the Spokane River from the highway 95 bridge to the floating restaurant. It took me almost 2 hours to count that section of the river.

Our website committee is doing a great job with lots of enthusiasm and hard work. I think we will be seeing an updated website we can all be proud of. Thanks to those folks for diligently getting on with it. Our efforts to initiate Audubon in the Classroom have hit a couple of snags but I don't believe they are insurmountable. Our school district personnel are all working hard and fitting new initiatives into their full schedules is a little bit challenging. Patience and time will get this effort done.

In parting I'd like to remind you to keep your bird feeders clean by periodically taking them down and washing them with soap and water. Let's not be part of spreading bird diseases around. Stay well and I'll see you round the spotting scope.

Happy New Year!

Ted

"Nemesis Birds" Bedevil Expert, Neophyte Watchers

The term "Nemesis Bird" was defined by writer Dan Koeppel in 2017 as "one common enough that a dedicated birder should have spotted it, but nevertheless remains unseen." The opposite of a "spark bird" (a species you saw that sparked your interest in bird watching), Nemesis Birds are elusive creatures that can become obsessions for determined birders.

It's a bird that almost everybody else has spotted, but not you. It's not where you're sure it will be, or it just left moments ago. Your mother saw one in her backyard last week. But try as you might, you can never track the bird down.

Koeppel, in his 2017 article, explains that his father was an avid birder obsessed with finding a mountain quail, a species that he'd never seen despite sighting more than 7,000 species over his birding career. The elder man's dying wish was to find one, and after he passed his son made it his mission to set eyes on one. Koeppel carried his father's ashes around in the backseat of his car for the moment the quail appeared.

It happened in Southern California, when Koeppel suddenly spied a pair of mountain quail in a state park. He ran back to his car and grabbed the urn and he and his son and threw its contents toward the birds. Just then a gust of wind blew the ashes back--the Koeppels were covered in a white powder. Was this just coincidence, or a slapstick expression of gratitude from the long-departed birder? In any case, the spell of this Nemesis Bird was broken.

Test Your Avian Awareness: Esoterica of the Bird World

(Answers on Page 5)

1. A recent study found what bird to have the ability to recognize itself in a mirror?
a. Crow b. Rooster c. Ostrich d. Parrot

2. The place with the greatest number of bird sightings anywhere on Earth is in:
a. Melbourne, Australia, b. Luxembourg, Belgium, c. South Texas, d. Lima, Peru
3. The ruffed grouse survives snowy winters by:
a. Hibernating
b. Flying south
c. Growing comb-like snowshoes on its feet
d. Adding a new layer of downy feathers
4. The living bird which is the closest relative to the Tyrannosaurus Rex is a
a. Vulture
b. Chicken
c. Emu
d. Raven
5. The only immature bird with claws on its wings is the
a. Hoatzin
b. Puffin
c. Osprey
d. Woodpecker
6. The longest tail feathers on a bird in Japan measured
a. Six feet b. 10 feet c. 24 feet d. 34 feet
7. The only poisonous bird in existence is
a. Turkey vulture
b. Hooded Pitohui
c. Roadrunner
d. Kori bustard
8. Birds in the wild typically live for
a. Less than one year
b. Five years
c. Ten years
d. Up to twenty years
9. The only bird that walks upright is the
a. Penguin
b. Puffin
c. Quail
d. Woodpecker
10. Downy woodpeckers have been observed pecking
a. Holes as deep as two feet
b. A hole big enough for several families of the bird to live in
c. 16 times per second
d. 10,000 pecks per day

Higgins Point: Audubon Eagle Info Team Greet Birders



Tubbs Hill: Youth Christmas Bird Counters Join the Fun



Photos By Ron Miller

Coming in 2024: New Names for Up to 150 Birds

The American Ornithological Society has announced that it will be renaming all birds under its purview, eliminating any names of people.

The Society has determined that birds should not be named for explorers, the person who first identified it, or anyone else. Instead, the birds will be known by names which reflect the bird's appearance, its particular traits, or habitat.

According to Colleen Handel, President of the Society, the renaming effort will "focus on the unique features of the birds themselves."

Early collectors, scientists and explorers have killed thousands of animals and plants for their own purposes, naming them for famous people (or even for themselves) when these fauna and flora already had names given to them by the indigenous peoples of their areas.

It's estimated that about 150 bird species will be renamed by the Society, which begins the process next year.

One bird set to have a new name is the Scott's Oriole, named for General Winfield Scott. Scott was a slaveholder and led the forced eviction of the Cherokee People from the Southeast to Oklahoma (then called "Indian Territory").

This forced removal occurred in the 1830s and resulted in the deaths of more than 15,000 Native Americans along the way. It's known as the "Trail of Tears."



The Scott's Oriole, named for General Winfield Scott

Ruffled Grouse Adopts Human in Pennsylvania

Appropriately named "Mr. Grouse," a woodland bird living near Muncy, PA, has taken a liking to his new landowner. For the past three years Mr. Grouse has been Bill Hartline's constant companion, riding on his head, his tractor, or his shoulders. Hartline says that when he tries to drive away, the bird throws himself under his car to stop him. Normally thought to be elusive and wary, this ruffled grouse is anything but.

Mr. Grouse is not the only unusually friendly bird in these parts. So many have been reported that scientists are investigating whether a fundamental change in some of these birds' DNA has caused them to seek the company of homo sapiens.

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

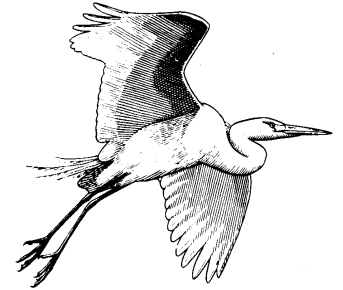
National Audubon New Member Application

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