

Portneuf Valley Audubon Society News

December 2018, Vol. 45, #13

PVAS website: <http://pvaudubon.org> PO
Box 32, Pocatello, ID 83204-0032



Adult female leucistic (lack of pigment, a genetic condition) red-tailed hawk. This bird has been seen late November, early December along Ferry Butte Road. Photo by Frank Renn.

Holiday Party

**December 13, Thursday, PVAS and Friends
Holiday Party/Potluck**

Time: 6 – 10 p.m.

Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Elks Lodge, 410 S. Main (immediately north of Benton Street). The entrance and ample parking are around back. There is handicapped access via an electronic chair escalator.

PVAS will serve a holiday ham for the entrée and the rest is potluck. There is a no-host bar for beverages and plug-ins for hot dishes. We have invited Watershed Guardians and the Citizen's Climate Lobby to join us.

We will have a White Albatross Gift Exchange (White Elephant exchange for nonbirders!) Please bring a wrapped, gently used birding or nature-related item to exchange. We plan to spend time visiting with friends!

Christmas Bird Counts

**December 15, Saturday
Pocatello Count Area**

This count covers a 15-mile diameter circle that extends from Blackrock Canyon to Siphon Pond. Feeder watchers please call in sightings after 6 p.m. on the Dec. 16. Thanks to everyone for your help on this important citizen science endeavor.

December 22, Saturday

American Falls Reservoir Count Area

This includes Michaud Flats, the Fort Hall Bottoms, McTucker Springs, Springfield, and the Aberdeen areas.

Call Chuck Trost at 233-4538 for route assignments, or to report the route you would like to survey.

The count period is three days on each side of both dates, so please pay attention to all birds seen in those periods.

After each count there will be a chili feed and bird tally at Chuck's (225 N. Lincoln) starting at 6:30 p.m. Frank Renn has offered to bring white chili along with potluck items you may wish to bring.

January 12, 2019, Annual Bald Eagle Count from American Falls Dam to Raft River.

To Carpool for this half day run:

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the lower ISU Campus parking lot by the Bison Sculpture behind the Idaho Museum of Natural History Building (5th and Dillon).

We plan to walk in to the Snake River at all available access points, so dress for the weather. Bring some snacks and a friend.

This is January's field trip.

Participants should be home by noon.

January 17, 2018, Thursday, Monthly Meeting

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Where: Marshall Public Library Community Room.

Topic: To be announced

Field Trip Report, November 18, American Falls Fish Hatchery

Seven participants went to the Fish Hatchery trail at the American Falls Fish Hatchery below American Falls Dam along the Snake River.

The group filled bird feeders and was treated to the sight of a variety of water birds and diving ducks.

Yards with Non-Native Plants Create 'Food Deserts' for Bugs and Birds

(This story, by Lexi Krupp, was sent out by National Audubon in one of its Action Alert Emails)



A Hummingbird thriving on native plants. Audubon photo.

Desirée Narango has knocked on hundreds of doors in the outskirts of Washington, D.C. to make an intimate request of homeowners: permission to count and identify the trees and shrubs in their yards.

Luckily for Narango, now an ecologist at the City University of New York, they almost always said yes. In her counts, she's found the tropical fronds of banana plants, pink-tufted crepe myrtles, scraggly oaks, and hundreds of other woody plants. But her interest in the greenery isn't that of a botanist.

"We're thinking at the scale of a bird," Narango says.

Narango and other researchers at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute wanted to know how plants in human-managed landscapes affect the reproductive success of resident bird populations—a simple question that no one had answered before. The team's research found only one distinction that determines if a spot is a

boom or a bust for a bird population: whether it has plants native to the area.

The scientists worked with a community science group called Neighborhood Nestwatch to monitor more than a hundred nests of Carolina Chickadees, a chirpy and insect-loving songbird, across D.C.'s suburbs. Homeowners agreed to house chickadee nest boxes on their property and, once a pair of chickadees took up residence, to allow researchers to collect data on plant and bug life in their yards. The birds' foraging range is an area larger than a football field, though, and certainly bigger than any single yard.

"We had to make friends with all of the neighbors so that we could sample their plant communities as well," Narango says. Then researchers recorded every bug and insect crawling on these plants to estimate the culinary options available to nesting birds.

"Each plant in your landscape you should think of as a bird feeder," says Doug Tallamy, an entomologist at the University of Delaware who also worked on the study. "It either has food in it, or it doesn't." (Carolina Chickadees aren't big users of actual bird feeders during nesting season, and, like most other birds, they do not feed birdseed to their chicks.)

Overall, Narango found way more insect food on native plants. That's because a tree or shrub will only have bugs if the creatures recognize the plant as food. If they haven't evolved together in the same ecosystem, bugs will probably steer clear of the greenery. For example, Narango searched scores of crepe myrtle trees, a non-native popular in landscaping. "I don't think we ever found a caterpillar," she says. Meanwhile, a neighboring oak tree grows dozens or more.

The team also monitored the nest boxes. Technicians and trained volunteers counted the number of chicks at each nest and tracked the survival of parents and fledglings. Over three breeding seasons, they monitored more than 100 nests with more than 800 birds combined. Narango used these data and 13 years of past records to model the population growth of Carolina Chickadees against the makeup of plants found at their nesting sites.

Her analysis found that chickadees could only sustain their population when at least 70 percent of plants in a nesting area were native. For species like warblers, vireos, and flycatchers that are even more reliant on bug and insects, "that number is going to be higher," Narango says.

Most yards don't make the cut.

"Almost all landscaping in yards, gardens, and public spaces are dominated by non-native species," says Myla Aronson, who studies urban ecology at Rutgers University and was not involved in the research.

She often works with land managers who recognize the danger of invasive species, but don't understand the other downsides of non-natives species, she says. "I get that question all of the time: 'Well, what's wrong with non-natives?'"

The answer comes down to the food web. Nesting birds scour for the most protein-packed, fatty foods they can find, and that superfood is plant-eating bugs like caterpillars. "Those are the things that fuel that rapid growth of a baby bird," says Karin Burghardt, an ecologist at the University of Maryland who studies biodiversity in human-managed landscapes. And those bugs need native plants.

The simple connection between bird, bug, and tree means that in places tended by people, birds are at the whim of an unwitting gardener. Right now, that's a dangerous arrangement.

"The fact that we are starving them by the way we landscape has not been seriously considered. That's the big breakthrough," Tallamy says. That also means that a small decision on the scale of a yard can foster big changes for birds. "It empowers every individual landowner," he says. "You want to help the birds? Then control the plants that are in your landscape."

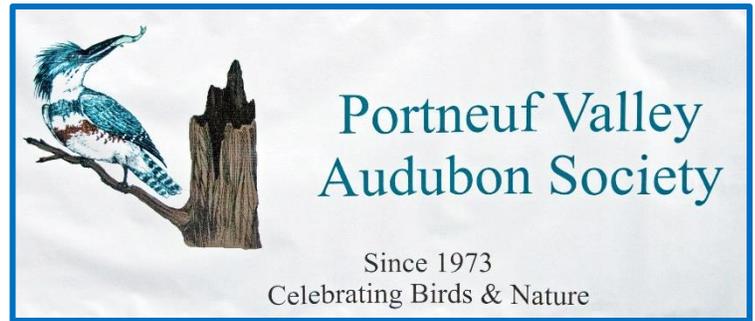
Find your Bird-Friendly Plants

To find bird-friendly Native plants in our region:

<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>



Yellow-rumped warbler eating bugs on golden current bush in Sue Weeg's backyard, April 2017



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Our chapter wishes to thank the people who joined or renewed during October. Our chapter welcomes the support of:

New and Renewed:

Lee Lemon
Kate Delate
Lee Ann Kenison
Janice Hardman
Tracy Payne
Kathleen McCoy
Mary Callahan
Patty Gailey
Walter Mickelson
Marl Andreasen
Judith Krauser

Number of Members

157 - National
38 - Local

For membership questions, contact Chair Frank Renn, 233-5638, rennnanc@isu.edu

PVAS Board

President, Barb North, 208-406-8507

barb.north10@gmail.com

Treasurer, Jackie Maughan jjm47@cableone.net

Field Trips, Chuck Trost, 208-233-4538

trostchuck@cableone.net

Conservation Chair, Dave Delehanty, 208-232-8757

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Membership, Frank Renn, 208-233-5638,

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Webmaster, Scott MacButch, 208-232-7510

scott@ecotonephoto.com

Publicity, including newsletter

Andy Taylor, 208-317-4965, taylandy@isu.edu

Members-at-Large:

Sue Weeg, (208) 208-220-0327, pvasnews@gmail.com

Curt Whitaker, 208-282-2742, whitaker@isu.edu

Todd Winters, toddwinters@gmail.com

New or Renewing National Audubon Member: mail form and your \$20.00 check directly to the New York address. This includes membership in PVAS.

MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.

Attn: Chance Mueleck
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014

PVAS CHAPTER LOCAL MEMBERSHIP ONLY, \$15.00 for one year. Make your check payable to the Portneuf Valley Audubon Society.

Mail form and your check to Frank Renn, Membership Chair, PO Box 32, Pocatello, ID 83204-0032

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