Letting my lawn go - to the birds - brings summertime rewards

By Crista Videriksen Worthy

In the midst of winter, let us indulge ourselves with thoughts of summer.

Last summer I tried an experiment and enjoyed it so much I'm already looking forward to its expansion this year. I didn't grow

up with a lawn. My parents, who emigrated from Denmark, did their own gardening. My Danish architect father designed our southern California landscaping without a lawn, and I never had one as an adult either until we moved to Hidden Springs five years ago.

Our house has a huge lawn in back that kind of melts into the sage canyon behind the property—no fence. Because the house had been a rental for years, the lawn had lots of weeds and I don't like poisoning, so I left them. For four summers I poured prodigious quantities of water onto the lawn and then spent time burning gasoline to chop off this growth and toss it in the trash, only to repeat the cycle over and over until November.

Finally last June I decided this was lunacy and quit mowing. By August we no longer had a back lawn—

we had a meadow, and it was lovely. Most of the weeds are different varieties of clover and small forbs, all of which then burst into continuous bloom, along with blue flax and other natives. As I waded through my meadow, the air literally hummed with the vibrations of several black-chinned hummingbirds and thousands of bees, all busily visiting the flowers. They parted before me as I walked. Dozens of butterflies added their colors to the scene.

The robins deserted the back, as they could no longer see worms, but remained in the front yard, which we kept mowed. In their place, however, were innumerable other birds, feasting on the bounty of insects attracted to the meadow and producing a continuous din of birdsong from before sunup until long after sundown—mostly lesser and American goldfinches, house finches, sparrows, and pine siskins, but also lazuli buntings, Brewer's and red-winged blackbirds, evening and black-headed grosbeaks, and even cedar waxwings, which seemed to be plucking insects from the air like flycatchers.

Sure, birds appreciate the seeds we put in our feeders or throw on the ground, but for protein many birds need insects, especially to feed their growing chicks. Sometimes four or five quail families with chicks of all sizes would be stalking bugs in the meadow at one time. We also attracted dragonflies and praying mantises—the falcons and T-rexes of the

es—the falcons and T-rexes of the insect world. I even discovered that I could keep a much greener back yard and yet use 30 percent less water, just by not mowing. By fall I had nine pheasants too.

One disadvantage of the meadow is that deer can't seem to resist it either. That would be okay except, if you think you have a squirrel problem, try a deer! One doe learned how to empty an entire feeder in less than five minutes. She licks the sunflower chips right out, in broad daylight. I've chased her off several times but she just takes a few steps and halts.

Despite adjusting sprinklers, one center patch couldn't be reached, so I would hand-water that each morning with the hose. It's a relaxing ritual and summer mornings are always cool. I've noticed that hummingbirds can't seem to resist an arc

of water from a hose. We have black-chinned hummers only, and it's always a female that flies right in front of me at ankle level, hovers around the spray, and then flies loops under and over the arc of water.

For her it might be as much fun as I'd think it would be to fly through the Gateway Arch in St. Louis—highly illegal, but the kind of thing pilots sometimes fantasize about anyway. It's probably the same bird, though I can't prove it of course, but if so, she's been doing this with me for two years whenever I handwater.

I enjoy birding with experts on an outing, but I guess I've always preferred to just observe birds at home or when out doing normal things. For example, there's a hairy woodpecker that hangs around the tree where I always park at WinCo. To delve into the nuances of behavior exhibited by individual birds, I've found nothing better than Bernd Heinrich's 2016 book, *One Bird at a Time*, which I highly recommend.



Backyard feeders put to good use. Photo by Crista V. Worthy

The Golden Eagle March-April 2017

President's Message

Where to start? Much has happened since the last newsletter. Indeed each day seems a barrage of potential change.

I've actually started writing, and then erased this column several times because of how fast bills are being introduced and withdrawn right now. So rather then detailing specifics I'll just say that it is very clear that there are issues that pertain to each and every one of us that are apparently up for debate. We must continue paying attention. We have to keep speaking up and telling our representatives what we, their constituents, feel about the issues.

So much is at stake, but at Audubon we are very concerned about the future of our public lands, science-driven policy decisions, and the continued existence of environmental regulations. I hope to work with the Board of Directors on how to effectively point our members to current and timesensitive issues as they arise.

The past few weeks have challenged us, but I am glad to see that people and organizations are remaining vigilant, connected, and determined. I am committed to seeing GEAS be the same.

I bet many of you have used the addresses below recently, but in case someone might not have the information at hand I will include the following here:

Senator Mike Crapo:

239 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510 202-224-6142.

Senator James Risch:

483 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510 202-224-2752.

Congressman Mike Simpson:

2084 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515 202-225-5531.

Congressman Raul Labrador:

1523 Longworth HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515 202- 225-6611.

Liz Urban, president

Don't Forget! EEAS Banquet and Auction Saturday

GEAS Banquet and Auction Saturday March 11 Registration Due by March 6 - See Page 7

GEAS CALENDAR March-April 2017

Malheur Wildlife Refuge, Trip preview	March 11
GEAS Annual Banquet and Auction	March 11
Family Birding Walk	March 12
GEAS Monthly Program meeting	March 21
Field Trip: Fort Boise WMA	March 25
Greenbelt Birding and Litter Patrol	March 26
SIBA Field Trip: Sage-grouse Lek	April 8
Family Birding Walk	April 9
GEAS Monthly Program meeting	April 18
Field Trip: Snake River Canyon	April 22
Greenbelt Birding and Litter Patrol	April 30

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Education: Amy Silver	amysilver819@gmail.com 407-0423					
Field Trips: Alex Takasugi,	alextakasugi@cableone.net 484-9132					
Kristin Gnojewski,	kgnojewski@cableone.net					
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March-April 2017 The Golden Eagle

News from the Board:

In December the GEAS Board of Directors discussed a desire to diversify the type of field trips we offer while keeping current trips and other membership services. In addition the board:

- Clarified what was previously an informal membership policy. Membership fees and donations are fully tax-deductible. The chapter will maintain separate rosters for those who select to be members and those who make a donation without becoming a member.
- In January, voted on two small grant applications and chose to delay a decision on a third application until February. The Idaho Bird by Bird Program was awarded \$750 in support for the next school year. The Land Trust of the Treasure Valley was awarded \$500 to support staff in the continued restoration efforts at Blacks Creek Bird Reserve and in the Boise foothills.
- Signed the American Bird Conservancy's "Standing Together

- for Birds" petition. Board members also drafted and submitted a letter in support of the Friends of the Weiser River Trail for their application for grant funding.
- Agreed to partner with the Boise River Enhancement Network and others on a grant application that would benefit restoration efforts at Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve.
- Noted that GEAS has received a \$900 collaborative grant from National Audubon Society to work with partners on developing a Native Plant Network, connecting native seed propagation with students, teachers, and businesses.

In other action, proposed amendments of GEAS by-laws are available for review and approval. For the past year, the board has been working on proposed amendments for our by-laws and is now ready to recommend them for review and approval by the membership.

Several years ago, the board identified a need to update the by-laws to reflect our desire to conduct our business in the digital age, address potential conflicts of interest, and generally clarify portions of our existing by-laws.

Board members have completed most of this process and now ask our members for any comments or edits they may have, and to vote on the recommended changes. If we receive comments, and after discussion by the board, require a significant change to the document, we will notify members and reset voting when a new draft is ready

The by-laws are available for review on our website, as is an easy voting ballot. Votes may also be cast via the mail, email (urbanhawk137@gmail.com), or in person at the March monthly meeting. Thank you for your time and consideration of our updated by-laws.

Thanks to Volunteers

Thanks to the following people for their work on the newsletter: Alex Takasugi, Suzanne Woodcock, Louise Maley, Lew Ulrey, Hope Denney, Sue Norton, Niels Nokkentved, Jessica Fusek, and Leah Dunn.



Monarchs gather for the winter in this grove near Monterey, Calif.

Photo by N.S. Nokkentved

The Golden Eagle March-April 2017

GEAS EVENTS for March and April

Field trip information is subject to change.

Please check the Calendar and Field Trips section on the website http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org for the latest information or contact Alex Takasugi at 484-9132 or alextakasugi@cableone.net and Kristin Gnojewski at kgnojewski@cableone.net.

Field Trip Etiquette: We set up car pools to take as few cars as possible, while making sure everyone has a window. Please give the driver of your ride gas money and arrive 10 minutes early.

Saturday March 11

Malheur Wildlife Refuge Field Trip preview

Time: 2 p.m. at the Boise Main Library on Capitol Blvd.

Organization meeting and trip signup

When: Trip Van leaves Boise May 4, returns May 7. Leaders: Kathy Barker McCoy, Matt McCoy, Alex Takasugi

Leaders: Kathy Barker McCoy, Matt McCoy, Alex Takasi

Accomodations: Malheur Field Station

Transportation: Van Food: under discussion

Cost: about \$150 for lodging and van rental.

Saturday March 11

GEAS Annual Banquet and Auction

Time: 6 p.m.

Location: Red Lion Downtowner, 1800 Fairview Ave., Boise Dinner served at 7 p.m. Reservations required, cost \$45 per person. See information on Page 7.

Sunday, March 12

Family Bird Walk in the Park

Time: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Location: Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve, 5301 N Maple Grove

Road, Boise.

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132, or Kristin Gnojewski, kgnojewski@cableone.net, 860-3658. We will spend a few hours visiting the wonderful world of waterfowl at this iconic close-in city park. The brushy banks also host lots of songbirds, and there are hard-packed trails that wind among the ponds. Bring the whole family, especially the young ones. We have binoculars and field guides you can borrow. Sign up the kids in our Frequent Flyer Club where they earn rewards for birding. We will finish by 11.

Tuesday, March 21

GEAS Program Meeting: Long-billed Curlews, Stephanie Coates

Time: 7 p.m.,

Location: Trophy Room, Idaho Fish and Game
Stephanie Coates will present research with the Intermountain
Bird Observatory on longbilled curlews, and components of
their annual life cycles with the goal of identifying limitations
to nesting success on the breeding grounds, and examining
wintering ground distribution patterns. The heart of curlew
conservation intersects native grasslands, agriculture, and
working lands. Stephanie Coates is working on a master's degree
in biology at Boise State University,

Saturday, March 25

Field Trip: Fort Boise WMA

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Location: Park and Ride lot at St. Luke's on Eagle Road just north of I-84 across from the Chevron/McDonald's

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132 The great (snow) goose chase! We will tour western Canyon County—Ft. Boise, Martin Landing and Roswell Marsh—looking for snow geese, white-fronted geese, sandhill cranes and other spring delights. Bring a lunch and dress for the everunpredictable Spring weather. We should finish in mid-afternoon.

Sunday, March 26

Boise River Greenbelt Birding and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Park near the Tavern at Bown Crossing (east end of Parkcenter Blvd)

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132 We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going downriver, birding as we go, then pick up litter on our way back. Birds abound in the pond/river/riparian wooded habitat. We usually finish around noon. Bring gloves, water and binocs. No public restrooms are available.

Saturday, April 8

SIBA Field Trip: Washington County and Sage-grouse Lek Time: 5 a.m.

Location: Caldwell Park and Ride, I-84 Exit 29 (Franklin Road) Contact: David Potter 365-8380 or joemorgan409@msn.com Sage-grouse numbers have been declining, and there is no longer any guarantee that we will see them on this trip. Nevertheless, we need to meet before 5 a.m. so that we can carpool and be on the road promptly at 5 a.m. We'll drive in the dark to arrive around first light at the sage-grouse lek near Midvale. If we are lucky and we see these great boomers, then we'll travel to C. Ben Ross Reservoir via remote unpaved roads, arriving around noon. Our route is weather flexible, but the plan is to check out other areas in Washington County. In the past, we have walked along the Weiser River Trail in Goodrich in the early afternoon. Bring lunch, water, and protection from the elements. Bathrooms are rare. This is an all-day trip.

Sunday, April 9

Family Bird Walk in the Park

Time: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Location: Hull's Gulch. Meet in parking lot off 8th Street next to Foothills Learning Center

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132 or Kristin Gnojewski, kgnojewski@cableone.net, 860-3658

A highlight of this walk will be seeing the nesting great horned owls that live in Hull's Gulch. We hope to be there in time to see their fuzzy nestlings. We will also look for the warblers and lazuli buntings that are returning to Boise for the spring and learn about migration. Bring the whole family, especially the young ones. We go over the basics of using binoculars. We have binoculars and field guides you can borrow. Sign up the kids in our Frequent Flyer Club where they earn rewards for birding. We will finish at 11 a.m.

Tuesday, April 18

GEAS Program Meeting: "Bird By Bird" program, Deniz Aygen Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Trophy Room, Idaho Fish and Game. Deniz Aygen, watchable wildlife biologist for Idaho Fish and Game and coordinator of the Bird by Bird Continued on Page 5

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Getting paid to watch birds

an excerpt from Back Road Daydreams

around and up the north side of

the rock. The top of the island

gives a commanding view of

the tidal wetlands and estuary

of the Skagit River. As I neared

the top I rounded a small grove

of trees and a rock outcrop. I

stopped in my tracks. Not ten

updraft off the rise of the island's

northwest side. I eased back into

the shelter of the rocks and trees

to a less-exposed vantage point.

watched them hang in the steady

binoculars to be of any use. Both

white bellies, probably siblings.

updraft off the face of the rock

like a couple of hang-gliders.

I was much too close for the

eagles appeared to be second

year juveniles, with speckled

They seemed to take no notice

of me. For several minutes, I

yards away, two young bald eagles hung in the air, riding the

By N.S. Nokkentved

One of the greatest jobs I ever had was working for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife during my college days. The job taught me a lot about birds, and it was my first step to become a serious birder and observer of nature.

My job as a research assistant entailed about twenty hours a week of tromping around in various parts of the Skagit

River Delta, about an hour north of Seattle, with a waterproof notebook, pencil and a pair of binoculars. I would take notes on any hawks, eagles or owls taking wounded or dead ducks and geese. I patrolled the edges of the tidal mud flats of Skagit Bay from Stanwood to La Conner.

I quickly learned to identify several birds from just a quick glance—the distinctive looping flight of the northern harrier, the soft, bullet shape and stiff wing beat of the short-eared owl. And, of course, there is no mistaking the bald eagle.

One day I watched an adult eagle chase a wounded snow goose across Skagit Bay between the delta and Whidbey Island to the west. Frantic wing beats of the goose were followed closely by the powerful strokes of the eagle. They splashed down together about a half

mile away. But the goose was too heavy for the eagle to lift from the water. The eagle headed back to shore with empty talons. In my binoculars, I could see the wounded goose sitting on the water.



Photo by N.S. Nokkentved Craft Island, Washington.

I found a place out of the wind to enjoy the view and the coffee and snack I had brought with me. I remembered to start for home before the returning tide could trap me on the rock.

One of my favorite spots in the delta was a 100-foot-tall chunk of weathered granite. I dubbed it Delta Rock, but on the USGS topographical map it is named Craft Island. Early one cool fall Saturday I arrived at the end of the road on Fir Island. I set out to explore the rock. Soon I was climbing the old granite festooned with gnarled, wind-twisted pines and clad with mosses, ferns and grass. I followed a vague path that led

Suddenly they swooped off to disappear in the trees beyond the marsh.

Events from Page 4

program, will talk about the program and GEAS's involvement. Bird by Bird is an Idaho program to teach children about birds and their habitats and provides them an opportunity to participate in citizen science by observing birds, monitoring behavior, and documenting data. Students get the opportunity to learn in outdoor environments about biology, ecology and the complex interrelationships between wildlife, habitats and humans. Some participants will talk about what they have learned in the classroom and how they used it to teach their families about birds, bird watching, and being wildlife stewards.

Saturday, April 22

Field Trip: Snake River Canyon

Time: 7 a.m.

Location: Park and Ride lot at St. Luke's on Eagle Road just north of I-84 across from the Chevron/McDonald's

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132 Spring should be springing in the canyon. We will start out at

Dedication Point, looking for nesting raptors in the cliffs, then descend to the Swan Falls park area to see songbirds in the brush and waterfowl behind the dam. We may also drive west along the Snake for a bit. Those wishing to continue will then go with us to Celebration Park to the west to see birds along the river there as well. Bring a lunch and dress for the ever-unpredictable Spring weather. We should finish in mid-afternoon.

Sunday, April 30

Boise River Greenbelt Birding and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Park near the Tavern at Bown Crossing (east end of Parkcenter Blvd)

Contact: Alex Takasugi alextakasugi@cableone.net, 484-9132 We'll walk the Bethine Church Nature Trail going downriver, birding as we go, then pick up litter on our way back. Birds abound in the pond/river/riparian wooded habitat. We usually finish around noon. Bring gloves, water and binocs. No public restrooms are available.

The Golden Eagle March-April 2017

A Volunteer Network for Native Plant Restoration in the Treasure Valley

By Sean Finn

The Treasure Valley is home to many spectacular places that provide wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities right where we live. Boise residents are blessed with the ability to get out into nature just a short walk or drive from their homes. Yet, as human populations increase and the footprint of visitors expands, many of these places have the potential of losing some of their value as native plants are reduced or replaced by weeds that are less desirable to wildlife and less scenic for nature lovers.

Locally, we are also fortunate to have many organizations, societies and individuals who have the desire and resources to help keep natural places natural. This paper outlines a way for these groups to work in concert when looking after, maintaining and restoring the places we enjoy visiting. It proposes a Volunteer



Backyard deer feeder?

Photo by Crista V. Worthy

Network for Native Plant Restoration that links greenhouses, nurseries, and gardeners with key nature reserves, wildlife areas and pollinator gardens that need modest yet dedicated sources of seedling stocks for restoration programs.

Led by Golden Eagle Audubon Society and Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, we are creating a loose network—a Volunteer Network for Native Plant Restoration—of plant growers and restoration sites around the valley that will work together to collect at local seed sources, germinate and propagate the seed and create banks of seedlings for planting around the Treasure Valley. Many of the partners are schools (K-12, high schools, colleges) and non-profit organizations committed to advancing environmental education. Thus, a valuable component of the network is hands-on education in the laboratory, greenhouse and the great outdoors. The network will be co-supportive, sharing resources, such as pots, soil, seedlings, knowledge, etc., and partnering in grant seeking so that each partner is uplifted, supported and acknowledged for their contributions.

The network is all-volunteer in recognition that each partner contributes and participates to the extent they are able, committing only to the level they are capable of. The outcomes will be coordinated maintenance and restoration of places around the Valley that humans, birds and animals enjoy so much, along with coordination among participants to ensure efforts are supported and sustained.

The network itself will begin as an interactive website where partners can communicate needs and opportunities. The website will be neutral territory so each partner can link to or reference as they see fit. This network resource may grow and evolve depending on the needs and interest of the partners.

As of February, at least 12 organizations have expressed interest in the network. Four places in the valley: Blacks Creek Bird Reserve, Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve, Harrison to Hollow, and the IBO Boise River site have been identified as initial restoration sites. As the network expands more will be added.

We invite you to join this network. Please contact Sean Finn at a.gentilis@gmail.com, or Eric Willadsen at ewilladsen@lttv. org, for information.

Donate Fred Meyer Rewards Points to GEAS

Golden Eagle Audubon Society is now a member of the Fred Meyer Community Rewards program. Every time you shop with your Rewards card, some additional points will go to Golden Eagle Audubon. Our number is 85197, and card users can link their Rewards card to GEAS by visiting www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Log in to your account, then enter the number 85197, or type "Golden" into the search box to see us. Fred Meyer will then send us a check every quarter whose amount is based on the number of points we accumulated. Please note that this does not reduce your personal rewards points in any way. Also, if you shop on Amazon.com, you can shop through smile.amazon.com and designate Golden Eagle to receive donations from AmazonSmile. It does not affect product selection or price.

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Golden Eagle Audubon Society Annual Banquet and Auction

6 p.m., Saturday, March 11 Red Lion Downtowner, 1800 Fairview Avenue, Boise \$45 Per Person



The speaker for the 2017 GEAS Banquet will be P. Dee Boersma, the "Jane Goodall of penguins." Boersma, who has a doctorate in zoology, holds the Wadsworth Endowed Chair in Conservation Science at the University of Washington. Her academic research in conservation biology focuses on seabirds as indicators of environmental change. She has been the director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's study of Magellanic penguins at Punta Tombo, Argentina, home of the world's largest colony of Magellanic penguins for 30 years. Boersma and her students follow the lives of individual penguins, monitor the colony, and develop the data needed to plan effective conservation efforts. In the Galapagos Islands she is building "condos" to increase the Galapagos penguin population. Boersma was awarded a 2010 Fulbright fellowship to study wildlife videography in New Zealand and was named one of the Nature Conservancy's "Conservation Heroes of the last 50 years" in 2011. She received the Ocean Conservation

Award from the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California in 2012. Dr. Boersma and Pablo Borboroglu edited "Penguins: Natural History and Conservation" in 2013.

Please join us for this annual fundraising event. In addition to our distinguished presenter, we will have a silent auction before dinner during the social hour at 6 p.m. Come spend an evening in good company and select a homemade dessert for \$5. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m.

GEAS BANQUET REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS — DUE BY MARCH 6.

Mail this form and your check payable to GEAS to: GEAS, 1963 Teal Lane, Boise, ID 83706. You may pay by credit card online at www.goldeneagleaudubon.org/banquet. Questions? Contact Sue Norton at 378-4248 or nortonsu@msn.com.

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		_ Meal Choice:	Prime Rib	Salmon	Vegetable
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	com. To preserve the s	cy and Cracked Pepper Roasted Prime a meal choice for each guest. S by donating an auction item or h.com. To preserve the sanity of the	cy and Cracked Pepper Roasted Prime Rib, 2) Char-Grie a meal choice for each guest. Meal Choice: Meal Choice:	cy and Cracked Pepper Roasted Prime Rib, 2) Char-Grilled Northweet a meal choice for each guest. Meal Choice: Prime Rib Meal Choice: Prime Rib	y and Cracked Pepper Roasted Prime Rib, 2) Char-Grilled Northwest Salmon, a meal choice for each guest. Meal Choice: Prime Rib Salmon Meal Choice: Prime Rib Salmon

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Chapter Code: C5ZG000Z

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- For membership/subscription information, renewals, or change of address, e-mail membership@goldeneagleaudubon.org.
- For newsletter submissions, send an e-mail to Niels S. Nokkentved at sparre47@gmail.com. The deadline for newsletter submissions is the second Sunday of the month.

We invite you to join the Golden Eagle Audubon Chapter

and support local activ	1		and all my dues remain with the local chapter		
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