



The Golden Eagle

Newsletter of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society

January/February, 2015

Fall Brings Family Squabbles and the Quest for Food and Warmth

By Crista Worthy

In the September/October newsletter I reported that our male Cooper's hawk had honed his skills to perfection over the past year. By the end of the summer, a young female appeared. I assumed she was his offspring, as she was begging from him the first time I saw her.

At the end of September I heard unusual noises out back and saw the male vocalizing loudly in the female's direction. He then flew over and attacked her from above as she sat on a fence. Being nearly 50 percent larger than her father, she was able to fight him off.

This occurred repeatedly, and it seemed obvious that he was attempting to drive her out of his territory. Instead, it seems the young female has displaced the older male, and now he has moved on. I find this interesting because with many other birds, the parents retain their territory, and the fledglings must move away to eventually establish their own homes.

In the bird-watching world, there may be almost nothing as entertaining as watching a young Cooper's hawk in its fumbling attempts to catch a meal. They're so brazen and yet so inept it's a wonder they don't all starve before they become accomplished hunters.

October 21 brought the first significant rainfall of the season. Two male pheasants were picking up seeds left over after the quail had passed through, when the female Cooper's hawk flew overhead. But the hawk hesitated in flight, giving the pheasants time to dart into the sagebrush. Even though the pheasants are significantly larger than the hawk, I do recall seeing the now-departed male Cooper's, back when he was young, attack an adult male pheasant. The pheasant beat him about the head with his wings and walked away unharmed.

The young female hawk circled over the brush exactly where the pheasants had vanished and plunked down. Nothing. She then lifted up, heavily, and plunked down again—still nothing. Next, she flew over and sat on the bird feeders. The remaining quail, also hiding in the sage, took the opportunity to zoom away like speeding bullets.

Naturally, every other bird in the vicinity had departed, but the hawk flopped from one feeding station to the next, vainly looking for prey, even under the bushes, walking all over the ground. She then hopped up onto an old swing set that serves as a lookout for various birds, now that our children are grown. The rain increased and she turned her head to look up, as if she wondered where all this water was coming from. This was her first rainstorm. I felt a little sorry for her, I have to admit.

While this past fall seemed warmer than usual, by mid-

November temperatures took a sudden nosedive. Treasure Valley received about nine inches of snow that didn't melt. Seed consumption by the finches at the feeders tripled immediately, and "my" covey of about 65 quail spent all day, each day, milling about under the feeders, instantly picking up any sunflower chip the finches dropped.

One day after the sun came out, some of the quail headed to the side of the house a few feet away, where I have large flagstones surrounded by fine playground sand. They pressed themselves in a line against the house to gather warmth radiating from the wall, and then burrowed themselves into the sand, rubbing up against each other tighter than a line of sardines in a can—quite a change from last summer, when no males would tolerate other quail within five feet of their mates.

As soon as the cold spell broke, my feeders went from being empty by the end of the day to 90 percent full. After a week things seemed to

even out, and they were 60 percent full by the end of the day, which is normal. The quail went back to their usual habit of showing up at dawn and dusk. Clearly, the changes in all the local birds' behavior show how much more energy they need to remain alive when temperatures drop.

As a follow-up on the Cooper's hawks, on November 16 the male came back. I haven't seen the female since, so it appears he reclaimed his territory. He spent a good part of the day sitting on the bird feeders, catching nothing and keeping the other birds away. It was a cold and lean day for all at our house.



Not even pheasants are safe from Cooper's hawks. Photo by Crista Worthy

President's Message

By Michele Crist

Happy New Year and greetings GEAS!

I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays and made it out on at least one Christmas Bird Count. I know sometimes it is hard to make it out on a count every year because of holiday plans and travel. Thank you to those who were able to make it, and a big thank you to those who led the counts. The Christmas Bird Counts are so much fun and provide much needed information on bird species presence and distribution.

GEAS is still in transition with our new website and membership database. A few members have experienced some issues with renewing their membership and with the website. If you have experienced any issues, please let Bruce Ackerman, Leah Dunn, Steve Hanser, Liz Urban or me know. My e-mail is mrcgoldeneagle@gmail.com. I know Liz, Steve, Leah and Bruce have been working very hard on a smooth transition, but typical of all transitions invariably a few issues arise. Please give them a big thank you for all their hard work and please bear with us as we work out the kinks over the next couple of months.

Our annual spring banquet is coming up, and the GEAS board is very excited to see all of you there. The Banquet Committee has lined up a very interesting speaker and is working on providing many different and fun auction items. We look forward to seeing you there.

We value your membership and involvement with GEAS.

Michele, president

GEAS CALENDAR

January-February 2015

Christmas Bird Count, Bruneau	January 3
Christmas Bird Count, Cascade	January 4
Family Birding Walk	January 11
Field Trip: Gulls at County Landfill	January 17
SIBAField Trip: Caldwell	January 24
GEAS Monthly meeting	January 27
Family Birding Walk	February 8
Great Backyard Bird Count	February 13 &16
Field Trip: Esther Simplot Park	February 21
GEAS Monthly meeting	February 24
Family Birding Walk	March 8
Annual Banquet	March 14

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OUT THE KITCHEN WINDOW

By Hilda Larson

We keep having little storms that add to the snow at the ranch, so at this time there is about a foot and a half of it. The juncos and chickadees are really enjoying the feeders as well as the Steller's jays and a couple of nuthatches. A pygmy owl enjoyed a junco a few days ago, too, while we watched.

We realized the birds were all gone from the feeding area and, on further checking, spotted the owl in the plum tree holding a junco. Al got the video and took pictures, but it was snowing hard at the time, and the light was terrible for picture taking. Several black-capped chickadees and a couple of Steller's jays had some awful words to say to the owl while this was going on. After some time the owl decided to fly, but the junco was pretty heavy, so the owl landed first in the snow and then at a base of a tree. This took place out of camera range, and before Al could get closer the bird had disappeared. We later saw some feathers floating down from a tall pine so perhaps the owl made it to a higher perch and finished its dinner.

We were mystified one late evening by a strange call, which seemed to move away and come less clear to us. We went inside

and played the owl calls, but nothing sounded like what we had heard, so we gave up. The next time up we heard the same call, but in broad daylight. The more we listened the more confused we became, until we traced the sound to the old septic tank stored in the yard. We felt silly after we heard water dripping from the lid covers into the tank, making a musical "PLOOK" as the drips fell to the bottom of the tank and echoed as they hit. On the evening we first heard it, the water must have been freezing and the drip kept growing less and less. Anyway, we are the red-faced warblers who have a "new bird" to add to our list – the Septic-Tank Plooker!

Nearly every time we go to or come from the ranch we see one to three dippers along Mores Creek from the Daggett Creek bridge to the Robie Creek turnoff. Last Sunday evening we saw four male common mergansers along the same stretch of water. We have had robins in town, mainly coming to the bird bath to drink. The waxwings seem to have gone elsewhere. Perhaps they have exhausted the cedar berries and the maple buds. When the snow falls here in town and covers everything it is rather pretty, but

when it falls at the ranch and the trees and bushes are covered it is a most beautiful sight. I have the urge to go out and take pictures, but I have so many I don't have room in the albums any more, so I refrain. It doesn't stop me from enjoying it. Al has mixed feelings because he has to shovel, and "it ain't fun" especially that which slid off the roof of the house and piled up against a back window.

February 1999

(This column contains kitchen window observations from Hilda and Al's house in town and from the ranch.)

We have been running some of Hilda's columns for the past year as a way to remember our great pleasure of reading about her observations from the kitchen window. Cathy Eels and Sue Norton are compiling a book of some of Hilda's past columns, which ran in this newsletter regularly from 1981 to 2014. They are getting considerable help from Lindsay Alsup and Niels Nokkentved. We will let you know as soon as it is available.



Volunteer News

With the New Year approaching, now is a good time to thank the volunteers who participate in our field trips, mailing the newsletter, education and many more of the activities that GEAS is known for.

First let's thank Susan Hazelton, Ann Swanson and Sue Norton for preparing the newsletter for mailing. Niels Nokkentved is the newsletter editor, and Harold Ward, Leah Dunn and Jessica Fusek prepared the newsletter for printing.

Thank-you to Michele Crist and Tom Auer of National Audubon Society for their interesting presentation on the National Audubon Society's Climate Change project "Birds in a Changing World," to forecast the effects of climate change on 500 bird species, from now until 2080.

Thanks to Susan Werner and Bruce Ackerman of the Membership Committee for processing about 100 donations and address changes resulting from the fall fund-raiser letters.

Thank you to the whole board of

directors for sending out the fall fund-raiser letters on November 10.

Many thanks to Steve Hanser, Leah Dunn, Liz Urban and Harold Ward for completely re-vamping our web site, rebuilding the database of member names and e-mails, building a new system for keeping track of member donations and renewals, and to remind members when their dues need to be paid.

We thank everyone who helped plant and water native seedlings at Blacks Creek Bird Reserve on October 25. We know we missed a few names, but we appreciate everyone's great work including: Lindsay Alsup; Pam Conley; Carey Crist; A.C. Crockett; Leah Dunn; Michael Garrett; Dave Hazelton; Iris, Danette and Matthew Henderson; Wieteke and Tony Holthuijen; Terry Humphries; Dick Lawson; Lynelle Perry-Kolsky; Dan Kolsky; Melissa Magorty; Kathy Barker McCoy; Matt McCoy; Maria Minicucci; Sue Norton; Chris and Mike O'Brien; Susan and Dick Riley; RL Rowland; Julie and Boyd

Steele; Alex Takasugi; Lew Ulrey; Liz and Mark Urban; Joe Weldon; D.K. Wong; Chris Wood; Gary Worthington; Helen Harrington and Diana Schilff; and Mary Hazelton. A big thank you to Sean Finn for pulling this together.

Thank you Liz Urban for your presentation on the New Roots program at our October meeting.

We thank the following folks for leading field trips. Kathy Barker-McCoy led trips for the ever popular Wednesday Morning Club. RL Rowland and Pam Conley led the Boise River Bird Walk and Litter Patrol trips. Liz Urban led the Family Bird Walk in November. Jay Carlisle led the field trip to C.J. Strike and surrounding area in November.

If you would like to lead a trip or have an idea for a trip, contact Pam Conley, 208-869-0337, pam_conley@q.com.

The banquet committee is busy making plans and could use your help. We need volunteers to

(Continued on Page 5)

GEAS EVENTS for January and February

Field trip information is subject to change. Please check the website <http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org> and go to the Calendar and Field Trips section for the latest information or contact Pam Conley at 869-0337 or pam_conley@q.com.

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, January 3, Bruneau CBC

Leader: Larry Ridenhour, 863-5596 ridenhour.larry@gmail.com

Time: 7 a.m., for all day trip

Location: Meet at BLM office, 3948 Development Ave., Boise.

This is expedition quality birding around CJ Strike Reservoir and the Snake River from below the dam to Bruneau Dunes State Park. Be prepared for bitter cold and relentless wind (and great birds!). We will finish at the CJ Strike bridge at sunset to watch thousands of common goldeneye fly in for the evening. Then we will go to the Y Bar Cafe in Grand View, to compile numbers and exchange stories. Dinner will be \$11.50 – spaghetti (vegetarian sauce will be available) with soup or salad, and French bread. Dessert – \$4, either cheesecake or caramel apple crisp; wine/beer is extra, depending on type and kind. Gratuity not included and always welcome. They put on a great dinner for us. **Please RSVP to Pam Conley, 869-0337 or pam_conley@q.com for a head count for dinner at the restaurant (helps them plan).**

Sunday, January 4, Cascade CBC

Leader: Ingrid Brudenell, cell 336-4136, ibrudenell@gmail.com

Location: Meet at the Ashley Inn, Highway 55, Cascade

Time: 8 a.m.

This count will focus on the area around Cascade Reservoir, North Fork of the Payette River and surrounding countryside. Be prepared for cold and wind. We will warm up with a chili lunch and exchange bird counts and stories. Final counts will be compiled at the end of the day. **Please RSVP to Ingrid Brudenell** (ibrudenell@gmail.com) for a head count for lunch.

WMC (Wednesday Morning Club) – January & February

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Janjou Patisserie 1754 W. State St., Boise

Contact: Kathy Barker-McCoy, h- 384-1205 c- 921-1340

Wednesday Morning Club continues through the winter so please join us. Tentative schedule: Jan. 7, Hyatt; Jan. 14, Discovery Park; Jan. 21, Greenbelt Glenwood; Jan. 28, Shakespeare Festival; Feb. 4, Ann Morrison Park; Feb. 11, Foote Park; Feb. 18, wait and see; Feb. 25, Snake River Celebration Park. I reserve the right to change the destination if weather or special sightings so indicate.

Sunday, January 11

Family Birding Walk: Kathryn Albertson Park - Especially for children or the child in you.

Time: 1 p.m.

Location: Kathryn Albertson Park parking lot, 1001 N. Americana Blvd., Boise.

Contact: Pam Conley 869-0337 pam_conley@Q.com

We will walk the paved loop around the park looking for geese, ducks and herons on the water, as well as songbirds in the brush. 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 Flier Club where they earn rewards for birding. We will finish at 3 p.m.

Saturday, January 17

Field Trip: Gulls at the Ada County Landfill, or How Gull-able are you?

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: North Gate Plaza parking, west Boise (Glenwood/Gary Lane and State St. under the Northgate Shopping Center sign) 7100 W. State St., Boise.

Leader: RL Rowland h-208-336-9808 c- 208-297-9953

rrowland@centurylink.net

Come join RL as he takes us to that “al fresco” cathedral of SW Idaho’s winter birding – the Ada Co. Landfill. RL will hold his annual, mostly, Gulls 101 seminar to hopefully show that gulls can be identified to species and even age. He will produce some of the currently available literature to help in this thrilling task, discuss the dump’s new entry procedure, etiquette and safety rules. Once in, we will peruse the available birds while RL goes on and on etc. tiresomely about markings and other identifying features. Be prepared for mud and winter conditions. We expect to finish around noon.

Saturday, January 24

SIBA Field Trip: Canyon Hill Cemetery/Curtis Park, Caldwell

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Canyon Hill Cemetery entrance, 1770 N. Illinois Ave, Caldwell

Leader & Contact: RL Rowland 336-9808 (H) best, C 297-9953 rrowland@centurylink.net

Think cemeteries are grim places to not enter after dark? Well, come meet up with RL at one of SIBA’s favorite crowd-pleasing, in the daylight so that you won’t need the garlic lei, field trips. This little half-day jaunt has in past years been a lot of fun and produced many unexpected bird findings. We will wander about, talk about this-and-that, especially RL’s four generations buried there and even look for and find some birds. After making the rounds we will adjourn down to and across the river to Curtis Park and repeat the above. Be sure to dress, reverently (black... black is always good, never goes out of style), for the weather.

Tuesday, January 27

GEAS Monthly Program: All these Amazing Tropical Birds and Learning to Draw Them Too!

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: M.K. Nature Center, 600 S Walnut., Boise

Contact: Pam Conley 869-0337 pam_conley@Q.com

A trip report about Majestic Feathers 2014 birding tour to Costa Rica with tour organizer Kathleen Cameron and birder and artist in residence Poo Wright-Pulliam. The presentation features two videos by Kathleen: An intro to the birds of Costa Rica and Birding and Drawing In Costa Rica. Poo will conduct a bird drawing class designed to help birders learn how to add this skill to their field notes. Bring colored pencils if you have them, or we’ll have some to loan out.

Sunday, February 8

Family Birding Walk: Marianne Williams Park - Especially for children or the child in you.

Time: 1 p.m.

GEAS EVENTS: continued

Location: Meet at restrooms at Marianne Williams Park, 3451 E. Barber Valley Dr., Boise.

Contact: Pam Conley 869-0337 pam_conley@Q.com

This new 72-acre park is on the north side of the Boise River in the Barber Valley area and has paths, ponds, wetlands and great birds. 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 Flier Club where they earn rewards for birding. We will finish at 3 p.m.

February 13-16**Great Backyard Bird Count**

Anyone can participate in this free event, and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 13-16. Enter your results at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>, where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations. "When thousands of people all tell us what they're seeing, we can detect patterns in how birds are faring from year to year," said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. For more information go to: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>.

Saturday, February 21

Field Trip: Esther Simplot Park

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Location: Meet in Greenbelt parking lot behind Idaho River Sports at Pleasanton and White Water Blvd., 3100 W. Pleasanton Ave, Boise/

Leader: Heidi Ware

Contact: Pam Conley 869-0337 pam_conley@Q.com

We will walk around this 55-acre yet-to-be developed park site, which is on the Boise River. The unofficial trails are not maintained so we may need to scramble over obstacles and numerous wet areas; be prepared for an adventure. We will also visit Quinn Pond, which is next door and walk along the Boise

River. Dress for the weather. We will finish around noon.

Tuesday, February 24

GEAS Monthly Program – Studying Bird Migration at the Strait of Gibraltar

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: M.K. Nature Center, 600 S Walnut., Boise.

Contact: Pam Conley 869-0337 pam_conley@Q.com

Robert Miller, research biologist at the Intermountain Bird Observatory will present a slideshow and a brief update from the ongoing research partnership between Boise State University's Intermountain Bird Observatory and Spain's Fundación Migres. Rob and his wife Karyn spent two months in Spain counting migrating raptors, banding flamingos, raptors, and songbirds, and enjoying the culture of the region. The Strait of Gibraltar is considered a "migratory hotspot" as most birds from Western Europe are funneled to this single point for their obligatory crossing to Africa, only 10 miles away.

Sunday, March 8

Family Birding Walk – Kathryn Albertson Park - Especially for children or the child in you.

Time: 1 p.m.

Location: Kathryn Albertson Park parking lot, 1001 N. Americana Blvd., Boise.

Contact: Pam Conley 869-0337 pam_conley@Q.com

We will walk the paved loop around the park looking for geese, ducks, and herons on the water, as well as songbirds in the brush. 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 Flier Club where they earn rewards for birding. We will finish at 3 p.m.

Saturday, March 14

GEAS Annual Banquet and Silent Auction

New location: Red Lion Downtowner.

See details in this newsletter Page 7.



American avocets

Photo by N.S.Nokkentved

Volunteer News continued from Page 3

help the day of the event for set up, clean up, working at the event; bakers to make desserts to sell at the banquet; and people to make donations or to help contact businesses for donations for the silent auction. Please call or e-mail Sue Norton at 378-4248 or nortonsu@msn.com if you can help.

As you can see, as the season changes our need for volunteers increases. Let us know if you have time to work with us on our various projects.

Gerrie Satz, Volunteer Coordinator, gerries@iranger.com

If you are receiving a paper copy of The Golden Eagle and you would like to help save GEAS some printing and postage expense, please sign up to receive our "new newsletter" e-mail message six times a year by sending an e-mail so stating to: membership@goldeneagleaudubon.org.

GEAS can now accept payments online for membership dues for NAS and for local GEAS members via our new "Join/Renew Audubon" page on our website; <http://www.goldeneagleaudubon.org/html/join-audubon.html>.

Golden Eagle Diets in the Birds of Prey Conservation Area Have Changed

By Julie A. Heath

The Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area is known internationally for its extraordinary raptor populations, especially golden eagles and prairie falcons.

The conditions that promote abundant prey to maintain high densities of raptors are of great interest for management and conservation efforts. Research done in the 1970s and early 1980s showed that nesting golden eagles preyed primarily on black-tailed jackrabbits (Steenhof and Kochert 1988) and that eagle reproduction was closely tied to jackrabbit abundance (Steenhof et al. 1997). In the conservation area, jackrabbit abundance was highest in shrub habitats and lower in grasslands (Knick and Dyer 1997).

Since the 1980s, wildfires, livestock grazing, military training and drought have interacted to cause extensive conversion of shrub habitat to grassland in the conservation area, greatly reducing the amount of jackrabbit habitat. Though the number of nesting eagle pairs in the area has declined since the late 1970s, the total number of young fledged per year has not changed. This suggests that a few productive pairs in quality territories may be producing most of the young. Further, long-term surveys led by Mike Kochert with the USGS Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center suggested that eagles in extensively burned territories in the conservation area continued to be productive.

To address why these territories continue to be productive, Kochert and I initiated a research project to assess whether golden eagles have adjusted their diet in response to large-scale habitat alternation, and, if so, how.

In 2014 our team collected diet samples from the same territories that were studied in the 1970s, using the same methods. Preliminary results suggest significant shifts in the composition of eagle diets compared to historical data. Eagle diets in 2014 consisted of a higher proportion of American coots, mallards, Piute ground squirrels and rock doves compared to the 1970s

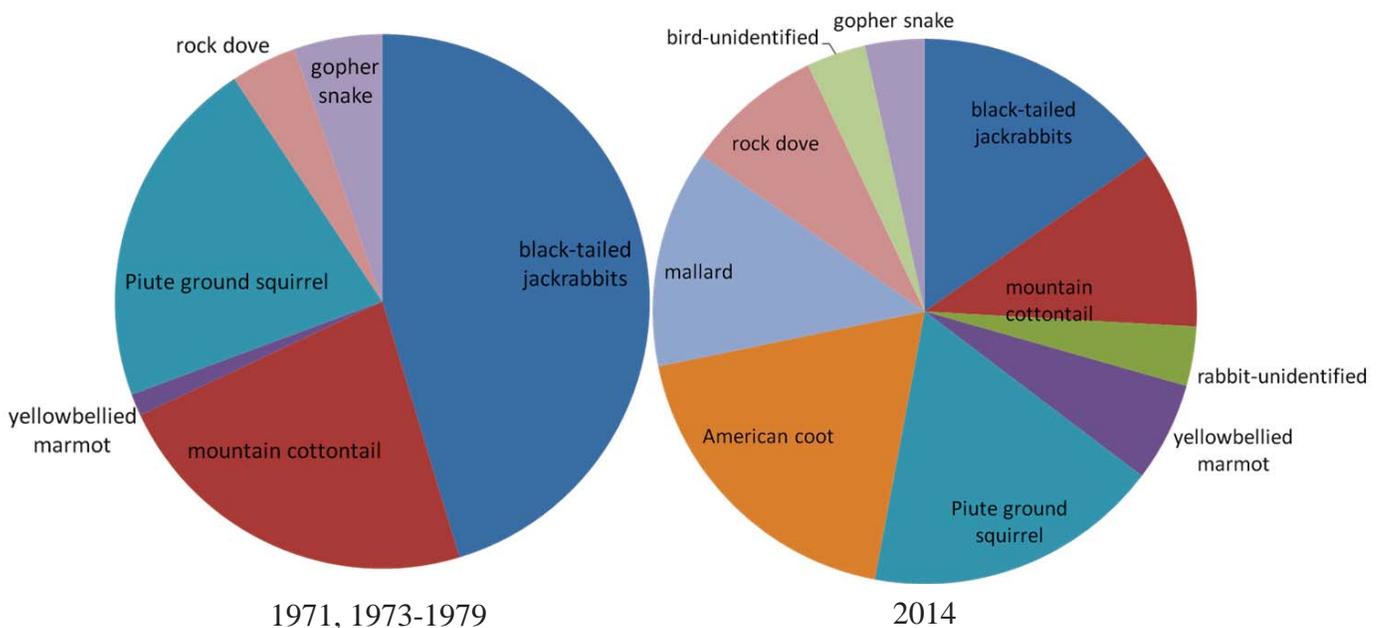
years (See figure below). Also, eagle diets contained a significantly lower proportion of black-tailed jackrabbits and mountain cottontails.

In addition to shifts in composition at all territories, diet breadth in 2014 was significantly greater compared to the 1970s diets. We will continue this project in 2015 to gather more information to study how diet impacts reproduction. But these preliminary results suggest that access to waterfowl and Piute ground squirrels may be a key component of dietary shifts that have allowed for continued productivity of golden eagles in this area.



Golden Eagle nestlings.

Photo by Jordan Harrison

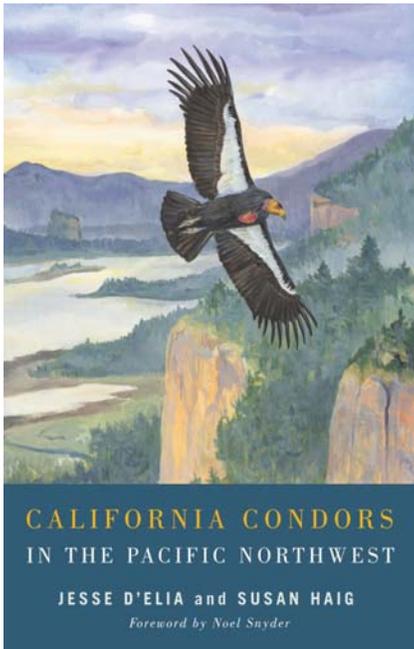


Golden Eagle Audubon Society Annual Banquet and Auction

Saturday, March 14, 2015

Red Lion Downtowner, 1800 Fairview Ave.

\$40 Per Person



Susan Haig, PhD, is a supervisory wildlife ecologist at the USGS Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center in Corvallis, Ore. She is also a professor of wildlife ecology at Oregon State University, a research associate of the Smithsonian Institution, and president of the American Ornithologists' Union. She has spent more than 30 years working on species facing extinction. Her research explores the genetic and demographic factors needed to plan recovery actions for small populations. Haig's efforts include work on piping plovers, spotted owls, red-cockaded woodpeckers and California condors.

With Jesse D'Elia, a fish and wildlife biologist from Portland, Ore., Haig has written "California Condors in the Pacific Northwest." The book investigates the paleontological and observational records as well as the cultural relationships between Native American tribes and condors and provides the most complete assessment to date of the condor's existence in the Pacific Northwest. They evaluate the probable causes of regional extinction and the chance that condors once bred in the region. They assess factors to be considered in determining whether condors could once again thrive in Northwest skies.

GEAS BANQUET REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS — DUE BY MARCH 9, 2015.

Please complete one of the payment forms below. Send payment form along with list of guests and meal choices to: GEAS, 1963 Teal Lane, Boise, ID 83706. Checks should be made out to GEAS. Questions? Call Sue Norton 378-4248.

To Pay By Check:

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ (Number of guests _____ guests @ \$40 per guest)

To Pay By Credit Card:

Please charge my credit card (circle one) : VISA MasterCard Discover American Express
 Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____
 Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Name on Card: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ (Number of guests _____ guests @ \$40 per guest)

Choose from one of the following entrees: Beef Tenderloin, Char-Grilled Northwest Salmon, or Vegetarian.

Guest Name: _____ Meal Choice: _____
 Guest Name: _____ Meal Choice: _____
 Guest Name: _____ Meal Choice: _____
 Guest Name: _____ Meal Choice: _____

I am not able to attend, but I would like to make a donation to GEAS: \$ _____

I have an auction item or a dessert to donate. Please contact me at:

In order to preserve the sanity of the auction committee, all donations (except desserts) should be received by March 2.

Volunteers, Short-eared Owl Reserchers Need Your Help

By Robert Miller

The short-eared owl, a ground-nesting species, inhabits marshes, grasslands and tundra throughout much of North America and other parts of the world.



It is not overly rare in Idaho, but incomplete information about its habitat use in Idaho and trends across its range have fueled growing concern about its future. The Idaho Bird Conservation Partnership is working with organizations in other states to assess the owl's status.

We hope to recruit volunteers from across Idaho to help to help us get a more complete picture of how short-eared owl populations are doing here.

Traditional surveys such as the

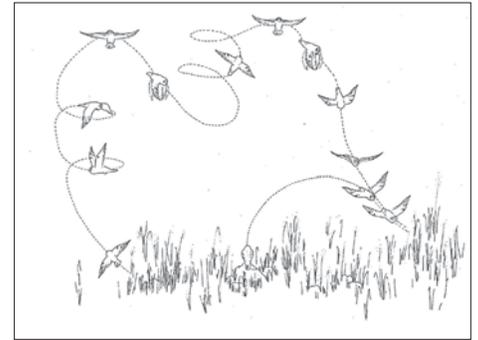
Breeding Bird Survey or Christmas Bird Count don't do a good job of collecting information on less common species, such as short-eared owls. But both of these surveys suggest the population of short-eared owls has declined over the past 40 years. As a result, the species is listed as endangered in 12 states and as a bird of conservation concern in five of seven U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regions. The short-eared owl is also on the National Audubon Society's watch list. The Idaho State Wildlife Action Plan lists the species as stable, but with a concern regarding the downward trend of the population.

We are looking for people willing to donate two evenings, one in March and one in April, to survey a route in their area. The routes take 1.5 hours, starting 100 minutes before sunset and finishing 10 minutes before sunset. We hope to complete 50 surveys across the state.

The routes are on secondary roads, and because of the owls' unmistakable courtship displays, require limited

previous knowledge or expertise of the species. Short-eared owls perform elaborate flight displays during spring evenings, making them easy to spot.

Training materials, maps and expert contacts will be provided to participants. We hope to have the survey locations and protocol established by late January. Anyone interested in learning more about this program may please contact Miller at: RobertMiller7@boisestate.edu; 208-860-4944.



Short-eared owl courtship flight.

The Golden Eagle Audubon Society publishes *The Golden Eagle* six times a year.

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The Golden Eagle Audubon Society is Southwest Idaho's chapter of the National Audubon Society. GEAS promotes environmental awareness through field trips, local programs and volunteer work.
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