



The Golden Eagle

Newsletter of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society

September/October, 2015

Fires, Fall Flights and a Tumultuous Summer

By *Crista Videriksen Worthy*

Growing up in the San Fernando Valley, a suburb of Los Angeles, I absolutely hated fall. First, fall meant I would have to go back to school. Early September always brought the hottest weather of the year, and our school lacked air conditioning. Because the Clean Air Act hadn't been passed yet, the smog was almost unbearable; when we had P.E. our lungs would ache, and our eyes would burn and water. Finally, the hot, dry Santa Ana winds would set the stage for wildfires.

After moving to Idaho, I enjoyed all four seasons, and after four full years here I have to say fall is my favorite. October 12 always seems to be the absolute prettiest day of the year; the trees are at their peak, skies are blue, and temperatures are perfect.

Here in Treasure Valley we have a further reason to love fall; this is when we can see the raptors fly at the World Center for Birds of Prey, 3 p.m. Friday through Sunday in October. If you haven't seen this spectacle, I encourage you to attend this year. Simply follow Cole Road six miles south of I-84 and turn right on Flying Hawk Lane. As you climb the road your cares fall away. At the top you'll see the amphitheatre where the flights take place. Members can come for free; it's a great deal, or you can join right there and get a beautiful calendar too. You'll look out over the entire valley and then enjoy half a dozen raptors up close—REAL close! The birds fly from one falconer to the other right over the audience. Last year, Wally, a large Eurasian eagle owl, grazed the top of my head as he flew over me from behind, and sure enough, I didn't hear him coming; his flight was completely silent. They often bring out a Harris's hawk, aplomado falcon, lanner falcon, and a couple of other birds. Bring your camera; you can get great close-up photos. I also like to go into the Center and say hi to Stoffel, the huge bateleur. He often interacts with visitors by vocalizing loudly and puffing himself up.

We had something of a catastrophe at my house this summer. Hidden Springs is surrounded by sage, and the hillsides have

become infested with weeds that present a fire danger. Last year the town brought in goats to eat the weeds and did so again this year. They parked them on the hillside behind my house and into the adjacent canyon just before the Fourth of July weekend, confining them via temporary electric fencing. I wasn't happy about this, as some quail were possibly still nesting, and I had mostly pulled the weeds out of my hillside already—about 30 trashcans full. When I say "my" hillside, it's actually part of the common area but directly behind the yard and we have no fence. We went out of town for a few days and alas—when we returned, the goats were still there and had eaten every scrap of greenery, including the sage, which the goat man told me they'd leave. I was furious! It looked like a fire had come through (still



Eurasian hawk owl

Photo by Crista Videriksen Worthy

does), and not a quail in sight for a day or two.

The goats were moved finally and the quail began to return, but for several years we've had about 65 birds, and the number was greatly diminished. After a couple of weeks more returned, mostly in pairs, and some families with chicks, but they scurried across the now-barren hill, vulnerable to the Cooper's hawks. I put out extra food, and, with the unusual rain we had in July, many of the weeds are growing back. The sage looks dead although I suppose it will come back eventually.

Did we learn nothing from the overgrazing our hills were subjected to decades ago? I guess not. So much for friendly ecological practices. It reminds me of hiring a gardener to trim your tree and you come home all the branches are gone. When you complain the gardener assures you the tree will come back, and think of all the cash you'll save because it will be a decade before you need to trim it again!

On August 1, I declared the quail reproductive season over because the pairs and families coalesced into a single large group that now arrives twice daily, instead of pairs strolling around all day. No longer do you hear and see the males fighting, it's just a big group of adults and "teenage" chicks feeding. I counted about 30 and hope the 35 or so missing quail will turn up soon.

President’s Message

By Sean Finn

Dear Members of Golden Eagle Audubon Society,

Fall is in the air. I can tell early in the morning as I get ready to bike to work. Red-breasted nuthatches have joined the chickadees and hairy woodpeckers that make up our neighborhood mob. The goslings in Julia Davis Park where I ride are pretty much all feathered out and looking like the adults – albeit a little on the small side still – and the dawn chorus I hear from the riparian bird community has changed tune from a melodious “My Country ‘tis of Thee” to a frenetic “Feed Me Seymore.”

Back in the yard, our dedicated momma black-chinned hummingbird is getting ready to fledge her very late brood. And while pulling some weeds, I’m sure I saw an adult northern goshawk flash through the tree tops. Four bands on the tail. Speckled gray breast. Flying stovepipe. I’m pretty sure it was a goshawk and not the Cooper’s hawks we have in the yard regularly.

I try not to get too melancholy this time of year as I try to keep in mind that the birds passing on migration are taking part in the great pageant-parade that’s been happening since at least the last ice age. This annual exodus gives us an opportunity to experience species we only get short looks at as they cross the Treasure Valley heading south. We in Boise are lucky (pun intended) to have a great opportunity to experience the wonder of bird migration at the Intermountain Bird Observatory’s Lucky Peak station. I should say we usually have that opportunity although this year will present a bigger-than-usual challenge. The road to the migration site is in very poor condition this year. Something needs to be done (more on that in a minute) as we are discouraging anyone from driving the road. Perhaps you have the time and energy to walk or bike up to Lucky Peak, but keep in mind there are other opportunities to experience migrant birds. Blacks Creek Bird Reserve is well-known as a shorebird hot spot and the Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve provides diverse habitat for migrants too. Also, don’t forget other opportunities along the Idaho Birding Trail. I encourage everyone to enjoy the migration spectacle.

About the Lucky Peak road: GEAS, through our Small Grants Program, pledged \$500 to repair that road last winter. Those funds were matched by IBO and made available to the Idaho Fish and Game’s Boise River Wildlife Management Area to work on the road. Sadly, “details” delayed any significant work, and the road won’t receive any improvements this year. If that upsets you, I suggest you write a letter to Fish and Game and say so. The GEAS Board submitted a letter in August. If you want more details, please contact me at our new email address: info@goldeneagleaudubon.org. We have info to help you make your voice heard.

Sincerely, Sean Finn, President

GEAS CALENDAR September-October 2015

Family Birding Walk	September 13
GEAS Monthly meeting	September 22
Greenbelt Litter Patrol & Birding	September 27
Big Sit! Hyatt Reserve	October 10
Family Birding Walk	October 11
IBO Bird Banding on Boise River	October 16
Field Trip: Bogus Basin Birding	October 24
Greenbelt Litter Patrol & Birding	October 25
GEAS Monthly meeting	October 27
Field Trip: CJ Strike	October 31

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News From the Board: Field Trips Cancelled

We regret to have to cancel our Field Trips to the Intermountain Bird Observatory's Lucky Peak banding station this fall. Field trips were scheduled on August 29 and October 16, including the well-loved "Owl Trip," but we are canceling them because the road to the banding and raptor counting station is dangerous and not passable for standard vehicles.

In fact, we are cautioning most visitors to avoid driving a vehicle on that road – it is in serious need of repair. The GEAS Board is working with IBO staff and Idaho Department of Fish and Game to come up with a plan to improve the road, but we don't expect any significant repair work to occur this migration season.

It is important to note that the dedicated IBO staff will still be conducting normal operations on Lucky Peak this fall. Raptor, owl and songbird research will continue as usual – and visitors are welcome to come to the site and participate in activities. However, access is restricted to walk-in,

bicycle or only the most rugged 4-wheel drive vehicles. We reiterate: vehicle access is at your own risk –several vehicles have incurred serious damage already. So if you go, please be prepared. But GEAS will not conduct organized field trips in 2015.

Our new field trip coordinators, Kristin Gnojewski and Alex Takasugi, have arranged an alternate trip on October 16th –to IBO's new site on the Boise River. Details are in the "GEAS Events" section on Page 4, or check the website at www.goldeneagleaudubon.org.

In other news, the Board of Directors:

- Established three ad hoc committees to: (1) review and update the By Laws and Charter; (2) consider potential conflicts of interest in terms of Board compensation for granted projects; and (3) outline options for use and/or investment of the recent bequest funds. All are important to the

membership—contact me if you'd like to get involved—but if and when we amend the By Laws it will require a vote of the membership. I will keep you posted.

- Approved \$2,000, through the GEAS Small Grants Program, to fund the Intermountain Bird Observatory's student intern to lead education programs at Lucky Peak this fall.
- Committed to support the publication of "My Kitchen Window," a compendium of Hilda Larsen's contributions to the GEAS Newsletter. Availability expected to be October 2015.
- We have set up a "Contact Us" e-mail address: info@goldeneagleaudubon.org. Expect speedy response when members use it.

Volunteer News

Thanks to RL Rowland for leading the Boise River Bird Walk and Litter Patrol on July 26. Thank you to Fred Bassett for his presentation at our July monthly program meeting on humming birds.

Thanks to the following people for their help in preparing the newsletters to be mailed: Ann Swanson, Bessie Skinner, Susan Hazelton, Hope Denney, Sue Norton.

Sean Finn would like to thank Lindsay Alsup, Steve Alsup, Leah Dunn, Matt Podolsky, Michele Crist, Cheryle Zwang, Matt McCoy, Anne Halford and Tate Fischer for working so hard to initiate a Friends group for the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area.

Gerrie Satz, Volunteer Coordinator

Armchair Bird Watching

Want to do a little tropical bird watching from your home?

Check out the webcam at Casa Bonita, on the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire, just north of Venezuela and east of Curaçao. Owners Maarten and Ingrid have created a bird sanctuary, and for 20 years have put out sugar water to attract birds. You'll see plenty of bright orange and black trupials, as well as the yellow oriole and black-and-yellow bananaquits.

At night you can see bats: <http://www.CasaBonitaBonaire.com/birdwatching.html>.



White-headed woodpecker

Photo by Kathy Lopez



Red-winged blackbird

GEAS EVENTS for September and October

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 Alex Takasugi at 484-9132 or alex_takasugi@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.

Wednesday Morning Club, September, October

Time: 8 a.m (8:30 starting in October)

Location: Janjou Patisserie 1754 W. State St., Boise, ID 83702
 Contact: Kathy Barker McCoy, cell 921-1340, home 384-1205
 Wednesday Morning Club continues into the fall. Come join us for some great nature adventures. I like to grab some coffee, then carpool and head to the destination. I reserve the right to change the destination at the last minute based on weather conditions, bird sightings and group requests. We join Terry Rich on the first of each month at the Foothills Learning Center for a bird talk and walk. Sept. 2 - Hulls Gulch, meet at the Foothills Learning Center; Sept. 9 - Eagle Island State Park; Sept. 16 - Veterans Park; Sept. 23 - Grimes Creek; Sept. 30 - Bonneville Point to Lydle Gulch-Foote Park; Oct. 7 - Hulls Gulch, meet at the Foothills Learning Center; Oct. 14 - Wilson's Ponds, Nampa; Oct. 21 - Upper Hulls Gulch; Oct. 28 - Kathryn Albertson Park,

Sunday, September 13

Family Birding Walk – Especially for children or the child in you
 Time: 9 to 11 a.m.

Location: Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve, 5301 N. Maple Grove Road, Boise, lower parking lot
 Contact: Alex Takasugi 484-9132 alex_takasugi@cableone.net
 This Boise city park is managed especially for wildlife. The area has a number of ponds and upland habitat, which support a diverse number of birds and other wildlife. Bring the whole family, especially the young ones. We have binoculars and field guides you can borrow and will cover their use. Sign up the kids in our Frequent Flyer Club where they earn rewards for birding. We will finish at 11 a.m.

Tuesday, September 22

GEAS Monthly meeting- TBA

Time: 7 p.m.

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

Sunday, September 27

Boise River Greenbelt Bird Watching and Litter Patrol

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Meet in the Greenbelt parking lot behind the Tavern at Bown Crossing (near east end of Park Center Boulevard).
 Contact: Alex Takasugi 484-9132 alex_takasugi@cableone.net
 We will walk downriver from the bridge at Bown Crossing, birding as we go, and pick up litter on our way back. We usually finish around noon. Bring gloves, water and binocs. No public restrooms are available.

Saturday, October 10

Big Sit! At Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve

Time: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Location: Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve, 5301 N. Maple Grove

Rd., Boise, lower parking lot.

Contact: Robert Mortensen 794-7906 BirdingIsFun@gmail.com

The Big Sit! is an international bird watching event sponsored by Bird Watcher's Digest and Swarovski Optik. Started by the New Haven Bird Club, "The Big Sit!" has become the "tailgate party for birders." The simplicity of the concept makes The Big Sit! so appealing. Find a good spot for bird watching—preferably one with good views and a variety of habitats and lots of birds. Next, create a real or imaginary circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle for 24 hours (12 hours in our case), counting all the bird species you see and/or hear. That's it. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun! Everyone with any interest in birds is invited to join in. You don't have to be an expert. People can come and go as they please throughout the day. Local avid birders will be on site to share their knowledge and experience about identifying birds and cool bird behavior. Extra binoculars and spotting scopes will be available for guests to get close-up looks at the variety of birds at one of Boise's best birding hotspots. The Hyatt Hidden Lakes Reserve is a Boise City Park that doubles as a storm-water treatment facility.

Sunday, October 11

Family Birding Walk – Especially for children or the child in you
 Time: 9 to 11 a.m.

Location: Hulls Gulch Foothills Learning Center parking lot 3001 N. Sunset Peak Road (8th Street).

Contact: Alex Takasugi 484-9132 alex_takasugi@cableone.net
 We will walk through the Grove and check out the pond to see what birds are around. Bring the whole family, especially the young ones. We have binoculars and field guides you can borrow and will cover their use. Sign up the kids in our Frequent Flyer Club where they earn rewards for birding. We finish at 11 a.m.

Friday, October 16

Bird Banding with IBO at the Boise River

Time: Sunrise to five hours after sunrise

Location: From Warm Springs Ave. drive straight across the T with Highway 21, onto a gravel access road that leads to the Greenbelt. Park in widened parking area, cross greenbelt and follow sign to banding station. Accessible to any vehicle.

Contact: Heidi Ware, HeidiWare@boisestate.edu.

Join us as we begin our new breeding season research project at the Boise River site. We expect to catch ruby-crowned kinglets, white-crowned sparrows and dark-eyed junco. No restrooms on site; the nearest restrooms are at Discovery State Park, a four minute drive from the site along Highway 21.

Saturday, October 24

Field Trip: Bogus Basin with Terry Rich

Time: 8 a.m.

Location: Meet in the parking lot of Highlands Elementary 3434 N. Bogus Basin Road

Trip Leader: Terry Rich

Contact: Alex Takasugi 484-9132 alex_takasugi@cableone.net
 Terry Rich is an ornithologist who's been holding popular bird talks at the Foothills Learning Center on the first Wednesday morning of each month. He'll take us up to view the birds at Bogus Basin and share his birding expertise and wisdom. We should be back by 1 p.m. Bring water and wind protection, dress for the cooler weather at Bogus. **(Continued on back page)**

Field Trip Report: Banding Goshawks

By Susan Hazelton

Dave Hazelton is a frustrated scientist and an avid birder.

As such, he has a keen interest in all things relating to the Intermountain Bird Observatory. So when IBO offered an exclusive field trip at the GEAS auction, he wasn't about to let this opportunity slip by. The trip promised a chance to explore the unique biology of the northern goshawk with IBO staff biologist, Rob Miller. Miller is a leading researcher of the species, and the South Hills of south-central Idaho is home to one of the highest, if not the highest concentrations of goshawks in North America.

We are septuagenarian wimps, so we stayed at Upper Penstemon campground, located at the base of Magic Mountain ski area, rather than the grassy open field where the scientists and students stayed (no campground amenities). We shared our campsite with numerous house wrens and nesting red-naped sapsuckers.

Miller had a great group of people helping him with the project: Kenny, experienced rock climber and intern from the University of Wyoming, Greg Kaltenecker, executive director of the Bird Observatory, and an enthusiastic group of young researchers from all over the USA. Visiting from Spain was Alejandro Onrubia, ornithologist from Fundación Migres in Tarifa, Spain. Fundación Migres is an organization similar to IBO. IBO has had an ongoing partnership with them for more than five years.



We watched adult goshawks fly into collapsible traps. The traps are set up close to a nest of young nestlings. Kaltenecker displays a live great horned owl and plays a distress call to lure the adult hawk to the nest. Kaltenecker and I each sat under a camo colored tarp, where we could hear the adult's fierce cries get closer and closer and watch the black blur zooming into the trap. As Kaltenecker carefully removed the hawk from the net, I asked if there was any way I could help. He said, "Yes! See if you can pry this talon from the back of my hand."

I didn't realize that you can climb a rope to get into the top of a tree. Because climbing spurs harm the trees, Miller trained his intern, Kenny, to climb a rope, using technical climbing equipment. After a nest has been spotted, Kenny climbs up to the nest, removes each chick, fits a sleeve over the bird, puts it into a small sack and lowers it to the ground for data collection.

We had never visited the South Hills before, and we were

surprised and thrilled by their beauty, green rolling hills interspersed with groves of aspens, stands of pines, and creeks bordered by thickets of willows. We visited the Hummingbird Feeding Station on the Oakley-Rogerson Road, where broad-tailed, black-chinned and calliope hummingbirds buzzed and zipped around 17 feeders maintained by a family from Twin Falls.

On our way back to the campground one evening, we watched young bull moose feeding in a beaver pond. And on the morning we left, we visited Diamondback Campground and watched South Hills crossbills. My high school and college science classes never taught me that science could be this much fun.



Alejandro Onrubia, left, and Rob Miller hold captured goshawks.

Aerial Duel: Who is the Prey Here?



Red-winged blackbird vs. red-tail.

Photo by Robert W. Ellis

Events, continued from Page 4

Sunday, October 25

Boise River Greenbelt Bird Watching and Litter Patrol
Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Meet in the Greenbelt parking lot behind the Tavern at Bown Crossing (near east end of Park Center Boulevard).
Contact: Alex Takasugi 484-9132 alex_takasugi@cableone.net
We will walk downriver from the bridge at Bown Crossing, birding as we go, and pick up litter on our way back. We usually finish around noon. Bring gloves, water and binocs. No restrooms are available.

Tuesday, October 22

GEAS Monthly meeting - Harold Ward, Birding by Ear
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: M.K. Nature Center, 600 S Walnut., Boise

Saturday, October 31

Field Trip: C. J. Strike East – Ted Trueblood, CJ Strike Dam, Jacks Creek WMA and Bruneau Dunes
Time: 7:30 a.m.
Location: Meet at BLM office, 3948 Development Ave. (near the airport)
Trip Leader: Jay Carlisle
Contact: Alex Takasugi 484-9132 alex_takasugi@cableone.net
Our first planned stop will be at Ted Trueblood WMA. Then we'll work our way toward C. J. Strike Dam, Jacks Creek WMA and Bruneau Dunes if time allows. This will be an all-day trip. Bring lunch, water, snacks and wind protection. Be prepared for any kind of weather.

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

- Please help us save paper and mailing costs; if you would like to receive your newsletter online, send your name and zip code in an e-mail to membership@goldeneagleaudubon.org. GEAS does not share your email address.
- 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

Membership in the local chapter includes a one-year subscription to *The Golden Eagle*, and all my dues remain with the local chapter and support local activities.

Name: _____
E-Mail: _____ (allows for website login)
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____

- Student membership \$15
- Individual membership \$20
- Family membership \$35
- Golden Eagle Lifetime membership \$500

I would like to donate an additional \$ _____

Make check payable to Golden Eagle Audubon Society. Mail to: Golden Eagle Audubon Society, PO Box 8261, Boise, ID 83707, **or pay by credit card on our website www.goldeneagleaudubon.org (click support GEAS).**

Please contact us for information on membership scholarships.

To join the National Audubon Society visit <http://www.audubon.org/> and use chapter code G00 for Golden Eagle Audubon Society, or write to: National Audubon Society, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250.

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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www.goldeneagleaudubon.org

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