



Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society

February 2019

Whidbey Audubon Society is dedicated to the understanding, appreciation and conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats on Whidbey Island and in surrounding waters.

Whidbey Audubon **CANCELED** Thursday, February 14 in Freeland Do Birds of a Feather Flock Together?

Stories from the Puget Sound Seabird Survey with Jennifer Lang



Jennifer Lang,
Seattle Audubon
Conservation
Science Coordi-
nator

Where do seabirds go when they overwinter in Puget Sound? Which seabird species hang out with one another? Are some birds more likely to be seen more frequently than others? With the help of over 200 dedicated citizen scientists braving the Pacific Northwest winter, we can answer these questions by looking at data collected for the Puget Sound Seabird Survey (PSSS) program. Since 2007, PSSS surveys have been conducted at waterfront sites regularly on the first Saturdays of the month from October to April to learn more about the overwintering seabird population throughout the Southern Salish Sea. Volunteers diligently identify, count and collect data on seabirds in nearshore habitats to help us learn more about seabird hotspots, both for birding and for conservation.

Join Jennifer Lang as she tells some interesting stories and talks about birds that have been seen over the past eleven seasons of this citizen science program.

Jenn joined the Seattle Audubon team as the Conservation Science Coordinator in August 2017 after completing several seasons monitoring and surveying all kinds of birds, from fairywrens to puffins, for various organizations around the world. She earned a master's degree from the University of Washington analyzing data from the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team and a bachelor's degree in wildlife science from the State



Photo by Adam Sedgley

PSSS volunteers calculate the distance of seabirds off the shore of a Puget Sound beach.

University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Watching and learning about birds have always been a passion of hers and she pursues them avidly whenever she can.

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, February 16: WINTER BIRDS OF SKAGIT FLATS, FIR ISLAND AND SAMISH FLATS. Typically there are large concentrations of waterfowl and raptors. The area is considered one of the top winter raptor viewing sites in the U.S. Some walking will be involved; be prepared for some mud. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Coupeville Prairie Station Transit Park to carpool and then at 9 a.m. at Walgreens in Oak Harbor on sr 20. A Discover Pass will be needed for each car. Due to narrow road shoulders and limited parking, carpools are particularly important. Bring a lunch for this all-day field trip. We plan to return to Coupeville about 5 p.m. Trip leaders are Joe Sheldon

Upcoming Field Trips, see **page 8**

Due to uncertain road conditions, the meeting Thursday evening February 14 has been canceled

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

20103 State Route 525, two miles north of Freeland

Getting to Know Your Board: Cathy Queeno-Wall

Cathy is the Whidbey Audubon Society's board secretary. Her primary job is to record and distribute the minutes of our board meetings. Below Cathy answers questions so that we can get to know her better:

How did you become interested in birding? *I took my first bird picture of a soaring Eagle at the Sea Plane Base with a 110 camera in 1978. I bought my first bird book when my husband and I went to the Oregon coast on our honeymoon to see the sea lions. I was fascinated in what I later learned were Puffins. When did I become interested in birds? Somewhere in there.*

What's your favorite birding site? *Mostly where ever I am standing at the time. There are so many great places, some I visit frequently like Penn Cove, others whenever I can come up with time and a reason to head that way like every side road off of SR 12 or the Aiea Loop trail on Oahu.*

Tell us a bit about your history with Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS). *I have been a member of WAS forever. I took one of the first birding classes. I have been on a couple Christmas bird counts (would really like to do this more) and participated in the Pigeon Guillemot study for many years, monitoring various bluffs*



Cathy Queeno-Wall, right, on a hike with her daughter Christina.

from Coupeville to Forbes Point. I still keep a close eye on Monroe Landing. Through WAS I was able to volunteer with the Washington Department Fish and Wildlife team to help tag Scoters in 2008.

Tell us a bit of your personal history. *I grew up in Buffalo, New York. I joined the Navy, which is how I arrived here and later Hawaii and California. I worked in a local bank for a number of years and later for the County until I obtained my degree in Communication Sciences and became a Speech Language Pathologist. I now work with the Oak Harbor School District. My favorite way to spend a vacation is traveling by car to visit family, with stops along the way or whimsical detours for marathons or halves and birding. This type of travel has taken me to places like the Columbia Wildlife Refuge and Farmington Bay Wildlife refuge in Utah.*

What are your visions for WAS/Whidbey Island? *Continued education of birds and their habitats as well as participation in conservation efforts for habitat preservation.*

How can the membership help you and your committee? *We need to invite more people to meetings and involve younger generations. When at meetings, introduce yourself to someone you don't know or don't know very well.*

Anything else you want to share? Profound quote? Funny or interesting bird story? Life list? *My life list is 227 including 22 birds on Oahu and Maui.*

Whidbey Audubon Society Needs YOU!

Are you a member of Whidbey Audubon Society? Do you enjoy the class offerings, field trips and camaraderie with other birders? Do you look forward to the monthly newsletter to check out what terrific speaker will be at the next meeting? Well, making all this happen takes a group of dedicated volunteers, and here is your chance to be one.

At the May 2019 Whidbey Audubon meeting we will have an election to fill the positions of Secretary and Treasurer on our Board. Each position is for a term of two years.

We are also hoping to appoint a person to serve as Chair of our Program Committee, who will arrange speakers for our meetings and handle the logistics. Typically, the chair leads a committee which shares the work.

We invite you to consider increasing your participation in the running of the Whidbey Audubon Society. Being on the board is a very rewarding experience and provides greater opportunities to give your input into the direction we take in the future.

If you would like to be considered for the upcoming slate or just have questions about what that entails, please get in touch with Linda Bainbridge at 360-331-5948 or lkgbirder@gmail.com.

Remember, we can't do what we do without YOU!

March Scholarship Deadlines

Graduating Whidbey high school seniors, planning to study an environmental science at a four-year college next fall, are invited to apply for a Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) Renee Smith Conservation/Environmental Studies scholarship. Generously funded by Whidbey Audubon members, the scholarships are valued at \$1,500 to \$2,000 and support environmental and conservation study, as proposed by Renee Smith, past member.

Information and applications are available at each Whidbey high school and online at www.whidbeyaudubon.org, (select "About Whidbey Audubon"). Completed 2019 WAS scholarship applications are due back to the respective high schools:

- Oak Harbor High School – Friday, March 8
- Coupeville High School – Wednesday, March 27
- South Whidbey High School – Friday, March 29

Insightful 'bios' about previous scholarship recipients, are included on the website as well.

— Ann Sullivan, Scholarship Chair

PSE Powerful Partnership Update

Whidbey Audubon Society's (was's) 2019 Powerful Partnership with Puget Sound Energy (PSE), our electric utility provider, was initiated at our January membership meeting, with Walt Blackford providing information on PSE's energy efficiency and renewable energy options. We jointly participated in hosting tables at the Way of Whales workshop January 26.

For the Osprey nest enhancement project, we initiated our search for a suitable tall tree at Cranberry Lake in Deception Pass State Park. Jim Kaiser, a raptor biologist with Osprey Solutions LLC, and Shaun Sears, a certified arborist with Canopy Conservation LLC, examined potential nest trees that can be safely viewed from public access points along the shoreline. As shown in the photograph below, the preferred characteristics of a potential Osprey nest tree include the tree's isolation, superior height in the forest and multiple strong branches near the top of the tree to contain a large



Photo provided by Osprey Solutions LLC and Canopy Conservation LLC

This illustration is from the Whidbey Camano Land Trust Osprey Nest Habitat Enhancement Project at Admiralty Inlet Preserve, April 2018.



Photo by Martha Cross; © 2017 Osprey Solutions, LLC. All rights reserved

New Osprey nest created using crown reduction pruning. Co-leader branches are pruned and lashed to existing branches to form a sturdy nest foundation.

nest, similar to a tree-top broken by high winds where Osprey prefer to nest. Mr. Kaiser has collaborated with PSE on several projects, including the Osprey nest relocation at South Whidbey High School when Whidbey Audubon was also involved. This project is beneficial for the Osprey and the tree (to prevent future wind-caused physical damage), and provides a safe public wildlife-viewing opportunity. The project also supports PSE's Avian Protection Program in enhancing natural sites for the Osprey to build nests, rather than on energized power poles that can cause power outages and are not safe nesting places for birds.

was will provide updates on this project, as well as upcoming PSE Powerful Partnership speakers and events, via our newsletter, website (www.whidbeyaudubon.org) and Facebook page (@WhidbeyAudubonSociety).

For additional information, please contact Linda Perry Dwight, treasurer@whidbeyaudubon.org.

BIN South Investigates Lone Lake and Studies Deer Lagoon from a Different Angle

January 3: It stands to reason that birds would appear to be as crazy as the birders who watch them.

This morning, a couple of such observers managed to identify 16 species in spite of winds blowing a steady 15 to 20 miles per hour over at the south side of Lone Lake. Aside from the **Ravens** raiding the poultry pens on the corner there, most interesting were the dozen **Golden-crowned Sparrows** hanging with a few **House Sparrows**, and also the **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** who may have been a **Hutton's Vireo**. No, it was a kinglet. Or maybe a vireo. Wait, no, did you hear that — for sure, it was a kinglet. Maybe. Likely, a kinglet. But possibly a vireo....

January 17: Big thank you to Vivian and Lance who had us come visit their Community Park access near Sunlight Beach. So fun to view a different angle and to learn about the awesome

shore restoration down there. The rain even held off.

After that, we went over to the Sunlight Beach access and the East Dike, where we added a few more species for a total of at least 38 for the morning.

January 31: Things are really ramping up like it was spring or something. Out at Deer Lagoon, we saw and/or heard at least 48 species, and had a wonderful morning. On our way out, we'd added the **Virginia Rails'** calls, heard a **Eurasian-collared Dove** and saw a little group of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** by the cars.

— Cathi Bower, *Bird early – bird often*

Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) South meets every other Thursday morning. The time varies with the season. Contact Cathi Bower for more information: whidbird@whidbey.com

Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

December 29: Just a “keep your eyes open” post! Christmas Bird Count — I got a distant scope view of a very large, heavy bodied, blue-grey falcon flying low to the ground, powerful slowish wing beats. I saw the face for a split second and it had faint mustaches. The rest of the sighting was a back view. This bird flushed and then chased a flock of 26 **Cackling Geese**. As the geese frantically flapped, the falcon kept up the steady, powerful flight. The

wingspan of the falcon was longer than the cacklers. The hunt was unsuccessful and the falcon peeled off and out of sight. My first impression was **Gyrfalcon**, a bird I have seen on numerous occasions. I am still about 90 percent confident it is a Gyr. Maybe someone out there can confirm! Location: The large farm field bordered by Mutiny Bay Road, SR 525, Cameron and Bush Point Roads.

— *Dave Parent/Joe Sheldon*

December 31: Northern Shrike perched in willows by edge of marsh. Location: Freund Marsh, Oak Harbor

— *Carla Corin*

January 13: While walking along the north east portion of the Pratt Loop trail, adjacent to the barbed wire fence line in Coupeville, we counted 65 yes, sixty-five **Killdeer**! They were in the area that has a crop coming out of the soil about two inches. We have never

seen more than a few Killdeer at any one time here on Whidbey until today.

— *Rob/Traci York*

PLEASE POST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS to the *Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) website*.

Sightings should be on Whidbey Island or relate in some way to Whidbey Audubon. Reports should refer to birds or other wildlife that are not commonly seen here. Alternatively, they may refer to migratory birds that arrive outside their normal seasons.

Reports of especially interesting sightings in nearby areas are welcome. Greater selectivity is needed to keep the email volume reasonable so editors will exercise judgment on whether the rarity, proximity and significance of sightings merit inclusion.

These guidelines reflect the interests of local birders. Please respect the essentially scientific nature of the Sightings feature. Thanks for your cooperation.

There are designated spaces to submit your information, such as what you saw, where you saw it and the date and approximate time. Although we are asking those who post to leave a phone number or email address with your sighting, they will not be included on the actual “Sightings” page. Thank you!

Keep up with “Sightings” on the WAS website, on your mobile device at www.m.whidbeyaudubon.org or on the *Whidbey Audubon Society Facebook page*.



Photo by Paul Neis

A leucistic Bald Eagle flying above a normal Bald eagle shows the contrast in this nice shot.

January 19: A leucistic **Bald Eagle** was spotted yesterday by the Whidbey Audubon Society Birding Class, on our field trip to Samish Flats, with Joe Sheldon. I was lucky enough to get photos of it flying with a normal bird for comparison. — *Paul Neis*

Field Trip Report: Fort Casey State Park on January 5

Birding at Fort Casey State Park was a great way to start the New Year. Eighteen people came out on a calm, cloudy, warm day. Our first sighting was a **Bald Eagle**. Then the raucous cries of **European Starlings** high in the trees got our attention. We wandered around the lighthouse seeing **Golden-crowned Sparrows** feeding along the shrub/grass edge, and in the trees and shrubs we saw an **American Robin**, **Ruby** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Spotted Towhee** and we heard **California Quail**.

We headed up the trail to the picnic area through the forest. Along the way we saw an **Anna’s Hummingbird**, **House Finch** and **Red-breasted Nuthatch**. In the picnic area we saw a fleeting glimpse of a species of **falcon** being driven off by a murder of **American Crows**. We cruised around the edge of the forest for owls, but to no avail, but we did hear a **Common Raven** and then saw it flying.

As we walked down the forest path toward the big guns, we

had great close-ups for several minutes of **Ruby** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** right at waist level. Continuing along the path we saw **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, **Pacific Wren**, **Song Sparrow**, **White-crowned Sparrow**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, **House Finch** and a **Brown Creeper**. Once we broke through to the grass, we had a nice view of a **Red-tailed Hawk**.

We headed back to the lighthouse to bring out our scopes and look at the seabirds. We saw a group of **Northern Pintails** fly by and a **Glaucous-winged X Western Hybrid Gull**. Looking down from the bluff we sighted a **Pigeon Guillemot** in winter plumage, **Surf** and **White-winged Scoter**, **Double-crested** and a **Brandt’s Cormorant**, **Horned** and **Red-necked Grebes** along with a **Red-breasted Merganser**. And just as we were getting ready to leave a **Northern Harrier** flew by. A wonderful day with 33 species identified.

— *Janet Hall, Field Trip Leader*

Conservation Column: New Priorities

Washington’s state legislature has convened and you will be hearing a lot about energy issues in this session. Audubon Washington is one of twenty statewide organizations making up the Environmental Priorities Coalition, which is working on four priorities this year in the legislature:

1. One hundred percent Clean Electricity Standard that removes all fossil fuels from Washington’s electric grid by 2035.
2. Orca Emergency Response
3. Oil Spill Prevention
4. Reducing Plastic Pollution

There will be loud and well-financed opposition to any action on these issues. Our representatives need to hear from all of us that all these priorities matter; we want our energy to be cleaner, our Puget Sound waters healthier, our iconic wildlife protected, our resources conserved!

On the local level, Whidbey Audubon will be working to make our communities more bird-friendly with educational materials and consultations. Watch for new brochures, guidelines and more coming up this spring.

— Kim Shepard, Conservation Chair

Christmas Bird Count Results

South Whidbey Christmas Bird Count (CBC South) held its eighth bird count on Saturday, December 29. It was a very windy, then rainy day. Our most abundant species is the **American Robin** at 1,142 individuals. Followed by the **Pine Siskin** at 956. We counted a total of 10,940 individual birds, categorized into 92 species. The three days after our count day were gorgeous for birding, and we were able to include an additional 13 species that were not seen before, bringing our total species to 105. See below table for previous year totals.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
°Fahrenheit	40°	37°	45°	39°	26°	30°	40°	45°
# of Individual Birds	14,585	15,627	13,368	21,333	13,629	19,281	19,992	10,940
# of Species	101	105	105	107	106	105	111	92
Extra CW Species	1	3	0	1	1	0	5	13
TOTAL	102	108	105	107	107	105	116	105

Thanks to everyone who participated in this important citizen science survey.

— Govinda Rosling, WASW Compiler



CBC North was held on Saturday, December 15. The following are some of the most interesting statistics:

- Total Species Seen = 117
- Last year = 104 Count Average = 108
- Most Abundant Species: European Starling
- Total Birds Seen = 17,739. Last Year 21,626.
- Rough Recent Average = 21,094.
- Number of participants = 48
- Total Party Hours = 98.25
- Total Miles in Car = 446
- Total Miles on Foot = 42

Check out more specific data from previous years on our website: www.whidbeyaudubon.org. Go to “Stewardship.”

— Jay Adams, WAOH Compiler

BIN North Spots “Catbird” at Duguala Bay

January 8: Rain was forecast but it held off for an abbreviated morning of birding at Duguala Bay. We saw the expected **Great Blue Herons**, **Canada Geese** and possibly a lone **Cackling Goose** in the grass, **Swans** (too far out to identify if there were some Tundras mixed in there) and a **Belted Kingfisher**. Additionally, we saw **Common Goldeneyes**, **Buffleheads**, **Red-breasted Mergansers** and two pairs of **Green-winged Teals**.

While looking over Duguala Pond in search of other species, we heard a strange noise that seemed to be coming from the bird deterrents that Puget Sound Energy installed on the power lines. We thought it was very clever that the spinning dials could make a sound much like a cat to keep the birds away from the wires. Just as we realized how silly that was, the source

of the sound appeared at my feet. A very tiny and upset kitten! It couldn’t have been more than a few weeks old. After looking around for a mama or more kittens, we put it in the car. We spotted **American Wigeons**, **Canvasbacks** and **Marsh Wrens** before the mewling became distracting. Birding was over for the morning. After trying to contact several agencies, kitty was taken to Best Friends Veterinary where Dr. Syring agreed to look after the little thing until it could be adopted. In all, we saw or heard 22 species of birds, not including the “catbird”.

— Marcia Lazoff

Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) North meets the second Wednesday of the month. Contact Marcia if you want to be added to the new list: mlazoff@comcast.net

Dan's Blog: *Hang On — The Rufous Are On the Way!*

By Dan Pedersen and Craig Johnson, #333, January 19, 2019

Editor's note: *Dan's Blog* is published every Saturday morning. Type this website into your browser: www.pedersenwrites.blogspot.com. If you'd like to be added to Dan's email list to receive the link to the latest post each week, write to Dan Pedersen at dogwood@whidbey.com.

It seems hard to believe it could ever be as warm again as we see in the photograph, but summer days are coming. This young Rufous Hummingbird was cooling itself in a tabletop fountain on Craig and Joy Johnsons' deck not too long ago.

A few Anna's Hummingbirds, with magenta heads, are with us in Puget Sound year-round, visiting feeders right through the winter. But the real excitement starts when the migrating Rufous arrive — smaller and more coppery, and loaded with attitude.



Photo by © Craig Johnson

Humbling Storm

It seemed a good day to stay indoors with 50-mph wind gusts and the power out at 11 a.m. My small house sits amid the giants of the Pacific Northwest forests, the Douglas fir. Though second growth they tower above me saluting the wind. The grove is healthy, undisturbed, with interlaced roots and somewhat sheltered. So far they have survived all storms. The Douglas fir has adapted to the wind; it's lateral branches in strong gusts break free and as they sail away, force is reduced on the tree. But the branches, up to three inches in diameter and twenty feet long, can be lethal missiles. A good day to stay inside.



Photo by Donald J. Miller, Delicate Light Photography

Annas Hummingbird photographed December 20, 2018, the day of a strong wind storm which caused destruction and power failure throughout Whidbey Island.

My thought turned to the Anna's Hummingbird. The only hummer to winter this far north, I had a male that came to my feeder every day. Would he make it this stormy winter day? I kept a watchful eye, but not for long. Soon he appeared, amazingly little affected, flitting through the waving shrubs then alighting on the feeder. He has a favorite perch on a huckleberry bush about 30 feet from the feeder which rustled with every wind gust. Undeterred he took to his perch, every once in a while giving a quick buzz of wings and tail for equilibrium when a gust struck. Feathers puffed for warmth, even on this gray day his throat and head flashed their iridescent color. Always bashful at the feeder I never wanted to photograph him there, but with my 40-year-old tank of a telephoto lens maybe I could photograph him as he perched 30 feet away. He brought me humor though as I pulled out an eight pound lens to photograph this bird weighing less than a sheet of paper not to be grounded by a winter storm.

— Donald J. Miller, Delicatelightphotography.com

“On Whidbey Island, it's usually mid- to late-March, depending on the bloom of salmonberry and flowering red currant,” Craig says. “Many people, including Joy and me, report Rufous arriving the first week of March.”

A juvenile Rufous Hummingbird takes a refreshing break in a tabletop fountain on Craig and Joy Johnsons' deck.

The Rufous are working their way north from Mexico right now and will reach Whidbey Island in about six weeks, give or take. And then things will get exciting in our yards. Some of the tiny Rufous will continue flying north as far as Alaska to mate, nest and raise the next generation, but many will stop right here.

Banding studies show they sometimes return year-after-year to specific yards where they were born, where they found good native plant populations, habitat and nesting conditions to raise young in the past.

Many people roll out the welcome mat by planting salmonberry, currant, honeysuckle and other flowering favorites in their yard, and not getting too zealous with their brush clearing.

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Dan's Blog, see [page 7](#)

Dan's Blog from page 6

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It may not be our imagination that the first bird of the season, hovering from window to window, is looking for last season's feeder. After flying thousands of miles, you can't blame these little birds for wondering why the feeder they remember is not there now.

I usually listen, as well as watch, for the first Rufous male in my yard. It may be hard to spot with the eye, but the distinctive sound of a speeding Volkswagen Beetle with high-pitched valves catches my ear every time. When I do find the bird, I've noticed it often looks exhausted after its long journey.

A long drink of fresh sugar water from the feeder can be a much-needed boost. I marvel that these tiny birds fly many miles nonstop over water to reach the island, presumably crossing from the mainland at the closest point, on the ferry route from Mukilteo to Clinton.

Typically, males arrive first, followed a few days later by females. Once the females arrive, the males' aerial courtship displays will be breathtaking, Craig says. They put on a sensational show of high dives and zigzag "power" demonstrations to impress the females. "Few creatures are more dazzling than an adult male Rufous Hummingbird.

I knew that Linda Bainbridge keeps a journal with the date she sees the first Rufous at her home on South Whidbey, so I asked for her data. Note some February dates in this list. Here are her records:

2006 March 9	2013 March 15
2007 March 7	2014 February 27
2008 March 3	2015 February 19
2009 March 3	2016 February 25
2010 March 10	2017 March 4
2011 March 6	2018 March 4
2012 March 7	

Of course, dates vary from one location to the next. "These are just the dates when I see them on my property," she emphasizes. Linda also said it's possible this isn't the destination of the first arrivals; they're just resting before continuing further north. Either way, Linda has documented the timing pretty clearly.

When the females arrive, then the serious work begins, Craig points out. "The females don't have any time to lose in building a nest and getting ready to raise their young. The males are happy to assist with everything but the work. (Use your imagination.) Female Rufous are single moms."

Because the females must produce eggs, they consume wood ash mixed with dirt to replenish the minerals in their bodies. "They begin eating ash as soon as they arrive," Craig says. "Adult Anna's Hummingbirds consume ash as well, but the timing is different."



Photo by © Craig Johnson

This female Rufous is gathering ash from a pile in Craig and Joy Johnsons' yard.

Hummingbirds not only rely on feeders but, of course, on the blooms of native plants. And they get much of their protein from a diet of insects.



Photo by © Craig Johnson

Male Rufous with red flowering currant.

More information about hummingbirds is available [in a] 22-minute video on Craig and Joy's website, [Puget Sound Backyard Birds](#) (click the red text).

Dates to Remember FEBRUARY

9: [Class at Padilla Bay: Swans, Geese and Dabbling Ducks](#) (click the red text for link to classes)

14: CANCELED: Whidbey Audubon Program: *Puget Sound Seabird Survey*, Freeland

16: Field Trip: Winter Birds of Skagit...

15 to 18: Great Backyard Bird Count; [gbbc.birdcount.org](#)

21: Deadline for March Shorelines

23 to 24: Port Susan Snow Goose and Birding Festival, Stanwood

28: Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) Board Meeting. Methodist Church, Coupeville, 7 p.m. Members Welcome

MARCH

14: Whidbey Audubon Program: *Molting and Migration* with Sievert Rohwer, Freeland

20: Field Trip: Semiahmoo Spit and Birch Bay State Park

21: Deadline for April Shorelines

Field Trip Report: The Loons of Deception Pass

Sarah Schmidt and Joe Sheldon led the field trip on January 15 to see Red-throated Loons massing in Deception Pass to hunt small fish on the outflowing current. Blue sky and sunshine greeted more than fifty people at the West Beach parking lot at Deception Pass State Park. Binoculars trained out on Rosario Strait showed the distant water polka-dotted with white, revealing raft upon raft of **Red-throated Loons** waiting to fly in to feed at the turn of the tide through Deception Pass.

On Gull Rock just offshore, the **Glaucous-winged Western hybrids** were joined by small **Black Turnstones** and bulky **Black Oystercatchers**, the latter impressing new folks with their long, bright-red bills and eye-rings and pink tights. Loons had already begun to gather in the pass, and at about the 9:30 field trip start time, hundreds streamed outbound between us and Deception Island, scared up by a boat coming under the bridge. This is typical behavior, and soon they were pouring back in. Sunlight reflecting off their white faces, necks, sides and bellies flashed brightly, making them easy to spot against the dark rocks of the island behind them.

Upcoming Field Trips, from page 1

(360-678-9060, jkseldon43@gmail.com or cell 206-940-7539) and Dave Parent. Bad snow or ice cancels the trip.

Wednesday, March 20: SEMIAHMOO SPIT AND BIRCH BAY STATE PARK. Semiahmoo Spit in Blaine is renowned for seabirds and shorebirds. The long, sandy spit gives us a chance to look at protected Drayton Harbor and also out toward Canada, a mile away. We will bird down the spit to the Semiahmoo Resort, then back along the coast to Birch Bay, where we can bird along the shore and through the woods at the park. Bring your lunch; this will be an all-day trip. Carpools form at 8 a.m. at the Coupeville Prairie Station Transit Park, 201 South Main Street (behind medical building) or meet at the Oak Harbor Park & Ride on SR 20 and Hoffman Road, just north of Ault Field Road in Oak Harbor at 8:20. Trip leader is Kim Shepard, kwshepard@gmail.com, 360-720-1711.

Field Trip Checklist

- ✓ Field trips are free and open to anyone interested in birding or conservation. Bring your friends!
- ✓ Beginners are very welcome.
- ✓ Carpooling is encouraged and even required for some sites with limited parking.
- ✓ Dress for the weather and in layers.
- ✓ Very bad weather cancels a trip. Check with the trip leader.
- ✓ If you have them, bring binoculars, scope and field guides.
- ✓ If you might need them, bring a drink and snack.

We are always looking for new trip leaders and assistants. If you are interested, please contact Patty Cheek at pattypipe@gmail.com.

Other fish-eating species along with the Red-throated Loons included **Common** and **Pacific Loons**, **Red-necked** and **Horned Grebes**, **Pelagic**, **Double-crested** and **Brandt's cormorants**, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Buffleheads** and **Pigeon Guillemots**. All loon and grebe species wore their gray, black and white winter plumages, and the mostly-white guillemots stumped those who have only known them in summer black.

As we stood on North Beach near the amphitheater to get eye level with the loons, a powerboat sped out under the bridge, flushing up the majority of loons. This white blizzard passing from sight around the point gave us an estimate of at least 500 Red-throated Loons, and possibly several hundred more than that.

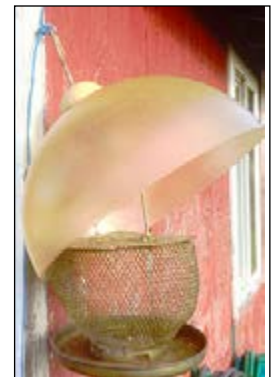
Looking over Cranberry Lake from the south end of the parking lot, we added to our list **Hooded** and **Common Mergansers**, female **Northern Shovelers** and a beautiful male **Ring-necked Duck**.

The field trip concluded with a stop at Dugualla Bay, where we spotted dozens of **Canvasbacks** and many other ducks. **Trumpeter Swans** easily signaled their identity with their diagnostic "toy trumpet" calls. **Greater Yellowlegs** dashed around in the water after small fish, and a flock of eight **Western Meadowlarks** winged in to the small island and vanished into tall grass. In all we recorded 43 species on this sunniest of Loon field trips since we began them 11 years ago.

— Sarah Schmidt and Joe Sheldon, Trip Leaders

Donations for These Welcome

Several members have given these lovely items to Whidbey Audubon to offer for a donation to benefit its programs and operation. You may specify which activity, such as the Scholarship fund. They will be available at the February 14 general meeting.



Above right, plastic window-style feeder donated by Dave Allen; left all metal feeder donated by Jan and Don Allen and right, squirrel guard and metal feeder donated by India and Gary Rassner-Donovan.



Welcome New and Renewing Members

New

Jon & Jocelyn Bentz
 Richard Martin
 Richard Thunen (Spotted Towhee)
 Barbara Schmitt
 Tim Hanson

Renewing

Christie Sears
 Don Zisette
 Jude Wiebmer
 Candace Haines
 Verleen Boyer
 June Ivy
 Erika Sweger (Scholarship Fund)
 Amy and Chris Gulick (Red-tailed Hawk)
 Candy and Robin Charlwood (Red-tailed Hawk)
 Dave and Kate Krause (Scholarship Fund)
 Vivian Stenbridge and Lance Porter
 Suzannah Dalzell (Red-tailed Hawk)
 Sally and Tom Cahill (Red-tailed Hawk)
 David and Louise Kankel (Pigeon Guillemot)
 Robert Tank (Spotted Towhee)
 Joe Sheldon
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 Sharon Bretches and Craig Reide

The expiration month for paper copies is on the address label. I will send email reminders to both paper and email subscribers.

— Linda Bainbridge, Membership Chair

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- _____ **SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP** for first year National Members only. Receive a joint membership in National and Whidbey Audubon for one year for only \$35. **Make check payable to National Audubon.**

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