



# Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society

January 2023

*Whidbey Audubon Society is dedicated to the understanding, appreciation, and protection of birds and other wildlife species and their habitat on Whidbey Island and surrounding waters.*

## Whidbey Audubon Society Meets Thursday, January 12 via Zoom

### The Most Overlooked Birds in North America: Females

Female birds are typically drabber and more inconspicuous than males, leading over time to an unconscious bias towards male birds in birdwatching, photography and even in our ornithological knowledge. Presenter Joanna Wu explores the history of the focus on male birds, female vocalizations, conservation implications of overlooking female birds and female bird identification tips.

Joanna Wu is a PhD student studying female birds in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of California Los Angeles. She previously worked at National Audubon Society and is a member of the Galbatross Project, a group of birders, scientists, writers and conservationists who are passionate about spreading awareness about female birds.

Whidbey Audubon Society programs are free and open to all. There is a brief meeting and socializing at 7 p.m. and the pro-

gram begins at 7:30. This will be available from the comfort of your home via Zoom. To register, click the red text to go to the [Event page](#). Registration is required. On the day of the program a Zoom link will be sent to those who have registered.



Joanna Wu to address female bird characteristics January 12.



Female American Wigeon

## Upcoming Field Trips

**Saturday, January 14: SKAGIT RIVER INTERPRETIVE CENTER IN ROCKPORT.** River walks are at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. We plan to meet for the 11 a.m. walk, which means we need to leave Whidbey Island by 9 a.m. The walks last from one and a half to two hours along a flat, well-maintained trail. The trail leads into the rainforest, crosses a bridge over a wetland and ends along the Skagit River. Be sure to dress for the weather and wear comfortable shoes. There will likely be snow on the trail. For more information click the [interpretive center website](#). This is a two-hour drive and those wishing to attend can text 209-352-6534 or email [Charlotte Ginn](#).

**Saturday, January 28: LOONS AT DECEPTION PASS.** Leaders: Sarah Schmidt and Steve Ellis. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the north end of West Beach parking lot, Deception Pass State Park. We'll bird beach and lake. We hope to see hundreds of Red-throated Loons gathering to feed in the outflowing current of Deception Pass. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Depending on weather and interest, we will end about noon, with a possible stop at Dugualla Bay on the way back toward Oak Harbor. You might want to bring water, a snack or a hot

## 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 Charlotte Ginn at [cginnsixbit@yahoo.com](mailto:cginnsixbit@yahoo.com).

drink. Dress warmly and prepare for wind. We won't do much walking. Cars need a Discover Pass to park. Questions: click to email [Sarah Schmidt](#), or call/text 360-929-3592. To carpool, meet at 8 a.m. at Trinity Lutheran Park and Ride in Freeland, 8:30 in Coupeville at Prairie Station Transit Park, 201 S. Main

Field Trips, see [page 3](#)



## President's Column: The Window Seat Perch

### Avian Influenza Update

We are all worried about Avian Influenza. It is called Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – HPAI. It is very serious, and I want to give you the latest information from Kersti Muul, Urban Wildlife First Responder, Seattle Audubon. She told me that we do not need to panic yet. However, we do need to be careful.

She is responding to many calls about sick or dead birds, and she responds to as many as possible. She says you do **NOT** currently need to worry about your feeders if you don't live next door to chickens. Our backyard birds should be okay at this time.

More than 700 birds of differing species and other animals have been found to have HPAI in the current wave of infections. So far these include raccoons, Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Trumpeter Swan, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Canada Goose, Raven, Crow, Mallard, Great Horned Owl, Cackling Goose, Ross's Goose, Tundra Swan, Bufflehead, various gulls, Caspian Tern, White Pelican, Turkey Vulture and Great Blue Heron. Bald Eagles are particularly susceptible to HPAI.

This is alarming as we have already had decreases in our bird populations. The main priority is getting these sick and dying birds away from areas where they can be eaten by predators, including dogs. Most of us do not want to chance getting HPAI ourselves. It doesn't happen often, but it can transfer to humans.

Please check Kersti's guidelines for picking up and disposing of these birds if you choose to do so yourself. We have two separate sites about HPAI on our website. The home page lists Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) guidelines for most people who definitely do not want to pick up birds. Please report them immediately to WDFW. They are concerned about new species contracting it. Recently, Kersti received information on a Hooded Duck, but it turned out to be something else it died from. Fortunately, it turned up negative.

The second site is our Whidbey Audubon Society website, [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/wildlife-rescue](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/wildlife-rescue), and describes in detail how to pick up a dead bird and dispose of it.

Dogs and other animals can become sick with avian flu and care should be taken to avoid contact between pets and sick or dead birds. Look for the signs of avian flu — twisted necks, lethargy, corneal opacity, diarrhea (often bright green), sneezing, labored breathing, shaking head, wobbly walking, being hunkered down, swimming in circles, and seizures in later stages. Even though you want to help, please don't endanger yourself.

Remember to check the WDFW site for the latest news.

— Patty Cheek, President

*Would that I were under the cliffs, in the secret-hiding places of the rocks, that Zeus might change me to a winged bird.*

— Sophocles – Hippolytus, 428 B.C.

### Whidbey Audubon Society

[www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org) • 509-906-1663

P.O. Box 1012, Oak Harbor, WA 98277

A chapter of National Audubon Society and a nonprofit organization EIN #80-0488910

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## Birthday Games: The Path to 65, as Experienced by Cathi Bower

Feelin' lucky this Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> — Gonna have a really big Bird-day! That is the plan, anyhow, conditions permitting. The backup plan (or Game — as you know, I love me my Bird Games and Challenges) has been leading up to it all this year. In the event that the Big Bird-day doesn't work out this month, there's always the BD to DSF Birding Year! These are not fleeting encounters either, not just ticks on the checklist. I've watched them all, and remember at least one sighting of nearly each species, some more memorable than others.

Beginning with a **Common Redpoll** on the 13<sup>th</sup>, during the last two weeks of January 2022, I enjoyed 91 First of Year (FOY) encounters. Just on the Island.



photo by Cathi Bower

Fox Sparrow taken on January 1 of last year — my first bird of the year.

In January. That doesn't even count the Skagit trip and the Red-throated Loon trip the week before that. It wasn't until October that I actually spotted a **Snow Goose** on Whidbey. I counted the **White-winged Scoter** and **Common Murres** halfway across the Keystone Ferry passage.

Unless someone new jumps out at me by the middle of January, this year I've made it to 170 Whidbey Island Bird species. A January Birthday is convenient for marking time as it is, at the start of a new year and all, and also it lands between migrations. A couple bygone oppor-

tunities, such as some missing flycatchers, won't roll around again until May or so.

The Common Redpoll isn't even on the Birds of Whidbey Checklist, so I took it as a good sign and believe was the inspiration for this little game. Also memorable and unique, the **Mountain Bluebirds** at Pacific Rim Institute in April, the **Peregrines** who are always a surprise to me, every **Northern Shrike** I ever see, and my Nemesis Bird, Evening Grosbeaks. Another year went by without adding them to the Whidbey Year List, and that's as memorable as the species we do see! (Note to self — tally of birds I keep missing).

I even added one more new species to my Yard List this year — a **Western Meadowlark** passing thru Maxwellton Valley. Most recent late Fall additions to the Game sheet included those adorable **Snow Buntings** near Crockett Lake. They also were added to my Life List. You know, if I were keeping track of such things.

Five years ago (!), to celebrate all these many trips around the Sun (always counting), I decided that a fun challenge would be an attempt at a 60 species bird list on my birthday. Friends joined in a glorious Island day, and in spite of our efforts, we were one species short. Disappointing? Or just perpetually at 59...

Though aiming for an additional five species this year, and minimal winter daylight hours are not helpful, I've been hoping for decent weather and another attempt mid-January. Although the BD to BD checklist is light on peeps — the feathered sort that forage a shoreline — the year's been abundant with the other sort — the peeps who accompany any number of celebrations throughout the seasons.

Bird-days come and Bird-days go, but marking time with the significant ones makes memorable the fleeting moments with all our peeps.

Happiest of Bird-days to each of you during this coming year.

### New Mailing System

Whidbey Audubon is in the process of transitioning to a new email management system, Mailchimp. This new system should improve the handling process for membership emails such as the *Shorelines* newsletter, membership renewal reminders and so on. However, transitioning almost 500 members from one database to another has the potential for a few glitches. Please do not hesitate to email the Membership Committee Chair, *Jann Ledbetter*, if you notice any problems.

### Field Trips, from page 1

Street or at Walgreen's in Oak Harbor (after SR 20 turns 90-degrees left at Pioneer Way traffic light, the entrance comes up immediately on the right). Carpoolers will need to organize yourselves.

#### Deception Pass State Park Field Trips

Whidbey Audubon Society's PARTNERSHIP WITH DECEPTION PASS naturalists are continuing at the park. Meet at parking lots on the follow Saturdays:

**Saturday, January 7: WEST BEACH**, 10 a.m. to noon

**Saturday, January 21: CORNET BAY**, 10 a.m. to noon

Thanks to Cathi Bower and David Krause for their amazing help leading the last trips.

— *Charlotte Ginn, Field Trip Chair*



# Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

**October 25:** A juvenile **Northern Harrier** attacked one of the birds (I didn't see which species) on the pilings next to the Langley Marina, creating an explosion of alarmed birds and a mobbing of the Harrier, who flew over the water past the docks while being mobbed, then bluff height over the water. Finally crows mobbed it as it flew over the bluff into Langley. I was greatly surprised by the prey choice and location.

— *Sego Jackson*

**October 31:** A white juvenile **Snow Goose** flew into our pond today with the usual flock of **Canada Geese**. Location: Midvale Road.

— *Sego Jackson*

**October 31:** Although most of my birding occurs outside, I had an avian visitor who managed to descend down our chimney and into the fire box in our living room. When I opened the glass door, I was surprised to find not only a **Northern Flicker** but one with yellow shafts rather than the more common red-shafted variety. Location: Off Wilkinson Road between Clinton and Langley. — *Frances Wood*

**November 1:** There were two immature **Snow Geese** at the West Beach parking lot at Deception Pass State Park. Friday, October 28. — *Carla Corin*

**November 1:** **Western Meadowlark** at Swantown Lake near West Beach Road at the south edge of the lake.

— *Carla Corin*

**November 1:** A **Western Meadowlark** was along the inner road on Keystone Spit (Crockett's Lake).

— *Steve Ellis*

**November 1:** **White Pelicans** (35-40) seen swimming about at Deer Lagoon. They flew off to the east then returned shortly thereafter, saluting and enchanting the Weed Wranglers busy at their Scotch broom removal efforts. They settled back down on the lagoon and continued their swim. — *Linda Griesbach*

**November 1:** Today, a dark juvenile **Snow Goose** joined the white juvenile **Snow Goose** that arrived yesterday with the usual **Canada Geese** on our pond. Location: Midvale Road. — *Sego Jackson*

**November 4:** I have a **California Scrub-Jay** that's been in my backyard for about two weeks now. Location: Bayview Road. — *Jocelyn*

**November 6:** **American Bittern** walking (running) across backyard and up the yard. Unable to take photo of bird as the bird moved quite fast. Location: Green Road, North Whidbey Island. — *Vincent Ho*

**November 9:** Several dozen **Trumpeter Swans** were in Duquall Bay Lake and its slough. There were more in Penn Cove (I didn't stop to identify the species). — *Steve Ellis*

**November 9:** Six **Tundra Swans** at the mouth of Grassers Lagoon by the intersection of Madrona Way and SR 20. Five adults plus a grayish juvenile whose bill shone deep pink-red when hit by the sun.

— *Sarah Schmidt*

**November 9:** Fifteen **Varied Thrushes** in our backyard, three miles south of Coupeville. Some used our water features for bathing and drinking, then they spread out to forage through the yard, flip-

ping over fallen leaves. We've never seen this number at once and are wondering whether the snowfall over the week-end sent flocks of thrushes our way. — *Bill Rick*

**November 11:** Two **White-Checked** or **Storm Wigeons** at Deer Lagoon. A Wigeon variant and really beautiful.

— *Carlos Andersen*

**November 11:** **Ring-necked Pheasant** by forest edge. Location: Green Road at Strawberry Point. — *Vincent Ho*

**November 11:** Went looking for this species, or longspurs, on the gravel road across from Crockett Lake. Confirmation: **Snow Bunting**.

— *Brooks Allen*



Photo by Carlos Andersen

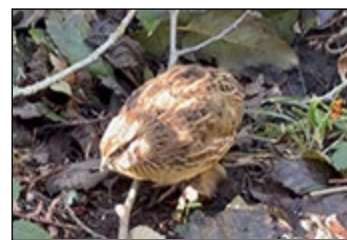
Rock Wren

**November 12:** **Rock Wren** at Double Bluff beach. **Snow Bunting** on gravel road at Crockett Lake.

— *Carlos Andersen*

**November 12:** **Fearless** bird on the path by the Fen, about the size of a quail. Location: The Earth Sanctuary, on the path by the Fen.

**Confirmation:** Submitting this sighting on behalf of Chuck. Rare bird on Whidbey, assuming it's not an escapee. Attached photo is poor quality for identification but Chuck also submitted a video which shows the bird much more clearly. I can send it along to whoever monitors this!



Bobwhite Quail, female.

— *Jann Ledbetter*

**UPDATE: Bobwhite Quail** on the trail near the Fen (this post is for clarification of the post above). Apparently, this bird may have been let loose by someone. — *Chuck Pettis*



Photo by Deb Stewart

Snow Bunting flock.

**November 13:** Two **Snow Buntings**. Was looking for a single bird this morning and saw just one for the longest time. Went to use facilities and when I came back to get a better photo with the sun out, saw two "toasted marshmallows" in flight. Location: Crockett Lake West Gravel Pullout. Snow Buntings are multiplying! By the time I left Crockett Lake at around 1 p.m. there were six SNBUS in a flock foraging in the same place where the single bird had been reported last two days and where I saw the pair at 11 a.m.. I was able to get four at once in a photo foraging in the grass while the other two of the flock were foraging in the road. We saw the flock

**More Sightings, see page 6**

## *Bird of the Month*

# Black Oystercatcher: Life on the Rocks

Those empty limpet shells you find on the beach may well have been victims of Black Oystercatchers, *Haematopus bachmani*. The darkest of our shorebirds, Black Oystercatchers are 16 to 18 inches in length and have a wingspan of 31 to 32 inches. Females tend to be a bit larger than males. Their plumage is overall dark brown to black, while the face sports a reddish ring around each eye. Unique among all shorebirds is the long, red bill. A squared, short tail and pinkish legs complete the fieldmarks of this charismatic, somewhat clownish species.

No other species resembles oystercatchers in flight. Wingbeats are deep and rapid, interspersed with short periods of gliding. The latter are accomplished with wings bowed downward. Oystercatcher flocks fly low over the water, ascending only when flying over jetties and headlands.

These large shorebirds, with their characteristic high-pitched “Weep-weep” calls, are found on rocky and gravel shores from the Aleutian Islands to Baja California. Rarely venturing far from this stony habitat, they prefer foraging in the mid-intertidal zone where they prey on mussels, clams, chitons, barnacles, limpets, and other marine invertebrates.

Different feeding techniques are employed for the various prey species. Mussels and clams have their adductor muscles jabbed to separate the shell halves. Occasionally a bird will insert its bill under a mussel and walk in a circle to slice the mussel from the attached rock, somewhat reminiscent of a can opener. Limpets and chitons are dislodged with carefully-aimed jabs of the beak and then flipped over for consumption. Barnacles are twisted out of their shells. (Oysters are rarely if ever, eaten by oystercatchers.)

Some Black Oystercatchers prefer to be right- or left-beaked: the head is always tilted to the same side during each jabbing event. Juveniles observe their parents’ feeding habits and imitate their “beakedness.”

While Black Oystercatchers do not breed on Whidbey Island, their nests can be found in Island County on Smith and Minor Islands. (We did observe copulating oystercatchers in Washington Park on Fidalgo Island, in Skagit County.) Whidbey-nesting shorebirds are Killdeer, Wilson’s Snipe, and



Photo by Martha Ellis

### Black Oystercatchers at Deception Pass.

#### Spotted Sandpiper.

Nests of oystercatchers are located above the high tide line, but not in vegetation. A female creates a depression in the surface material by pressing her breast downwards. Rocks and seashell fragments are tossed toward the nest to build up a rim. Deeper nests are more successful, and some are so low the incubating parent can't see over the rim. One to three eggs are tended by both parents. Eggs washed out of the nest by a high wave are still viable and may be incubated in place or carried in the bill back to the nest. Pair bonds are long, and many mate for life, and their lives may be long — the current record holder is a 27-year-old female who is still successfully breeding.

It takes considerable time for a young oystercatcher to master the art of manipulating its bill. Parents feed juveniles for several months.

As in most bird species, the most vulnerable time of life is as an egg or an unfledged young. Gulls, crows, and ravens are frequent predators. Adults are rarely taken; they escape Peregrine Falcon attacks by flying low over the water, where the falcons cannot risk dipping a wingtip into a wave. Black Oystercatchers are decent swimmers, and the young are capable of diving under the surface if threatened.

Post-breeding family groups join into flocks that travel about through the local breeding territories. Only a few populations in Alaska are truly migratory, going south as far as British Columbia. How fortunate we are to hear the “Weep-weep” of Black Oystercatchers calling year-round on our island! There are less than 11,000 in the world, with about 65 percent living on Alaska’s shores. Washington supports roughly 400, with most being found on the outer coast. Various governmental agencies list them as a Species of High Concern, particularly in the Puget Sound region. They are undoubtedly the rarest bird species found on Whidbey Island on a regular basis. The rocks off Deception Pass State Park, the beach north of Hastie Lake boat launch, and Partridge Point are great places to encounter these *clowns of the rocks*.

— Steve Ellis

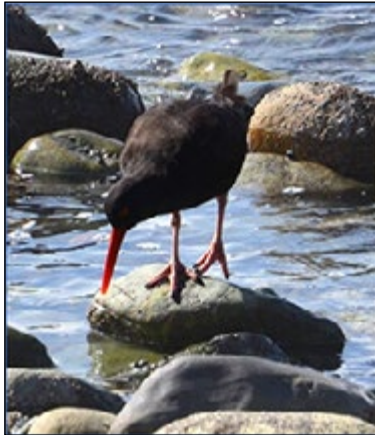


Photo by Martha Ellis

### Black Oystercatcher on West Beach.



# BIN South Enjoys a Perfect Birding Day at Deer Lagoon

**November 17:** Last week, that One-in-500 (or whatever it is) **Eurasian Wigeon** glowed its coppery head for us at Deer Lagoon. There may have been more than one, as there were hundreds and hundreds of **American Wigeons** out there. We were also surprised by a **Red-Breasted Merganser** hanging with the **Hooded Mergansers**.

Speaking of notable moments — back before *Birds*, I used to do *Plants*, and my mom and I had a theory about working outdoors (it was our job, landscaping, so we worked outside every day). We used to say that there were 10 perfect days a year for working outside, and then we would acknowledge said *Perfect Day*. That's not great odds out of 365, but it does make for extra special *Ten Perfect Days*. I mention this bit of personal history, so that you can appreciate that it might also be said of year-round Birding Days. As much as we enjoy watching birds, conditions are most often less-than-perfect. There's always something (when

I was gardening with Mom, we used to say, "If it's not one thing, it's your mother," so while birding, it's at least one thing — too cold, too hot, too breezy, too much traffic, machinery, chatting, too few birds, too many birders, too many planes, too few rest-rooms, too little time. You have the picture. Now picture what a Perfect Birding Day might look like, and that was last Birding in the Neighborhood (BIN). In my opinion.

On top of a loveliest of lovely mornings, we watched a **Nuthatch** working a fir tree and stashing his collections in alder crevices. Back and forth across the path over us.

During this Gratitude season, hang on to those images to sustain us in the upcoming hit-or-miss winter birding days ahead.

**December 1:** Birders who show up to BIN during inclement weather usually carry proudly, such labels as

**BIN South, see page 7**

## More Sightings, from page 4

fly on two occasions so got a good count of six.

— *Deb Stewart*

**November 13:** A **Short-eared Owl** was coursing along between the highway and Crockett's Lake at dusk. We also saw the six **buntings** on the gravel road at Keystone Spit reported earlier. — *Steve Ellis*

**November 18:** Three **Ancient Murrelets** visible near the tide rip off campsite 12 at Fort Casey State Park. Seen about 50 yards from shore. Three **Snow Buntings** continue near the observation platform on the gravel road on Keystone Spit. — *Dave Parent*

**November 18:** One **Short-eared Owl** at Deer Lagoon.

— *Carlos Andersen*

**November 23:** A **Merlin** was stand-in bathing among a group of **American Wigeons** and **Northern Pintails** (~120 ducks). It was buffeted a bit by the small and gentle swells. It wasn't particularly active; it looked more like it was wondering what it was doing there. The ducks appeared unconcerned by it and vice

versa. After about a minute it flew to the top of a nearby maple, fluffed and shook off water, settled in and appeared to scan for prey for a few minutes, then left its perch, circled broadly a few times and flew off with steady wingbeats toward Smith Park. This is the first **Merlin** I've seen in Oak Harbor and the first I've ever seen bathing. I did not see it arrive, so do not know how long it stood in the water. Location: In the relatively sheltered water directly off the east side of Flintstone Park in Oak Harbor. — *Dave Krause*

**November 26:** Several hundred **Cackling Canada Geese** flew over Engel Road at dusk, probably headed to Crockett's Lake. — *Steve Ellis*

**December 5:** Two (apparent)

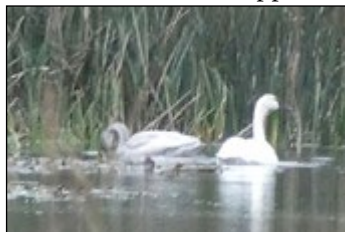


Photo by Linda Griesbach

**Trumpeter Swans.**

**Trumpeter Swans**, one adult, one juvenile, seen foraging along the perimeter of Lone Lake. — *Linda Griesbach*

**December 5:** **Townsend's Warbler**, by bird bath with **juncos** and a **chickadee**. Location: Zig Zag Lane, Langley. — *Lee Kanning*

**December 12:** At least one

**Pacific Golden Plover** in a tightly packed flock of 100+ resting **Black-bellied Plovers**. Location: Crockett Lake, west end. — *Dave Parent*

**Confirmation:** Obvious golden speckling really stood out in the setting sun and smaller than surrounding plovers.

— *Dave Parent*

**PLEASE POST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS** to the *Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) website*. Select the aqua button, "Report a Sighting." You can also submit a photo using the aqua button labeled "Submit Gallery Photos."

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 or on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety](http://www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety).

## BIN North Visits Cranberry and Crockett Lake

**November 9:** Five of us braved the cold on Wednesday to check out Cranberry Lake and the seashore at Deception Pass West Beach. It was a glorious morning after the storm with mixed flocks on the lake and offshore and local residents in the near-shore thickets. Here are the 25 species we found:

<b>Trumpeter Swans</b> flying above the estuary by Dike Road	<b>Coot</b>
<b>Gulls</b> (sp.)	<b>Canada Goose</b>
<b>Crow</b>	<b>House Finch</b>
<b>Cormorants</b> (sp.)	<b>Golden-crowned Kinglet</b>
<b>Great Blue Heron</b>	<b>Song Sparrow</b>
<b>Bufflehead</b>	<b>Chestnut-backed Chickadee</b>
<b>American Widgeon</b>	<b>American Robin</b>
<b>Eurasian Widgeon</b>	<b>Pacific Wren</b>
<b>Pied-billed Grebe</b>	<b>Red-breasted Nuthatch</b>
<b>Kingfisher</b>	<b>Dark-eyed Junco</b>
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	<b>Surf Scoter</b>
<b>Killdeer</b>	<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>
	<b>Common Goldeneye</b>

**December 14:** Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) North explored Crockett Lake and its environs. Seven of us met at Keystone Harbor where we were entertained by a raft of California sea lions and a bob of harbor seals. Birds in the harbor included **Pigeon Guillemots**, **Harlequin Ducks** and **Red-breasted Mergansers**. We moved on to view **Double-crested** and **Pe-**

**agic Cormorants** perched on pilings in the marine sanctuary and spotted **Common** and **Pacific Loons** and **Horned Grebes** offshore. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was seen on Crockett Lake.

The star of the day was the **Snow Bunting** who posed for us on the observation platform, showing off its immaculate feathers. At the quarry pond, we saw **Barrow's Goldeneye** and **Pied-billed Grebes**. We admired the brilliant plumage of **Green-winged Teal** and **Hooded Mergansers** at the Admiral's Cove pond.

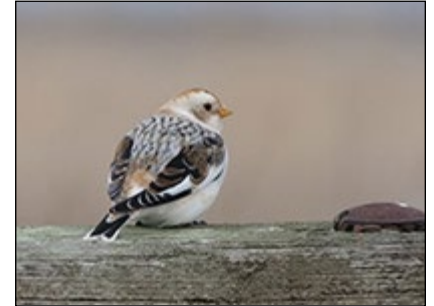


Photo by Dave Krause

Snow Bunting

Much in need of warmth, we wrapped up the trip with food and coffee at Callen's Restaurant. A final flourish was the sighting of **Black-bellied Plovers** at Camp Casey by Denise Marion. In all, we saw 33 species of birds.

— *Denise Marion*

**Birding in the Neighborhood North** meets the second Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. Contact [Denise Marion](#) or [Nancy Luenn](#) by clicking the red text which is hyperlinked to each email address.

## BINS South, from page 6

“determined,“undaunted, “intrepid....”

Thursday last week, they may have been known as “crazed.” But a few of us bundled against the temps, and we identified at least 32 species while travelling to and walking at Deer Lagoon. We did count the **Robins** and **Varied Thrushes** along the roadside, because half of us were in one car. Actually, half of us were in the front two seats of one car.

Noticeably absent — besides most of our regular birders (who we don't think less of, btw) — were **Red-winged Blackbirds**. Not one. Likely quietly hunkered down among the cattails.

Ninety-eight percent of the birds present were **American Wigeons**, about another percent were **Buffleheads**, and the rest of the one-percenters included such elites as that **Eurasian Wigeon**, an **American Kestrel**, some adorable **Bonaparte's Gulls**, another performing **Marsh Wren** (who doesn't care what the heck the weather conditions are like), a couple of beautiful and vocal **Quail** running around by the path, and a couple of surprising **American Goldfinches** poking around in the reeds at the water's edge!

**Green-winged Teal** and **Mallards** were working the slough bank, and we had a really fun time watching the females of each, whose markings — especially from the tail end — look very similar, but for the size difference! The teal at 14 inches and

12 ounces are nearly half the size of Mallards, at 23 inches and 2 pounds! Not a fair match in the ring, but they were happily dabbling side by side at the shore. Great comparison.

**December 15:** Last week, a walk at Sunlight Beach and East Dike was amazingly satisfying. Brutal in the open, but comfortable where it was more protected along the dike, we saw and or heard at least 35 species. Again — 98 percent **American Wigeons**, but somehow that one **Eurasian Wigeon** stands out! **Hérons** perched all along below the bluff looked to be ornaments hanging there in the trees. A couple weeks ago all of a sudden a couple dozen heron nests became noticeable among the alders East of the East Dike. We'll have to keep an eye on this recent rookery.

After the pleasant dike walk, we made a quick stop at the end of Sunlight Beach Road at the other county access, where we watched an unexpected **Yellow-rumped Warbler** poking around in the grass with a little band of **White-crowned Sparrows**. These are a few of our favorite things.

— *Cathi Bower*

**Birding in Neighborhoods South** meets every other Thursday morning. Time varies with the season. Click red text to email [Cathi Bower](#) to join in.

# Birding With Benefits: How Nature Improves Our Mental Mindsets

Most birders and other outdoor enthusiasts always feel better mentally and sometimes physically after spending time outdoors. Now there is increasing scientific evidence to support the health benefits of being outside.

Read the entire article, "Birding with Benefits," by Jill U. Adams, published in the *Audubon Magazine*, Winter 2019: [www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2019/birding-benefits-how-nature-improves-our-mental](http://www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2019/birding-benefits-how-nature-improves-our-mental).



Rose Wong Illustration for "Birding with Benefits," from *Audubon Magazine*, Winter 2019

## Dates to Remember

Please check the *Whidbey Audubon Society Events Calendar* and *Listings* on its website for more detailed information and how to enter Zoom for some of these upcoming events. There also might be further information elsewhere in this issue.

### JANUARY

**7: Field Trip: West Beach at Deception Pass State Park**

**12: Program: *The Most Overlooked Birds in the North America: Females*** with Joanna Wu

**14: Field Trip: Skagit River Eagle Interpretive Center**

**14 Way of the Whales Workshop**, in-person and virtual, 10:30 to 5, Coupeville High School Performing Arts Center; Click the red text for *information and registration*

**18: Birds 'n' Beer Get-together**, 5 p.m.

**21: Field Trip: Cornet Bay at Deception Pass State Park**

**25: Page Peepers Book Group** via Zoom, 7 p.m.

**26: Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) Board Meeting**, Freeland Library. 6 to 8 p.m. Members welcome

**28: Field Trip: Loons at Deception Pass State Park**

### FEBRUARY

**4: Sound Waters University**, hybrid event, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; field trips on other days, *registration and information*

**9: Program: *Listen to Her Sing*** with Gary Pipelow. Zoom. 7 p.m.

**15: Birds 'n' Beer Get-together**. 5 p.m.

**17 to 20: Great Backyard Bird Count**; [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). More information in February issue

**23: WAS Board Meeting**. Freeland Library. 6 to 8 p.m. Members welcome

### SAVE THE DATE

**MAY 18 to 20: Wings over Whidbey Festival**. More information in February. Volunteers interested in planning contact *Stef Neis*

## Welcome New and Renewing Members

### New Members:

Lee Badovinus, Spotted Towhee Neal Hedges  
 Bob Martin & Kathryn Tooker Sara Wedemeyer  
 Carole Matthews  
 Kathleen Davenny, Spotted Towhee  
 Roy Therrien & Shu-Ting Chang

### Renewing Members

David Earp & Louise Abbott, Osprey  
 Colleen Fox & Marie Shaw, Red Tailed Hawk  
 John A Lee, Red Tailed Hawk  
 Sharon Vanderslice, Red Tailed Hawk  
 Brian & Jan Martin, Pigeon Guillemot  
 Dave & Cathy Parent, Pigeon Guillemot  
 Ed & Martha Hollis, Spotted Towhee  
 Frank Worster & Deborah Dix, Spotted Towhee  
 John Hastings & Robin Obata, Spotted Towhee  
 Karen Posner & Frank Ruggiero, Spotted Towhee  
 Lance Porter & Vivian Stenbridge, Spotted Towhee  
 Janet & Blair Paul, Spotted Towhee  
 Martha & Vern Olsen, Spotted Towhee  
 Hayley Johnson & Michael Shroyer  
 Jan-Olof Johansson & Susanne Ohrvik  
 Diana Conners, Spotted Towhee Stu Ashley & Linda Dwight  
 Donald Krafft, Spotted Towhee Susan Berg  
 Jay Adams, Spotted Towhee Charlotte Ginn  
 Margie Parker, Spotted Towhee Dan Cummins  
 Carlos & Toni Andersen Karen Brooks  
 Steve & Judith Fihn Leslie Duffy  
 Richard Timmins Mary Jo Adams  
 Rick & Gail Mylander Paul Belanger  
 Roy & Betty Branson Rebecca Bolte  
 Sheila Proby & Patrick Gross Toni Schinnerer



# Page Peepers Meets on January 25 via Zoom

Join us to discuss the book, *Gifts of the Crow: How Perception, Emotion, and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans*, by John Marzluff and Tony Angell

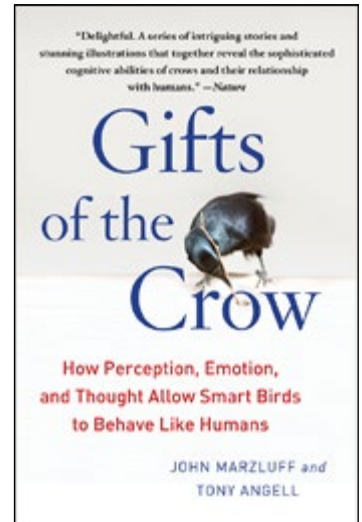
Although this book is not a recent publication, it is a very worthwhile read. We've had John Marzluff speak to Whidbey Audubon several times. He is a Professor of Wildlife Science at

the University of Washington, and he has done fantastic work with crows.

Sy Montgomery, author of *Birdology*, said that John and Tony's amazing, true stories of crows who rage, grieve, give gifts, work together and even design and use tools would be enough to make this book a great read... one of the most exciting books I've read in a long time.

Come join us to talk about this marvelous book at our Zoom meeting on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at 7 p.m.

Please register on the Whidbey Audubon Society website on the [events page](#).



*Gifts of the Crow* was published by Atria; Illustrated edition (February 5, 2013); 320 pages.

## 2023 Scholarship Season

The 2023 Whidbey Audubon Society Renee Smith Scholarship for Environmental Studies season has opened at the three Whidbey Island high schools. A graduating senior interested in pursuing a four-year degree in an environmental subject (oceanography, environmental studies, marine biology, conservation, environmental recreation, etc.) is highly encouraged to apply. Three generous scholarships are offered this year from supportive Audubon members.

Mini-biographies of former scholarship awardees and current scholarship applications are available at [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/scholarship-program](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/scholarship-program).

— Ann Sullivan, Scholarship Chair

— Patty Cheek

## WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY - MEMBERSHIP

Please make your check payable to: WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Mail to: Jann Ledbetter, 1112 Maple Place, Coupeville WA 98239

Or pay online: [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership)

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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.

*The Whidbey Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible. It is Whidbey Audubon policy to never share our membership and subscription information with other groups.*



Photo by Martha Eliis

Black Oystercatchers in flight. [See “Bird of the Month” on [page 5](#) for the story.]

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### **General Meeting & Program Thursday, January 12**

Meeting and Socializing at 7,  
Program at 7:30 p.m.

## **The Most Overlooked Birds in North America: Females**

**with Joanna Wu**

**This meeting is on Zoom  
REGISTER**

[www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org)