

Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society **June 2021**

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 Meets Virtually Thursday, June 10 A Birder's Evolution with George Armistead

 Δ t some point every dedicated birder among us reaches a on our *website* under "Events." We'll send a Zoom JOIN link to place when we realize that birding is not a passing fancy all members but is now in fact part of our core being. Once we reach that juncture, we often start thinking about how to get more out of our birding. Where do we want to go? How do we want to dedicate our time? What areas do we wish to improve upon in our fieldcraft? George will help us to explore areas in which a birder can grow both in skill and enjoyment, while also considering where we can make a real impact within our community and in what we know about birds.

George Armistead is chief network officer at Rockjumper Worldwide Birding Adventures, which operates tours to over 100 countries. George has guided trips to all seven continents and authored two books: Better Birding: Tips, Tools and Concepts for the Field (2015, Princeton University Press), and The ABA Field Guide to the Birds of Pennsylvania (2016, Scott & Nix, Inc.). He has a master's in environmental studies from University of Pennsylvania and is an associate at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Please join us on Thursday, June 10. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. after a brief meeting. Our Monthly Programs are free and open to all. If you are not a Whidbey Audubon Society member and would like to attend, please click the red text register

and registered nonmembers. If you do not see our Zoom invitation, email by midday the day of the program, please check your spam folder. Contact the



George Armistead, in the foreground, pointing; leads a group of aspiring birders.

webmaster, if you still do not find it. Registration will close at 10 a.m. on June 10.

If you are not a member, please consider joining us through the Membership page. Members receive notifications of upcoming events and do not need to register for our Monthly Programs.

REMEMBER

There will be no meetings in July and August. See you in September, maybe in person!

Birdathon 2021 Meets \$5,000 Goal

The Birdathon provides a snapshot of bird species that either live on or migrate through Whidbey Island in early May. Of course, birds migrate on their own schedule, so a day or two after our Big Day,* the Black-headed and Evening Grosbeaks and a Western Tanager showed up at my feeder. (No, we did not get them on our species sighted list.)

A total of 144 bird species were identified during this time, with the Coupevillains, (Steve and Martha Ellis and Sandy

*Whidbey Audubon Society's Birdathon is modeled on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Global Big Day of Birding which occurs nationally every May, click red to see the website.

Shields, who did sight a Black-headed Grosbeak on their Big Day) identifying 118, which won them the Golden Binoculars award for 2021. They were closely followed by Wingin' It, with 114, Wild Women of Whidbey with 110 and Shore Thing with 105 species. Great job, teams!

The 2021 Birdathon results, along with the last seven years' statistics, will be posted on the Whidbey Audubon website on the "Birdathon" page, under Events menu. During this sevenyear period, a total of 203 species have been observed.



President's Column: The Window Seat Perch

Last Friday, I received a disturbing note from a resident of Useless Bay. She sent me pictures of what Island County had

done to our dear, favorite Deer Lagoon. They had widened the path so that vehicles could get through on a gravel surface road and then aggressively mowed the dikes. And, I do mean, AGGRESSIVELY mowed the dikes. All the Marsh Wrens and Savannah Sparrow habitat was mowed during peak breeding season.

We have worked with Island County for more than two decades to keep this prime habitat in place. In 2017, we worked with them to agree to put in bollocks and handicapped parking places. We have no quibble with their having an emergency vehicle access for the Useless Bay Colony residents nor do we have any disagreement with their mowing, just not during peak breeding season. We would have been pleased to communicate with the office had they spoken with us. Please call or write the Island County Commissioners office; contact details can be found on the *Island County website*.. Select "Your Government" from the menu.

I have contacted the office twice now with only one response from an assistant saying that the commissioner had been out of town and would get back to me.

To lower my blood pressure from Island County's actions, here's what I did this morning:

At 4:30 a.m., I rolled out of bed, wrapped myself in a warm robe and asked my husband to bring me coffee when it was

Whidbey Audubon Board Proposes Changes to Bylaws

n May 30, the Board of Directors of Whidbey Audubon Society approved a resolution authorizing a change to the Bylaws. The proposed Bylaws change may be found on our *website*, select "About Us," then "Our Committees and Bylaws." The next step will be a vote by the membership on September 9 at the membership meeting.

As we have confronted the changing environment posed by migrating to a new website and dealing with the pandemic, we realized that a realignment of the organization was needed in order to continue to accomplish our vision. As a first step in the restructure, this proposed modification to our Bylaws will allow us to change our organizational structure without changing our Bylaws in the future. This will allow us to more effectively respond to changing environments and priorities.

Please direct questions or concerns to *Sheri Croll*, click red text to email her.

ready. Then I went out onto the back porch to listen. I'm trying an adventure in birding by getting up at first light and listening and looking for at least an hour.

It was cool and crisp as I was sitting on the back porch. I heard a robin singing loudly, nonstop, with barely a fermata (a rest in musical notation) in between. There was lots of chattering from other birds with loud whistles every few seconds. When Larry came with coffee, he noted that it was quite noisy out there.

No kidding. Buzzing became louder as the **Spotted Towhees** got closer. I heard a few **Black-capped Chickadees** also singing their *Fee-bee-bee* repeatedly, never stopping. The first robin stopped singing like he was waiting for an answer. Another robin started, farther away, and, after a few phrases, stopped suddenly.

A hummer showed up and then another. Chasing each other around and somewhat angry that there was nothing in the feeder.

I heard **House Finches**, an **Eurasian Collared-Dove** spoke up and a cacophony of crows who screamed and screeched over some inexplicable outrage for nearly 15 minutes before letting up. I saw crows and swallows fly overhead, I heard some *sweet/sweets* and different pitches of the familiar *Fee-bee-bee* from the chickadees.

Quite a chorus — a splendid way to start the day! A mindful meditation on bird observation. It certainly helped me. Go birding, early and often.

— 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 в.с.

Deer Lagoon Update

On May 11 a meeting was held between Mel Trenor of Island Beach Access and Shawn Morris of Island County Planning at the south end of Deer Lagoon Road and I was invited to join in. The county is planning a drainage modification there, well into the future, probably not this year. I raised the issue of replacing that sad scrap of chain link which separated the public road from the public land beyond and required the general public to go around it through (Audubon member) Libby Hayward's yard. The Haywards have been very tolerant of this situation.

In the days since, the county has replaced the gate with bollards (removable wooden posts) allowing for easy nonmotorized access and has widened and improved the portion of the trail from the road end to the dike. Many thanks to Island County Planning and Island County Public Works for addressing this long-standing issue.

I can be reached at *bradkin@whidbey.net*. Thanks

Whidbey Audubon Society Bird Class Begins in September

We are excited to announce we are now recruiting students for the 2021-2022 Whidbey Audubon Society Birds of Whidbey Class Series. The primary goal is to improve your ability to identify birds on Whidbey. This annual class gives an overview of avian anatomy and physiology followed by expert presentations about bird life on Whidbey Island.

It meets the first and third Thursday evening (usually 6:30 to 8:30) of each month from September through May and the

instructors lead field trips each month to help you apply the class-room material in natural habitats. This fabulous community class will be held in Freeland this year and fills up rapidly, so if interested, please go to the *Whidbey Audubon Society website* and find the "Birds of Whidbey Class" page under the Education menu.

The Whidbey Audubon Society Board is requiring that all participants be vaccinated against Covid-19

Conservation Column:

Upcoming Habitat Grants and Special Fundraising Habitat Tour

In the fall, Whidbey Audubon will again be offering small grants to local nonprofits to create or improve wildlife habitat with native plants on the island. The grant cycle will be timed so that applicants can purchase native plants from the Whidbey Island Conservation District's plant sale, which usually starts taking orders at the end of the year. Watch for details in the October newsletter.

Last year, we were able to give five grants. This year, we hope to give more. As a fundraiser for this program, the Conservation Committee is planning a unique tour of four privately owned habitats in late September. From Clinton to Bush Point, four groups of five Whidbey Audubon members will meet with each landowner for an hour or so to learn about the parcel, the plants, and the birds. Each group will rotate to each site at a set time. By keeping the numbers small we will limit the impact on the habitats and will ensure that everyone can hear the speakers and ask questions. We will ask for a \$20/person donation to the habitat fund. Signup and payment will be online and details will be announced in the September edition of *Shorelines*.

— Kim Shepard



Photo by Jim Gage

Purple Finch

Birdathon Update, from page 1

Although both Birdathon and Global Big Day are about how many species of birds can be identified in 24 hours, an equally if not more important facet of Birdathon is to raise money for Whidbey Audubon. This will be our second time to award the **Bronze Owl Bank (BOB)** award to the team that raises the most money. Team leaders are still collecting and submitting pledges and donations, but at this point, over \$5,000 has been deposited, with around \$2,300 for the general fund and \$2,900 for the scholarship fund. Our goal of \$5,000, which seemed so far away just a few months ago, has been realized, thanks to your generosity.

Due to not being able to meet in person and the fact that pledges can take a while to collect, we will be awarding the Golden Binoculars and the Bronze Owl Bank at our September meeting.

Updated information on donations collected is available on the *website*, and we'll announce the latest data at the June 10 General Membership meeting.

Thanks to all team members for their great birding and fundraising, and thank you, thank you, to all our Birdathon supporters! Your participation shows your deep caring for birds and our environment.

A Reminder

Save Found Dead Birds for the Specimen Library

Please carefully wrap the birds in newspaper or paper towel and place in a zip-lock bag with the finder's name and contact information, date found, location found and how it died, if known; then place it in the freezer. Email *Robin Llewellyn* for pick up arrangements or call her at 360-320-5480.

— Robin Llewellyn, Specimen Librarian

Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

we saw one on our property was 2019, on the exact same day! Location: Dow Road, Freeland. —Carlos Andersen



Photo by Carlos Andersen

Marbled Godwit

May 4: Marbled Godwit at Swantown/Bos Lake.

— Carlos Andersen



American Pelicans

May 5: Counted 58 American White Pelicans at Deer Lagoon this morning.

— Carlos Andersen

May 5: Yellow-headed Blackbird amongst several blackbirds foraging in the freshly mowed grass. Location: Greenbank Farm by the playground. — Ryan Elting



Photo by Tony Zoars

A pair of Purple Finches.

April 29: Chipping Sparrow May 7: Purple Finch pair at at Deer Lagoon. in our orchard. The last time feeder. Location: Lopez Drive Scatchet Head. — Tony Zoars



Caspian Tern with leg bands.

May 8: Caspian Tern bands these bands may be part of an Oregon State University study: agsci-labs.oregonstate.edu/catetracking/about-the-project/ Location: Whidbey.

— Mike McKinstry May 9: Heard my first Olive-sided **Flycatcher** the year. Welcome back! Location: Greenbank near Honeymoon Lake Road.

— Linda Bainbridge May 12: A Western Kingbird was hunting insects at Pacific Rim Institute, one of 21 bird species I found there this afternoon. Blurry photos taken if anyone is interested. Also found: three mammal species, one butterfly species, one dragonfly species, 18 native plant species blooming.

Steve Ellis



Photo by Carlos Andersen

Long-billed Curlew

May 14: Long-billed Curlew

— Carlos Andersen May 15: At least five male

Redheads (ducks) swimming with **scaup** far out in the lake. With heat shimmer and distance, photos not possible, but the rounded cinnamon head, black chest, and gray back were distinctive.

Also nine American White Pelicans west of the pilings. They lifted off and departed the area about 9:45 a.m. Location: Crockett Lake, east side. — Sarah Schmidt



Photo by Michael Sheldon

Wilson's Phalarope pair.

May 16: Male (L) and Female (R) Wilson's Phalaropes pointed out by Nathaniel Talbot on west dyke of Deer La-

goon. Birds were actively feeding. Location: Deer Lagoon.

— Michael Sheldon

May 17: First Western Tanager sighting at our property this season. Location: Aquila Drive. — Paul & Stef Neis



Photo by Steve Ellis

Leucistic Bald Eagle.

May 17: A leucistic adult Bald Eagle was perched on the boat launch dock in Coupeville. It eventually flew down to the shore and briefly mixed it up with a normal colored adult

> More Sightings, see page 6

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 agua 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.

Bird of the Month

Get to Know the Western Tanager (Piranga ludoviciana)

What's so special about a Western Tanager? Just about everything.

Three days ago, I saw two male tanagers and a female outside in my trees — Cornelian-cherry and pink dogwoods. Wow! The color is spectacular — the male is unmistakable with black on his back, scapular feathers, wings and tail with median coverts, rump and upper-tail coverts a bright yellow and a very reddish head. The female is duller, olive-green with some yellow on her undertail. She does have two yellowish-white wing bars like the males.

The tanagers are about seven and a quarter inches long and they winter from Mexico to Costa Rica. They come here in May and leave by late July or August migrating at night. Their habitat is open coniferous and mixed deciduous trees and forest openings like clearings and open wetlands. They are particularly inconspicuous despite their brilliant colors. They move deliberately and quietly through the trees, usually high up, around 30 to 50 feet. They like shade and you really must look for them if you want to see them.

They eat lots of insects, mostly wasps, ants, termites, stink-bugs, cicadas, beetles, etc. Yeah, WETA (the banding code for **We**stern **Ta**nager). They do fly-catcher-like moves after waiting motionless, except moving their heads from side to side. Their diet gives them the red color from a rare plumage pigment called rhododoxathin. No other tanager has this plumage. They also like fruit such as wild cherries, elderberries, blackberries and mulberries and eat them when they can.

Although I haven't seen them nesting, they have flimsy to relatively stout, loosely woven, open bowls with three to five palish blue, bluish glaucous or bluish green eggs. They hatch in

Page Peepers Book Group What the Robin Knows

Deep bird language is an ancient discipline, perfected by native peoples the world over, and science is finally catching up. This ground-breaking book unites indigenous knowledge, the latest research and the author's own experience of four decades in the field to lead us toward a deeper connection to the animals and — a deeper connection to ourselves.

Page Peepers Book Group will meet on Wednesday, June 23 at 7

WHAT THE ROBIN KNOWS

WHAT THE ROBIN KNOWS

HOW SIRDS RIVEAU OAN SECRETS

OF THE MATURAL WOLLD

JON YOUNG

TOTAL WOLLD

TO

p.m. via Zoom to discuss Jon Young's book, What the Robin Knows. New members may sign up on the Whidbey Aububon website.



Western Tanager, male

about 13 days. The male feeds the female until the chicks hatch, and then, she does all the work.

As for their song, it's burry, like they have sore throats, slow, rambling but strong and deliberate, made up of four or five notes separated by a short pause. Their call is *PUT-A-TICK* which is easier to remember than "*pit-er-rick*." Hmmm, I wonder if they eat ticks.

— Patty Cheek, President

Dates to Remember

Please check our website for more detailed information and how to enter Zoom for some of these upcoming events on the *Whidbey Audubon Society website*, *events page*.

JUNE

- **10: Whidbey Audubon Program: A** *Birder's Evolution* with George Armistead, via Zoom
- **16: Birds 'n' Beer** Zoom 5 to 6 p.m.
- 17: No Shorelines in July and August
- **23: Page Peepers Book Group,** via Zoom 7 p.m. **JULY**
 - 8: No Program
 - 21: Birds 'n' Beer, via Zoom 5 to 6 p.m.
 - **28: Page Peepers Book Group,** via Zoom 7 to 8 p.m. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* by Frans de Waal

AUGUST

- 12: No Program
- **18:** Birds 'n' Beer, via Zoom 5 to 6 p.m.
- **25: Page Peepers Book Group,** via Zoom 7 to 8 p.m. Selection will be announced on website

BIN South Plays Peek-a-Boo with a Eurasian Wigeon

May 6: For a breezy, chilly morning last Thursday, we enjoyed our very casual Deer Lagoon count of 46 species. After the intense previous Birdathon day for our team Shore Thing, it was relaxing to just hang out with everyone and see what we could see. The most entertaining was a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** pair excavating a hole in a snag. About equally entertaining was playing hide and seek with the single Eurasian Wigeon among the Americans and the Caspian Terns. "OK - he's in the scope right now. "I don't see anything. "Oh — he went behind that gull — OK, here he is. "Is that him behind that Tern? "He and his friends just slid into the water now. "Wait, no - he's back up with the other Wigeons." Repeat.

May 20: As the Deer Lagoon dike access trail mowing (or the Big Scalp, as a member dubbed it) was too disturbing for some, last Thursday's Birding in Neighborhoods (вім) wound up way down at Possession Point State Park (apologies to the folks who came from down south up to the Park and Ride).

The surf wasn't real great for spotting sea birds, but the sea lions on the buoy were entertaining. The two dozen Pigeon Guillemots (PG) were close in, however, and really getting busy, especially making new PGs. 'Tis the season. Also up on the beach, we noted a particularly round-looking Song Sparrow, who turned sideways to show us just how round he was — he had no tail! (He was doing alright, perhaps only slightly self-conscious.)

The chilly breeze eventually calmed and the sun peeked out, so we stopped by Hammons Preserve where we added another 10 species, for a total of 39 that we saw and/or heard that morning.

— Cathi Bower, Bird early – bird often

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

BIN North Birds at Admiralty Inlet Natural Preserve

May 12: Our group visited another Whidbey Camano Land got up close and personal with the delightful Pacific Wren. At Trust property, the Admiralty Inlet Natural Preserve. It is a restored prairie area with a couple of miles of walking trails. The draw, besides the birds, was the spring blooming of the Golden Paintbrush, an endangered plant. We also saw Camas, and Scarlet Paintbrush in bloom. Of the 23 species identified, about half were by ear. Some we knew and some were verified by using the Merlin app once we had an idea what it might be. We saw or heard Goldfinch and House Finch, Black-headed Grosbeak, Song Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow, Northern Flicker and Pileated Woodpecker, Spotted Towhee and Red-breasted Nuthatch (two of my forest favorites) and

a trail overlook we saw a large group of Pigeon Guillemots. We were unsure of whether we were close to a nesting site but did not see them going back and forth to the cliff with fish.

It was a great day for a walk at someplace new, nice to be able to carpool once again and the flowers and birds did not disappoint.

– Marcia Lazoff

Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) North usually meets the second Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. To be included on the email list, contact Marcia at mlazoff@comcast.net.

More Sightings, from page 4

over a crab. — Steve Ellis

— Steve Ellis

May 18: First Western Tana- May **ger** of the season at our feeder. Location: End of Log Cabin Road, Clinton.

— Lynne Jensen

May 20: First of the year (for me) Cassin's Vireo and Western Wood-Pewee today along the Pratt Loop Trail. Twentysix bird species from the cemetery to the bluff and back along the loop trail including seven Eagles in a kettle. Also three mammal species., four butterfly species and 12 species of native flora blooming.

20: Swain-First son's Thrush of the season. Heard the "weep" call from a bush, then observed the bird as it flew across the road and continued to call. Location: Zimmerman Road near intersection with Bob Galbreath Road, Clinton.

> — Frances Wood & Bill Graves

May 24: Leucistic Western Tanager. Location: Aquila Drive. — Paul & Stef Neis

May 24: The first sighting of a Black-Chinned Hum-



Leucistic Western Tanager.

mingbird for my wife and me in Western Washington. I was holding three empty saucer type hummer feeders in my left hand, looking at our garden, when this bird flew up and tried to feed from

the empty feeders. It was a cloudy afternoon and rather dark and his head and throat looked black, but he was definitely not an Anna's. He was also easy to i.d. by the typical sound of his wings which is so familiar east of the Cascades. He flew off toward the north edge of our field where two feeders had just been filled. Hoping he will stay around for a while.... Location: At our home, approximately two miles southwest of the Clinton Ferry Dock.

- George Heleker



Attention Hummingbird Enthusiasts

If you have feeders, *please use only plain white sugar* in your mixture of one part sugar to four parts water. No organic or raw or brown sugar, no powdered sugar, no honey, no artificial sugar. Use plain white sugar/water mixture which is most similar to actual flower nectar. And no toxic red color liquids!

Change the sugar water mixture every couple of days, especially during high temperatures, as it will start to ferment if it sits out for days

— Sherry Zoars

Welcome New and Renewing Members

New Members

Ron Hutchinson Suzie Wood Susan Salveson Marc & Christine George Nicky Sorensen Susan Scofield

Renewing Members

Corinne Ludy

Barbara & Mark Jabbusch

Louie (Lou Ann)

Don & Marcia Allen

Robin Llewellyn

Donald H. & Jan Allen

Sheryl Norris

George & Sara Gray

Barbara Fournier

Barbara Fournier

Barbara & Mark Jabbusch

Jan Nelson & Naomi Lev

Christina & Stephen Kahn

Patty Cohick

Janet Jernigan Nicole Luce & Janet Hall Jill Hein, Spotted Towhee

Dorian McGlannan Patricia Duarte & Tom Pocock Lea Kouba, Pigeon Guillemot

Claudia George, Spotted Towhee

Melissa Merickel & Jim Somers, Spotted Towhee

Nancy Van Wormer, Spotted Towhee

Carol & Anthony Dougherty, Spotted Towhee

Jann Ledbetter, Pigeon Guillemot

Joel Beerman & Anne Lawson-Beerman, Pigeon Guillemot

Linda & Gordon Griesbach, Red-tailed Hawk

Shirley Hendricson, Red-tailed Hawk Dominique Emerson, Red-tailed Hawk

Whidbey Audubon Society Membership

Please make your check payable to WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY (WAS)

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

Or pay online with PayPal or a credit card, www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership

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	SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHII Receive a joint membership in National and Make check payable to National Audubon.	Whidbey Audubon for one year for only \$35.

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.

Whidbey Audubon Society

Whidbey Audubon programs are 7 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month except December, July and August
Meetings are conducted virtually using ZOOM and may be hybrid by Fall 2021

Whidbey Audubon Board and Committee Chairs 2021-2022

Williabey Adduboli board and Co	Jillillittee Cilalis 2
President	. Patty Cheek
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Contents

June Program: A Birder's Evolution1		
Birdathon 2021 Meets \$5,000 Goal <i>1</i>		
President's Column2		
Deer Lagoon Update2		
Bird Class Begins in September3		
Habitat Grants and Habitat Tour3		
Sightings4		
Get to Know the Western Tanager5		
Book: What the Robin Knows5		
Dates to Remember5		
Birding in Neighborhoods South6		
Birding in Neighborhoods North6		
Attention Hummingbird Enthusiasts .7		
New and Renewing Members7		
was Board and Committees8		

Membership Meeting and Program

Thursday, June 10 7 to 8:30 p.m. via Zoom

A Birder's Evolution

with George Armistead

See you in September. Have a great summer!