



# Shorelines

*Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society*

October 2023

*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 Society Meets in Coupeville on Thursday, October 12** **Discovery Bay Wild Bird Rescue**

Come to the Coupeville Recreation Hall on Thursday, October 12 at to meet live, glove-trained raptors, such as owls, hawks and falcons. Cynthia Daily and Joseph Molotsky will discuss what they do at Discovery Bay Wild Bird Rescue as a rehab facility to help wild birds get back to the wild after being orphaned or injured.

The center's mission is to inspire its community through wild bird rehabilitation, education and release programs to promote healthy stewardship and conservation of native wild bird populations. It sees almost 500 birds annually.



Cynthia Daily with a Great Horned Owl.

Discovery Bay Wild Bird Rescue is directed by Daily, a Wildlife Rehabilitator, state and federally licensed for all types of birds. She has been a rehabilitator for over 40 years, starting in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1986. She moved to Port Townsend in 1994 when she started Discovery Bay Raptor Rehabilitation and Education Center.

Today, this facility can house a hundred birds, and has the capacity for more, as the need arises, especially during summer months when it has baby birds. The center has over 30 outdoor enclosures that can accommodate an assortment of birds and their special needs. It takes in and releases hundreds of wild birds each year, ranging from the tiniest hummingbirds to native songbirds, crows, ravens, all types of seabirds and waterfowl, to owls and large raptors such as bald eagles and hawks.

Joseph started building a career as a rehabilitator when he was 13 years old as a volunteer at the Rescue Center and currently is the only paid staff. He is taking his knowledge and using it to train birds for use in conservation education.

**Doors open earlier than usual at 6:30 p.m.** for refresh-

ments, socializing and a brief meeting. This is an in-person only program beginning at 7 p.m. and ending at 8:30 so Cynthia and Joseph can make the last ferry leaving from the Coupeville Ferry Terminal. The public is welcome to this free event, located at 901 NW Alexander Street.

**Note:** If you arrive after 7, please enter from the rear of hall on Alexander Street so to not startle the visiting birds.



Joseph Molotsky with a rescued Gyrfalcon.

## **Upcoming Field Trips**

**Friday, November 10: DEER LAGOON** with site expert Carlos Andersen, who will lead this exploration of one of our island's most desirable birding areas. Meet at the parking area at the end of Deer Lagoon Road off Millman Road at 9 a.m. A walk along the dikes and marshy areas will be sure to find wintering waterfowl arriving for the season as well as a number of marsh residents.

**Saturday, November 18: FORT EBEBY STATE PARK** Local expert Steve Ellis will lead a trip into this jewel of a state park, which offers a mixture of forest and seabird species. Be prepared for a bit of walking. And if you are lucky you may spot an orca, as participants did on last year's trip. Meet at 9 a.m. at the end of Libbey Road at Libbey Beach County Park. We will carpool from there to the state park. A Discover Pass or day fee is required for vehicles entering the state park. Snow or ice cancels the trip.

**Saturday, January 20: DECEPTION PASS LOON TRIP** Sarah Schmidt will lead. Details will be forthcoming.

**Upcoming Trips, see page 3**

# What Do the Pigeon Guillemot Folks Do With All That Data?

As mentioned over previous years, there are two kinds of people — those who love Pigeon Guillemots (PIGU) and those who do not yet love Pigeon Guillemots.

Those of us who have already loved them for some time thought it might be interesting to share with everyone else (and one another) what is done with all the data gathered when we observe them for hours and hours all summer long. Another breeding survey season — *our twentieth* — has closed for the year and now we can do other things like the Christmas Bird Count and shorebird surveys and maybe even spend some personal time with family or some such.

What began twenty years ago with a few Whidbey Island guillemot colonies has expanded to include several regions throughout the Puget Sound area. Beyond what the survey teams collect during our summer beach time, there are those out there who take it to the next level. Our data compilation helps Washington agencies assess the health of the Salish Sea. Whidbey Audubon Society remains a major supporter of the survey program and provides financial management services to

the Salish Sea Guillemot Network (SSGN).

Unless a person has been spending the last few years inland under a rock, it's hard to miss the Pigeon Guillemot presence, if not along the shores at their colonies, then represented by the logo of this Audubon chapter.

When you visit the [SSGN website](#), you will learn that much about the bird and the study. I am quoting several portions here.

“Pigeon Guillemots are considered an important indicator species because of their interaction with coastal bluffs and their role in subtidal marine communities. As one of the few seabirds that both breed and winter in the region, they offer an important tie to our marine environments. Pigeon guillemots typically breed in coastal bluff systems, which connect them to the health of nearshore marine habitats that rely on feeder bluffs to build beaches and support vital natal grounds for many fish and invertebrate species. Additionally, these seabirds are near the top of their food chain, and monitoring their populations and breeding success can help provide a snapshot of the health of subtidal marine environments.

“Our [monitoring] work is ultimately about keeping an eye on the population to look for trends. Our volunteers learn many things in the field, but in all they are helping build a record for future studies and conservation efforts.

“Due to our diligent and dedicated volunteers and adherence to

**Pigeon Guillemots, see page 6**

## Notice the OPEN Positions?

Contact any of us in the box below and learn how you can serve Whidbey Audubon Society. We are also looking for candidates for President and Vice Presidents for the 2024-2025 year.

### Whidbey Audubon Society

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

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

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

### Board and Cabinet Chairs 2023-2024

#### Executive Committee

President Patty Cheek  
Vice President Linda Griesbach  
Treasurer (temporary) Stephanie Neis  
Secretary Janet Jernigan

#### Auxiliary Committee

Past-president(s) Sharon Gauthier  
Nominating 2023 Kathy Obersinner  
Sharon Gauthier  
Patricia Duarte  
Internal Audit Lance Porter  
Roy Seliber

#### At Large Appointments

Cathi Bower  
Patricia Duarte  
Kathy Obersinner

#### Core Cabinet Chairs and Subcommittees

Support Services Jann Ledbetter  
Membership Management, Jann Ledbetter  
Online Services & Technology Support OPEN  
Special Project Grants and Fundraising OPEN  
History and Records –Janet Jernigan

#### Conservation & Science OPEN

Conservation – Linda Griesbach (temporary chair),  
Salish Sea Guillemot Network – Cathi Bower

Christmas Bird Count North – Jay Adams,  
Christmas Bird Count South – Govinda Holtby  
Bird Specimen Library – Robin Llewellyn

#### Outreach Susan Prescott

Publicity – Susan Prescott  
Newsletter Editor– OPEN  
Volunteer Recruitment and Management–Sheri Croll  
Social Media – Cathi Bower

#### Events Stephanie Neis

Membership Meetings & Programs – Stef Neis  
Field Trips – OPEN  
Birding in Neighborhoods South – Cathi Bower  
Birding in Neighborhoods North – Denise Marion  
Nancy Luenn

Page Peepers – Patty Cheek  
Birdathon – OPEN  
Birds 'n' Beer – Patty Cheek  
Bird Specimen Library – Robin Llewellyn  
Wings over Whidbey Festival – Stephanie Neis

#### Education Sharon Gauthier

Online Educational Classes, Patty Cheek  
Public Presentations OPEN  
School Programs OPEN  
Birds of Whidbey Class – Dyanne Sheldon  
Scholarship Program – Ann Sullivan

# Conservation Matters

## Neotropical Migratory Bird

### Conservation Act

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act is a federal program that provides grants for the conservation of neotropical birds and their habitats. Neotropical birds breed in the U.S. or Canada and spend their non-breeding season in Latin America or the Caribbean. The program was first enacted in 2000. In June, Rep. Maria Salazar of Florida, along with cosponsors Rick Larsen (WA District 2), Dave Joyce (Ohio) and Mary Peltola (Alaska), introduced H.R. 4389, the *Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act of 2023*. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Natural Resources. This bill, if enacted, will reauthorize the program for the next five years and authorize increased funding each year. Rep. Larsen stated, "Pesticide pollution, deforestation and invasive species threaten the more than 350 migratory bird species that rely on the Pacific Northwest as their flyway. This bipartisan bill will help protect

## Upcoming Trips, from [page 1](#)

**February TBD: WEST BEACH AND PENN COVE**  
Steve Ellis finds this a great area for many wintering seabirds. This is a good trip for those with mobility issues as there will be very little walking. Meet at the end of Libbey Road at Libbey Beach County Park. Carpooling is a must as limited parking exists along the planned trip route. Wind and ice cancels trip.

There will also be field trips to the Skagit Valley in January or February and a proposed family birding trip in April led by Steve Ellis.

**We are continuing to look for volunteer trip leaders as well as a Field Trip coordinator.** A birder doesn't have to be an expert to lead a trip. Part of the fun on a trip is that everyone can contribute different skills and knowledge. If you have a desire to bird a special spot or know some areas that you think would interest others, please contact me for assistance in setting up a trip. Also contact me about taking on the coordination of field trips.

— Charlotte Ginn,

### 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).

these diverse bird populations and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest and across the Western Hemisphere." If you would like to indicate your support for this important legislation, Contact [Rep. Larsen](#) (click red text) or leave a message at 425-252-3188. If you are not a resident of District 2, you can reach out to your congressional representative and ask that they support this bill.

### Establish Native Plants in Fall

It's the time of year to be thinking about fall planting! If you have been thinking of adding native plants to your landscape, you may wish to check out some **upcoming native plant sales**. The Salal Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society is holding an online sale which opens on October 5 at 9 a.m. and closes October 16. Purchases will need to be picked up on either October 20 or 21 in Mount Vernon. For more information about the upcoming sale and online shopping, [click here](#).

The Whidbey Conservation District will be holding its annual bare root native plant sale again this autumn. Plants are usually sold in bundles of ten. Online ordering usually begins around November 1. For details of the upcoming sale, visit the Conservation District's [Events Page](#), scroll toward the bottom to "Native Plant Sale," or click on [this link](#) to receive email notification of the sale.

### Weed Wrangling

It is hoped that weed wrangling at Deer Lagoon will be recommencing in the near future. We're just waiting on sufficient rain to loosen up the soil a bit to make the wrangling tasks a bit easier. If you would like to help extricate some Scotch broom from the dike, please email [Linda Griesbach](#) to be notified of upcoming weeding dates.

— Linda Griesbach, Interim Conservation Chair

## Envisioning Keystone

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust extended an invitation to Whidbey Audubon to participate in a natural resources focus group on September 19. We were thrilled to be part of the early planning stages for the development of the recently acquired Keystone Farm and Forest Preserve, which covers 216 acres. Within this preserve lies one of Whidbey Island's oldest farms, surrounded by 165 acres of woodland and boasting two-thirds of a mile of natural shoreline. Serving as Whidbey Audubon's representative, Jann Ledbetter attended this meeting. We are looking forward to an ongoing partnership with the Whidbey Camano Land Trust as they work towards envisioning the best possible use of this extraordinary property.

— Jann Ledbetter



Image by Christine Farrow

Showy Fleabane,  
*Erigeron speciosus*

# Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

**August 31:** First sighting of the season of a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**. A lone kinglet was working through the rose bushes at Mueller Park along Madrona Way. — *Steve Ellis*

**September 3:** We saw a juvenile **Northern Goshawk** fly over State Route 20 south of Oak Harbor. It was most likely a female, going by the large size. Location: SR 20, south of Rolling Hills and north of San de Fuca. — *Steve Ellis*

**September 4:** Juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper** feeding with **Greater Yellowlegs** at the canal on the SE corner of Crockett Lake. Hundreds of other shorebirds present on the flats. Stilts have an entirely different appearance and feeding behavior than Yellowlegs.

— *Dave Parent*

**September 6:** Several **Ancient Murrelets** were in a group on the water at Fort Casey today. All the usual species were there: **guillemots**, **Rhino Auklets**, all three **cormorants**, **Common Murres**, **Harlequin Ducks**, four gull species. A **Merlin** flew over the lighthouse. Also seen were three or four harbor porpoises and a northern sea lion. Seen with binoculars from the high bluff. — *Steve Ellis*

**September 10:** I saw a **Horned Lark** at Ala Spit yesterday but did not have my camera. I went back today in hopes of getting a photo. It was still there so I was able to get pictures. It was foraging high on the beach on the east side of the spit and out toward the end. — *Mary Jo Adams*



Photo by Mary Jo Adams

Horned Lark

**September 13:** A **Wilson's Warbler** came to the bubbler fountain this morning, then checked out the Indian Plum trees by the deck. Very bright yellow with lightly visible cap. Latest sighting for our yard in past eight years of tracking. Early afternoon, a **Townsend's Warbler** visited the bubbler fountain. Another quite late warbler for our yard! Location: South Whidbey on Aquila Drive in the back yard.

— *Stef Neis*

**September 29:** A **White-throated Sparrow** was singing at the Pacific Rim Institute (PRI) this morning. I also saw a **Lincoln's Sparrow**, **Hermit Thrush** and many newly arrived **Golden-crowned Sparrows**. At least two of the latter were also singing in the sunshine. There were 21 species in total! The White-throated and Lincoln's were new to me at PRI. Location: White-throated in the blackberry bush next to the solar panels near the clump of trees. The Lincoln's were in roses in the southeast corner. — *Steve Ellis*

**Please post unusual sightings** on the [Whidbey Audubon Society website](#); find it under the "Birds" menu.

## Birding in Neighborhoods North in Fog and Sunshine

**September 13**, our group searched for water birds and shorebirds on foggy West Beach. The tide was out and the wet sand beach was wide. Visibility was good enough to identify a **Common Loon**, **Horned** and **Red-necked Grebes** offshore, and a flock of **Sanderlings** along the tideline. Several straggling Sanderlings provided the most dramatic sighting of the day, a **Peregrine Falcon!** After an attempt to snag a Sanderling, the falcon flew right in front of our group giving us an unforgettable view of this magnificent bird.

As the fog moved inland, we drove up West Beach Road, passing **Great Blue Herons** standing sentinel along the shore of Swan Lake. The lake itself was engulfed in fog. Parking at the overlook, we sighted **Double-crested Cormorants** and a group of shorebirds.

The sky was clear above Beach View Farm Trail. We spotted a **House Finch**, **White-crowned** and **Song Sparrows**, and heard a **Red-winged Blackbird**, **American Goldfinch**, **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Killdeer**. **Violet-green** and **Barn Swallows** put on an airshow. As the fog began to clear from the lake, we spotted a **Yellowlegs** wading in the shallows.

It was an enjoyable morning, combining good company with a variety of habitats and birds.

**BIRDING IN NEIGHBORHOODS NORTH (BIN North)** meets

the second Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. Contact [Denise Marion](#) by email or call 501-655-3130 or email [Nancy Luenn](#). Red text is hyperlinked, click to email Denise or Nancy.

## Splendid Fall Migrations

**August 24:** Among 40 species our Birding in Neighborhoods South observed out at Deer Lagoon, we'd watched a **Peregrine Falcon** for the longest time at the south end of the dike. It had captured a **Greater Yellowlegs** and was brunching on it fairly close in on a mud spit, with other GRYE looking on. No sooner was the meal down, it took off for a dessert hunt after more yellowlegs. Besides that exciting event, the **Virginia Rails** were chatty, we saw a coyote across the lagoon, and we also enjoyed comparing sandpipers. There was a **Semipalmated Plover** which can catch you off guard when you realize it's not a Killdeer.

During a couple hours of drop-in birding at the edge of Maxwelton Valley, at least 30 species were seen and/or heard, including **Ospreys** hanging around Miller Lake, **Common Yellowthroats**, a couple **Wilson's Snipe** on a fly-over, **Green-winged Teal**, a **Wood Duck**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Mourning**

**BIN South**, see [page 6](#)

## Specimen Librarian Warns Against Handling Dead Birds

Due to a number of avian diseases in local and migrating populations, the Bird Specimen Librarian recommends that you not handle dead birds at this time. If you have a question about a dead bird you find, you may call Robin Llewellyn, 360-320-5480 for further information.

## Volunteer Corner

### Refreshments for meetings

Can you bake some cookies or provide savory treats to bring to the October 12 meeting?

### Program Support for meetings

1. **Set up 6 p.m.** (2 or 3 people)
  - a. chairs, tables
  - b. pull down window blinds
  - c. set up greeter table, etc.
2. **Technology crew** to set up speakers, camera, check mics for weak batteries, log into Zoom
  - a. Zoom host
  - b. record program
  - c. monitor chat
  - d. send recording to website committee for website.
3. **Hospitality**
  - a. pick up cups and percolator from storage
  - b. solicit snacks
  - c. set up and clean up beverages and refreshments
  - d. return supplies to storage
4. **Greeter:** Whidbey Audubon Society brochures, name tags, current *Shorelines* issue, hats for sales, membership information.
5. **Lights:** two people to manage lights: stage, kitchen, sides and main (remember to turn on outside porch light)
6. **Clean up**
  - a. Put away chairs and tables
  - b. pack up greeter table materials and return to storage?
  - c. tall person to raise window blinds
  - d. sweep room, take trash including restrooms
  - e. lock up
  - f. return key to Town Hall.

**If you can help**, please contact Jann at 509-906-1663 or [email her](mailto:jann@whidbeyaudubon.org).

### Why Volunteer?

“...educate yourself because we need your intelligence, get excited because we need your enthusiasm and organize because we need your collective strength.”

— Antonio Gramsci, Italian philosopher

## Dates to Remember

Check the Whidbey Audubon Society website [events calendar](#) or [events list](#) for further information on these upcoming events, including how to enter Zoom for online programs and meetings. There may also be further details on some of these events elsewhere in this issue.

### OCTOBER

- 5: Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) South**, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 11: BIN North**, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 12: General Meeting and Program:** *Discovery Bay Bird Rescue*, at 6:30 p.m., Coupeville, in person only
- 18: Birds 'n' Beer**, via ZOOM at 5 p.m.
- 19: BIN South**, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 20: Deadline for November Shorelines**
- 26: Board Meeting**, 6 p.m. at Freeland Library Community Room, all are welcome

### NOVEMBER

- 2: BIN South**, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 8: BIN North**, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 9: General Meeting and Program** — *Deer Lagoon* with Carlos Andersen at 7 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Freeland; hybrid meeting
- 10: Field Trip** to Deer Lagoon, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 15: Birds 'n' Beer**, via ZOOM 5 p.m.
- 16: BIN South**, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 18: Field Trip** to Fort Ebey State Park, 9 to 11 a.m.
- 23: Thanksgiving**
- 29: Page Peepers**, via ZOOM at 7 p.m.; *How the Penguins Saved Veronica* by Hazel Prior
- 30: BIN South**, 9 to 11 a.m.

### DECEMBER

- 14: Board Meeting**, 6 p.m. at Freeland Library, all are welcome

## CORRECTIONS

### September 2023 Shorelines

**Page 6** — “Dead Eagle Found at Lagoon Point,” the author Anna Banks referred to her teammate Linda Gisbrecht, not Linda Griesbach.

**Page 10** — The Wingin’ It team includes five members: Janet Hall, Libby Hayward, Ann Linnea, Sarah Schmidt and Dyanne Sheldon.

They want to say, “We are deeply thankful to all the generous donors who helped us again win the Bronze Owl Bank Award for bringing in the most donations, \$2,916.50.”

We regret these errors.

## Field Trip Report: South Whidbey State Park

September 2 was a glorious morning, cool and clear. We were greeted by a **Bewick's Wren** who was singing to everyone in the parking lot and two **Ospreys** who chimed in. One of them appeared high up, hovering. I don't know what he saw because there were no fish in the concrete. They were quite vocal too. We didn't see many birds but we heard several — **Black-capped** and **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, **Song Sparrows** and **Red-breasted Nuthatch**. A **Brown Creeper** eluded many of us but caught the eye of one good spotter. We had one **Hairy Woodpecker** and many squirrel sounds trying to trick us. One Douglas was sitting in a tree with his tail over his back just talking away. The path I was going to take us on had a huge log

blocking the entrance on Monday. Sure enough, someone had notified the State and it was gone by the time we arrived on Saturday. This left us with a nice path. Few birds but the ending of the trail was beautiful. Puget Sound was gorgeous with salmon jumping up. Lots of **gulls** that we couldn't identify from the distance. There were several **Osprey** as we turned back and they accompanied us all the way to the beginning of Hobbit Trail. As we walked back, we were treated to a **Hutton's Vireo** giving us his monotonous song, and a **Pacific Wren**. All in all, we saw or heard 15 species. For a quiet September day, that's pretty good.

— *Patty Cheek, Trip Leader*

### Pigeon Guillemots, from [page 2](#)

protocol, we are one of the few citizen-science based monitoring efforts being used by the State of Washington and the academic community to inform their marine bird population assessments and population modeling studies.

“At the highest level, our data informs the state Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in its assessment of Pigeon Guillemot abundance as part of its reporting on Puget Sound Vital Signs. Puget Sound Partnership (PSP).”

The Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) was formed in 2007 as a state entity tasked with the recovery of Puget Sound. The PSP uses identified vital signs as indicators to measure different aspects of Puget Sound ecosystem health. Pigeon Guillemots were chosen as one of four marine bird vital sign indicators because they breed, feed and live in the region year-round, and as such, their population trends and reproductive success reflect changes occurring within the Sound's marine ecosystem. To understand what Puget Sound Vital Sign Indicator means, see the [Puget Sound Partnership website](#). Click red text for the link to the website.

WDFW uses our abundance data to complement their aerial surveys when calculating and reporting trends of vital sign indicators to the Puget Sound Partnership. This is huge, and we are very proud of our ability to contribute to the PSP's assessment of Puget Sound health.”

To see the most recent Vital Sign Indicator Report of marine bird populations, including Pigeon Guillemots, visit [here](#).

Sarah Converse, Associate Professor with the University of Washington Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences, has remarked, “I've been so impressed going to Whidbey and seeing Frances Wood, one of the two founders of the program, and their team. They

**Help us celebrate our 20th anniversary** by purchasing your very own SSGN t-shirt, featuring artwork by long-time Whidbey surveyor, Govinda Holtby. All proceeds go to the Whidbey Audubon Society, which supports SSGN by funding the majority of our costs. Shirts are on sale **until October 24**. Check it out, [click here](#).

work so hard as a group to train all their volunteers and they all take it so seriously. As a result, we can take these data and trust them and use them.”

If there is anyone not involved with the survey itself, who would like to take a deeper dive into the experience of the PIGU surveyors, this summer SSGN coordinator Shannon Boldt, has been sharing weekly summaries at [2023 Breeding Survey Weekly Updates](#) under Current Happenings.

Thank you for your interest and continued support of Whidbey Audubon, the Salish Sea Guillemot Network and all the creatures with whom we share this amazing Rock that is Whidbey.

— *Cathi Bower, Salish Sea Guillemot Network Liaison*

### BIN South, from [page 4](#)

**Doves**, **Cedar Waxwings**, a **Kestrel**, many other usual suspects, and some demanding **Steller's Jays**. The **Kestrel** perched on a shed, and there consumed a captured vole.

**September 7:** Back to Deer Lagoon where it's getting pretty ducky. No Gadwalls yet, but **Pintails**, **Wigeons**, **Mallards**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Shovelers**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Coots** and the most beautiful iridescent-patched **Green-winged Teals**. The shorebirds are arriving and no one holds still, but we were able to puzzle out **Western** and **Least Sandpipers**, and perhaps **Dunlin**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Killdeer** and **Long-billed Dowitchers**. (You're asking how we decided against Short-billed? — *Merlin* heard them!) An **Eagle** was even hanging around, along with several **Ospreys** still, but no sign of **Pelicans**, for those who are keeping tabs on them. The best part of the extremely leisurely day was watching a ginormous, actual murmuration of **Starlings** — hundreds of them — out-maneuvering a **Cooper's Hawk**. Heard our first **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, a **Quail** and watched a tree-full of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and some entertaining **Kingfishers**... It's just one of the best times of year.

**BIRDING IN NEIGHBORHOODS SOUTH** meets every other Thursday morning. Starting October 5, we meet at 9 a.m. Contact [Cathi Bower](#) for details.

# Lagoon Point (and More) Purple Martins 2023

Turnover in landlords and nest boxes continued in 2023 at Lagoon Point and elsewhere on Whidbey Island, with lots of birds spotted. The nesting habitat changes started at the end of 2022 in the dead of winter.

The December king tides raised my floating dock so high that its retaining brackets ripped two Bob Vierra-built nest boxes from one of my pilings. Both boxes had a long history of successful nests. One box was destroyed, and the other one I gave to Bill Charbonneau to install on one of his pilings. It was used this season which was a relief.

Adult Western Purple Martins began appearing in the skies over Lagoon Point the last week of April. That was a bit late but not unusual in our short history. The weather was so cold I expected them to be even later, so was delighted to hear their lovely voices on April 25.

Here on the point, long-time landlord Bert Pack left and moved to the Skagit Delta and took the martin condos he built with him, leaving only a piling cavity behind at his East Canal lot and a gourd on his West Canal property. Without him here to monitor, I don't know if either housed a nest.

Gary Hammer's big news is that the picturesque condos he built many years ago and recently installed at Callen's Restaurant on Keystone spit finally produced a nest of Purple Martin fledglings.

The nest boxes he built and installed at Sheri Croll's produced three successful nests with a double-nesting in one. (One nest fledged before the second nest started.)

I had a double nesting in one of the Chuck Hammer/Dave McKee-built cedar boxes, and a single nesting in the other. At the start of the season House Sparrows took one of the boxes but I was able to persuade them to go elsewhere by leaving the back of the box open for a few days. After the martins took over they fledged a batch of babies.

Chuck and Dave did the cedar nestbox construction and installation work last year, when they proved to be just right for discouraging starlings from entering. Their legs are too long. The starlings, not Chuck and Dave. Starlings are smart birds however so this year they apparently didn't even bother trying.

My oversize mailbox nestbox (another Bob Vierra creation) housed a successful nest for the ninth year in a row.

I have tall perches at the edge of my lot nearest the martin boxes specifically for them to use. Although the martins arrive

**Purple Martins, see page 8**

## Membership Is Strong

Whidbey Audubon Society membership is strong as we start the current fiscal year. We currently have 384 different household units totaling 505 individual members, broken down as follows by membership level:

Individual .....	41	Red-tailed Hawk (\$100) .	1
Household .....	107	Osprey (\$250).....	7
Spotted Towhee (\$50) ...	66	Lifetime (\$1000).....	4
Pigeon Guillemot (\$75)	28		

### WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY - MEMBERSHIP

Please make your check payable to: WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Mail to: Whidbey Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1012, Oak Harbor, WA 98277  
Or pay online: [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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## Purple Martins, from page 7

mid-April they do not get started laying eggs, hatching and raising babies, until mid-June. Between these two times they use the perches for scoping, grooming, bathing in the rain and what not. Once the eggs hatch the parent birds no longer perch, but streak straight to the boxes, bug in beak and disappear quickly inside. I think this is to minimize the chance of a predator observing food delivery to a vulnerable nestling. So I was surprised toward the end of the season to see a parent bird perch holding a large dragonfly in full view of its full-sized babies begging and calling from the nestbox entrance. It must have been trying to get its big babies out of the nest because they fledged soon after.

The highlight of the summer, once again, was a visit by the Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN South) group led by Cathi Bower. Birders took advantage of the view from Dan Brock's lot next door to observe food deliveries indicating active nests at my and other locations in the neighborhood. It's a treat to see the birders enjoying baby birds poking their heads out, parent birds bringing a variety of flying insects and, of course, the singing. Plus I love trying to answer their questions.

A block or so down the canal Anita Badri had martins attempting to nest in her piling cavity. They may even have succeeded.

Elsewhere on the Island, an adult male was observed by the BIN group at Sunlight Beach.

Jay Adams saw as many as ten Western Purple Martins at the Crockett Lake boxes. In mid-August I observed one food delivery indicating a successful nesting pair, but I only watched for twenty minutes. Jay is caring for boxes there that somehow get knocked off of the pilings.

Mark Borden went the extra mile at his place between Smith and Ebey Prairies, by building and installing four nest boxes. He hosted a total of four nesting pairs this season including one inside his kestrel boxes. He and his wife garden nearby and believe they are being scolded by the birds. Possibly they were just hearing demands for more nest boxes. Mark believes he recognizes martins demanding more nesting habitat in the YouTube video "The Knights Who Say 'Ni'" from Monty Python and the Holy Grail. I think it's a funny portrayal that martins have only one use for our species and that is, to provide them with nesting habitat.

Dyanne Sheldon was unable to put up the gourds I gave her this season, but she has plans. She too observed many adult as well as juvenile purple martins at Red Door Farm off Cultus Bay Road.

It seemed there were far more breeding age birds spending time on Whidbey Island than there are available nest sites. Plenty to keep lots of would-be landlords busy for a good long while.

— *Mary Hollen*

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### General Meeting & Program

**Thursday, October 12**

In Person Only

Doors open 6:30 p.m. • Program at 7

## Discovery Bay Wild Bird Rescue

**Live glove-trained birds**

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