

# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

[www.fidalgo.net/~audubon/](http://www.fidalgo.net/~audubon/)

Vol. 29 No. 1

## JANUARY FIELD TRIPS

by Libby Mills

### Skagit Audubon Field Trips

Beginning birders are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips, and membership in Skagit Audubon is not required. Participants gladly help each other identify and enjoy the birds. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing, and bring field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Don't forget snacks or lunch and a thermos with warm drinks for winter walks. Carpool whenever possible and please offer to contribute to the driver's expense.

Watch the e-mail reminders for the latest information, including any changes and/or additions to the field trip schedule. To be added to the e-mail distribution list contact Libby Mills: [libbymills@gmail.com](mailto:libbymills@gmail.com)

Please note that the field trip descriptions are deliberately brief and do not describe complete trip itineraries. If you plan to join a trip other than at the described starting point, call the leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Plans change as conditions shift and opportunities arise. Timely notification by e-mail isn't always possible.

### Saturday, January 9

#### Blaine, Semiahmoo, Birch Bay, and Lummi Flats

#### 8:00 a.m. to Early Afternoon

This trip will start in Blaine, then go to Semiahmoo, and Birch Bay looking for shore birds and sea birds, then wander South through the Lummi

Blaine, etc. and other Field Trips  
continued on page 5

## JANUARY MEETING AND PROGRAM

### Western Washington Snowfree Winter Hikes

by Craig Romano

Tuesday, January 12, 2010  
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program  
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center  
10433 Bayview-Edison Road  
Mount Vernon, Washington



Craig Romano on Quinalt's North Fork  
Photo by Craig Romano

An encore this month for author, Craig Romano! This January Craig will emphasize "snowfree winter hikes" of western Washington. He will cover hikes from the Columbia River to the British Columbia border.

Craig has a new type of book out, which is really not a book but a deck of cards. Titled "**Winter Hikes of Western Washington Deck**," this card deck features 4-by-6 cards with a route description on one side and a map on the other. Most hikes are snow free year-round.

The deck includes 13 hikes that have never been published in Craig's guidebooks. Additional cards in the set provide essentials for winter hiking, an index of hikes, and information on winter flora and fauna.

Interspersed in Craig's trail talks will be historical tidbits and conservation issues facing our trails and public lands.

"Craig Romano is one of the better guidebook writers around... He covers a lot of territory that other guidebooks have passed up." -- *Seattle Post Intelligencer*



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**Young San Juan Peregrines**  
Photo by Bud Anderson

**MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**General membership meetings of the Skagit Audubon Society** are held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 1043 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon, WA—7:00 PM Social/ 7:30 PM Program—on the second Tuesday of each month, September through June. The board of directors meets at the same location at 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of each month.

**Skagit Audubon Society (SAS) membership** provides a local chapter affiliation and newsletter, **The Flyer**, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. Newsletters from additional chapters can be sought by contacting their websites and membership chairs from links at [www.audubon.org/states/wa/](http://www.audubon.org/states/wa/). **To join Skagit Audubon Society** please use the form below.

**National Audubon Society (NAS) membership is separate from SAS membership** and includes Audubon magazine. National Audubon membership does not provide Skagit Audubon membership; however, NAS will assign you an affiliation with a local chapter. To change your chapter assignment call 800-274-4201. **To join National Audubon Society** use the form below.

**Skagit Audubon Society is a Chapter of the National Audubon Society.** Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

**Skagit Audubon Society Membership Form**

Annual membership in the Skagit Audubon Society includes 10 issues of our newsletter, *The Skagit Flyer*, available on our website. Membership includes all members of your household.

\$20 one (1) year                      \$40 two (2) years

I wish to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ to Skagit Audubon Society.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Clip form/Mail to/Payable to:**

Skagit Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1101  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-1101

Please do not share my personal information with National Audubon Society. (It is the policy of SAS not to share information with any other groups.)

**National Audubon Society Membership Form**

Annual membership to the National Audubon Society includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine. Membership includes all members of your household.

\$20 for one-year introductory membership with one chapter affiliation

\$35 for two (2) year introductory membership (normally \$70)

\$15 for student or senior 62 or older) membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Clip form/Mail to/Payable to:**

National Audubon Society  
Chapter Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 422246-2246  
Palm Coast, FL 32142

Y21  
7XCH

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

For members receiving a paper copy of *The Skagit Flyer*, the mailing label includes your membership expiration date in the upper right corner. If that date is highlighted in **orange** it is a reminder that your membership is about to or has expired. All other members will receive an email notice when their membership is about to expire. *The Skagit Flyer* is published monthly from September through June. Unsolicited material for the next month's *Flyer* should be sent to the editor by the third Saturday of the current month. For questions or problems about your *Skagit Flyer* subscription, contact membership chair: Sheila Pera, [skagitmembers@gmail.com](mailto:skagitmembers@gmail.com).



The birds on Skagit Audubon's logo are of course swans, but not generic ones. They're Trumpeters. Largest of the world's waterfowl, they are one of the Skagit Valley's true avian wonders. The smaller Tundra Swan, more numerous across its range, is here also, and those could be Tundras on the logo too. But I like to think of them as Trumpeters. Now numbering in the thousands, this amazing bird was once very near extinction. Skagit and adjacent counties host more wintering Trumpeters than anywhere else.

In mid-December I joined other Skagit Audubon members for a field trip to Johnson DeBay's Slough Game Reserve, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) site near Clear Lake we call "the Swan Reserve." WDFW and The Trumpeter Swan Society organized this field trip for members of the Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission, legislators, and others interested in seeing a place the Commission has been discussing for two years. There have been boundary and property acquisition issues. Jackie Boss, Pam Pritzl, and Steve Aslanian have been particularly active in presenting Skagit Audubon's support for keeping the reserve as originally envisioned. Things are turning out well, with the Commission resolving to retain the originally intended boundaries of this 331 acre sanctuary and acquire the remaining private property within them. Plans are coming along for paths and viewing platforms to make this an even better spot for wildlife watching.

In preparation for the field trip I visited the reserve the day before. For a while, I had the place all to myself, along with over 500 Trumpeter Swans and a variety of other birds and mammals. In the entire United States, this is the only reserve dedicated to swans. The WDFW's plantings of potatoes and winter wheat have enticed many Trumpeters and Tundras to visit the reserve this winter, and people are coming to see

them. As I walked back towards Francis Road, by the slough I found a birding group from another Audubon society chapter. One person stopped to talk: "Not much around today," was his greeting, and he continued talking along this general theme though there were 3 perched Bald Eagles and a Peregrine Falcon in view. He'd seen them and the other birds too: Hooded Mergansers, Mallards, Ring-necks, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Coots. There was a Double-crested Cormorant, a Belted Kingfisher, Song Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, and more. "Not much around today." Not so long ago Trumpeters, Bald Eagles, and Peregrines were rapidly approaching extinction, while today in the Northwest, birders can readily see these species on the same day and in the same place and yet think the birding's not so great. In a way, I appreciated this birder's remark because it reminded me how easily we slip into complacency about the wildlife around us in Skagit County. That these species have survived and now even thrive is, of course, not a coincidence and not to be taken for granted. The persistent work of caring people ensured their survival and recovery. It's our continued caring and our willingness to act that enables their continued existence today. In the year ahead, you'll hear about opportunities to contribute time and talent to protecting and enhancing places such as the Swan Reserve upon which many species depend.

On page 5 of this newsletter, read about a fast approaching opportunity to act as a citizen and do a bit of lobbying on behalf of the environment. In 2010, I hope you'll resolve to become active in conserving wildlife habitat in even more ways than you already are. Future generations will thank you as we should all thank those who made it possible for us to see Trumpeter Swans, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and so many more species on just any winter day in Skagit County!

**WINTER HAWKWATCHING CLASS IN WESTERN WASHINGTON**  
**Taught by Bud Anderson**

This class is intended for anyone wanting to learn more about the 16 species of hawks, eagles, and falcons that regularly inhabit western Washington. The class will be held on Tuesday nights, 7-9 p.m., beginning on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January and running through the 9<sup>th</sup> of February. It will be held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10433 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon, WA.

During an hour of lecture and an hour of slides, we cover the basics of hawk biology, including their distribution, annual cycles, hunting behaviors and much more. We always put a strong emphasis on field identification. The class meets two hours each week for five weeks and covers a different group of raptors each night. We conclude with a full day winter field trip to the Skagit Flats to observe a wide variety of raptors in the wild. Cost of the 5 week class is \$135.00.



**Peregrine Falcon**  
 Photo by Bud Anderson

The instructor, Bud Anderson, is a raptor biologist with 46 years experience working with birds of prey, both locally and abroad. He is the director of the Falcon Research Group (FRG), a non-profit organization dedicated to the support of field research, public education and the preservation of birds of prey. It is based in Bow, WA.

For more information, please call (360) 757-1911 or e-mail Bud at [bud@frg.org](mailto:bud@frg.org)



Four hikes are scheduled for the first month of the New Year. Unexpected circumstances such as weather, wash-outs, closed trails, logging, construction, or road conditions may cause cancellations or changes in the following hikes. A hike will be canceled if there are high wind warnings, flooding conditions, or snowy or icy road conditions. If you have questions on any of the following, call JOAN MELCHER, 360-424-0407, or e-mail [jdmelcher@comcast.net](mailto:jdmelcher@comcast.net) anytime up until 7:45 the morning of the hike. Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes. If dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times.

**DECEMBER 30 INTERURBAN TRAIL:** Walk off some of those holiday pounds on the Interurban Trail, several options available. Up to 13 or more miles; slight elevation gain. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Clayton Beach Parking lot at the south end of Larrabee State Park on Chuckanut Drive. Return time depends on hike option you select.

**JANUARY 6 FRAGRANCE LAKE:** Hike to a lovely Mirror Lake above Larrabee State Park. 7.3 mile loop. 1,000 ft. elevation gain. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Clayton Beach Parking lot at the south end of Larrabee State Park on Chuckanut Drive. 1 p.m. return to trailhead.

**JANUARY 13 DISCOVER OLD AND NEW ANACORTES:** Wendy Gray will lead us on a walking tour of the features of old and new Anacortes. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Soroptimist Station Tommy Thompson Trail Parking lot. From Highway 20, enter Anacortes on R Avenue. Take a right on 30<sup>th</sup> Street; you will be heading east. Go two blocks and

park in the Soroptimist Station lot. Eight or more miles. You may leave when you return to your car.

**JANUARY 20 WHATCOM FALLS AND CREEK AND THE STIMPSON FAMILY NATURE PRESERVE:** First hike along Whatcom Creek from Whatcom Falls Park to the I-5 Freeway bridge and back, 4 miles round trip, slight elevation gain. Then drive to the Stimpson Family Nature Preserve and hike up to 4 miles there, about 400 ft elevation gain. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the I-5/Cook Road Park-n-Ride **OR** meet at 9 a.m. at the Whatcom Falls Park parking lot on Arbor Street off of Electric Avenue. When your car load returns to your car, you may leave.

**JANUARY 27 SUGAR LOAF AND MT. ERIE:** Hike in the popular Anacortes Forest Lands. Terry Slotemaker, 360-293-6514, will lead us on a 5 mile hike, 1,400 ft total elevation gain. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Similk Park-n-Ride. (At the stop light at the intersection of HWY 20 and the Christianson and March Point Roads, turn **RIGHT** and then an immediate **RIGHT** turn onto the frontage road and soon turn **LEFT** into the Park-n-Ride.) **OR** meet at 9:15 a.m. at the Mt. Erie parking lot off the Heart Lake Road south of Anacortes. 1 p.m. return time to trailhead.

**FEBRUARY 3 LUMMI ISLAND:** Walk a 7 mile loop on the north end of Lummi Island. Island, sea, and mountain views. \$4 foot-passenger ferry fare required. Mostly level, walking shoes recommended. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the I-5/Cook Road Park-n-Ride. No specified return time although most will take the 1 p.m. ferry back.

**SKAGIT AUDUBON FIELD NOTES: NOV. ~ DEC. 2009**

**By Howard Armstrong**

This column reports submitted sightings. Any rare sightings should be accompanied by detailed written documentation and if possible a photograph. A second person to verify rare sightings is extremely helpful. Do not hesitate to call any observer to help document unusual sightings. Also do not hesitate to call if you need clarification on locations.

**Please submit** your sightings to **Howard Armstrong** [godwits@wavecable.com](mailto:godwits@wavecable.com) or 766-6657.

- Greater White-fronted Goose** 1 at Hayton Preserve from 11/29-12/13 (GB)
- Snow Goose** 1 "Blue Goose" at Hayton Preserve on 11/29 (GB)
- Cackling Goose** 53 at Hayton Preserve on 11/29 (GB)  
Unusually high number.
- Tundra Swan** 10 east of Lyman from 11/26-12/4 (GB)
- Wood Duck** 2 near Francis Road on 11/28 (GB) Late Date
- Pied-billed Grebe** 16 on Lake Campbell on 12/5 (GB)
- Eared Grebe** 2 at Samish Island on 11/29 (GB)
- Western Sandpiper** 1 at March Point on 12/13 (GB)
- Bonaparte's Gull** 1 at March Point on 11/28 (GB)
- Heermann's Gull** 1 at Rosario Head on 11/21 (GB)
- Rhinoceros Auklet** 1 at Green Point on 11/21 (GB)
- Northern Pygmy-Owl** 1 at Everett Lake on 12/6 (GB)



- Northern Saw-whet Owl** 1 rescued from road on Samish Island 11/30 (AM)
- Red-breasted Sapsucker** 1 at Dunbar Road yard on 11/25 (JA)
- Northern Shrike** 1 at Cockreham Island on 12/6 (GB)
- Gray Jay** 4 at Sauk Mountain on 12/6 (GB)

- Bushtit** 20+ visiting suet feeder in Dunbar yard daily (JA)
- Hermit Thrush** 1 at Green Point on 11/21 (GB)
- American Pipit** 50 at SWA on 12/13 (GB)
- Cedar Waxwing** 50 at SWA on 12/13 (GB)
- Orange-crowned Warbler** 1 at SWA on 11/29 & 12/5 (GB); 1 at suet feeder in Anacortes on 11/27 & 12/9 (JB)
- Yellow-rumped Warbler** 30 "Audubon" at SWA 12/5 (GB)
- Dark-eyed Junco** 1 "Slate-colored" in Concrete on 12/6 (GB)
- Snow Bunting** 1 at Martin Road, Rockport on 12/7 (POM)
- Brown-headed Cowbird** 1 at Francis Road on 12/5 (GB)
- Pine Siskin** 30 at SWA on 12/5 (GB)
- American Goldfinch** 1 at SWA on 12/5 (GB)

(SWA) Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough  
(JA) Jean Ashby (GB) Gary Bletsch (JB) Jackie Boss (AM) Amber Miller (POM) Paula Ogden-Muse



**Field Trips continued from page 1  
Blaine, etc. continued:**

Flats looking for raptors. Depending on time, we may make a stop at Lake Terrell. Bring your binoculars, and scopes, and whatever food you need; dress for wind and rain. Our morning target birds will be Black Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Pacific Loons, and Black Turnstones. Those who want to carpool to Blaine can meet in Skagit County at the Park and Ride area just south of Cook Road east of the I-5 exit. Be there promptly at **8 a.m.** and get out of cars to find one another. Meet at the south end of the row of cars south of Cook Road.

It takes about an hour to get from Cook Rd to Blaine meeting area. In Blaine meet at the first picnic shelter at **9 a.m.**, (from I-5, take Exit 276, turn left at the light and at the 2nd light turn right which will take you onto Marine Dr. The picnic shelter is on the right just after crossing the railroad tracks.)

Trip leaders: Joan Bird, (cell phone number 360 201-8418 in case someone needs to get a hold of us on that day) or home: 360- 734-1030, [jbird202@hotmail.com](mailto:jbird202@hotmail.com), and Andrea Warner, 360-734-9881, [ajwarner@msn.com](mailto:ajwarner@msn.com).

**Saturday, January 23**

**Port Susan Bay**

**8:30 a.m. to noon**

Winter is a great time to study waterfowl and look for unusual passerines and raptors. Port Susan Bay, a salt marsh estuary and pond just south of the Skagit Delta, is a special spot to do so and leader Libby Mills had been making birding trips there since The Nature Conservancy bought the property back in the late 1990's. This is a good place to see Trumpeter Swans in the estuary and Snow Geese working the fields and bay. We'll meet in Stanwood at 8:30a.m. and carpool to the property. Bring lunch and hot drinks or plan to eat in Stanwood after the trip when your carpoolers are back to the cars.

Please contact leader Libby Mills if you plan to come. She will email you a map to our carpool spot at the north end of Marine Drive at Stanwood, just south of highway 532. Leader Libby Mills: 360-757-4139; [libbymills@gmail.com](mailto:libbymills@gmail.com)

**Saturday, January 30**

**Johnson DeBay Swan Reserve and other sites near Clear Lake and Burlington**

**2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.**

Johnson DeBay's Slough Game Reserve, what birders call "the swan reserve," is the only place in the U.S. specifically set aside for swans. In winter, our home area hosts Tundra Swans and the largest concentration of Trumpeter Swans in the world. To see in one place hundreds of this largest of the world's waterfowl is a remarkable opportunity. After a hiatus of some years, Trumpeter and Tundra Swans are again using the Johnson DeBay Reserve. On this field trip we'll visit the reserve and some other sites near Clear Lake and Burlington, particularly looking for waterfowl and raptors. We'll be at the swan reserve before dusk in hopes of seeing the great white birds flying in for the night. Dress for the weather, including possible wind. Bring binoculars and, if you have one, a spotting scope. A WDFW Conservation Permit is required for parking at the reserve. Meet at the parking lot in front of PETCO in Mount Vernon just off College Way near I-5. We'll form carpools there. For information about swans in Washington, go to

<http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/wswg/washington.htm>

Leader: Tim Manns: 360-336-8753

**Samish Island Bird Walks with Howard Armstrong**

As weather and time permit, Howard Armstrong leads bird walks on Samish Island for beginners and experts alike. To be contacted when these walks are scheduled, send a message to Howard: [godwits@wavecable.com](mailto:godwits@wavecable.com) asking to be added to his e-mail notification list.

**ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY DAY: JANUARY 26, 2010**

**by Tim Manns**

January offers two special opportunities for each of us to take action on behalf of the environment. For some years now Skagit Audubon has joined many other environmentally attuned organizations in Washington State to sponsor Lobby Day. On January 26, buses and carpools carrying hundreds of members of organizations united as the Environmental Priorities Coalition will converge on Olympia. In this annual event citizens come to the capital to hear from legislators and environmental leaders and to learn a little about bringing issues to the attention of our elected representatives. We'll then meet with our legislators to convey support for this year's environmental legislative priorities:

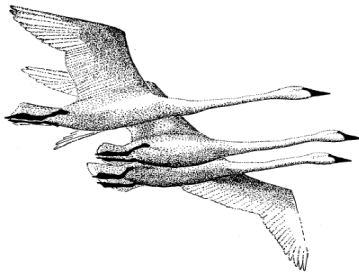
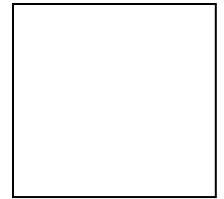
- 1) **Work for Clean Water Bill** to create jobs, rebuild local economies, and clean up polluted waterways
- 2) **Safe Baby Bottles** to phase out BPA from baby bottles, food and beverage containers, and other consumer products
- 3) **Budget for our Environment** to ensure adequate funding for Washington's core environmental protections

To learn more about the coalition, go to <http://www.environmentalpriorities.org/> To register to participate in Lobby Day go to <http://www.pugetsound.org/programs/policy/lobbyday> Meals and bus transportation are included at a very low cost.

Leading up to Lobby Day, on **January 9<sup>th</sup>** there's an opportunity to learn about the issues and about being an effective advocate for environmental concerns by attending the **Coalition's Legislative Workshop** in Seattle. To register go to the first web address above. Some members of Skagit Audubon have already registered. I hope you will too. The more participants the better!



SKAGIT AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 1101  
MOUNT VERNON WA 98273



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Check your  
address label  
for membership  
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## January 2010 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Dec. 27	Dec. 28	Dec. 29	Dec. 30 <b>Hiking:</b> Interurban Trail	Dec. 31	1	2
3	4	5 <b>SAS Board Meeting:</b> 7:00	6 <b>Hiking:</b> Fragrance Lake	7	8	9 <b>Field Trip</b> Blaine, Semiahmoo, Birch Bay, Lummi Flats
10	11	12 <b>General Meeting:</b> Social 7:00 PM/ Meeting 7:30 PM	13 <b>Hiking:</b> Discover old and new Anacortes	14	15	16 <b>Deadline</b> SAS February Flyer
17	18	19	20 <b>Hiking:</b> Whatcom Falls & Creek & the Stimpson Family Nature Preserve	21	22	23 <b>Field Trip:</b> Port Susan Bay
24	25	26	27 <b>Hiking:</b> Sugar Loaf & Mt. Erie	28	29	30 <b>Field Trip:</b> Johnson DeBay Swan Reserve & nearby sites,
31	Feb. 1	Feb. 2	Feb. 3 <b>Hiking:</b> Lummi Island	Feb. 4	Feb. 5	Feb. 6



