

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

www.skagitaudubon.org

Vol. 30 No. 10

DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS

By Libby Mills

The Discover Pass

Field trip attendees and all other Washington recreationists need to inform themselves about the new **Discover Pass**, issued by the state for parking on State Lands including State Parks, (Deception Pass, Bay View, Larrabee, Birch Bay) Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife lands like the Skagit Wildlife Area and the West 90, as well as Dept. of Natural Resources lands. (Chuckanuts, Blanchard Mountain).

<http://discoverpass.wa.gov/>

The passes are issued specifically to a single car and can be purchased for a single day (\$10) or as an annual pass (\$30 -\$35) good for 365 days from day of issue. The new pass has become an essential fee in funding our State Parks for our day use, as well as other state lands. Please remember when you share a ride that sharing in the parking fee and gas costs are always welcome donations to the driver.

About the field trips

Beginning birders and their friends are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips. Membership in Skagit Audubon is encouraged but not required for participation. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing, and bring field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Carpool whenever possible and contribute to the driver's expense. Watch the email reminders for the late changes and/or additions to the field

Field Trips continued on page 5

December 2011

DECEMBER MEETING AND PROGRAM

Back by Popular Demand
Picture Potpourri
By Skagit Audubon Members

Tuesday, December 13, 2011
6:30 Potluck; 7:30 Program
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center
10441 Bayview-Edison Road
Mount Vernon, Washington



House Sparrow feeding Young
Photo by Jim Powell

This December 13th we will be sharing our favorite nature photos to give a collective view of how the Skagit Audubon Society members have viewed nature, both here and abroad.

We have had some fine photos donated already, but there is room for more. Libby Mills is gathering the submitted digital photos and making a "slide show" of them for projection. Libby knows more photographers among you, so please don't be shy ~ show your work to your friends and fellow nature lovers.

If you are shooting a film camera, your slides are welcome and we will show them on a slide projector. Please contact Libby to tell her if you will bring slides. A special request to participate goes out to all junior members who love photography. This show is open to **EVERYBODY**.

We look forward to an evening of sharing among the membership. It's not a contest, just a show! Thanks for participating!

Please email your pictures to libbymills@gmail.com Submit up to five images by Dec. 5th. The best digital size is about 1-3 megabytes each. If they are less than 1 MB in size they don't enlarge well with the projector.



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Common Loon, Winter Plumage

Photo by Joe Halton

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/. **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.)

Using the form below to initially join the **National Audubon Society** will ensure that the **Skagit Audubon** chapter receives a cost share to support local programs.

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

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Telephone No. _____

Clip form/Mail to/Payable to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center Y21
P.O. Box 422246-2246
Palm Coast, FL 32142
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



PRESIDENT'S DECEMBER MESSAGE:

By Tim Manns

The Audubon Society stands out among conservation groups in Washington State for its truly statewide membership. Over 15,000 Washington Audubon members belong to 26 chapters from the Canadian border south to the Columbia River and from the Pacific Coast to the Idaho line. Representatives from many chapters attended October's Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) meeting in Moses Lake. Lynn Teneffoss, National Audubon Vice President for State and Chapter Services, described the strategic planning she's been working on with other National Audubon staff. Lynn told us there are 465 Audubon chapters across the U.S. with 250,000 members. Even more people - 2 million! - read Audubon magazine. Such a large and well-known organization, over a century old, has tremendous potential for addressing today's conservation challenges if it can mobilize the membership to act as "One Audubon."

Under Audubon's new President, David Yarnold, work is underway to come up with a narrative tying together all of what Audubon is and does. The old concept of migratory flyways will be used to help us work collaboratively in protecting areas important to birds ranging beyond the boundaries of our chapter, state, and nation. To choose conservation priorities, Audubon will focus on critical bird species and related threats, in our case, along the Pacific Flyway. The strategic planners have identified key themes, all relevant to our situation here in the Skagit:

1. Working farms, ranches, and forests (with emphasis on encouraging management practices favorable to birds)
2. Sharing seas and shorelines
3. Important Birding Areas (protecting sites designated by National Audubon as of special importance to one or more bird species)
4. Supporting a healthy climate for birds and people (i.e. pollution, global warming)
5. Making communities and cities safe and healthy for birds and people

An underlying premise of the plan is that, "Where birds thrive, people prosper," where "prosper" is to be construed, I think, to include more than economics.

We look forward to the completed plan and to seeing how we can get involved. Some things Skagit Audubon is doing now fit the vision, but there's great potential to do more. One challenge all Washington chapters face is rebuilding our ability to act in a collaborative way across the state. The assumption right now is that we need to re-establish statewide staff to coordinate our actions and give Audubon a presence in Olympia. At this writing, chapter boards across Washington are considering several options. Reaching consensus is quite a challenge. Stay tuned.

SKAGIT AUDUBON FIELD NOTES

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 for the January Flyer to:
Pam Pritzl, ppritzl@frontier.com or 360-387-7024.

WATERFOWL

Greater White-fronted Goose 1 at Hayton Preserve on 10/23/11 (GB)

Tundra Swan 50 on Samish Flats 11/9/11 (GB)

Redhead 1 at Lake Erie on 10/23/11 (GB)

RAPTORS

Peregrine Falcon 1 on Samish Flats 11/13/11 (BK)

SHOREBIRDS

Sanderling 14 at March Point on 11/13/11 (GB)

Dunlin 10,000 on Samish Flats on 11/13/11 (GB)

GULLS

American Herring Gull 1 on Samish Flats on 11/11/11 (GB)

ALCIDS

Ancient Murrelet 3 at Green Point on 10/27/11 (GB)

OWLS

Northern Pygmy-Owl 1 at Howard Miller Steelhead Park on 10/27/11 (GB)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Anna's Hummingbird 1 female in an Anacortes yard on 11/20/11 (JB)

WAXWINGS

Cedar Waxwing 80 at Game Range on 10/30/11 (GB)

WRENS

Bewick's Wren 1 in an Anacortes yard on 11/15/11 (JB)

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler 1 at DeBay Slough on 10/25/11 (GB)

SPARROWS

White-throated Sparrow 1 at DeBay Slough on 10/25/11 (GB)

Field Sightings continued on page 4



Field Sightings continued from page 3

Snow Bunting 1 at March Point on 11/11/11 (RM); 11/12/11 (DT); 11/13 (GB & BK); 11/14 Others

FINCHES, WEAVER FINCH

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch 25 at Sahale Arm on 10/16/11 (GB)

Common Redpoll 1 at feeder near Lyman on 11/18/11 (GB)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (JB) Jackie Boss; (BK) Bob Kuntz; (RM) Ryan Merrill; (DT) Dave Templeton

From: Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife "Crossing Paths" email news notes

August 2010

Don't Help Cats Hurt Wildlife

Wild birds and free-ranging cats are not a good mix.

As a backyard wildlife enthusiast, you control your own cat and talk to cat-owning neighbors about doing the same.

But feral cats – those untamed strays that now total up to an estimated 10 million throughout the United States – can, and have, seriously damaged wild bird and other wildlife populations.

While domestic cats are solitary animals, colonies of feral cats often form around food sources like bird feeding stations, garbage dumps, or places where people deliberately leave food for them. In fact, many colonies of feral cats are supported by well-meaning but misinformed advocates of what's become known as "TNR" management: Trap, Neuter, Release.

The theory behind TNR programs is eventual reduction of feral cat colonies. But sadly, such claims are not substantiated and research shows continuing negative impacts to wildlife (as most recently documented by Darcee Guttilla and Paul Statt from California State University in the Journal of Mammalogy <http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.1644/09-MAMM-A-111.1> .)

Cat colonies often serve as dumping grounds for other unwanted cats. The food provided usually attracts more cats. Contrary to TNR proponent beliefs, colony cats do not keep other cats from joining the colony. As time goes on, some colony cats become too wary to be caught, so rarely are all spayed or neutered. With females capable of producing up to three litters of four to six kittens each every year, it doesn't take long to grow a feral cat colony.

Well-fed cats, either feral or domestic, become "super-predators" of birds and other wildlife. The need to eat and the instinct to hunt can and do function separately. Any cat owner can attest to this fact with stories of "gift birds" laid at their feet by feline companions.

Almost one-fifth of all injured wildlife brought to Washington's wildlife rehabilitators across the state was harmed by cats.

In addition to their threats to wildlife, feral cat colonies pose human health risks. Even TNR-managed colonies can spread disease such as ringworm, toxoplasmosis, cat scratch fever, and rabies, since every cat is not captured regularly for health care.

Free-roaming cats usually have short, miserable lives, due to collisions with motor vehicles, attacks by other domestic and wild animals, accidental poisoning or trapping, and parasites and diseases. The Humane Society of the United States reports that the expected life span of an indoor cat is at least triple that of cats that spend their lives outdoors.

TNR management of feral cats is clearly not in the best interests of anyone, and it often overwhelms the ability of well-meaning people who genuinely want to help animals. It also undermines efforts of responsible pet owners who keep their cats indoors. For more information, see the American Bird Conservancy's "Cats Indoors!" campaign at <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy>



trip schedule. To be added to the email distribution list contact Libby Mills: libbymills@gmail.com. **If you plan to join a field trip some place other than the described starting point**, call the trip leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Trip plans may change!

Saturday, December 3
Samish Island, including Camp Kirby
9:00 a.m. to Noon

Samish Island holds a lot of avian surprises and Howard Armstrong makes regular bird walks seeking them out. For this Saturday trip meet at Howard's place at **10833 Halloran Road on Samish Island** to carpool and the group will move out to the west end to check the beach at Camp Kirby for winter shorebirds and waterfowl as well as forested areas for passerines. Scopes are very helpful when looking at sea birds, the more the better. Warm clothes are essential as it is usually quite cool by the water. There will be a short walk, but a steep hill. **Leader: Howard Armstrong** (godwits@wavecable.com) 360-766-6657

Thursday, December 8
Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary
8:00 a. m. to late afternoon

Keith and Jan Wiggers will be our guides for a trip to the ever-popular Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Feed chickadees from your hand, observe waterfowl and their iridescent plumage at close range, and look for Saw-Whet Owls.



Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Photo by Joe Halton

NOTE the CHANGE in MEETING PLACE!

Meet to arrange car pools at 8:00 a.m. at the new Chuckanut Park-and-Ride at old Hwy 99 and Chuckanut Drive, take I-5 Exit 231, this is about one mile south of Cook Road. Park anywhere and meet at the shelter. Bring appropriate ID for the border crossing – such as a **passport**, or an **enhanced driver's license**, – a crossing-friendly

lunch, and a few dollars for the entry fee and bird feed. There will be additional stops for any special birds reported in nearby areas, which may include Snowy Owls at the Boundary Bay dike and unusual shore and water birds at Blackie Spit. **Leaders: Keith and Jan Wiggers:** (360-757-0772) Cell 360-540-3464.

Saturday, December 17
North Cascades National Park Christmas Bird Count

6:30 a. m. to 4:00 p.m.

Each year the National Park Service does a Christmas Bird Count centered on Newhalem along the North Cascades Highway. The species count is low but often includes surprises and species not seen in the downriver world. When the weather is good, the scenery makes this about the most beautiful Christmas Count you could hope to attend close to home. It may also still be the only Christmas Count taking place in Washington's Cascade Mountains giving even greater importance to the data gathered. Participants meet at National Park Service headquarters, 810 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, at 6:30 a.m. If you would like to participate or have questions about the count, please contact **Bob Kuntz at 360-854-7320**, or **Robert_Kuntz@nps.gov**

Monday, January 2
Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count
All day, followed by a Potluck Dinner

The annual Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count takes place this year on Saturday, January 2. Volunteers are needed to help with this valuable – and fun – endeavor, so plan ahead. Some teams start before dawn to count owls, while others brave the elements from first light to dusk. The data collected by our "citizen scientists" is used to document bird population trends over time. Plan to spend the day birding, and then – as a bonus – enjoy a potluck dinner and good company at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center. After dinner the day's observations are tallied, and fun stories (some of which are true!) are swapped.

For details regarding times, places, and area assignments, Please contact:

Leader/Coordinator: Bob Barry at 360-299-8443



NOTE: THE NEW WASHINGTON STATE DISCOVER PASS IS REQUIRED TO PARK ON STATE PARK PROPERTY.

Hikes continue in December with 4 hikes scheduled. Hikes may be canceled or destinations changed due to weather conditions, logging, construction or other unforeseen circumstances. A hike will be canceled if there are high wind warnings, flooding conditions, or snowy or icy road conditions. All the hikes are on Wednesdays. Questions? Contact Joan Melcher, jdmelcher@comcast.net or 360-424-0407. Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes. If dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times.

DECEMBER 7 EAST SHORE LAKE WHATCOM OR STEWART MOUNTAIN

1. The **East Shore Lake Whatcom** hike is a fairly level hike among trees beside the east shore of Lake Whatcom. It is 6.25 miles round trip with little elevation gain.
2. **Stewart Mountain** hike begins in the same area as the East Shore of Lake Whatcom hike, but it goes up hill on the new Beke Trails and on the power line road. Most of this hike is on trail. It is 5 miles round trip.

For both hikes, meet at 9 a.m. at the new Chuckanut Drive park-n-ride lot. This lot is on the east side of I-5, off Exit 231 of I-5. Car pool according to which of the two hikes you plan to do. You may leave when all in your car are safely back to the trailhead.

DECEMBER 14 DECEPTION PASS AREA

Hike on trails at **Sharpe Park, Pass Lake, Rosario and Bowman's Bay**, making a total of 10.7 miles, with 1,000 ft. total elevation gain. Meet at 9 a.m. at Sharpe Park trailhead off of Rosario Road south of Anacortes. Parking is limited at Sharpe Park so please car-pool, if possible. Joan will shuttle anyone who wants to walk between Sharpe Park and the park access off the Ginnett Road and, at the end of the hike, from Rosario up to Sharpe Park. Contact Joan Melcher (see above) if you need driving directions to Sharpe Park. Joan's last shuttle will leave Rosario at 2:30 p.m. The Washington State Discover Pass is required for your vehicle if you park in Deception Pass State Park.

DECEMBER 21 WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCULPTURES / TREE TOUR & THE BELLINGHAM WATERFRONT

During this Christmas week, take some time off to walk on the Western Washington University campus to view sculptures/trees and to enjoy the Bellingham waterfront. The tour will be led by Sal Russo. Meet at the Village Green in old Fairhaven at 9 a.m. The Village Green is at the corner of Mill Ave and 10th Street. Find parking on the street. After visiting the Western campus, walk north on High Street and then turn left when you reach E. Holly. This will take you to downtown Bellingham where there are many restaurants available for lunch. To return, go south on Railroad Avenue. Take South Bay Trail, which follows the shoreline and enters Boulevard Park. Be sure to take the popular walkway over the bay that leads to Taylor Dock. Continue back to your car in Fairhaven.

DECEMBER 28 DUGUALLA STATE PARK

Spend part of a short day-light day at Duguala State Park, a little-known park north of Oak Harbor. The park's several miles of trails meander through an alder grove, a wetland area, and offer a more challenging, steep trek to a secluded beach. Meet at Duguala State Park at 9 a.m. From SR20 traveling from the north, turn left onto Sleeper Road. Continue on Sleeper Road, approximately 2.6 miles, until it dead-ends at a metal gate. There is about 5 miles of trail, if you do all the loops there is a 500 ft. elevation gain. A **Washington State Discover Pass** is required for your vehicle.

JANUARY 4 INTERURBAN TRAIL

Walk off some of those holiday pounds on the Interurban Trail. There are several options available. One is up to 14 or more miles and a 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. A **Washington State Discover Pass** is required for your car.



!!! CONGRATULATIONS JOSH PARROTT !!!



Song Sparrow

Photo by Josh Parrott

From 8,000 bird photos submitted by 1,300 professional, amateur, and young photographers, two of **Josh Parrott's** photos were winners in the **2010 Audubon Magazine Photography Awards**. Those of you who take part in Skagit Audubon Society's birding field trips have met this avid truck-driving birder. We envy Joshes opportunities to combine his frantic trucking occupation with birding around the U.S.A.

Despite Joshes far flung birding habits, his two photo winners are Washington state birds. The first is a Red-



Red-eyed Vireo

Photo by Josh Parrott

eyed Vireo photographed 20 miles west of Winthrop, while the second is a Song Sparrow from our Whidbey Island's Dugualla Bay. The Red-eyed Vireo photo appears in the National Audubon Society 16-month Calendar, "Conserving and Restoring Birds 2012." To read more about this photo contest link to: <http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/features1101/photoawards-top100.html>

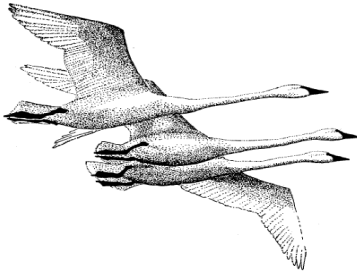
• WDFW NEWS RELEASE

• **Hotline to report dead or ill swans available**

- **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife**
600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/> November 9, 2011
- **Contact: Paul DeBruyn, (360) 466-4345 ext. 281**
- OLYMPIA - In a continuing effort to monitor trumpeter swans that have succumbed to lead poisoning, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has re-established a hotline to report dead or ill swans in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties.
- People can call (360) 466-4345, ext. 266, to report dead or sick swans. Callers should be prepared to leave a message including their name and phone number, and the location and condition of the swans. The hotline is available 24 hours a day through the end of March.
- Some trumpeter swans in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties, and in southwestern British Columbia, die each winter from lead poisoning after ingesting lead shot in areas where they feed.
- Lead shot has been banned for waterfowl hunting in Washington and British Columbia for more than a decade, but biologists believe swans are likely reaching shallow underwater areas in fields and roosts where spent lead shot is still present.
- People who see sick or dead swans are advised not to handle or attempt to move the birds, said Paul DeBruyn, WDFW wildlife biologist. WDFW and Puget Sound Energy employees, as well as volunteers from the Washington Waterfowl Association and the Trumpeter Swan Society, will pick up the birds, he said.
- WDFW and other agencies and organizations have been working since 2001 to locate sources of toxic lead.
- Since 2006, hazing crews have worked to discourage swans from using Judson Lake, a significant source of lead poisoning on the U.S.-Canada border in Whatcom County. As a result of that effort, the number of lead-related swan mortalities in northern Puget Sound dropped to about 75 per year, about 65 percent less than the previous five-year average, said DeBruyn.
- For the third straight year, biologists will place bamboo poles in portions of the lake to keep birds from landing or swimming in areas with concentrations of lead shot, DeBruyn said. Swans that do access those areas will be hazed from the lake.



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



Check your
address label
for membership
expiration date!

Skagit Christmas Bird Counts

Dec. 17 ~ North Cascades
robert_kuntz@nps.gov; 360-424-9099

Jan. 2 ~ Padilla Bay
Bob Barry; 360-299-8443
or alice2@msn.com

December 2011 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Nov 27	Nov 28	Nov 29	Nov 30 Hike: Little Mountain	1	2	3 Field Trip: Samish Island, Including Camp Kirby
4	5	6 SAS Board Meeting: 7:00	7 Hike East Shore Lake Whatcom or Stewart Mountain	8 Field Trip: Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary	9	10
11	12	13 General Meeting: Potluck 6:30 PM/ Meeting 7:30 PM	14 Hike: Deception Pass Area	15	16	17 N. Cascades Xmas Bird Count <u>Deadline SAS January Flyer</u>
18	19	20	21 Hike: W Wash Univ. Sculptures/ Tree Tour & Bell. City Waterfront	22	23	24
25 Christmas Day Jan 1 New Year's Day	26 Jan 2 Padilla Bay Xmas Bird Count	27	28 Hike: Duggulla State Park Jan 4 Hike: Interurban Trail	29	30	Dec 31

Visit the Skagit Audubon Society Website at www.skagitaudubon.org

The Skagit Flyer is printed on recycled paper

