

# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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

Vol. 31 No. 3

## MARCH 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. (Chuckanut, 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

March 2012

## MARCH MEETING AND PROGRAM

### Where We Live!

By Ivar Dolph

Tuesday, March 13, 2012  
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program  
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center  
10441 Bayview-Edison Road  
Mount Vernon, Washington



Western Coralroot  
Photos by Ivar Dolph

*Come travel around Washington with Phyllis and Ivar Dolph. You'll see boats (too many says Phyllis), birds (yeah!), flowers (too many says Ivar), mountains, and islands. We move quickly from Anacortes, to the Olympic Peninsula, Mt. Rainer, Mt. Baker, the Skagit Flats, and finally to Vendovi Island. We reached into our bag of photos and pulled out a few nice ones.*



Leccinum Mushroom Species



California Sea Lion



**SKAGIT AUDUBON**  
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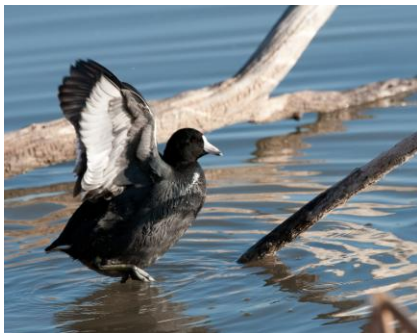
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American Coot  
Photo by Joe Halton

**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/](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.)

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](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)



Much more land needs protection or restoration here in the Skagit, but it's good to pause and appreciate what's been achieved. From the Skagit River's further reaches in the North Cascades down to the bays and islands beyond its mouth, there's a growing collection of protected habitat. North Cascades National Park, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, and the Skagit Wild and Scenic River System managed by the U.S. Forest Service protect millions of acres. State parks at Rockport, Birdsvew, Deception Pass, and on Burrows and other islands plus lands which Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife manages on Fir Island, Samish Flats, Johnson-DeBay Slough, and other spots, and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve managed by the Washington Department of Ecology; together these protect a great variety of habitat. Aquatic reserves at Fidalgo Bay and Cypress Island and over 90% of the island's 5,500 acres are managed by the Department of Natural Resources and owned by you and me. And then there are the county and city parklands such as Sharpe Park, Northern State Recreation Area, Mount Vernon's Little Mountain, Anacortes' Washington Park and the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. Seattle City Light has bought many acres for wildlife habitat along the Skagit downstream of the utility's dams. The Nature Conservancy owns and protects lands in the middle reaches of the watershed while the San Juan Preservation Trust holds Vendovi Island and other lands in fee or under conservation easements in western Skagit County. Several organizations focus on farmland preservation, significant for some of the Skagit's best known birds, while others do habitat restoration. Skagit Land Trust, founded 20 years ago this month with much involvement by Audubon members, has protected thousands of acres by acquisition or donation of land and conservation easements and by lending staff expertise to other organizations.

With so many agencies and non-profits doing good preservation and restoration work, a person might reasonably think all they need do to help is support all this by paying taxes, joining, donating, and volunteering. In fact, there's more we can and need to do (it's fun too). Fragmenting habitat as we develop land for many uses profoundly affects wildlife. Developed areas separate the protected spots mentioned above in ways that can impede movement of birds and other species migrating, foraging, and breeding. Practices followed on many developed acres exclude or jeopardize the health of the creatures with which we share this place on earth. There's a lot you can do to mitigate these effects and help connect the larger protected areas. Owners of more land or shoreline can be even more helpful.

Each March we anticipate the return of migrating birds and begin yard and garden work. It's a perfect time to check the ideas on the National Audubon website "Audubon at Home" ([athome.audubon.org/](http://athome.audubon.org/)) especially the sections "Ten Ways to Make a Difference for Migrating Birds" and ("[Healthy Yards](#)"). Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program: ([wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/index.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/index.html)) has good suggestions too, and I'm sure there are many more sources. For shoreline owners the Washington Shore Stewards program is a way to learn about making a difference ([www.shorestewards.wsu.edu/index.html](http://www.shorestewards.wsu.edu/index.html)). Knowing our wild neighbors and helping keep the Skagit area a good place for them is part of enjoying our shared home and living here well.

### Seeking Skagit Audubon Board Members

Each year there are a few opportunities for Skagit Audubon members to join the board for one or more years. The list of current board members on page two of this Skagit Flyer shows the range of roles each National Audubon chapter needs to fill. There are many ways to get involved.

If you are interested, please contact any member of the Nomination Committee:

Ivar Dolph: 360-293-5951 , Phil Wright: 360-299-8212 , and Tim Manns: 360-336-8753



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 March Flyer to: **Pam Pritzl**, [ppritzl@frontier.com](mailto:ppritzl@frontier.com) or **360-387-7024**.



**WATERFOWL**

**Lesser Scaup** 115 on Lake Erie on 1-22 (GB)

**Ruddy Duck** 2 on Lake Erie on 1-22 (GB)

**LOONS, GREBES**

**Red-throated Loon** 1 resting on sandbar at Skagit Game Range on 2-11 (GB)

**SHOREBIRDS**

**Black Oystercatcher** 1 at March Point on 1-28 (GB)

**Long-billed Dowitcher** 5 at Big Indian Slough on 2-11 (GB)

**OWLS**

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** 3 at Harry Osborne State Forest and 1 at Rockport State Park on 2-11 (GB)

**WOODPECKERS**

**Red-breasted Sapsucker** 1 at Camano Island home on 1-28 (PP)

**VIREOS**

**Hutton's Vireo** 2 (a pair) at Pomona Grange Park on 2-11 (GB)

**SWALLOWS**

**Barn Swallow** 1 at Port Susan Bay [Arlington Eagle Festival] (TM)

**PIPITS**

**American Pipit** 2 on Samish Flats on 1-20 (GB)



*Photo by Joe Halton*

**SPARROWS**

**White-throated Sparrow**

1 seen at Anacortes feeder on 1-25 [seen for about 2 weeks] (JH); 1 seen at feeder in Mt. Vernon 1-29 [seen for about 4 weeks] (JA)

**Snow Bunting** 4 at March Point on 1-28 (GB)

**BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES**

**Rusty Blackbird** 1 at Gear Road on 1-28 (GB)

**Brown-headed Cowbird** 100 at Gear Road on 1-28 (GB)

**FINCHES, WEAVER FINCH**

**Common Redpoll** 12 on Samish Island on 1-20 (GB)

**American Goldfinch** 5 near Cockreham Island on 1-20 (GB)

**Evening Grosbeak** 60 near Cockreham Island on 2-15 (GB)

(JA) Jean Ashby; (GB) Gary Bletsch; (JH) Joe Halton; (TM) Tim Manns; (PP) Pam Pritzl.

**Saturday, March 17**

**10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL "WINGS OVER WATER"**

**10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**Festival Location:** I-5 Exit 275, Blaine Middle School Cafeteria, 975 H St Blaine WA

Great for avid enthusiasts and casual observers! Join this annual event held in one of the Pacific Northwest's premier bird viewing areas. Originally known as the Washington Brant Festival, this festival focuses on the thousands of Brant geese and other birds that visit the shores of Blaine and Birch Bay on their annual migration.

**At 5 pm there will be a talk by Canadian Dick Cannings** - biologist, birder and author living in the Okanagan Valley of southern British Columbia. Dick will be talking about "The Enchantment of Birds."

For more information on this event, please visit: <http://www.blainechamber.com/wow/>



trip schedule. To be added to the email distribution list contact Libby Mills: [libbymills@gmail.com](mailto: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, March 3**

**Deception Pass State Park and Nearby Areas**

**10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Parking permit needed: Discovery Pass**

March is the last big month to see the diversity of Salish Sea wintering bird species. Red-throated Loons feed near West Beach while Pacific Wrens will sing from the forest sword ferns. There is a lot of great potential on this birding trip and you will learn some nice areas to further explore if you are new to the area. Beginners are always welcome.

Meet at the March Point Park and Ride near the refineries off S. March Point Rd.

Leader: Ivar Dolph, [pidolph@frontier.com](mailto:pidolph@frontier.com)

**Saturday, March 10**

**Skagit Flats**

**8:30 a.m. to Early Afternoon**

**Parking permit needed: Discovery Pass**

Rescheduled from the January snows, this is a mostly drive-and-bird field trip across the bird-rich Skagit Flats. Though justly famous for its raptors, the flats also provide numerous opportunities to spot shorebirds, ducks, and songbirds. Bring a lunch if you plan to continue birding into the afternoon. Meet in the parking lot of Snow Goose Produce (it's closed in winter) to arrange carpools. This is on Fir Island Road, just south of the North Fork bridge of the Skagit, also just south of where Rawlins Rd. meets Fir Island Rd.

Leader: Libby Mills, cell 360-708-6975,

[libbymills@gmail.com](mailto:libbymills@gmail.com)

**Friday, March 16**

**“Envisioning a Restored Estuary”**

**Stanwood & Port Susan Bay Preserve**

**10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

Julie Morse, ecologist with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Mount Vernon, will present a program for Skagit and Pilchuck Audubon about TNC's plans for restoring the estuary at the preserve. Following the program and light refreshments we will carpool to the preserve for an 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. birding field trip on the dike. Dress warmly – it can be breezy there. Bring lunch if you like. Meet at the Stanwood-Camano School District, #401 Administration and Resources Center, 26290 Pioneer Highway, Stanwood, WA, 98292.

Leader: Julie Morse ( [jmorse@TNC.org](mailto:jmorse@TNC.org) )

**Sunday, March 25**

**Birding Aboard the Lightkeeper**

**9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Expert Skagit Audubon birder, **Gary Bletsch**, will help us find and learn about seabirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and possibly other wildlife up close and personal in their natural habitat. The *Lightkeeper* will leave Skyline Marina in Anacortes bound for Williamson's Rocks and other points either side of Rosario Strait. We'll depart at 9:00 a.m. sharp. Please arrive by 8:45 a.m. We'll return between 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Dress warmly and bring a lunch or snack and something to drink.

Cost is \$45.00 per person. Reservations are required.

Phone or email Tim Manns: 360-336-8753 or

[bctm@fidalgo.net](mailto:bctm@fidalgo.net)

Confirm your place by sending a check to “Skagit Audubon” no later than March 13, the date of the Audubon monthly meeting. There is a limit of 33 participants.

This trip will serve as a small fundraiser for Skagit Audubon and for the Northwest Schooner Society's project of preserving Burrows Island Light Station.

Learn more about the **Northwest Schooner Society** at:

[www.nwschooner.org/lighthouse.htm](http://www.nwschooner.org/lighthouse.htm)

**Olympic BirdFest 2012**

***Sequim, Washington, March 30 – April 1***

Grab your binoculars and join the Olympic BirdFest 2012 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center. The stage is set ... quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready ... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, and Pygmy Owls. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours; and a gala banquet.

**For more information call 360-681-4076, or email: [info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org)**



Four hikes are scheduled for March. Unexpected circumstances such as unforeseen trail problems, weather, snow, landslides, floods, logging, construction, or road conditions may cause cancellations or changes in the following hikes. If you have questions or want information on any of the hikes, call **JOAN MELCHER**, 360-424-0407, or e-mail at [jdmelcher@comcast.net](mailto:jdmelcher@comcast.net). All the hikes are on a **WEDNESDAY**. Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes. If dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times.

### **MARCH 7 LILY LAKE LOOP**

Hike the Lily Lake Trail to Lily Lake and North Butte on Blanchard Mountain. Return to trail head via Max's Shortcut and the Larry Reed Trail. It is a 8.5 mile loop with 1,600 ft. total elevation gain. We will divide into a faster and slower group; car pool accordingly. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Chuckanut Drive park-n-ride at exit 231 from I-5 on the east side. At 2:00 p.m. return to the trailhead for the faster group; 3:00 pm for the slower group. **A Discover Pass is required to park at the trailhead.**

### **MARCH 14 SHAW ISLAND**

This is a loop hike on Shaw Island with a 300 ft. total elevation gain. We will be stopping for lunch at Hoffman Cove and visiting a San Juan Island County park. Depending on the route there are anywhere from 5.6 to 8.4 miles. The round trip foot passenger fare is required on the ferry. Meet at the Anacortes/San Juan Islands Ferry Terminal, 2100 East Ferry Road (follow 12<sup>th</sup> Street west from Commercial Ave.). Allow ample time to find parking. One must pay to park at the terminal so you may wish to pool rides. Ferry departure time is 7:40 a.m. **NOTE EARLY FERRY TIME.** Return ferry times from Shaw to Anacortes are 12:20 p.m. or 4:15 p.m.

### **MARCH 21 GOOSE ROCK PERIMETER HIKE**

Hike a loop that includes Cranberry Lake, beaches, the south side of Deception Pass, Cornet Bay, all with a 450 foot climb up Goose Rock. There is a total elevation gain for the day of 750 feet. Meet at 9 a.m. in the east side parking lot at Cranberry Lake near the main entrance to Deception Pass State Park. There are 6.2 miles for the basic loop hike; add 4.0 miles if you hike on beach south to the naval station border (10.2 miles). You may leave when your car or people has returned to the trailhead. **A Discover Pass is required to park in the Deception Pass State Park.**

### **MARCH 28 GUEMES ISLAND**

The hike is 6 miles round trip on Guemes Island. There are 4 miles on the road shoulder and 2 miles on the new trail to the top of Guemes Island. Meet at the Guemes Ferry in Anacortes at 9:15 a.m. The ferry is located at 500 I Avenue. We will take the 9:45 a.m. ferry to Guemes. The round trip foot passenger fare is \$2.50 or \$1.50 for seniors. There is no set return time.

### **APRIL 4 PINE AND CEDAR LAKES AND RAPTOR RIDGE**

Hike to two very pleasant lakes in the Chuckanut Mountain area. There is up to 9.6 miles one way with shuttle cars. 1,900 ft. is the total elevation gain. The 1.7 mile uphill route from the Pine/Cedar Trailhead is steep. The 4.0 mile down-hill route via the new Raptor Ridge Trail down to the Lost Lake Trail and then on down to the North Chuckanut parking lot is less steep and will lead to Arroyo Park, the Interurban Trail, and finally the North Chuckanut parking lot. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the North Chuckanut parking lot located off Chuckanut Drive just north of California Street at about milepost 18.5. 2:30 p.m. is the return to the North Chuckanut lot if the weather is poor; 3:00 p.m. is the return if the weather is sunny. Drivers will be shuttled back to their cars.



## Southern Cross Peregrine Project

### Tracking a peregrine falcon between the Arctic and Chile: A project of the Falcon Research Group

*Pictures & text from the Falcon Research Group Blog by Bud Anderson:*

<http://frgroup.frg.org/>



#### “Island Girl” Begins Her Third GPS Migration South

**20 Sept. 2011** After spending her summer on Baffin Island, “Island Girl” has started her southbound migration towards Chile.

This will be her third trip south wearing a backpack GPS satellite transmitter. She was originally captured and tagged by Kathy Gunther and Bud Anderson at the Putu dune field of southern Chile on 15 March 2009. She also went through the 2010 earthquake with us in Chile.

She appears to have a really precise internal clock as she has departed Baffin on either the 20th or 21st of September each time, a rough departure period of about 24 hours, and very near the fall equinox (September 23).

**01 Oct. 2011:** So “Island Girl” is making her way out over the Gulf right now. Sounds like the weather could be much better. Headwinds that strong (15-20 knots) are very difficult to overcome.

**03 Oct. 2011:** Frankly, I am relieved to report that “Island Girl” is definitely heading for the Texas coast. She is very likely flying south towards Padre Island as I write this blog. “Island Girl” continued to follow the coast south to Brownsville and crossed into Mexico there. She looks to have flown over Matamoros, Mexico.

**13 Oct. 2011:** On her 24th day of migration this fall, “Island Girl” flew about 90 miles (145 km) across Honduras. An interesting aspect of her behavior is the variation in her route. It is different from her previous 2 fall migrations.

**30 Oct. 2011:** She roosted at 5,200 feet in elevation (1,505 meters) on the lower slopes of an active Andean strato-volcano, Volcan Galero (14,028 feet). This is the most active volcano in Colombia, having erupted just last year.

#### “Island Girl” Returns Home-Safely Completes her Third GPS Migration

**12 Nov. 2011:** So after **53 days of migration**, crossing through **twelve countries** (Canada, US, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile) and two hemispheres, and flying at least **8,628 miles (13,885 km)**, “Island Girl” has completed her migration.



Peregrine with backpack  
GPS Satellite Transmitter

#### “ISLAND GIRL”: THE FUTURE

Some of you have asked already about our future plans for the project. We have decided to return to Chile in February 2012 once again. We want to see how the area has recovered from the devastating earthquake of 2010. We also have two satellite transmitters remaining to be used and we want to learn more about the falcons in Chile and this remarkable migration that they make.

If you like this project and would like to keep it going, please contribute to the cause.

To be part of the project, we ask that you send your donations of any amount to the:

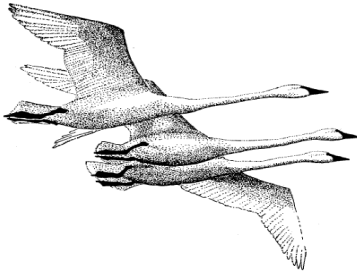
- Falcon Research Group
- Box 248, Bow, WA 98232 USA

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- **Thanks everyone and see you again in the fall!**



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



Check your  
address label  
for membership  
expiration date!

## March 2012 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Feb 26	Feb 27	Feb 28	Feb 29 <b>Hike:</b> Sugar Cube & Whistle Lake	1	2	3 <b>Field Trip</b> Deception Pass State Park, plus
4	5	6 <b>Board Meeting:</b> 7:00	7 <b>Hike:</b> Lily Lake Loop	8	9	10 <b>Field Trip</b> Skagit Flats
11	12	13 <b>General Meeting:</b> Social 7:00 PM/ Meeting 7:30 PM	14 <b>Hike:</b> Shaw Island	15	16 <b>Field Trip:</b> Stanwood: Nature Conservancy Port Susan Bay Tour	17 <b>NW Bird Festival</b> Wings Over Water <b>Deadline</b> SAS March Flyer
18	19	20	21 <b>Hike:</b> Goose Rock Perimeter	22	23	24
25 <b>Field Trip:</b> Birding aboard the <i>Lightkeeper</i>	26	27	28 <b>Hike:</b> Guemes Island	29	30	Mar ch31 - April 1 <b>Olympic BirdFest 2012 Sequim, WA</b>
Mar ch31 - April 1 <b>Olympic BirdFest 2012 Sequim, WA</b>	April 2	April 3 <b>Board Meeting:</b> 7:00	April 4 <b>Hike:</b> Pine & Cedar Lakes, & Raptor Ridge	April 5	April 6	April 7

Visit the Skagit Audubon Society Website at [www.skagitaudubon.org](http://www.skagitaudubon.org)

The Skagit Flyer is printed on recycled paper

