

# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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

Vol. 35 No. 9

## NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS

By Libby Mills

### About the field trips

Beginning birders and 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 latest information, including any changes and/or additions to the field 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, November 12  
Wiley Slough & Fir Island  
8 a.m. to early afternoon**

Meet at Skagit Wildlife area on Fir Island, Wylie Road, at the boat launch parking lot. Pack your November birding outfit, a scope, and bins, a warm thermos and lunch and

*Field Trips continue on page 6*

## NOVEMBER MEETING AND PROGRAM

### Raptors and Wind Energy Development by Jim Watson

Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016

7:00 Social 7:30 Program

Padilla Bay Interpretive Center  
Mt. Vernon, Washington



### Wind Farm & Golden Eagle

*Photos by Jim Watson*

As a form of green energy, wind power continues to expand worldwide and is now making inroads into Western Washington.

Unfortunately, for birds and bats there is a side of wind power that is less than green, because it often results in their displacement from habitats or direct fatality from turbine strikes. Raptors are particularly vulnerable to these effects.

Join us as we review what the last 15 years of research of wind power/raptors in eastern Washington has taught us in regard to impacts to golden eagles and Buteos. We'll provide an overview on the state-of-the-art tools for avoiding or minimizing impacts to raptors, limitations to those tools, and the opportunities and challenges we face in western Washington with wind power development.

Jim Watson is a Wildlife Research Scientist with the Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife. His recent work evaluates impacts of wind energy and lead contaminants on golden eagles and ferruginous hawks.



# SKAGIT AUDUBON

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### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation: Tim Manns  
[conservation@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@skagitaudubon.org)  
360-336-8753

Education: Sheila Pera  
[skagiteducation2@gmail.com](mailto:skagiteducation2@gmail.com)

Field Trips: Libby Mills  
[libbymills@gmail.com](mailto:libbymills@gmail.com)  
360-757-4139

Hikes: Joan Melcher  
[jdmelcher@comcast.net](mailto:jdmelcher@comcast.net)  
360-424-0407

Bird Sightings: Pam Pritzl  
[birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org)  
360-387-7024

Membership: Pam Pritzl  
[membership@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:membership@skagitaudubon.org)

Programs: Catherine Carter  
[programs@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:programs@skagitaudubon.org)

Publications: Jackie Boss  
[jackieaboss@yahoo.com](mailto:jackieaboss@yahoo.com)  
360-299-8067

Newsletter Distributor: Barbara Craner  
[craner2@frontier.com](mailto:craner2@frontier.com)  
360-770-3898

### REPRESENTATIVES

Jean Ashby  
[jeanash66@gmail.com](mailto:jeanash66@gmail.com)  
Jane Brandt  
[janeb@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:janeb@skagitaudubon.org)  
Ivar Dolph  
[pidolph@frontier.com](mailto:pidolph@frontier.com)  
Stephanie Fernandez  
[ferstephanie07@yahoo.com](mailto:ferstephanie07@yahoo.com)

Ron Holmes  
[ronh@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:ronh@skagitaudubon.org)  
Alice Turner  
[alicet2@msn.com](mailto:alicet2@msn.com)

Hospitality: Stephanie Fernandez  
[ferstephanie07@yahoo.com](mailto:ferstephanie07@yahoo.com)

Webmaster: Ron Pera  
[skagitaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:skagitaudubon@gmail.com)



**Hooded Merganser**  
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 <http://wa.audubon.org/audubon-locations/>. **To join Skagit Audubon Society** use the **1st** 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 **2nd** 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 at: <http://www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter>. Membership includes all members of your household.

Check one:  \$20.00 one (1) year  \$40.00 two (2) years

Additionally, I wish to donate to Skagit Audubon Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Donations of \$100.00 or more receive a personal field trip by a Skagit Audubon field trip leader.*

Check one:  New Membership  Renewing Membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

SAS does not share your contact information.

**Clip form/Mail to/Payable to:** Skagit Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1101  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-1101

Use the form below to initially join the **National Audubon Society**.

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please mail chapter-created new membership forms to address below: (Payable to same)**

National Audubon Society Y21  
P.O. Box 97194  
Washington, DC 20090-7194  
Attn: Chance Mueleck

For membership related questions and address:  
Email: [customerservice@audubon.org](mailto:customerservice@audubon.org)  
Phone: (844) 428-3826

*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:*

*Pam Pritzl [membership@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:membership@skagitaudubon.org)*



Giving Thanks!

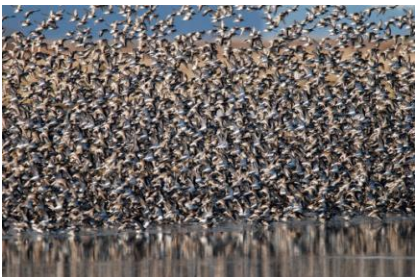
November brings the season to gather family and friends to reflect on reasons we're thankful. For me, it's time to grab binoculars and scope to get outdoors in search of the return of our winter migrants. I'm so thankful to live in Skagit County.

With the fall harvest complete and winter crops planted, the “flats” are a great place to bird. The Skagit Flats offer the best sightings for Snow Geese and Swans. Find your way to Fir Island and the Skagit Wildlife Area where there are multiple stops to view the estuary and Skagit Bay, a globally recognized Important Bird Area (IBA). The only non-hunting location is the Fir Island Farms Reserve, which has recently undergone restoration to the intertidal estuary. This is a good location to look for ducks and the many raptors, who prey on them including eagles, hawks, and falcons. Next, head to the Samish Flats to search for raptors at the “West 90.” This location is left at the end of Bow-Edison Road onto Samish Island Road. You will see the parking lot straight ahead at the 90 degree turn. This is an active hunting area October through January, so stay in the parking lot where great birding can be viewed; particularly look for raptors. Scan the area for Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks and multiple Falcon species. This is a great spot to look for Short-eared Owls too.



Northern Harrier  
Photo by Ron Holmes

Moving to the shoreline of Skagit County you can find a “flight, fling, or trip” of Dunlins. These are terms to describe a group of Dunlins. And yes it is a “trip” to see thousands of Dunlins take flight as a predator approaches the shoreline. Great places to observe Dunlin are Padilla Bay and Fidalgo Bay at March Point. On those bays look for loons, ducks and grebes. However to find the best views of grebes and alcids drive over to Fidalgo Island and the great shoreline parks there. Green Point in Washington Park is a favorite location to view Marbled Murrelets and Red-necked Grebes in winter plumage. Head to Deception Pass State Park for views of loons, especially the Red-throated Loons hunting using the current in the Pass.



Flight of Dunlins  
Photo by Jim Powell

These are just a few of the locations to take family and friends before and after the Thanksgiving feast. Also, what a great way to escape for fresh air and birds while you fend off the seasonal pounds. I'm thankful for the opportunity to bird in Skagit County and be part of our active Skagit Audubon Chapter. Look for field trips and additional birding locations on our chapter website [skagitaudubon.org](http://skagitaudubon.org).

So be sure to have a current **Discover Pass** to access lands managed by the Washington state departments of Natural Resources and Fish & Wildlife. This includes area State Parks. Visit [discover.wa.gov](http://discover.wa.gov) to find a convenient location or vendor to purchase your pass.

Enjoy the season!



# SKAGIT AUDUBON NOVEMBER CONSERVATION REPORT

## BY TIM MANNS

### Ballot Initiative 732: Taking Action on Climate Change

Last month's conservation report discussed Initiative 732, which would set up the first carbon tax in the U.S. If you haven't voted yet, consider supporting I-732. Climate change is the most serious threat to birds. In Washington 189 species are in danger of losing so much habitat that they will disappear from our state. I-732's revenue neutral carbon tax is coupled with a 1% reduction in the sales tax rate, elimination of the Business & Occupation tax, and provision of aid to low-income households. It would make our state a shining example to others in acting decisively to roll back carbon emissions. Because gridlock in Washington, D.C. has made legislative action on climate change impossible, the states need to lead the way. Now it's up to us as voters and as individuals making daily decisions with consequences for the earth's climate.

### Fossil Fuel Projects: It's Far From Over

Three years ago Shell Anacortes began applying for permits to build the East Gate Crude by Rail project to receive 6 trains of highly volatile Bakken crude oil per week, each with 100 or more tank cars. Many organizations and individuals worked to get Skagit County's original decision changed to a requirement that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for this project. Shell's sudden withdrawal of its plans days after the draft EIS was released in October was a surprise and a relief. The story, though, continues. Presumably, the refinery is seeking other ways to obtain the crude it requires. Bakken, tar sands, or other unrefined oil could arrive via one of the existing pipelines or by increased ship and barge traffic. Watch for: 1) Governor Inslee's decision on Tesoro-Savage's plans for a 5 unit-train/day crude oil terminal on the Columbia River at Vancouver 2) plans under review for 2 smaller oil terminals at Grays Harbor, and 3) plans for terminals on the British Columbia coast. Any of these could ship crude to March Point. Also, by the time this newsletter comes out we may see the draft EIS for Tesoro's plans to produce xylene from gasoline at March Point and ship it to Asia for making plastic.

Many fossil fuel projects in the Northwest have been withdrawn in the last few years, but a significant number are still alive. It's easy to cast conservation groups as adversaries of the companies involved in procuring coal and oil or transporting it or burning it. Audubon here in Skagit County certainly appreciates the local economic importance of the refineries, their role in providing the fuel we use and many good-paying jobs, their charitable support for great causes in our community, and the role our neighbors and friends who work at the refineries play in making Skagit County a good place to live. At the same time, we would be remiss to act as though nothing needs to change. We need to strongly urge these companies, which are overseen from afar, to do right by our and their community by reducing the air and water pollution the refineries generate and by working towards a better future, one in which fossil fuels are ultimately a mere memory. Climate change presents a huge challenge which can only be met if each person and organization does her, his, or its part, not least of all the big fossil fuel corporations.

Fish & Wildlife Commission supporting the revised listing. We hope the "endangered" designation adds additional impetus to a long-overdue project of the WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to write a long-term strategy for managing marbled murrelet habitat on state trust lands. Some of the most important such habitat in Washington is among the 13 million acres DNR oversees, much of it held in trust for school districts and other public entities. For over a century, the approach has been to treat these trust lands strictly as sources of revenue for the beneficiaries. If the marbled murrelet is to survive in Washington, that approach needs updating to see preservation of a rare and wonderful species as a public benefit at least as important as dollars.

### Two more forest management matters: the Blanchard Forest and Urban Forestlands

The Blanchard Forest is comprised of state trust lands north of Burlington at the southern end of the Chuckanut Mountains. Unless the 2017 state legislative session approves \$7.7 million to purchase replacement timber lands, a core area of this forest will be cut to produce revenue for certain schools, hospitals, and other public beneficiaries in Skagit County. A hard-won agreement among the DNR and various conservation and recreation

*Conservation Report continued on page 5*





groups will be for naught if this funding is not forthcoming. Besides being a very popular hiking spot, the area to be cut is adjacent to excellent marbled murrelet nesting habitat. And this is a rare place, the only place, where the Cascade foothills reach saltwater. Write your state legislators and let them know you want Blanchard Forest preserved (see **Skagit Land Trust: <http://www.skagitlandtrust.org/pages/takeaction.aspx>** or **Conservation Northwest: <http://www.conservationnw.org/what-we-do/forests/blanchard-mountain>**.)

In 2015 a loophole in the Forest Practices Act was among the factors enabling clearcutting of Mount Vernon's largest remaining privately owned forest tract, which the city had hoped to add to adjacent Little Mountain Park. There was no protection for most of the property's many wetlands and minimal protection for its 2 streams. Skagit Audubon continues to work with Audubon Washington's lobbyist to pursue amendment of the Forest Practices Act to close this loophole. We believe all forest lands in the state's Urban Growth Areas should be subject to local critical areas ordinances when those are more protective than the state's timber harvest rules.

## SKAGIT AUDUBON HIKING ~ NOVEMBER

BY JOAN MELCHER

Cold season hikes begin this month. We move from the high country to lowland hikes near the water and on the foothills. Hikes may be canceled or destinations changed due to weather, logging, construction or unforeseen circumstances. A hike will be canceled if there are high wind warnings, predictions of very heavy rain, flooding conditions, or snowy or icy road conditions. Because this is hunting season, wear a bright-colored item of clothing. For information on or questions about 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.

### WED. – NOV. 2 – LITTLE CRANBERRY LAKE

Ron Larson will lead a hike in the Anacortes Forest Lands in the Little Cranberry Lake area. This hike will omit those trails closed due to the forest fire that occurred this summer. The exact miles and elevation gain are not known at this time. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the trailhead located on "A" Avenue between 37<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Streets in Anacortes. You may leave when all in your vehicle return to the trailhead. Historically, all are back by 1 p.m.

Ron can be reached at [ronlarson@comcast.net](mailto:ronlarson@comcast.net) or at 360-299-8350.

Option II meet at 9 a.m. at the North Chuckanut parking lot located on the east side of Chuckanut Drive between the Old Samish Highway and California Street. This is at about milepost 18.5. Option II hikers will pool rides and drive to the Cyrus Gates Overlook where the hike will begin. Return time to the North Chuckanut parking lot will be 2 p.m. Drivers will need to be shuttled back to the Cyrus Gates Overlook **A Discover Pass IS NOT required** for those parking in the North Chuckanut parking lot. **but a Discover Pass is required in Larrabee State Park.**

### WED. – NOV. 9 – LOST LAKE

Hike to a mirror lake in a rock trench on Chuckanut Mountain. Both options below will utilize a new trail, the Rock Trail, completed in 2014. It connects the Cyrus Gates Overlook with the Lost Lake Trail in the trench below. There are two options:

**Option I:** is a STRENUOUS 10 mile hike with an elevation gain of 2,400 ft. For this hike meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Lost Lake parking lot (formerly known as the Clayton Beach lot) at the south end of Larrabee State Park off Chuckanut Drive. Return time for this hike will be 3 p.m.

**Option II:** is a much less strenuous 7.2 mile hike with several hundred feet of elevation gain. For

### WED. – NOV. 16 – LITTLE MOUNTAIN

Explore the trails on Little Mountain southeast of Mount Vernon, WA. This is a part of the Mount Vernon City Park system. A number of options are available. There will be elevation gains. Meet at 9 a.m. on the Little Mountain Park access road. Park on the side of the road, before the gate. (The gate opens at 10 a.m.) The Little Mountain Park access road is off the Little Mountain Road which is off the Blackburn Road. You may leave when you return from the hike.

### WED. – NOV. 23 – THANKSGIVING WEEK

No Hike

*Skagit Audubon Hiking continued on page 6*



**WED. – NOV. 30 – THE TURSI TRAIL**

Hike the new Tursi Trail in Deception Pass State Park. This trail, which was dedicated this year on National Trails Day, connects Deception Pass State Park with the Anacortes Forest Lands and completes the long-awaited Cross Island Trail on Fidalgo Island. This hike is 5.2 miles round trip. The total elevation gain is about 400 feet. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Pass Lake Parking Lot. Try to pool rides as parking is fairly limited in this lot.

**A Discover Pass is needed to park here.**

*Field Trips continued from page 1*

join Bob Kuntz for a morning (and potentially longer) of birding in one of Skagit Valley’s finest areas for winter birds. We’ll seek the big waterfowl of Skagit fame, herons and skulking songbirds, birds of prey and more. There is always a surprise when enough eyes and enthusiasm gather to look out on a November day. Sometimes it is helpful for the leader to know if you plan to attend, for notifying last minute in the event of impossible weather.

**Leader: Bob Kuntz, contact at 360-424-9099 or [annebobkuntz@gmail.com](mailto:annebobkuntz@gmail.com)**

**Nov. 16, Wednesday  
Birds, then Brew in Anacortes  
8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Extend your October Fest celebration with morning birding followed by beer tasting and lunch in Anacortes. We'll begin the day with a visit to Washington Park, then stop at Ship Harbor and on to other Fidalgo Island hotspots. We're sure to see the return of many waterfowl as we say farewell to the last fall migrants. After birding, we'll break at noon for a refreshing beer tasting and lunch in town. Come for the birding. Come for the brew. Join us for both. Bring binoculars and a scope, if you have one. Expect some walking on smooth trails. Meet at Washington Park, in Anacortes at the first day use parking lot to the right after entering the park. **Leader: Mark Perry, 931-623-2084 or [runningspring3305@yahoo.com](mailto:runningspring3305@yahoo.com)**

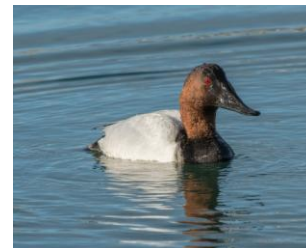
**Saturday November 19  
North Whidbey Island  
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

Meet at March Point “Park and Ride” to carpool,

**WED. – DEC. 7 – EAST SHORE LAKE  
WHATCOM**

The East Shore of Lake Whatcom hike is a fairly level hike among trees beside the east shore. The hike is 6.25 miles round trip, with little elevation gain. 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. You may leave when you return to the trail.

off of Highway 20, at the light east of Sharpe’s Corner and just south of the oil refineries. Join us as we bird the auto route that visits Deception Pass, Dugualla Bay, Swantown, Penn Cove/Coupeville and Cornet Bay. This trip is mostly in and out of cars with little walking involved. We’ll search north Whidbey Island, mostly the shorelines, for a variety of charismatic sea ducks and puddle ducks, on both



**Canvasback**

*Photo by Joe Halton*

salt and fresh water. Some of the nearby trees and shrubs can enrich the birding with a variety of small songbirds and a few shorelines offer shorebirds some years. Bring your binoculars and a scope, if you have one, a lunch and hot thermos. Good rain and wind gear are essential as shore-lines can be cooler than surrounding protected areas. Many birds will be distant, but beginners are welcome to come learn from more experienced participants. Sometimes it is helpful for the leader to know if you plan to attend, so he can notify you of last minute changes in the event of impossible weather.

**Leader Ivar Dolph, contact at 360-293-5951, or [pidolph@frontier.com](mailto:pidolph@frontier.com)**

**Philchuck Audubon**  
*Seeks Energetic Person to Begin*  
**Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program**  
Where: Everett  
When: Jan. 2 ~ Oct. 31, 2017  
Job description at [philchuckaudubon.org](http://philchuckaudubon.org)





## December Potluck and Membership Show



THE TRADITION CONTINUES .....

**When: Tuesday, Dec. 13      Time: 6:45 Potluck ~ 7:30 Program**  
**Program Organizer: Ronan Ellis**

**EMAIL PHOTOS TO: [ronaniellis@gmail.com](mailto:ronaniellis@gmail.com)**

- **Ronan asks:**      Send **no more than 8** photos in **.jpeg** format
- **Videos** can be no longer than 1 minute and in **.mov, .mp4** or **.avi** format
- **Include Name of Photographer, Description of Subject, and Location**
- **Topics include Wild Nature, Flowers, Birds and other Animals, Landscapes, Trips, Backyard Habitat, and Hikes**

**Pictures** should have sufficient resolution to project well:  
The photo size should be of at least 3 megabytes

**Please Send Your Pictures ASAP ~ NO LATER than DECEMBER 1**

### Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count 2016



Bald Eagles  
Adult & Immature  
*Photo by Ron Holmes*

This year is the 117<sup>th</sup> for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the nation's longest-running citizen science project. The CBC has been around 5 years longer than the National Audubon Society itself. Each year between December 14 and January 5, thousands of volunteers across the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America, Bermuda, and the Pacific Islands count bird species and individuals within established count areas. Count volunteers scour a designated 15-mile diameter circle, noting every bird they see or hear. There are almost 2,500 counts with about 2,000 of those in the U.S.

In western Skagit County the count circle centers on March Point by Padilla Bay. That's why this count is officially known as the "Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count" though it includes a much larger area than Padilla Bay. Skagit Audubon Society has sponsored and organized this count for several decades, each year recruiting birders to work in teams focused on 16 or more sub-areas of the circle.

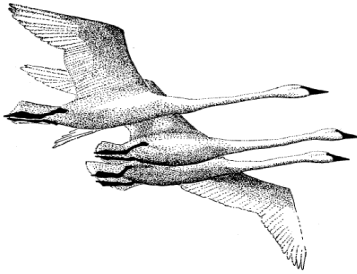
The National Audubon website has lots of information about the Audubon Christmas Bird Count including history, data, and how the information gained has been used (for example, to predict climate change's effects on birds). Go to <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

**This year's Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count will take place December 31<sup>st</sup>.** It may seem unusual to choose the day before New Year's, but we are constrained by the allowed count period and the need to avoid weekends traditionally used for other Christmas Bird Counts nearby. Many Padilla Bay CBC birders are needed to help with several of those counts, so we need to avoid conflicting dates. Later this fall, details, forms, and maps will go out to area leaders for the count.

For information about participating, contact count organizer Tim Manns  
([conservation@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@skagitaudubon.org) or 360/336-8753).



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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**VOTE!!**  
**Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016**  
**The Future is in YOUR Hands**  
**VOTE!! VOTE!! VOTE!!**

*Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count  
&  
December Potluck and Membership Show  
See page 7*

*November 2016 Calendar*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Oct. 30	Oct. 31	1 Skagit Audubon Board Meeting: 7:00 PM	2 Hike: Little Cranberry Lake	3	4	5
6	7	8 Skagit Audubon General Meeting: Social 7:00 PM Meeting 7:30 PM	9 Hike: Lost Lake	10	11	12 Field Trip: Wiley Slough & Fir Island
13	14	15	16 Hike: Little Mountain Field Trip: Birds, Brew-Anacortes	17	18	19 Field Trip: North Whidbey Island
20	21	22	23 No Hike Thanksgiving Week	24 Thanksgiving Day	25	26
27	28	29	30 Hike: Tursi Trail Dec. 7 Hike: Lake Whatcom	Dec. 1	Dec. 2	Dec. 3

Visit the Skagit Audubon Society Website at [www.skagitaudubon.org](http://www.skagitaudubon.org) The Skagit Flyer is printed on recycled paper

