

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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JANUARY MEETING – PRESENTED IN PERSON ONLY

"Celebrate the New Year with Snowy Owls"

Presented by: Paul Bannick

Tuesday, Jan. 9th at 7:00 pm

**7:00 pm Meeting
6:30-7:00 pm Social**

NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING LOCATION (JANUARY ONLY)-SEE BELOW

Please join us at Skagit Station, 105 E Kincaid St., Mt. Vernon, for this presentation by award-winning photographer Paul Bannick, whose breathtaking images inspire education and conservation.

Paul's numerous photography awards include prestigious contests hosted by Audubon Magazine and the International Conservation Photography Awards. His work has been prominently featured in many bird guides, including Audubon, The Smithsonian, and the National Wildlife Federation. Paul's work has also appeared in several publications, including the New York Times, Sunset, Birds & Blooms, and Alaska Air Magazine. Paul is an accomplished public speaker and best-selling author of several books. Photo: Snowy Owl by Paul Bannick



Meeting Logistics: the doors open at 6:30 pm. Cookies and other treats will be provided but attendees must bring their own personal non-alcoholic beverage, including coffee or tea.

Monthly Meeting Update: In response to the COVID-19 virus, some of our general meetings are being held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center while others will be available on Zoom only. Hybrid meetings are not currently offered. Please check the monthly program description for meeting details. As with our field trips and other events, only vaccinated, symptom-free individuals should attend meetings in person. Please visit our website: www.skagitaudubon.org for updates.

ABOUT SKAGIT AUDUBON: 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. General membership meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 pm. Some meetings will be presented in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon and other meetings will be available on Zoom only. Hybrid meetings are not currently offered. Check the monthly Flyer for upcoming meeting details. The board of directors meets on the first Tuesday of each month, September through June, at 7 pm. Skagit Audubon membership provides a local chapter affiliation and newsletter, the Skagit Flyer, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. The Skagit Flyer is produced monthly from September through June and full color issues are available at: www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter. Unless noted, all images, drawings, clip art, etc. appearing in The Skagit Flyer are in the public domain. We reserve the right to edit.

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Other Volunteers

Newsletter Distribution: John Edison

NEW PHONE NUMBER FOR REPORTING SICK/INJURED/DEAD SWANS AND GEESE: WDFW has updated the hotline number for reporting sick/injured/dead swans and geese. Please call 360.466.0515 for assistance. WDFW continues to remind the general public not to handle sick, injured, or dead swans and geese.

FIELD TRIPS – by Colleen Shannon

Beginning birders and friends are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing and bring field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes (if you have them). Please note specific COVID guidelines in each field trip description. Questions? Contact Colleen Shannon, fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org.



SignUp Genius

Skagit Audubon subscribes to SignUp Genius. Most field trip leaders are using it to register for their field trips. It is quite easy to use. Just click on the link provided and follow all the prompts. You should receive an email confirmation within a couple of minutes if your registration was successful. If you have difficulty please let Colleen know at fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org.

Saturday, January 13 – Washington Park, Anacortes – Sea Birds and More

8:30 am until late morning

Trip Leader: Tim Manns (bctm@fidalgo.net) or 360.333.8985

Washington Park is both scenic and a good place to see Marbled Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, loons, grebes, cormorants, sea ducks, and more. This trip will particularly focus on seeing birds on and over the water, but we'll encounter forest species as well. We'll walk some of the loop road and spend concerted time at Green Point (total walking distance: 1 – 1 ½ miles, paved or grassy surface). Please bring binoculars (and a spotting scope if you have one). Meet at the parking lot near the beginning of the loop drive. Dress for the weather, including wind. **Registration required using this link:** <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-46873553-seabirds>

Saturday, January 27 - Port Susan Bay The Nature Conservancy Property

12 Noon until 2:30 pm (approximately, depends on weather)

Trip Leader: Jeff Osmundson (education@skagitaudubon.org)

Winter is a great time to study waterfowl and look for unusual passerines and raptors. Port Susan Bay is a salt marsh estuary and pond just south of the Skagit Delta. We have the potential to see thousands of snow geese, ducks, and trumpeter swans in the estuary. There are usually lots of eagles and hawks, and if we are really lucky, a short-eared owl sometimes works the area. We will have our typical winter high tides which means you should bring binoculars and spotting scope (optional) to see out to the bay. Dress for the weather, including wind. Plan to park at the end of Boe Road which takes off west from Marine Drive just south of Stanwood. Please bring a "hunter orange" vest or hat if you have one.

Directions: From I-5 (exit 212) to WA-532 W in Snohomish County. Continue on WA-532 West. Turn left onto 267th St NW and then right onto Pioneer Hwy. In 1.4 miles turn right onto Boe Road, follow to end.

Registration required: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-46875005-port>

Skagit Audubon Reads, by Colleen Shannon

This year your Program Committee is initiating a new program, Skagit Audubon Reads. The book chosen for our inaugural year is In Search of Meadowlarks by John Marzluff. We encourage you to read it and plan to have a discussion centered around the book prior to Dr. Marzluff's program for Skagit Audubon next February. We are also planning to host a field trip to one of the farms featured in the book. Please join us in reading Dr. Marzluff's exciting book about the impact of agriculture on birds and other creatures.



CONSERVATION – by Tim Manns

Audubon Washington's Legislative Priorities

The Washington State Legislature begins a fast and furious sixty-day session January 8th. Fewer bills will pass than in the alternate-year long session, and the two-year budget will be merely tweaked. Audubon Washington's priorities include ensuring the landmark Climate Commitment Act is neither weakened nor repealed and continues to direct investment towards climate mitigation and adaptation. The 2021 act caps the greenhouse gas contributions of the state's highest emitters and invests subsequent revenues in cutting carbon pollution. Audubon needs our chapter's support on this, on efforts to conserve and restore coastal areas, and more. Twenty-six organizations plus Audubon comprise the Environmental Priorities Coalition, whose several priorities also need our voice. Please read this brief summary: [2024 audubon legislative priorities one pager 12.2023 2.pdf](#) and sign up to receive Audubon Washington action alerts ([Take Action and Advocate Effectively | Audubon Washington](#)).

A Very Happy Birthday - the Endangered Species Act at Fifty

Dan Flores' *Wild New World – The Epic Story of Animals & People in America* lays out the long and disturbing story of the wanton destruction of wildlife in the United States. The Passenger Pigeon, once Earth's most numerous bird, completely wiped out. The Carolina Parakeet, North America's only native breeding parrot, also gone plus seven other bird species. Millions upon millions of bison and other mammals reduced to near extinction. Unbridled shooting and profit-taking eliminated an abundance of which we can only dream. And then gradually in the last century came an awakening to what we had done. At last, on December 28th fifty years ago, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was signed after passing the Senate 92-0 and the House 390-12. Flores writes, "... for the priceless genetic legacy of wild species that evolved in North America's deep time and existed here in health long before we ever arrived ... surely the Endangered Species Act of 1973 is America at its best." The Supreme Court later called the act "the most comprehensive legislation for the preservation of endangered species ever enacted by any nation." The ESA acknowledges the moral and ethical obligation we have to the other-than-human world. It acknowledges that we humans should restrain our impulses at least enough to let other species survive.

Every day in the Skagit we see this act's importance. Without the ESA we would probably not see Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons, their populations recovered because this act mandated their protection and restoration. The Marbled Murrelet and Northern Spotted Owl, both still imperiled, would likely be gone already without the ESA as would the old growth habitat they require. Many acres are set aside from logging to protect these birds. In mandating protection of murrelet and spotted owl habitat, the ESA has protected many other species as well.

Times have changed. Every Congress now sees bills introduced to weaken the ESA. During some administrations, executive action has undercut the act. Agencies have not always diligently implemented it. Passing the ESA was a great victory a half-century ago, and it remains an essential bulwark against loss of biodiversity and of much that Audubon members hold dear. Fifty years is a long time, but the act's longevity is no assurance it will endure. Let's certainly celebrate the Endangered Species Act but be ever prepared to rise to its defense.

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Conservation continued from Page 4

There are near constant opportunities to add your support to preserving and restoring ESA listed species, to reverse some of the damage done to North America's wildlife. Recently Audubon members and chapters voiced their support once more for restoring the grizzly to the North Cascades. Until January 16th the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, responsible for implementing the ESA, will take comments on the draft plan to prevent the invasive Barred Owl from driving the Northern Spotted Owl to extinction ([Service Seeks Public Comment on Draft Strategy to Manage Invasive Barred Owls | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#)). The North American Wolverine, rare in the North Cascades, was recently listed as a threatened species because climate change is impacting its essential winter habitat ([North American wolverine receives federal protection as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#)). A long overdue draft recovery plan for the Canada Lynx, also impacted by climate change and present in very limited numbers in our state, is open for comment through January 30th ([Canada lynx draft recovery plan available for public review & comment | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](#)).

Celebrate the survival of species - - and the Endangered Species Act making it possible. Then add your voice to recovering America's wild heritage.

For information on conservation issues and advocacy, see Conservation Notes on the Skagit Audubon website here: <https://skagitaudubon.org/~dphwzgi/conservation/notes>

Birds and Climate Change Exhibit at the Museum of Northwest Art: Through January 21st, the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner is showing "Surge: Mapping Transition, Displacement, and Agency in Times of Climate Change" ([Surge 2023 — Museum of Northwest Art \(monamuseum.org\)](#)). This exhibit includes Skagit artist Natalie Niblack's bird portraits inspired by National Audubon's 2019 report [Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink | Audubon](#). See a preview of Niblack's fine bird portraits and ornithologist Dr. John Bower's informative captions at [Paintings: 66 Birds/ 3 Degrees | natalie-niblack \(natalieniblack.com\)](#).

FUN FACTS - by Mary Sinker – visit www.allaboutbirds.org to learn more.

American Goldfinch – the Washington State bird, follows a very strict vegetarian diet and only occasionally and unintentionally swallows an insect. American Goldfinches even feed seeds exclusively to their nestlings.

Great Blue Heron – one of our most ubiquitous birds, Great Blue Herons use kelp beds as floating rafts to perch on while hunting for prey that swims by.

Trumpeter Swan – thousands of swans spend the winter months in the Skagit Valley. When they return to their northern breeding grounds and are incubating their eggs, they keep their eggs warm by covering them with their webbed feet.

Pilated Woodpecker – the largest woodpecker in the Skagit Valley and it is not uncommon for them to show up in yards or city parks if sufficient forest habitat is nearby. Their characteristic rectangular excavations in tree trunks can be deep enough to sometimes cause smaller trees to snap in half.

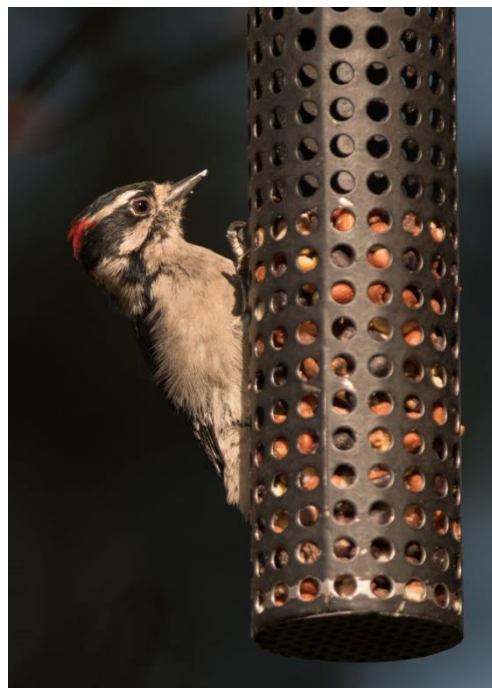
MEET THE DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Dryobates pubescens*) by Jeff Sinker

Petite, active, acrobatic, and frequently confused for its larger lookalike, the Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpeckers are easily attracted to backyard feeders offering suet, black-oil sunflower seeds, peanuts, and peanut butter. Downies also join flocks of small songbirds such as chickadees and nuthatches when foraging in parks, woodlots, orchards, alongside streams and mixed forest habitats. Mixed flocks are a common occurrence in the bird world because there are more eyes to both watch out for predators and to look for food sources. Adult male Downy Woodpeckers have a red patch on the back of their head and females lack this marking. Interestingly enough, fledgling Downies (both sexes) have red on top of their head.

Downies love insects and the larvae of beetles plus they also eat ants, caterpillars (including tent caterpillars), apple borers, corn earworms and bark beetles. It might be surprising to learn that about 25% of their diet comes from plants, including berries, grains, and acorns. These small woodpeckers can also access food sources that larger woodpeckers cannot reach, like insects or larvae living on or inside the stems of weeds, grasses, and perennial flowers.

Like all woodpeckers, the Downy doesn't sing a song to attract a mate or establish a territory but instead drums loudly against tree trunks, other pieces of wood or if he wants to make a real impression the metal supporting pole of your satellite dish! Once a pair bond has been formed, both the male and female will excavate the nest hole in a dead tree or in the dead part of a live tree (they are also attracted to nest boxes). This process can take one to three weeks and when completed the bottom of the nest cavity is lined only with wood chips. A successful pair will raise one brood per season. Egg incubation takes 12 days followed by a nestling period of 18-21 days.

These charismatic little woodpeckers are numerous and according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, their populations were stable between 1966 and 2015. A global breeding population of 1.3 million is estimated and they are a species of low conservation concern. Downies do well in young forests and have been less affected by the thinning and clearing of older forests. Learn more at: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Downy_Woodpecker. Photo credit: Downy Woodpecker by Joe Halton



FIELD SIGHTINGS – by Ann Skinner (will return in February, 2024)

This column reports a summary of selected sightings. Rare sightings should be submitted with detailed written documentation and if possible, a photograph. A second person to verify rare sightings is encouraged. Do not hesitate to contact any observer to help document unusual sightings.

Please submit your sightings to birdsightings@skagitadubon.org. For recent updates on bird sightings, check out **ABA Tweeters** and **Skagit County Ebird List** on the SAS website (Birding menu, Bird Sightings submenu).

FROM THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY – The Great Backyard Bird Count is Coming! February 16-19, 2024

When: February 16-19, 2024

Where: Wherever you are (this is a global event)

Learn more on how to participate and submit your checklists (participation over all three days is not required) here: www.birdcount.org

Join birders from around the world for this annual global event to count the species observed in your backyard, park, or anywhere you happen to be on these dates. This event is free, and the data collected is used by researchers and scientists to determine which birds are being seen – or not seen – as they work to develop population trends and gather other important information.

In 2023 a total of 7,728 species were recorded through 334.2 thousand checklists submitted from 253 subregions globally. The US led the way with 197,767 checklists followed by India with 56,131 and Canada with 27,535. This event is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society.

EDUCATION CORNER – by Jeff Osmundson

The Education Committee and its wonderful volunteers have been busy planning for upcoming presentations and festivals plus giving programs and presentations to various school groups. Our ability to engage with the public is only limited by the number of members and volunteers who are available.

Recently, we worked with Mount Vernon Girl Scout Troop 46232 and had some nice presentations for the mixed 3rd and 5th graders. We did a What is a Bird presentation and a habitat discussion, including a habitat coloring project. We saved time for lots of good looks and Q&A with our mounted birds. We are looking forward to an additional program in January 2024, including a field trip and a tutorial on using binoculars.

If you are interested in learning more about our educational outreach programs, contact Education Committee Chair, Jeff Osmundson, education@skagitaudubon.org



HIKING

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, the Skagit Audubon-sponsored hiking program has been discontinued. Thank you to the volunteers who organized this program for many years.



**SKAGIT AUDUBON SOCIETY
PO BOX 1101
MOUNT VERNON, WA 98273**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Skagit Audubon Society Membership Form

Membership: ____ \$20/one year **OR** ____ \$40/two years ● ____ New **OR** ____ Renewal

Additionally, I wish to donate \$_____ to Skagit Audubon Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Please designate my donation to: ____ General ____ Education ____ Scholarship Fund.

Payment: (1) Pay online with a credit card or PayPal (see skagitaudubon.org for details) **OR** (2) Mail this form & your check to: Skagit Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1101, Mt. Vernon WA 98273-1101

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/: _____

ZIP: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

By providing your email address and those of any household members, you/they consent to SAS's use of electronic transmission, such as email and website postings, for notices about SAS business. You may revoke this consent at any time on written request to the Secretary of SAS.

Membership includes those members of your household whose names & emails you provide to us:

Name: _____ Email: _____

(If you have more than one additional member of your household who wishes to become a member of SAS, please provide their name(s) and email address(es) to membership@skagitaudubon.org)

I want to be involved in (check all that apply): Education ____ Conservation ____ Field Trips ____ Other ____

(To join National Audubon Society, a separate membership, please visit: www.audubon.org)