



The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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MARCH MEETING – PRESENTED IN PERSON AND ON ZOOM

"The Rough-legged Hawk Project: 10 Years of Research on an Understudied Raptor"

**Presented by: Jeff Kidd, Kidd Biological and Neil Paprocki
Tuesday, March 14th at 7:00 pm**

Please join us for this month's meeting which will be held in person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon and on Zoom. To attend the Zoom event, please register at: <https://bit.ly/SASMar1423>. Preregistration for Zoom is required and please only one Zoom registrant per household. After you register, you will receive an email with the link to sign in at the time of the event. If you register and are unable to attend the Zoom event, please cancel your registration. Thank you. Questions? Contact programs@skagitaudubon.org.

Jeff Kidd, Kidd Biological Inc, has worked in western North America and Scandinavia since 1995 conducting research on burrowing and spotted owls, northern goshawks, peregrine falcons, golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, white-tailed kites, and turkey vultures, but his passion is rough-legged hawks. In 2014, Jeff and Nina Kidd founded "The Rough-legged Hawk Project" to investigate migratory movements of rough-legged hawks in Northern California. Approximately 200 GPS transmitters have been deployed throughout North America. Jeff currently supervises the raptor strike avoidance program at Sea-Tac Airport. (Photo: Dark Morph Chicks, Nunavut, Canada)



Neil Paprocki has a M.Sc. in Raptor Biology from Boise State University where he studied wintering raptors in North America and is a PhD Candidate at U of Idaho where he is currently studying differential migration in Rough-legged Hawks and other avian species. Neil worked with HawkWatch International from 2014-2018 where he first became involved in the Rough-legged Hawk Project.

In-person attendees must be fully vaccinated, and please do not attend if you have any symptoms of illness. Masks are optional.

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 on Zoom only. Others will be hybrid meetings on Zoom and in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon. 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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Hospitality: Pamela Maxwell
Newsletter Distribution: John Edison

In response to the COVID-19 virus, some of our general meetings are being held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center with an option to attend via Zoom, while others will be available on Zoom only. Please check the monthly program description for meeting details. As with our hikes and field trips, only vaccinated, symptom-free individuals should attend meetings in person. Please visit our website: www.skagitaudubon.org for updates.

CONSERVATION – by Tim Manns

At this writing in mid-February, the priorities of Audubon Washington and the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) are faring well in the state legislature. February 17th is the cut-off date for policy bills to pass out of the first committee in which they were considered. There are further cut-off dates as bills wend their way through the legislative process. Most bills will not reach the Governor's desk. Last year the bill updating the Growth Management Act to require that counties and certain municipalities address resiliency to climate change in their comprehensive plans came within a hair's breadth of passing when time ran out. This year there is strong optimism the bill will make it (HB 1181 [Washington State Legislature](#) & SB 5203 [Washington State Legislature](#)). Significantly for Skagit County, this bill will require addressing such climate change effects as sea level rise.

The Washington Legislature is working on the state's two-year budget, which has three parts: Operating, Capital, and Transportation. All three have implications for conservation. Audubon and the EPC are urging that the revenue from last session's landmark carbon tax legislation, the Climate Commitment Act (CCA), be spent as intended; that is, on supporting meaningful climate action and community resilience to climate change. See [EPC One Pager \(waconservationaction.org\)](#) for specific investments we hope to see. We are fortunate to live in a state where major policy has passed to address climate change. Now comes the challenge of implementation. Contact your state legislators and urge them to spend CCA dollars as intended. These revenues come from the state's largest emitters of greenhouse gases.

While contacting your legislators also urge them to increase funding for salmon habitat restoration (another EPC priority: [EPC One Pager \(waconservationaction.org\)](#)) and to approve Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's request for funding to support research on and management of non-game species, a perennially underfunded responsibility of the department central to Audubon's interests ([2023 audubon legislative priorities one pager 12.2022 0.pdf](#)).

The state legislative session will end April 23rd. Although the session is fast-paced and our legislators are all but overwhelmed by the number of bills to be considered, hearings to be had, decisions to make, they do want to hear from constituents and are influenced by what we have to say. By letter, email, phone call, or in person, make your voice heard. The Washington Legislature's website is easy to use and full of information about how to participate: [Legislature Home \(wa.gov\)](#). See particularly [Washington State Legislature Participating in the Process](#). Previous issues of this conservation report and the Conservation Notes on the Skagit Audubon website give further information. Help make and keep Washington State the place we want it to be for us and our wildlife neighbors.

On a different note, during February word came of a request to Skagit County for a permit to erect a large billboard near the Conway I-5 interchange. There was conflicting information about what type of display this billboard would carry but widespread, uniform opposition to erecting any such sign in an area designated an Agricultural Scenic Corridor. The fields in the vicinity are a frequent foraging area for Trumpeter and Tundra Swans and Snow Geese, whose comings and goings could be adversely affected by a large barrier lit at night. The effect of lights on migrating birds presents an additional concern for Skagit Audubon. At this writing the county's decision on the permit request is pending.

For more information about conservation issues Skagit Audubon is following, see Conservation Notes on the Skagit Audubon website ([Skagit Audubon Society - Home](#)) under the Conservation tab.

HIKING

Skagit Audubon is pleased to offer scheduled hikes. Please visit our website: www.skagitaudubon.org/activities/hikes for full details on the hikes. All hikers must have a current signed liability release form (available on the website) on file prior to participating in any Skagit Audubon hike. Please be prepared to follow current COVID pandemic safety protocols and all hikers must be fully vaccinated. Questions? Contact Tom Ozretich, tom.ozretich@gmail.com; 360.424.8466 *Means Wash. State Discover Pass required.



- Mar. 1:** Goose Rock Perimeter Hike*
- Mar. 8:** Guemes Island
- Mar. 15:** Lily Lizard Lakes Loop (LLLL) or Trailhead to Samish Overlook*
- Mar. 22:** Around Mt. Erie
- Mar. 29:** Whistle & Toot Hike
- Apr. 1:** Pine & Cedar Lakes and Raptor Ridge or Lake Padden

A Message from your Nominations and Governance Committee

We are looking for board candidates. We especially need people who have an interest in outreach to the community. We need your ideas and energy in welcoming our newer members, creating engagement among all members, and reaching out to nonmembers, particularly in communities less familiar with the wonderful world of birding. The election process will be explained in future communications. If you have an interest in serving on the board or want to nominate someone, please contact any of the following: Lisa Hopkins (finance@skagitaudubon.org), Ann Skinner (anns@skagitaudubon.org), Don Jonasson (donjonasson@hotmail.com), Jeff Osmundson (education@skagitaudubon.org), John Day (president@skagitaudubon.org), Katherine O'Hara (katherineoh@skagitaudubon.org) or Tim Manns (conservation@skagitaudubon.org).

MEET THE WHITE-throated SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), by Jeff Sinker

With its melodic "Oh-sweet-Canada" song, and distinctive white throat, White-throated Sparrows are found along brushy edges near woods, meadows, disturbed areas, and ponds. They readily visit



feeders for millet and sunflower seeds during migration and winter. In addition to seeds, these sparrows eat many small fruits and berries, tender spring buds and blossoms and copious quantities of insects during nesting season. Females build their nests, usually on the ground, using moss, twigs, wood chips, grasses, and similar materials. She lays 1-6 eggs and a pair will raise 1-2 broods. Incubation takes 11-14 days and nestlings fledge after 7-12 days. White-throated Sparrows hop rather than walk across the ground, and often use both feet to scratch backwards before springing forward to retrieve their meal.

While still abundant, the North American Breeding Bird Survey found they declined annually by an estimated 33% over their range from 1966-2019 and in the US the rate of decline was 69%. These sparrows migrate at night and can fall victim to striking lighted buildings and other tall structures. Learn more at: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/white-throated_sparrow. Photo credit: Joe Halton

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.



Saturday, March 11 – Wylie Slough Dike Raise Project Tour – 10 am until Noon

Trip Leader: Jeff Osmundson, education@skagitaudubon.org

Skagit Audubon is pleased to partner with WDFW Skagit Wildlife Area Manager, Greg Meis, on this informational field trip prior to the construction and reconstruction of the dike at the Headquarters Unit. The site will be closed for dike work from about March 30 to Nov 3, 2023. Due to safety and security concerns, including use and storage of heavy equipment and dump trucks entering and leaving the area, the Headquarters Unit will be closed to the public during that time. This closure will include evenings and weekends during the construction period. Public notice of specific dates will be provided once the work has been scheduled.

This is your opportunity to see, firsthand, what the proposed changes are and how they will impact the site. Please use the following link for a more complete description of the area and project:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/habitat-recovery/puget-sound/estuary-restoration-projects/wiley-slough-restoration-project>

We will meet at the Pavilion in the Headquarters parking lot at 10am. Please use Sign up Genius so that you will be notified of any changes for the field trip. This trip is accessible, and a restroom is available.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-wiley>. **Wash. State Discover Pass required for parking.**

Saturday, March 25 – Johnson/DeBay Slough Swan Reserve (Wash. State Discover Pass required)

9 am until Noon (pre-registration required, see below, maximum 15 people)

Trip Leaders: Julie Kinder, juliek564@gmail.com and Jeff Osmundson, education@skagitaudubon.org

Address: 22767 Francis Rd., Mt. Vernon (4.8 miles from Laventure & College Way intersection)

We will be looking for Trumpeter Swans that winter here as well as numerous other waterfowl. Adjacent trees and brush provide habitat for many species, including sparrows, meadowlarks, flickers, and red-winged blackbirds. Raptors in the area include eagles, hawks, and harriers. Dress for the weather, including mud, and bring binoculars and spotting scopes if available. Carpooling by private arrangement is encouraged and all participants must be fully vaccinated for Covid. This trip is not accessible, and no restrooms are available. All parking is at the Francis Road entrance. Pre-registration is required by using this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-johnsondebay>

EDUCATION CORNER – by Jeff Osmundson

Thanks to all of the volunteers that have helped get the Education Committee going again. In this new post Covid era we are reestablishing some contacts and making new ones. You, the Audubon membership, have been really wonderful to step up and volunteer for projects.

Our latest outing was with the Mount Vernon Transitional Kindergarten at Fir Island Farms where we had over a **dozen** SAS volunteers help to show 4 and 5 year olds eagles and herons and much more. It was an amazing morning with over 80 children from several schools.

We have also been working with Children of the Valley, the Salish Sea School and several libraries and think that our opportunities are only limited by the number of our members willing to become involved. I'll remind everyone that you don't have to be the best birder, you can try it one time or schedule a regular routine, you can focus on one or two age groups or adults. All you have to do is be willing.



Our policy will be to always have two volunteers (minimum) for each event or class. If you are interested, please contact me at education@skagitaudubon.org.

Once again, thanks to all of our members and the Education Committee for such tremendous progress. Photo credit: Bob Banks

What do birds and airplanes have in common?

Safety! The juvenile Cooper's Hawk pictured here was relocated to Skagit County through the "Raptor Strike Avoidance Program at Sea-Tac".



The program, one of the first in the US, began in June 2001 and its purpose is to reduce the number of birds at SeaTac Airport who pose a safety risk to planes. This young hawk is one of two juvenile Cooper's Hawks to be captured, banded, and released in Skagit County this winter.

The Cooper's Hawk mainly eats birds and if there are trees around, they can be found from open fields to backyard gardens. They adapt well to suitable habitats and also supplement their diets with mice, squirrels and other small rodents or mammals.

Learn more about the Cooper's Hawk at www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Coopers_Hawk and about the Raptor Strike Avoidance Program at Sea-Tac at www.portseattle.org/programs/sea-airport-raptor-strike-avoidance-program

FIELD SIGHTINGS – by Ann Skinner

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).

WATERFOWL

Eurasian Wigeon (3) SF, 1/24 (NOH)
Trumpeter Swan (100+) SF, 1/24, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)
Harlequin Duck (7) WA Park, 1/22 (NOH)
Ring-necked Duck (1) Cranb. Lk., 1/27 (NOH)
Northern Shoveler (2) SF, 1/24 (NOH)
Red-breasted Merganser (2) Rosario, 2/2 (NOH)
Greater Scaup (1) Rosario, 2/2 (NOH)
Long-tailed Duck (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)

GREBES AND CORMORANTS

Horned Grebe (1) WA Park, 1/22 (NOH)
Red-necked Grebe (1) WA Park, 1/22; (1) Rosario 2/2 (NOH)
Brandt's Cormorant (2) Rosario, 2/2 (NOH)

SHOREBIRDS

Greater Yellowlegs (1) Wylie, 1/29 (NOH)
Black Oystercatcher (21) Similk Beach, 1/25, (3) Rosario (NOH)

LOONS

Red-throated Loon (200) Rosario, 2/2 (NOH)
Common Loon (3) WA Park, 1/22, (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Cooper's Hawk (1) Cap Sante, 2/6, (JH); (1) (EFI), 2/5 (RW)
Northern Harrier (4) SF, 1/24; (3) Wylie, 1/29 (NOH)
Red-tailed Hawk (3) SF, 1/24; (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)
Rough-legged Hawk (1) SF, 1/24 (NOH)
Bald Eagle (25) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)
American Kestrel (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)
Merlin (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)
Sharp-shinned Hawk (1) (EFI), 2/5 (RW)

SHRIKES

Northern Shrike (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)

OWLS

Great-horned Owl (1) Cranb. Lk., 1/27 (NOH)
Barred Owl (2) Cranb Lk., 1/27 (NOH)

Short-eared Owl (3) SF, 1/24 (NOH)

KINGLETS

Golden-crowned Kinglet (1) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)

WRENS

Bewick's Wren (1) Wylie, 1/29 (NOH)

THRUSHES & PIPITS

Varied Thrush (2) Cranb. Lk., 1/27 (NOH)
Townsend's Solitaire (1) 2/8 Mt. Vernon (KS)
American Pipit (2) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)

FINCHES & SPARROWS

White-throated Sparrow (4) Cap Sante, 2/6 (JH)

BLACKBIRDS

Western Meadowlark (6) SF, 2/4 (NOH), (SAS)

(FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; **(SF)** Samish Flats **(EFI)** East Fidalgo Island **(KS)** Ken Salzman; **(JS)** Jeff Sinker; **(MS)** Mary Sinker; **(NOH)** Neil O'Hara; **(JH)** Joe Halton **(TM)** Tim Manns **(RW)** Regan Weeks

**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 ____ Hiking ____ Other ____

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