



The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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APRIL MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM

Birds of the Olympic Coast

Presented by: Chris Williams, Olympic National Park Ranger

Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 PM

Come explore the diversity of birds found on the Olympic Coast. From bald eagles to tufted puffins to black footed albatrosses, over 100 species of birds can be found along the Olympic Coast. We will look at the different ways that these birds use the ocean and how they are adapted to do so, and how organizations work together to create a healthy coast for seabirds and other marine organisms, as well as some of the challenges birds face.



Chris Williams is an Interpretive Park Ranger at Olympic National Park in Port Angeles. His love for the outdoors started when he was young and fell in love with wildlife. After completing a master’s degree in environmental education, he worked at North Cascades National Park, and in 2021 joined Olympic National Park as a Ranger. He loves to lead guided walks on the coast and snowshoe walks at Hurricane Ridge.

Please register for this Zoom event at: <https://bit.ly/apr2022SAS>

Preregistration is required and limited to 100 attendees. Please only one registrant per household. After you register you will receive an email with the link to sign in at the time of the event. Questions? Contact carlajhelm@comcast.net.

If you missed last month’s excellent Zoom presentation “Birds of Mt. Rainier” by Jeff Antonelis-Lapp you can view the recording at the following link: <https://youtu.be/2uI3W1Qnubs>

Due to the continuing emergency response to the COVID-19 virus, our in-person member meetings and many other activities have been cancelled until further notice. Hikes and field trips are being organized for vaccinated members who must comply with the activity leader’s guidelines. Personal field trips for donations of \$100 or more are not now being offered. Please visit our website for updates.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Greetings friends and members of Skagit Audubon:

As I sat down to ponder what might work for a message this month, lots of ideas kept passing by. We could talk about climate change, the uneasy state of world politics, diminishing farmland, species in peril...and the list goes on. We could continue asking about your interest in leading field trips, taking a board position or working on our project to provide hybrid meetings, but you have all been asked before and maybe are even getting tired of it.

I recently listened to a wonderful podcast talking about the Future of Food with Michelin Chef Dan Barber (author of “The Third Plate” and host of “Chef’s Table”). He was talking about the politics of how America feeds itself. As I thought about it the topic started to feel a little preachy and I didn’t want to go there just now.

Then I remembered that, as of this writing, the equinox is only a few days away and the official spring kicks off. Why can’t we decide to just give ourselves a break and enjoy the longer days and occasional hours of sunshine – I promise, they will come eventually. Most of us joined Skagit Audubon for the opportunities to go birding or hiking with like-minded people. Maybe we could just grab our binoculars or our hiking sticks and join Joan Melcher’s hiking group or one of the field trips. We could possibly call an old friend that we have not seen all winter and meet up at Wiley for an afternoon walk. Who knows, there will probably be some interesting birds migrating in soon. Some have already started.

As we navigate through the trials of a slowing pandemic, war-torn Europe, climate change and the rest, sometimes we just need to take a break and let ourselves be distracted by where we live. I know that I can go walking with my binoculars and before I know it, several hours have passed. In the meantime, I’ve not been bothered about what is going on outside the smallish territory that I can see right in front of me.

Take a break, you’ve earned it. Thanks, and happy birding and hiking. Be safe, wear your mask, get fully vaccinated.

Jeff Osmundson, President

FROM YOUR EDITOR – by *Mary Sinker*

As I begin to write this, the calendar says that winter has ended, and spring has sprung! Well, the temperatures are still chilly, and the days are mostly grey, but the brief breaks of sunshine and the longer



hours of daylight have many birds singing their mating songs, excavating cavities for nesting sites, and selecting mates to raise their families.

In the past few days, Rufous Hummingbirds have arrived to join the resident Anna’s Hummingbirds in our yard and the four feeders are busy all day long. Flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, ranging in size from 10 to 50 birds, stop in periodically to fill up on black-oil sunflower seed and suet, and American Robins are

pairing up and staking out nesting territories.

Spring migration brings shorebirds stopping over to feed and rest on their long journey northward. Colorful tanagers, swallows and warblers will follow soon afterwards and take up summer residence in our yards, forests, and wetlands. It’s an exciting time of year for birders, whether you are experiencing spring migration for the first time or in search of a rare visitor for your life list. Enjoy!

NOTICE OF ANNUAL ELECTION-SAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Skagit Audubon Society (SAS) annual board nominations and elections process is underway. The Board has four elected officers and 17 At-Large Directors. Elections will be held at the annual member meeting on **June 8, 2022**. All board members except President will serve for one year, starting July 1, 2022; the President will serve for two years.

Our board is a fun and congenial group of people with a mixture of long-serving and newer members. Many have expressed interest in continuing in their current roles, but we have open spots and are seeking more candidates. In particular, we are seeking people who might have interest in serving on the Education committee, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) committee, on one of our current technology projects or as board secretary.

You don't need to have a lot of birding experience to serve on the board. Enthusiasm, complementary skill sets and a willingness to serve are much more important factors. Board members are expected to regularly attend monthly board meetings (first Tuesday evenings, Sep-Jun) and to serve on one or more board committees.

Here's more information about the areas of interest that would be helpful in rounding out the board.

Education

We provide both adult and youth educational events for the community. We have experienced committee members who will continue serving, but we are looking for someone able to attend the monthly board meetings and act as chair for this important program.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

We are looking for someone to chair this new board committee which aligns with National Audubon goals. You can bring your ideas and help shape our EDI efforts. There are no set expectations on how to proceed. It can be what you make of it.

Technology Projects

We have some exciting ad hoc technology projects underway such as developing the process to conduct hybrid in-person/online meetings. Another project is to update our website and choose a new webhost. If you have experience or interest in this area, we'd love to hear from you.

Board Secretary

This is an officer position. The main responsibility is providing minutes for monthly board meetings (ten per year.) Generally, the minutes are concise and it's a great board to work with. Zoom recordings are also available to help with producing the minutes.

Serve on a Committee

Even if you don't want to be on the board, we'd love to hear from you if you have interest in the above areas or any of our standing committees such as field trips, monthly programs, conservation, or finance. Any member who is current with dues payment can serve on a committee. Committee meetings are called as needed by the chair; there are typically several meetings per year.

Contact the Nominations and Governance Committee

If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else to a board position, or if you have interest in serving on a board committee, please contact any of the following board members:

John Day (jday0730@gmail.com), Ann Skinner (anns@skagitaudubon.org), Tim Manns (conservation@skagitaudubon.org), Jeff Osmundson (president@skagitaudubon.org), Don Jonasson (donjonasson@hotmail.com) or Lisa Hopkins (finance@skagitaudubon.org).

WELCOME BACK HIKING - by Joan Melcher

After more than a year, Skagit Audubon is pleased to announce the return of scheduled hikes. Please visit our website www.skagitaudubon.org/activities/hiking-info 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. Questions? Contact Joan Melcher at jdmelcher@comcast.net or 360.424.0407.



Apr. 6: Pine and Cedar Lakes and Raptor Ridge or Lake Padden

Apr. 13: Washington Park and Guemes Channel

Apr. 20: Oyster Dome

Apr. 27: Lummi Island

May 7: Hoypus Point, Hoypus Hill and Ala Spit

WELCOME BACK FIELD TRIPS!

Skagit Audubon is once again offering field trips to current members who are fully vaccinated against COVID. Masks must be worn within six feet of each other and the number of participants per field trip is limited to 12. Plan to dress for the weather, bring binoculars, a spotting scope (optional), and contact the field trip leader listed below for full details. If you wish to be added to the field trip email list please contact Libby Mills, libbymills@gmail.com or 360.757.4139.



Saturday April 9 – Trip Leader Alice Turner, 360.387.1781; alicet2@msn.com

Semiahmoo / Drayton Harbor

8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

We will be focusing on waterbirds and early migrating shorebirds. Large rafts of mixed birds may be seen, including Grebes, Scoters (if we're lucky we'll see Black Scoters), Loons, Harlequin Ducks, Brant, Mergansers, Goldeneye, Cormorants, Scaup, some shorebirds including Sanderlings and Turnstones.

Meet 9:00 a.m. at the Birch Bay State Park, where you will find the only bathroom stop on the trip. (To get to Birch Bay State Park, take I-5 north to exit 270, Lynden Rd/Birch Bay.) From there, we'll drive to Semiahmoo County Park at the beginning of Semiahmoo Spit. We'll walk along the Semiahmoo Spit trail, where one can see both Drayton Harbor and Semiahmoo Bay. Bring rain gear, warm clothes (it can be windy), and snacks. Scopes are very useful when birds are far out. We request that participants be fully vaccinated for Covid 19.

Saturday April 23 - Trip Leader Tim Manns, 360.333.8985; conservation@skagitaudubon.org

Washington Park and Ship Harbor, Anacortes

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Washington Park is both scenic and a good place to see Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Marbled Murrelets, Pacific Wrens, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and many other birds on the water or in the forest. Plan for a .5 mile walk to Green Point as we look for shoreline and forest birds, including spring migrants. We'll then drive to the end of Edwards Way and walk the Ship Harbor Trail. Contact the leader if you plan to attend and for possible weather changes. Beginning birders are encouraged to come! Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Meet at the parking lot at the beginning of the Washington Park loop drive. Dress for the weather, anticipating wind along the shore. We request that participants be fully vaccinated for Covid 19.

Northern Elephant Seals

On January 31st this year, a Northern elephant seal was born in Bowman Bay, Deception Pass State Park. The mother, named Elsie Mae, had also been born in the area and was known to wildlife officials. In the last few years, a small group of these seals have been visiting the beaches of Whidbey and Fidalgo Island.



The Northern elephant seals were almost hunted to extinction in the 19th century for their blubber oil, only a few hundred survived in Mexico. The Mexican government started protecting them in 1922, and in 1972 the US followed with the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The species has made a great comeback and this young pup, and his mom were given all the protection they could get. Working under the provision of the Act, Park staff closed off the area and trained volunteers spent hours working in rotating shifts to educate visitors and to keep them at a safe distance.

Elsie never left her young for about five weeks and fattened him up with her own fat reserves. When her instinct told her that it was time to leave her baby on his own, she said goodbye. He had been identified as a male and named Emerson, his weight was approximately 300 pounds. Adult males can weigh up to 3,000 pounds and females about 1,500. Emerson will now learn how to swim and catch fish. He also has to lose about 30% of his weight, because an overweight young seal is not fast enough to escape a large shark or orca in deeper waters.

Northern elephant seal males spend about 250 days out at sea and females about 300 days. They migrate twice a year from open sea to land, once for molting and once for breeding. Males and females go their separate ways and take different routes of migration. Breeding season is December to March and the female's cycle includes delayed gestation.



Currently Emerson hangs out at the Park Ranger's yard. We can't observe him there, but we're happy that he found a safe place on land during his stay. We wish that he is one of the 45% that will survive into adulthood!

More information can be found on the websites of the Seal Conservation Society, NOAA Fisheries, and the Monterey Aquarium site.

Text and Photos by Rosmarie Jansen

Sources and additional information:

Seal Conservation Society: <https://www.pinnipeds.org>

NOAA Fisheries: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov>

Monterey Bay Aquarium: <https://www.montereybayaquarium.org>

FIELD SIGHTINGS - by Pam Pritzl

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 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

Brant 50 at SIPB on 2-26 (SAS); 25 on Padilla Bay on 3-9 (YH)

Northern Shoveler 1 on Samish Flats on 2-26 (SAS); 3 at SWAWS on 3-5 (NOH)

Eurasian Wigeon 15 on Samish Flats on 2-26 (SAS); 9 on Samish Flats on 3-9 (YH)

Green-winged Teal 1 American/Eurasian intergrade at NSRA on 3-13 (GB)

Canvasback 8 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

Ring-necked Duck 16 on Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-2 (NOH); 14 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

Greater Scaup 500 off Samish West 90 on 3-5 (GB)

Harlequin Duck 2 at Rosario Beach on 3-11 (YH)

White-winged Scoter 8 at SIPB on 2-26 (SAS)

Long-tailed Duck 3 at SIPB on 2-26 (SAS)

Hooded Merganser 7 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-2 (NOH); 2 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

Red-breasted Merganser 1 at SHIP on 3-4 (NOH); 1 at SWAWS on 3-5 (NOH); 2 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

Wild Turkey 1 on Samish Flats on 3-9 (YH)

GREBES

Red-necked Grebe 5 at SHIP on 3-4 (NOH)

Western Grebe 39 at Penn Cove, Whidbey Island on 3-10 (YH)

PIGEONS and DOVES

Eurasian Collared-Dove 1 at east Stanwood yard on 3-5 (MS)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Rufous Hummingbird 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 3-11 (RW); 1 female on 3-11 & 1 male on 3/12 at Cap Sante, Anacortes yard (JH)

OYSTERCATCHERS

Black Oystercatcher 2 at Deception Pass SP on 3-10 & 2 at Rosario Beach on 3-11 (YH)

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

Sanderling 8 at March Point on 2-12 & 9 there on 3-5 (GB)

Wilson's Snipe 6 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

GULLS and TERNs

Glaucous Gull 1 in Burlington on 2-14 & 2-20 (GB)

HERONS and ALLIES

American Bittern 1 at SWANFA on 2-28 (JS)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Bald Eagle 26 on Samish Flats on 2-26 (SAS); 1 at SHIP on 3-4 (NOH); 2 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

Northern Harrier 3 on Samish Flats on 2-26 (SAS); 1 at SWAWS on 3-5 (NOH); 2 at Dugualla Bay on 3-9 (NOH)

Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 2-14 (RW)

Cooper's Hawk 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 2-21 & 3-2

(RW); 1 on Skagit Flats on 3-13 (YH)

Rough-legged Hawk 2 on Samish Flats on 2-26 (SAS); 1 "dark-morph" on Samish Flats on 3-9 & 3-13 (YH)

OWLS

Great Horned Owl 1 heard at east Fidalgo yard on 3-2 (RW)

Northern Pygmy-Owl 1 at Judy Reservoir on 2-16 (GB)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 3-15 (RW)

Hairy Woodpecker 1 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-2 (NOH)

FALCONS

Gyrfalcon 1 on Samish Flats on 2-19 (YH)

Peregrine Falcon 1 on Samish Flats on 3-9 (YH)

FLYCATCHERS

Black Phoebe 1 at SWAWS on 3-13 (GB)

VIREOS

Hutton's Vireo 1 at Camano Island yard on 3-16 (PP)

CORVIDS

Steller's Jay 2 on Samish Flats on 2-26 (SAS)

SWALLOWS

Tree Swallow several at east Fidalgo yard on 3-13 (RW)

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Continued from pg. 6

NUTHATCHES

Red-breasted Nuthatch 2 at east Stanwood yard on 3-6 (MS/JS)

WRENS

Bewick's Wren 2 at SWAWS on 3-5 (NOH); 1 at east Stanwood yard on 3-5 (MS)

KINGLETS

Golden-crowned Kinglet 2 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-2 (NOH)

Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1 at SWAWS on 3-5 (NOH)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

Spotted Towhee 10 at east Fidalgo yard (snow) on 2-21 & 2-22 (RW)

Fox Sparrow 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 2-14 (RW)

BLACKBIRDS and ORIOLES

Yellow-headed Blackbird 1 at DeBay Slough on 2-16 (GB)

MAMMALS

Grey Whale 1 at Rosario Head on 3-5 (GB)

Elephant Seal 2 (dam & pup) at Bowman Bay on 2-16 (GB)

Coyote 1 on Samish Flats on 3-9 (YH); pack yipping throughout sighting period at east Fidalgo yard (RW)

Raccoon 3 on Fidalgo Island on 3-13 (YH)

(**ACFL**) Anacortes Community Forest Lands; (**GB**) Gary Bletsch; (**JH**) Joe Halton; (**NOH**); Neil O'Hara; (**YH**) Yvonne Houppermans; (**NSRA**) Northern State Recreation Area); (**SHIP**) Ship Harbor Interpretive Preserve; (**SIPB**) Samish Island Public Beach; (**TM**) Tim Manns; (**PP**) Pam Pritzl; (**JS**) Jeff Sinker; (**MS**) Mary Sinker; (**SAS**) Skagit Audubon Society Field Trip; (**SWANFA**) Skagit Wildlife Area North Fork Access; (**SWAWS**) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (**RW**) Regan Weeks

BEST BIRDING AT HAYTON (Fir Island Farm Reserve, Conway) by Neil O'Hara

Hayton Reserve, part of the Skagit Wildlife Management Area, used to be a prime location for viewing snow geese. The dike was breached a few years ago, however, and the erstwhile field is now a tidal basin that attracts huge numbers of waterfowl and dunlin in winter as well as numerous shorebird species during migration. To the bald eagles, falcons, hawks, and harriers that prey on these birds, Hayton has become a smorgasbord.

A birders' paradise? Only at the right time—or, in truth, the right tide. Local tides feature one high high, one low low, one low high and one high low each day, and the time at which those occur fluctuates over the lunar cycle and the seasons. For example, in December the low low occurs in darkness, but in April and August during shorebird migration it's in broad daylight.

Shorebirds are picky eaters that forage on tidal mudflats close to the water's edge. Go to Hayton around a low low tide and you will be disappointed: no water, no birds. Around a high high, you may see ducks, but the water is too deep for shorebirds.

The basin begins to fill up on an incoming tide when the Swinomish Channel tide marker exceeds 5 feet, but by the time it reaches 8 feet most shorebirds have left until the water recedes. Suppose you want to visit Hayton on April 15 (a treat after filing your taxes). The water level will be good all morning, but after a 7.4 ft. high tide at 11:34 a.m. the basin starts to drain toward a 0.8 ft. low tide at 6:42 p.m. By 2:30 p.m., the water is gone so birds will be few in number and much further away.

To plan your visit, check this web site for Swinomish Channel tides:

<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/noaatidepredictions.html?id=9448558&legacy=1>. Scroll down to change both dates to the day you wish to visit and click the blue Plot Daily button. The sweet spot is probably 6 ft. to 7.5 ft. water at the tide marker, so pick your arrival time with that in mind.

One final tip: the higher the water the closer the birds are likely to be, but a scope always helps at Hayton. Happy birding!

CONSERVATION REPORT – by Tim Manns

Adequately protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitat requires the attention of individuals, organizations, and government at every level. For the sixty days ending March 10th the conservation focus of Audubon Washington’s state level staff and Washington’s 25 Audubon chapters was particularly on the legislature in Olympia. Washington’s part-time senators and representatives write a two-year state budget during a 105-day session. In the alternate years they hold a mere 60-day session. This alternate year, as every year, legislators introduced hundreds of bills on a myriad of subjects. Either from lack of support or simply lack of time in a very hurried 60 days, few bills passed. Time also went to enacting a supplementary budget and to passing the biennial transportation budget not finished in 2021.

For Audubon, the outcome of the 2022 legislative session was mixed. There was the very good news that Senate Bill (SB) 5042 passed after years of attempts. This closes a loophole in the Growth Management Act that gave developers and counties an easy way to undercut the basic goal of concentrating growth in more urban areas while preserving agricultural and other resource lands and habitat. Closing this loophole significantly helps in the struggle in Skagit County to prevent the sprawl and loss of farmland, forest, and habitat that would come with allowing misleadingly termed “Fully Contained Communities.”

Also on the plus side, a solar energy bill passed which Audubon vigorously supported. In the words of Audubon Washington’s Adam Maxwell: “House Bill (HB) 1814 ... Creates a new incentive program to provide funding to support low-income solar installations on buildings, parking lots, existing impervious surfaces, and other locations that don’t displace habitat or prime farmland.”

Funding was also protected in the budget to map non-urban areas where solar and wind power could best be developed while minimizing adverse effects on farmland and birds. And funds were provided to staff the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to respond to a major influx of solar projects on the Columbia Plateau. This will help DFW ensure these projects are well-sited, protecting sagebrush birds such as the Sage Thrasher and Greater Sage-grouse.

Unhappily, the legislature did not enact HB 1099 to require Comprehensive Plans developed under the Growth Management Act to address the effects of climate change. This requirement would also have applied to Shoreline Master Programs (SMP). These programs are plans which the Shoreline Management Act requires counties and municipalities to adopt in cooperation with the Department of Ecology to protect certain river, lake, and marine shorelines. Skagit County is finally revising its three decades old SMP, but the draft not only weakens shoreline protections in several ways; it also fails to address sea level rise. Skagit Audubon joined several other conservation groups and many individuals critiquing the plan. A March 13th article in the *Skagit Scoop* blog summarizes the SMP draft’s problems: [Skagit County Draft Shoreline Management Program Fails to Address Climate Change - Skagit Scoop](#).

Why does this matter to Skagit Audubon? Ignoring climate change threatens human well-being and property; it threatens birds too. National Audubon research identifies climate change as the greatest



among the many threats to birds. Poorly regulated shoreline armoring intended to protect buildings built too close to the water prevents beaches from receiving sand and gravel eroding from banks and bluffs. This changes the characteristics of beaches and renders them unsuitable for the spawning of sand lance and smelt. These small fish near the base of the marine food chain are essential in the diet of sea birds, salmon, and marine mammals, many of them in decline. In this context it should also be noted that a top

Audubon legislative priority, SB 5885, failed under a barrage of opposition from people who would rather

not have the state know they ignored regulations and installed hard armoring despite its detrimental effect on Puget Sound and its wildlife. This modest bill would simply have directed the state to inventory the extent of hard armoring to provide basic information needed to redress the damage already done.

For quick summaries of bills Audubon Washington tracked and their fate, see [Bill Tracker: 2022 Legislative Session | Audubon Washington](#) and [2022 Legislative Session Recap for Climate, Puget Sound, Sagelands, and Bird-friendly Communities | Audubon Washington](#).

Other issues Skagit Audubon is following are described on the chapter's website (www.skagitaudubon.org). At the dropdown menu beneath the Conservation tab, click on "Conservation Notes." Please direct questions or comments to conservation@skagitaudubon.org.

Photo credit: Andrew Reding; Rhinoceros auklet with sand lance off the coast of Washington State; www.pewtrusts.org

Meet the Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) – by Jeff Sinker

A large black sea duck with a colorful bill, sometimes initially mistaken for a puffin, the Surf scoter is common in winter along the Pacific Coast in shallow water close to the coastline. The strong head pattern of the male has earned it nicknames like "skunk-head coot" and "old skunk head".

Foraging for benthic invertebrates – those sea creatures that live on or near the sea bottom – Surf scoters feed on mollusks, crustaceans, small fish, marine worms, and herring spawn by diving and swimming underwater.



Pair bonds are formed during the winter and several males may attempt to attract a single female at the same time. Displays include rapidly swimming back-and-forth with neck stretched upward, flight displays, or exaggerated bowing.

Surf scoters nest in northern Canada and Alaska where the boreal forest blends with the tundra in a patchwork of wetlands, forests, meadows, and lakes. Utilizing wetland edges on medium-sized shallow lakes, the female constructs a shallow depression on the ground and lines it with mosses, downy feathers, twigs, and bark. She incubates the clutch of 5-9 eggs for 28-30 days and the young leave the nest shortly after hatching. The young eat plant material like sedges, crowberries, and pondweeds in addition to aquatic insects. Females will utilize multiple adjacent water bodies when available for brood rearing.

Surf scoters are common on their winter range along the coastlines of Deception Pass State Park and Washington Park in Anacortes where they are often seen just off the beach. Like other sea ducks, these birds are vulnerable to oil spills and other forms of marine pollution.

Sources and more information can be found at: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Surf_Scoter and www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/surf-scoter.

Photo credit: Matt Davis, Macaulay Library, www.allaboutbirds.org

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 at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview- Rd., Mt. Vernon on the second Tuesday of each month, September through June. Social/7:00 pm and Program/7:30 pm. The board of directors meets at the same location the first Tuesday of each month, September through June, at 7:00 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:	Pamelia Maxwell
Newsletter Distribution:	John Edison
Webmaster:	Ron Pera.....skagitaudubon@gmail.com

What is “torpor” and how do birds use it?

Essentially, torpor is a state of slowed metabolic functions but not as extreme as hibernation. Torpor helps birds, especially small ones, to conserve energy during cold nights or when food supplies are scarce. When a bird is in torpor, heart rate and respiration slow down, conserving precious calories while still maintaining life functions.

Although torpor helps birds to survive extreme conditions, it can also be dangerous because birds in this state are unable to react quickly to predators or other dangerous situations. It can take several minutes to an hour for a bird to fully come out of torpor. Some of our common local birds that use torpor are hummingbirds, doves, and chickadees. Photo credit: Rufous hummingbird by Joe Halton



GRAYS HARBOR SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL is celebrating the natural world and the spring shorebird migration with a hybrid festival experience including virtual presentations and resources for self-guided shorebird viewing.

Each spring, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed along the Washington Coast and in the Grays Harbor estuary during their migration northward. Coming from as far south as Argentina, these Arctic-bound shorebirds are among the world's greatest migrants. Some birds travel over 15,000 miles round trip! The concentration of birds during spring migration offers people a great chance to view a number of shorebird species. With luck you will also see the birds fly together in beautiful formations while trying to escape a Peregrine Falcon.

Shorebird is the name given to the group of birds that are usually found along the shoreline. They include plovers, turnstones, sandpipers, dowitchers, and others. Some shorebirds can be found in Grays Harbor County all year, others only during their migration.

The shorebird spectacle happens every year at Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge and in other parts of the County. People from around the world come to view this event of hemispheric importance. The festival works to bring people together for this incredible natural phenomenon.

Festival Updates: The peak shorebird viewing dates of 2022 are April 24-May 6. To keep our communities safe in 2022, we are opting for a self-guided festival experience. Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge is open sunrise to sunset, 7 days a week, and we invite you to enjoy our year-round trail. Should you have questions, concerns, or comments please contact us at shorebirdfest@gmail.com.

For more information and links to additional resources visit: www.shorebirdfestival.com

PROJECT NEST WATCH from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology aims to connect birders and people interested in birds and community science projects while helping to inform researchers on the breeding and nesting patterns and distribution of birds from around the country. Participating is free and even if you are unable to collect all of the data requested (example, number of eggs laid if visibility of the nest is restricted), the data you are able to collect is still valuable. As with any project involving birds, the first rule is always "Do No Harm."

NestWatch is a nationwide monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive. Our database is intended to be used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals.



Your observations will be added to those of thousands of other NestWatchers in a continually growing database used by researchers to understand and study birds. Simply put, without your help it would be impossible to gather enough information to accurately monitor nesting birds across the country. And while you are contributing extremely valuable information to science, you will learn firsthand about birds and create a lifelong bond with the natural world.

For detailed information on how to participate please visit: www.nestwatch.org

**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

Mail form and payment to: **Skagit Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1101, Mt. Vernon WA 98273-1101**

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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)

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