



The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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FEBRUARY MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM

*Watching After Waterfowl: Washington’s Unique Role in
Waterfowl Ecology, Conservation and Management*

Presented by Kyle Spragens

Tuesday, February 9, 7:00 PM

The term “waterfowl” comprises a highly diverse suite of species, that have adapted to span a broad array of habitats across the globe. Often in North America, due to their “gamebird” designation, the intricate storylines that define this group of migratory birds, unfortunately gets lost as an afterthought. By providing a comparative perspective, this presentation strives to provide you with insights to the unique set of circumstances, changing story lines, and considerations involved in waterfowl ecology in Washington state.



Kyle is the Waterfowl Section Manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, based in Olympia, and serves as a technical liaison to the Pacific Flyway Council. He is originally from the Northern San Francisco Bay Area and is a graduate of Humboldt State University (BSc & MSc) with an emphasis in Wildlife Management. His previous waterfowl adventures have spanned from the Canadian Arctic tundra to lagoons along the Black Sea in Turkey to fishponds in Hong Kong’s Pearl River Delta; including six years as a Wildlife Biologist for the USGS-San Francisco Bay Estuary Field Station and three years as Senior Waterfowl Biologist for the USFWS-Yukon Delta NWR in Bethel, Alaska. His background has focused on cooperation with partners across the Pacific and East Asian-Australasian Flyways conducting monitoring and research projects related to nesting waterfowl, migration chronology, sea-level rise impacts to migratory bird habitats, and spatio-temporal dynamics in habitat use.

Please register for this event at: <http://bit.ly/febsas>. Preregistration is required and is 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? Please contact Carla Helm at carlajhelm@comcast.net. If you missed the excellent January 12th presentation, “**Bring Back the Pollinators**”, or want to watch it again, a recording is now available for viewing at the following link: <https://youtu.be/demS6FIWiz>

Due to the continuing emergency response to the COVID-19 virus, our in-person member meetings, field trips and hikes, and most other activities have been cancelled until further notice. This includes the offer of personal field trips for future donations to Skagit Audubon Society of \$100 or more. Please visit our website for updates.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE -Greetings members and friends of Skagit Audubon,

The National Audubon website press room has any number of stories for you to act on: reverse the rollback of the MBTA, the EPA's assault on law, science and the public voice, even presidential politics; but let's take a little more positive look closer to home.

Spring is right around the corner. In western Washington some think the gardening season starts in January, February for sure! Our winter birds have been amazing, and soon they will be joined by northward moving migrants, and then butterflies and dragonflies. If you live in a house, apartment or condo you perhaps have some areas that are green and growing already. On this sunny day, I will be headed out the back door as soon as I can.



So, what can we do today or this week to help locally? Well, here are a couple of ideas. We recently had the Xerces Society give a program on invertebrates in our area. Some of those are pollinators and they need help. You can find more information and some things that you can do to help on one of Xerces pages if you go here:

<https://xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/pnw>. On that page there is a plant list for pollinator plants and other native plants for the Pacific Northwest region.

One of the things I thought I would try this year is a bug hotel. The National Audubon website has an article "At these hotels, bugs are the VIP". You can find the article here: <https://www.audubon.org/news/at-these-hotels-bugs-are-vip>. Not only can we make a cool little garden display, but it can help local bugs, mason bees, other beneficial insects....and maybe even the birds that feed on them from time to time.

And lastly, I will not throw away all those limbs that come down in the storms. At least some of them will make a little pile or two on the edges of the garden. They are great places for our little bird friends to find safe haven from the hawks, places to hang out during the day, and some may even nest in them.

This is an easy article to write on a day that sun is streaming in the window; and I know that we have a few rainstorms left before spring arrives. Remember last year when the pandemic caused a run-on garden seed? I will be spending the rainy days looking at seeds, tubes for mason bees, native plant lists and propagation techniques. I hope you too can find some fun and interest while waiting for spring to spring.

Until next month, stay safe, wear a mask and wash your hands. When is the best time to go birdwatching? When you can!

Jeff Osmundson, President

WDFW SWAN HOTLINE ACTIVATED

From now through the end of March, 2021 anyone observing or finding a sick, injured or dead Trumpeter or Tundra Swan should call the hotline number 24/7: 360.466.4345 ext. 266. Please be prepared to leave a short, detailed message, including your name, phone number, location and condition of the swan(s). WDFW stresses the importance of now approaching or handling the swan(s).

CONSERVATION REPORT – by Tim Manns

At this writing in mid-February, it's 10 days after the assault on the U.S. Capitol and almost the end of an Administration that for the last 4 years busily reduced environmental protections. We all need reasons for political optimism, and fortunately some are at hand. The balance of power at the federal level has shifted just enough to maybe enable passing legislation addressing climate change, restoring protection for birds and other wildlife, renewing our government's reliance on science, and so much more. Audubon Board Member Alice Turner brought to the Board's attention an article from the Autumn 2020 issue of *Living Bird* magazine (Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology) describing a Bird Agenda for the 117th Congress. The article points out that the Congressional Review Act of 1996 offers a way to quickly reverse the outgoing Administration's reinterpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 in a way exempting all but deliberate killing of birds. Perhaps this is also how to reverse the Administration's mid-January opening to logging of 3.4 million acres of old-growth Northern Spotted Owl habitat in California, Oregon, and Washington. The now unprotected area includes more than a third of what was set aside in 1994 by the Northwest Forest Plan to protect the owl from extinction and more than a half million acres on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, Okanogan-Wenatchee, and Gifford Pinchot national forests.

The balance of power in Olympia remains favorable for environmental legislation, if not easy. When this newsletter reaches you the Washington State Legislature will have been in session several weeks. This being an odd-numbered year, the session will especially focus on writing the next 2-year budget; actually



3 budgets: operating (General Fund), capital, and transportation. All are relevant to Audubon Washington's legislative priorities and those of its partners in the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC). Adam Maxwell, Audubon Washington's State Campaign Manager, produces periodic updates on the progress of legislation. The link to these updates and information sheets are on this page: <http://wa.audubon.org/conservation/legislative-session-2020>. The EPC has posted brief papers on the coalition's key issues: <https://wecprotects.org/environmental-priorities-coalition-2/>.

EPC staff produce a weekly Hot List of top environmental issues in the House and Senate: <https://wecprotects.org/environmental-priorities-coalition-2/bills-to-watch>.

For a longer list of environmental legislation, sign up for weekly emails from Bellingham-based RE Sources (www.re-sources.org), whose weekly legislative alerts are easy to skim. There are action items too (<https://p2a.co/T6LJzvj>). With legislative hearings all virtual, you can sign in to support or oppose any bill having a hearing without needing to travel to Olympia. This replaces the sign-in sheets in the corridors familiar to those of you who participated in Lobby Days past. The Washington Legislature's own website (<https://leg.wa.gov>) is an easy-to-navigate way to read and follow bills, learn what committees your senator and representatives are sponsoring, and submit comments.

The political climate and events of recent years and days have convinced many that it's important to be an active citizen supporting the issues you care about whether that's wildlife habitat, climate change, affordable housing, or many others. It's easy to be overwhelmed but not difficult to begin with the help of the kinds of aids mentioned here.

For more about issues Skagit Audubon is tracking, go to "Conservation" on the Skagit Audubon website (www.skagitaudubon.org) and click on "Conservation Notes".

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@skagitaudubon.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 1 at Skagit Flats on 12-27 & 1-9 (NOH)

Harlequin Duck 3 at Deception Pass SP on 12-24 (LM); 7 at WA Park, Anacortes on 12-26 (NOH)

Long-tailed Duck 1 at Seafarer's Park, Anacortes on 12-27 (BH)

Red-breasted Merganser 1 on Gorge Lake on 12-29 (GB) **unusual upriver**

GREBES

Red-necked Grebe 23 at WA Park, Anacortes on 12-26 (NOH)

Western Grebe 1 at WA Park, Anacortes on 12-26 (NOH); 4 at Iverson Spit, Camano Island on 1-15 (PP)

RAILS and COOTS

Virginia Rail 1 at SHIP on 12-22 (NOH)

OYSTERCATCHERS

Black Oystercatcher 10 at Deception Pass SP on 12-24 (LM)

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

Black Turnstone 4 at Deception Pass SP on 12-24 (LM)

Surfbird 1 at Deception Pass SP on 12-24 (LM)

ALCIDS

Ancient Murrelet 19 at Green Point, WA Park, Anacortes on 1-10 (GB)

LOONS

Common Loon 5 at WA Park, Anacortes on 12-26 (NOH)

Yellow-billed Loon 1 at Rosario Head on 1-3 (GB) **rare**

HERONS and ALLIES

Great Egret 1 on Fir Island on 1-1, 1-3 & 1-6 (GB); 1 on Camano Island on 1-1 (PP); 1 on Fir Island on 1-6 (JH); 1 on Fir Island on 1-9 (SRP)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Bald Eagle 1 "leucistic" on Samish Flats on 12-28 (AO); 10 at Samish Flats on 12-18, 16 on 12-27, 3 on 12-28, 7 on 1-7, 49 on 1-9 (NOH); 45 on the Nooksack River on 12-24 (NOH); 2 at SWAWS on 12-29 & 9 on 1-6 (NOH); 1 at SHIP on 1-8 (NOH)

Northern Harrier 6 on Samish Flats on 12-18, 4 on 1-7 & 11 on 1-9 (NOH); 4 on Fir Island on 1-11 (NOH)

Cooper's Hawk 1 adult on 1-1, 1-13 & 1-14 at east Fidalgo home (RW); 1 juvenile at east Fidalgo home on 1-10 (RW)

Northern Goshawk 1 on Fir Island on 12-21 & 1-6 (GB) **rare**

Rough-legged Hawk 1 at Samish Flats on 12-18, 11 on 12-27, 4 on 12-28, 6 on 1-7 & 8 on 1-9 (NOH); 2 at SWAWS on 12-29 & 1-6 (NOH); 1 on Samish Flats East 90 on 1-9 (JS/MS); 2 on Fir Island on 1-11 (NOH)

Golden Eagle 1 on Frailey Mtn on 1-9 (GB)

OWLS

Great Horned Owl 1 at SWAWS on 1-6 (NOH); 1 at east Stanwood home on 1-7 & 1-10 (MS); 1 at SWAWS on 1-10 (JS/MS)

Northern Pygmy-Owl 1 at Lookout Mtn on 1-7 (NOH)

Short-eared Owl 1 at Samish Flats on 12-18, 1 on 12-27, 4 on 1-7 & 7 on 1-9 (NOH); 1 at Samish Flats East 90 on 1-9 (JS/MS)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker 2 at east Fidalgo home on 1-9 & 1-10 (RW)

FALCONS

American Kestrel 3 on Samish Flats on 1-9 (JS/MS)

Gyr Falcon 1 on Fir Island on 1-1 (GB)

Peregrine Falcon 1 on Samish Flats on 12-27, 1-7 & 1-9 (NOH); 2 at FIFR on 1-9 (JS/MS)

Prairie Falcon 1 south of Bay View on 1-14 (GB)

Field sightings continued on Pg. 5

Field sightings continued from Pg. 4

CORVIDS

Black-billed Magpie 1 at Rosario on 1-14 (JB)

DIPPERS

American Dipper 1 on Nooksack River on 12-24 (NOH)

THRUSHES

Mountain Bluebird 2 on Fir Island on 12-31,

1-1 & 1-6 (GB) **rare in winter**

Varied Thrush 1 on Lookout Mtn on 1-7 (NOH)

PIPITS

American Pipit 1 at SHIP on 12-22 (NOH)

FINCHES and ALLIES

Pine Siskin "hundreds" (like a murmuration) at Bow yard on 12-21 (KR)

LONGSPURS and BUNTINGS

Snow Bunting 1 at Leque Island/Eide Rd on 1-16 (JS/MS)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

Swamp Sparrow 1 at Clear Lake on 1-3 (GB)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (JB) Joan Bird; (FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; (BH) Bruce Hall; (JH) Joe Halton; (LM) Libby Mills; (NOH); Neil O'Hara; (AO) Alan Ottini; (SRP) Sheila and Ron Pera; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (KR) Kerry Rye; (SHIP) Ship Harbor Interpretive Preserve; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (RW) Regan Weeks

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2021 is happening Feb. 12-15, 2021. For

information on how to participate visit:

www.birdcount.org

(not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society)

ARE YOUR BACKYARD FEEDERS KILLING BIRDS? By Kim Nelson

Even though there are lots of advantages to feeding birds, your feeders could possibly be to blame for a vast die-off of birds. Wildlife rehabilitation centers throughout the area have been reporting huge increases in Pine Siskins suffering from salmonellosis, an often-fatal bacterial disease. This disease is easily transmitted through the saliva and feces of sick birds, and because Pine Siskins flock together in large numbers at feeders, this makes them especially susceptible to infection. Adding to this issue, is that this winter marks an irruption year for boreal finches in which large populations migrate south due to a poor food crop in their usual wintering grounds in Canada.



Sick Pine Siskins are typically easy to spot: they are often isolated and look lethargic and fluffed. While some wildlife veterinarians recommend taking sick Pine Siskins to wildlife rehabilitation centers, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) veterinarian, Kristin Mansfield, believes that the best course of action is to leave these birds alone and report your sightings, including dead birds, using their online form: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a384e90f69744f2e846135a9ce80027f>.

WDFW also recommends temporarily discontinuing to feed birds for at least two weeks to hopefully encourage birds to feed on natural food sources elsewhere. Some wildlife rehabilitators have suggested feeding more intermittently, such as every other day, in order to stop spreading the disease. Either way, if you are going to continue to feed birds, it is strongly recommended that you clean your feeders on a regular basis (ideally daily) by washing them with warm soapy water and disinfecting them with a 9 parts water to 1 parts bleach solution before rinsing and drying them thoroughly. You will also want to rake up any feces and seed casings found below your feeders as well as clean your bird baths on a regular basis.

SKAGIT AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The annual Skagit Audubon Christmas Bird Count was held under appropriate COVID-19 protocols on Dec. 26th. Dedicated field volunteers and feeder watchers tallied 127 species and 84,994 individual birds. Thank you to all who organized and participated in this important community-science project. Mary Sinker is compiling the results for submission to National Audubon in the coming weeks. Results are summarized below:

accipiter sp. (1)	American Coot (21)	American Crow (641)
American Goldfinch (6)	American Kestrel (10)	American Robin (705)
American Wigeon (13,791)	Ancient Murrelet (7)	Anna's Hummingbird (154)
Bald Eagle (185)	Bald Eagle-Adult (96)	Bald Eagle-Immature (21)
Band-tailed Pigeon (1)	Barn Owl (2)	Barred Owl (2)
Barrow's Goldeneye (7)	Belted Kingfisher (26)	Bewick's Wren (37)
Black Oystercatcher (11)	Black Turnstone (74)	Black-bellied Plover (25)
blackbird sp. (81)	Black-capped Chickadee (205)	Brandt's Cormorant (33)
Brant (212)	Brewer's Blackbird (339)	Brown Creeper (23)
Bufflehead (765)	Bushtit (149)	California Quail (20)
California Scrub Jay (2)	Canada Goose (232)	Canvasback (1)
Chestnut-backed Chickadee (239)	Common Goldeneye (196)	Common Loon (64)
Common Merganser (364)	Common Murre (3)	Common Raven (108)
Cooper's Hawk (7)	cormorant sp. (27)	dabbling duck sp. (1,017)
Dark-eyed Junco (1,295)	Double-crested Cormorant (286)	Downy Woodpecker (18)
duck sp. (1,537)	Dunlin (4,912)	Eared Grebe (1)
Eurasian Collared-Dove (74)	Eurasian Wigeon (59)	European Starling (4,050)
Fox Sparrow (111)	Gadwall (63)	Glaucous-winged Gull (966)
Golden-crowned Kinglet (301)	Golden-crowned Sparrow (343)	Great Blue Heron (213)
Great Egret (1)	Greater Scaup (439)	Greater Yellowlegs (2)
Great-horned Owl (7)	Green-winged Teal (928)	gull sp. (429)
GW/WE Gull (177)	Hairy Woodpecker (7)	Harlequin Duck (15)
Hermit Thrush (11)	Herring Gull (1)	Hooded Merganser (173)
Horned Grebe (78)	House Finch (359)	House Sparrow (324)
Hutton's Vireo (2)	Killdeer (7)	Least Sandpiper (1)
Lesser Scaup (118)	Lincoln's Sparrow (7)	Long-tailed Duck (134)
loon sp. (3)	Mallard (14,616)	Marbled Murrelet (26)
Marsh Wren (11)	merganser sp. (5)	Merlin (4)
Mew Gull (578)	Mourning Dove (90)	Northern Flicker (131)
Northern Flicker-Hybrid (2)	Northern Flicker-Red-shafted (33)	Northern Harrier (40)
Northern Pintail (5,521)	Northern Shoveler (107)	Orange-crowned Warbler (1)
Oregon Junco (248)	Pacific Loon (22)	Pacific Wren (186)
Pelagic Cormorant (223)	Peregrine Falcon (6)	Pied-billed Grebe (33)
Pigeon Guillemot (51)	Pileated Woodpecker (9)	Pine Siskin (4,510)
Purple Finch (23)	Red Crossbill (111)	Red-breasted Merganser (1,066)
Red-breasted Nuthatch (122)	Red-breasted Sapsucker (4)	Red-necked Grebe (42)
Red-throated Loon (1,045)	Red-winged Blackbird (1,805)	Ring-billed Gull (91)
Ring-necked Duck (286)	Rock Pigeon (246)	Rough-legged Hawk (29)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (82)	Ruddy Duck (62)	scaup sp. (1,202)
Sharp-shinned Hawk (4)	Short-eared Owl (3)	Snow Goose (11,835)
Song Sparrow (467)	Spotted Towhee (262)	Steller's Jay (25)
Surf Scoter (242)	swan sp. (5)	Thayer's Gull (5)
Trumpeter Swan (1,433)	Tundra Swan (24)	Varied Thrush (162)
Virginia Rail (5)	Western Grebe (45)	Western Red-tailed Hawk (89)
Western Scrub Jay (3)	White-crowned Sparrow (286)	White-winged Scoter (57)
Wilson's Snipe (2)	Wood Duck (7)	Yellow-rumped Warbler (2)

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: Pamela Maxwell
Newsletter Distribution: John Edison
Webmaster: Ron Pera.....skagitaudubon@gmail.com

Open Board Position – Secretary

We are now recruiting for a new Secretary and if you could spare some volunteer time, Skagit Audubon would be grateful.

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in the Secretary position, please contact any Board member or President Jeff Osmundson at president@skagitaudubon.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**

Name: _____

Address: _____

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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)