

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Find us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/skagitaudubon
Volume 41, No. 1 www.skagitaudubon.org January 2022

JANUARY MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM

“Seeking Elusive Wetland Bird Species”

Presented by: Cindy Easterson

Tuesday, January 11, 7:00 PM

Secretive birds intrigue us, but their elusive nature makes them difficult to study, so there is remarkably little known about the biology of many wetland birds. Puget Sound Bird Observatory (PSBO) has been studying birds across our regional wetlands for the past 5 years to assess population trends of four under-detected, wetland species: American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, and Green Heron. Join us to learn about these species and this important PSBO project, and how you can participate!

Cindy manages PSBO’s Regional Wetland Secretive Bird Monitoring project in addition to providing oversight for a wide variety of other avian monitoring projects. She has supported bird banding efforts with PSBO’s Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station at Morse Reserve and has served on the Board of PSBO since 2010. She holds an integrated Bachelor of Arts and Science Degree with a focus on Wetland Science from the University of Washington. Photo credit: American Bittern by Mandy Weger



Register for this Zoom event at: <https://bit.ly/janSAS>.

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 carlajhelm@comcast.net.

If you missed the fantastic SAS Holiday Member Photo Show in December, please be sure to watch the recording: <https://youtu.be/2prKwQahdf8>. Also, SAS was unable to record the November 9th speaker presentation by Dr. Kim Adelson “Dinosaurs Among Us”, however if you missed it, we were kindly given permission to share Spokane Audubon’s recording from their November member meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOdqPAlar8k>.

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:

Last month we talked briefly about sharing the field, farm, and forest with our hunting friends. That is important, but as one of our members found out recently, we should be aware how others may be treating our resources. A Skagit Audubon member noticed a rare bird for our area, an Emperor Goose pair, but also saw a nearby hunter shoot and take one of the pair. Apparently there were enough observers in the area that the hunters were caught and cited for taking the goose that was not listed as a harvest species and hunting geese out of an open season. The incident highlights our responsibility to steward our area and resources. On our SAS web page, the splash banner states, **“Watching birds, protecting habitat, connecting with nature”**. We each have our own comfort level when it comes to sharing our resources. If you experience unsafe shooting, illegal activity or people harassing wildlife, with gun or camera, an article by Martha Jordan elsewhere in this newsletter may give you some options.

On a completely different topic, we were told this month that the Padilla Bay center where we have traditionally held our member and business meetings will be open for business in 2022. There is, however, a 30-person limit, which is considerably less than we have had for our presentations. There were also several presentations put together by the Program Committee for our meetings on Zoom this past year with many presenters who would not normally be willing to travel to the Padilla Bay center. Your Board members are already looking into the feasibility of hybrid meetings for both in person and online attendance. We are in the early stages but are very hopeful that this is something we can offer in the New Year. Your part will be to think about whether you are comfortable getting back together, if you like the Zoom presentations, if you think a hybrid model that would allow a mix of in-person and remote attendees and presenters would be worth pursuing, and if you feel there are meetings where it just makes more sense to keep it all remote. I'm thinking about some of the dark and wet winter months when many folks prefer to limit travel in the evenings. Hold those thoughts....The Board has not yet decided to do a formal poll or survey but that may be coming.

We also know that there are folks out there more familiar with the technology we would need to use. If you think that you can help out with researching what would best suit us or setting it up, or using a camera for a live feed, or helping with electronic interfaces, **we need you!** Please feel free to contact me, John Day, Katherine O'Hara, or Carla Helm to see where you might fit in.

Field trips are starting again, we hope to see you with your binoculars out in the field very soon.
Until then.....

Thanks, and happy birding
Be safe, wear your mask, get fully vaccinated.

Jeff Osmundson
President

REMEMBERING BARBARA CRANER

Longtime Skagit Audubon member and volunteer, Barbara Craner from Conway passed away on November 22, 2021. Barbara had distributed the Skagit Flyer for many years, working closely with the Membership Chairs and Flyer Editors. Barbara was a lover of birdwatching, cared deeply about the environment and her dog, Millie, was always by her side. Condolences and memories of Barbara can be shared online at:
www.kernfuneralhome.com.



**ROADLESS RULE PUBLIC COMMENTS DUE
JAN. 24, 2022**

<https://www.regulations.gov/document/FS-2021-0007-0006>

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.



Jan. 5: Interurban Trail

Jan. 12: Sugar Loaf Mtn & Mt. Erie

Jan. 19: Fragrance Lake

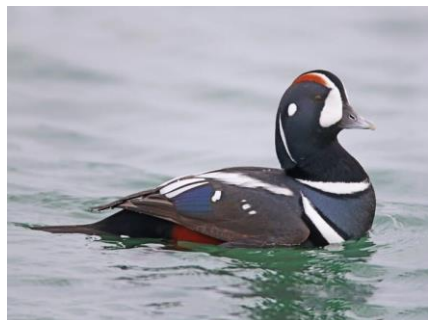
Jan. 26: The Tommy Thompson Trail (TTT)

Feb. 2: Whatcom Falls & Creek, Big Rock Loop

Meet the Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)– by Jeff Sinker

Male Harlequin ducks are unmistakable in their stunning blue/chestnut/white breeding plumage and look as though they are dressed for a masquerade ball. These small ducks are never found far from turbulent waters, both winter and summer, and x-rays performed on adults have revealed these ducks sustain multiple broken bones that have healed during their lives.

In winter, they congregate on exposed, often rocky, coastlines where they often form large groups. Harlequins are diver ducks who can propel themselves underwater as deep as 70 feet and for as long as 45 seconds. Favorite prey items include: small fish, barnacles, fish eggs, crabs, insects (especially during breeding season), and similar foods.



Harlequin ducks form monogamous pair bonds that last for the long term. When traveling to their breeding grounds on fast rushing rivers, they follow the path of the river rather than flying overland. If you've been out hiking along a turbulent river and seen a pair of small ducks zipping up the river, most likely you've seen a breeding pair of Harlequins.

After the pair arrives on the breeding grounds, the female inspects possible nest sites, which might take her an hour or more per site. She will use downy feathers, mosses, soft plant materials and perhaps small stones to construct the nest. Nests can be located on the ground, on cliff ledges, or in tree cavities. Only the female incubates the 4-6 eggs she lays, and once incubation begins, the males depart for the wintering grounds. After the chicks hatch, the female moves the family to slower-moving water with an abundant supply of insects for the chicks to eat since the chicks are not able to dive until they are 3-4 weeks old.

Reliable local spots to see Harlequin ducks, fairly close to shore, are Deception Pass State Park (Rosario Beach, Bowman Bay, and West Beach) as well as Washington Park in Anacortes.

For more information on this iconic species please visit: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Harlequin_Duck.
Photo: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Harlequin_Duck.

A BIRDING WITH AWARENESS REMINDER: (Reprinted with permission)

By Martha Jordan

BEFORE YOU GET OUT OF YOUR VEHICLE: Please remember to put your Discover Pass on your dashboard or hang it on the rearview mirror. You need a Discover Pass to park in any WDFW Wildlife Area parking lot or their boat access sites. They can be purchased anywhere WDFW licenses are sold and online.

Read what is posted on the reader boards/kiosks.

Note if there are other cars in the lot. Be aware that other activities may be happening on the unit such as hunting (big game, waterfowl, and upland bird) during certain dates, hunt dog training, or a scheduled special activity. A reminder that during the fall these areas are pheasant release sites for hunting and special hours may apply on pheasant release days.

If you are out during hunting season it is suggested that you wear an orange or bright pink vest, so hunters can see you.

If you see a wildlife-related issue, including poaching, there are several ways you can report the issue:

- ☐ Call 911 to report poaching in progress, a dangerous wildlife complaint, or an emergency.
- ☐ Call 877-933-9847 for non-emergency poaching/violation reports.
- ☐ Send an email to reportpoaching@dfw.wa.gov.
- ☐ Send a text tip to 847411 (TIP411) by entering WDFWTIP, followed by a space, and then entering your report.
- ☐ Use the online form to report a violation

And remember, please keep your dog on leash at all times while out enjoying your wildlife viewing. Our wildlife areas are not off-leash dog parks. If you are able and willing, bring a garbage bag and either some collection device (like a stick) or gloves, please do so. Picking up the smaller items is appreciated, especially when out on the unit. The bigger items as well as most of the garbage piles dumped at the parking lots are picked up by volunteers associated with other groups, especially the hunting groups. I keep a Hiking checklist and those items are always included in my run-through of everything I need.

With some knowledge about the shared space, regulations, and what you can do to be part of the active stewardship community, you can not only help protect these areas for wildlife and future generations but have a great and safe time out there. Now, get out there and bird!

CONSERVATION REPORT – by Tim Manns

On January 10th the sixty-day legislative session begins in Olympia. In Washington State's two-year budget cycle, 2022 is a non-budget writing year, but there can be tweaks. In mid-December Governor Inslee announced his proposed supplementary budget, including among other things, measures to move our state further in addressing climate change and ones focused on recovering salmon.

For some years National Audubon and Audubon Washington have had a strong legislative focus on the transformation needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change on birds, people, and, truly, all life. In Olympia, Audubon staff and chapter members will urge elected officials to finish last session's work and pass House Bill 1099. This update to the Growth Management Act would require counties and cities to address climate change (sea level rise, emissions reduction, and more) in revising their comprehensive and shoreline plans, something Skagit County has chosen not to do voluntarily.

Another Audubon emphasis is promoting installation of solar energy equipment in developed areas (i.e. rooftops, parking lots, etc.), particularly community solar systems so that less wealthy individuals can also benefit from solar energy. This approach to installing solar contrasts with focusing most such development in rural areas where siting can be problematic for farmland and native habitat. East of the Cascades there are currently proposals for 40 large solar projects on over 54,000 acres, including much shrub-steppe habitat. Audubon supports solar as essential to transitioning from fossil fuels, but siting needs to, and can, avoid impacts to key wildlife habitat and productive

Conservation continued on Pg. 5

Conservation continued from Pg. 4

farmland. Paralleling Governor Inslee's budget request, Audubon asks that Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife be adequately staffed to evaluate and minimize these projects' potential adverse environmental effects. Audubon also seeks to protect the funding in place to map least-conflict sites for solar installations. Improving protection for shorelines where forage fish spawn is an on-going Audubon legislative focus. These small fish are essential food for many sea birds and for salmon.

Details about these and other Audubon Washington's legislative priorities are at:

https://wa.audubon.org/sites/default/files/static_pages/attachments/audubon_2022_session_talking_points.pdf. Sign up to receive updates during the legislative session: <https://wa.audubon.org/conservation/legislative-session-2022>. When bill numbers are available associated with these priorities, go to the Legislature's web site for the text of each bill, to track its progress, and to express your support or opposition during the session (<https://leg.wa.gov>). Watch for information about advocacy day and please participate.

For information on other issues Skagit Audubon is tracking go to "Conservation Notes" under the "Conservation" tab on the chapter's website (www.skagitaudubon.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@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

Emperor Goose 2 at March

Point on 12-5 (GB) **RARE**

Brant 20+ on Padilla Bay on 12-11 (SAS)

Trumpeter Swan 4 on Big Beaver Pond, ACFL on 12-16 (RH)

Tundra Swan 2 at SWAWS on 11-21 & 5 on 12-1 (NOH)

Redhead 12 on Butler Flats on 12-13 (GB)

Long-tailed Duck 100+ off March Point on 12-11 (SAS)

Ruddy Duck 100 at Similk Bay on 12-11 (SAS)

GREBES

Eared Grebe 1 on Samish Island on 11-23 (GB)

RAILS and COOTS

Virginia Rail 2 at SWAWS on 11-21 (NOH)

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

Wilson's Snipe 50 by Similk Bay on 12-11 (SAS)

Spotted Sandpiper 1 at North Beach, Guemes Island on 12-4 (TRM); 2 at Nichols Bar on 12-13 (GB)

ALCIDS

Marbled Murrelet 8 off North Beach & 2 off Young's Park, Guemes Island on 12-4 (TRM)

Ancient Murrelet 120 off Young's Park, Guemes Island on 12-3 (GB); 5 off North Beach & 25 off Young's Park, Guemes Island on 12-4 (TRM)

GULLS and TERNs

Glaucous Gull 1 in Burlington on 12-8 (GB)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Northern Harrier 5 on Samish Flats on 11-19 & 6 at FIFR on 11-24 (NOH)

Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 throughout sighting period at east Stanwood yard (MS/JS)

Cooper's Hawk 1 at east Stanwood yard on 12-5, 10 & 14 (MS)

Red-tailed Hawk 1 dark Harlan's on Farm to Market Rd on 12-17 (AW)

Rough-legged Hawk 1 on Samish Flats on 11-19 (NOH)

OWLS

Great Horned Owl 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 & 1 on 12-1 (NOH); duets heard starting on 11-29 at east Fidalgo yard (RW); 1 heard at east Stanwood yard on 12-13 (MS)

Barred Owl 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 (NOH)

Short-eared Owl 1 at FIFR on 11-24 (NOH)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker 2 at east Fidalgo yard on 11-17 (RW)

Field sightings cont'd on Pg. 6

Field sightings cont'd from Pg. 5

FALCONS

American Kestrel 2 on Samish Flats on 11-19 (NOH)
Merlin 2 on Lincoln Hill, Mount Vernon on 12-13 (TRM); 1 in Edison & 1 on Bayview Edison Rd on 12-17 (AW)
Gyr Falcon 1 off Chuckanut on 12-7 (AW)
Peregrine Falcon 2 on Samish Flats on 11-19 & 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 (NOH)
Prairie Falcon 1 off Bayview Edison Rd on 12-16 & 1 at corner of Bayview Edison and Sullivan on 12-17 (AW)

FLYCATCHERS

Black Phoebe 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 (NOH)

SHRIKES

Northern Shrike 1 at SWAWS on 12-1 (NOH)

CORVIDS

California Scrub-Jay 1 in Burlington on 11-28 (GB)

BUSHTITS

Bushtit 8 at east Stanwood yard on 12-10 (MS)

NUTHATCHES

Red-breasted Nuthatch 1 at east Stanwood yard on 12-10 (MS)

CREEPERS

Brown Creeper 2 at Cranberry Lake on 11-29 (NOH); 1 at east Stanwood yard on 12-11 (MS)

WRENS

Pacific Wren 2 at east Stanwood yard throughout sighting period (MS/JS)

DIPPERS

American Dipper 1 at Rasar State Park on 12-10 (GB)

KINGLETS

Golden-crowned Kinglet 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 & 8 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 11-29 (NOH)

THRUSHES

American Robin 13 at east Stanwood yard on 12-10 (MS)
Varied Thrush 2 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 11-29 (NOH); 1 at east Stanwood yard on 12-13 (MS/JS)

LONGSPURS and BUNTINGS

Snow Bunting 3 along Padilla Bay Trail on 12-8 (GB)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

White-throated Sparrow 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 (GB)
Harris's Sparrow 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 (GB)

BLACKBIRDS and ORIOLES

Red-winged Blackbird 1 at east Stanwood yard on 12-10 (MS)

WARBLERS

Townsend's Warbler 1 female at Mount Vernon yard (DH)

(ACFL) Anacortes Community Forest Lands; (GB) Gary Bletsch; (FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; (DH) Di Hoffman; (RH) Ramona Hammerly; (NOH) Neil O'Hara; (TRM) Tim Manns; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SAS) Skagit Audubon Society Field Trip; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (AW) Andrea Warner; (RW) Regan Weeks

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.



To register for the field trip, please contact the trip leader listed below.

Port Susan Bay Nature Conservancy property, south of Stanwood

Saturday, January 15, 2022, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Trip leader: Jeff Osmundson, jeffo4297@gmail.com

Washington Park, Anacortes

Saturday, January 29, 2022, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Trip leader: Phil Wright, plwright55@gmail.com or 360.299.8212

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.

Board of Directors - Officers

President: Jeff Osmundson.....president@skagitaudubon.org
 Vice President: Vacant
 Secretary: Don Jonasson.....donjonasson@hotmail.com.....360-299-1415
 Treasurer: Neil O’Hara.....treasurer@skagitaudubon.org...781-290-9083
 Immediate Past President: Vacant

Board of Directors - Committee Chairs and At-Large Directors

Conservation: Tim Manns.....conservation@skagitaudubon.org.....360-333-8985
 Education: Sheila Pera.....skagiteducation44@gmail.com
 Kim Nelson.....kimn@skagitaudubon.org
 Field Trips: Libby Mills.....libbymills@gmail.com.....360-757-4139
 Finance: Lisa Hopkins.....finance@skagitaudubon.org
 Hikes: Joan Melcher.....jdmelcher@comcast.net.....360-424-0407
 Membership: Pam Pritzl.....membership@skagitaudubon.org
 Programs: Carla Helm.....programs@skagitaudubon.org
 Publications: Mary Sinker.....publications@skagitaudubon.org
 Representative: Alice Turner.....alict2@msn.com
 Representative: Ann Skinner.....anns@skagitaudubon.org
 Representative: Diana Hoffman.....dianah@skagitaudubon.org
 Representative: Jeff Sinker.....jmsinspect999@aol.com
 Representative: John Day.....jday0730@gmail.com
 Representative: John Farnsworth.....jfarnsworth@scu.edu
 Representative: Katherine O’Hara.....katherineoh@skagitaudubon.org

Other Volunteers

Bird Sightings: Pam Pritzl.....birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org.....360-387-7024
 Hospitality: Pamela Maxwell
 Newsletter Distribution: John Edison
 Webmaster: Ron Pera.....skagitaudubon@gmail.com

HAWK WATCHING IN WESTERN WASHINGTON CLASSES RETURN



Sue Cottrell from Raptor Studies Northwest will again be offering the *Hawk Watching in Western Washington* classes by Zoom this season. The link for class info is below. Also, a couple of scholarships are being offered to young folks who are excited about learning more about raptors. If you know of anyone please have them message Sue directly.

For class and registration details, contact Sue Cottrell at: <http://www.raptorstudiesnw.org> or by email at: raptorstudiesnw@gmail.com. The advantage of offering it by Zoom is that folks from out of the area can also join. Merlin photo by Sue Cottrell.

**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: _____

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)