



The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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MARCH MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM

Special Birds of Mount Rainier
Presented by: Jeff Antonelis-Lapp
Tuesday, March 8, 7:00 PM

To most birders, Mount Rainier National Park is a mecca for subalpine and alpine birds that include Gray Jay, Clark’s Nutcracker, Mountain Bluebird, and sought-after birds that include Boreal Owl, White-tailed Ptarmigan, and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. But did you know that it and its neighboring watersheds host Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, and Streaked Horned Lark, all protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act? Join Jeff Antonelis-Lapp, Emeritus Faculty at The Evergreen State College, as he shares the status of these key species from *Tahoma and Its People*, his natural history of Mount Rainier.



After college, Jeff worked two summers at “the Mountain,” igniting a connection to it that endures today. He has summited it, hiked all its mapped trails, and completed the 93-mile Wonderland Trail five times. Jeff began writing *Tahoma and Its People* after being unable to find a current natural history for a course he planned to teach at Evergreen. He conducted over 250 days of fieldwork for the book, most in the company of park archaeologists, biologists, and geologists.

Register for this Zoom event at: <https://bit.ly/mar2022SAS>. 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.

January: If you missed the January 11th Zoom presentation “Seeking Elusive Wetland Bird Species” by Cindy Easterson from Puget Sound Bird Observatory, you can view the recording at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWrng8I23pg>

February: If you missed the February 8th Zoom presentation “Estuary Restoration in the Greater Skagit Delta - What is Monitoring Telling Us?” by Callie Moore and Jenny Baker, you can view the recording at the following link: https://youtu.be/crRBA9I6z_g. Callie and Jenny have also provided additional resources here:

- [Island Unit Estuary Restoration Frequently Asked Questions | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)
- [skagitchinookestuaryhandout.pdf \(wa.gov\)](#)
- <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02189/wdfw02189.pdf>

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

Well, here we are in the bee-tweener time of year. It doesn't feel like winter anymore, but spring seems a ways off. Many of us would love to get out in the garden or yard and start getting our hands dirty. But you may want to practice a little patience. There is an internet meme that says 5 days of 50 degrees is needed before the insects, especially pollinators, hatch and start to move about. As you know, insects are a primary source of food for many of our bird species. So, if you can, be a little lazy about getting started in the garden.

Your Board of Directors is also working hard this spring season. As you know, we will have elections and install officers and at large directors in June. To get there, the Nominations and Governance Committee is working to put together a slate of nominees for your consideration. In my opinion, this Board has been very good at getting things moving and starting new initiatives. Last month you saw the incredible, but incomplete, list of the accomplishments over the past year. But as usual, there are some Board members that will step down. We are starting now to recruit new members that will continue this great work (see Pg. 6 for more information).

I would like to make a special request for anyone that is willing to help with the field trips. Everyone loves field trips, but we need trip leaders to make that happen. You don't have to be the best birder, just know where the bathrooms are! Seriously, we can help you partner with an experienced trip leader to try it on for size. Without trip leaders, we will have no field trips. Please consider whether you can help out.

We hope to see you with your binoculars and hiking shoes out in the field very soon. Until then..... Thanks, and happy birding. Be safe, wear your mask, get fully vaccinated.

Jeff Osmundson, President

Skagit Audubon Member Wins National Audubon Photography Award

Congratulations to our very own Ann Kramer! Ann's photo of a Varied Thrush on Pacific Crabapple was among the winners in the "How Native Plants Support Birds" category can be seen on our website (www.skagitaudubon.org) and here: <https://www.audubon.org/news/these-delightful-photos-highlight-how-native-plants-support-birds>.

Meet the Spotted Towhee (Pipilo maculatus) – by Jeff Sinker

Formerly known as the Rufous-sided Towhee, the Spotted Towhee makes its home in brushy habitats where it can easily hide while foraging by "double scratching" in the leaf litter for insects, worms, and other favorite foods.



Towhees feed almost exclusively on the ground, and they can be easily attracted to yards, gardens and even campgrounds if sufficient brush cover is present. Males begin singing in the spring from the tops of brush piles or low tree branches. Once they attract a mate, they focus their energy on defending their territory. The nest site is usually on the ground under a shrub but occasionally on a low branch less than five feet above ground. Females build the open cup nest using grass, twigs, strips of bark and fine materials including animal hair. The female incubates the 3-

5 eggs for 12-14 days and both parents care for the nestlings who fledge in 9-11 days. One or two broods per year are common. Learn more: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Spotted_Towhee/overview Photo by Mary Sinker

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.

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.

Mar. 2: Goose Rock Perimeter Hike

Mar. 9: Lookout Mountain Preserve and/or Stimpson Family Nature Reserve

Mar 16: Dugwalla Bay State Park

Mar. 23: Whatcom Falls and Creek, Big Rock Loop

Mar. 30: Around Mt. Erie/Mt. Erie Base Circumference Hike

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



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.

March 13: Deception Pass State Park/Rosario Head, Beginning Birding (1 pm-3 pm)

Primarily geared towards the newer birder, but all skill levels are welcomed. We will have an orientation to binoculars and scopes, and cover field marks, ID tips and tricks, and general birding etiquette. Meet at the Rosario Head picnic area at 1 pm. Dress for the weather and a Discover Pass is required for parking. NOTE: this area has no fencing and there are vertical cliffs. Directions/more area info: <https://www.parks.wa.gov/497/Deception-Pass>
Email trip leader Jeff Osmundson to register at jeffo4297@gmail.com with "Rosario" in the email header. Priority registration for Skagit Audubon members until Mar. 6th and then open to all. Covid 19 vaccinations required.



March 26: Northern State Recreation Area (9 am-12 noon)

We'll meet at the Northern State Recreation Area parking area on Helmick Road, just east of Sedro-Woolley on the north side of SR 20 at 9:00 a.m. and walk the trails along both sides of Hansen Creek until around noon. Resident and migrating waterbirds and songbirds are a possibility, including American Bitterns, Soras, Virginia Rails, Marsh Wrens, Tree Swallows, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, and if we're really lucky, a Mountain Bluebird or two. Please wear sturdy, waterproof walking shoes and be prepared for wet and cold, especially wet feet.

Group size limited to 13 attendees, and we request you be fully vaccinated for Covid 19 to attend. To reserve a spot, please use this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F44A8A729AAFEC16-field>
Leader: John Day, 360-856-0644, jday0730@gmail.com

FROM YOUR EDITOR - by Mary Sinker

On a recent semi-dreary late January day, I headed out to a favorite Skagit Valley nursery in search of some winter color for the front porch to compliment some brightly colored primroses. Not only did I find some small pink camellias with lots of buds still to bloom, but while browsing through the native plant section, I came upon some heavily budded Red-flowering Currant shrubs. The two that I already have out in the garden, really began to take hold last year and the hummingbirds loved them. Being the ever-optimistic gardener that I am, and my general rule of not buying more than what will fit onto one small cart, I filled the remaining space in the small cart with three Red-flowering Currants. My rather messy garden is a haven for many birds and other wildlife but is always changing as plants fulfill their life cycle and are replaced with new ones. Maybe I want to try a different theme or design in an area, or even delve deeper into container gardening. A garden is never done, that's for sure!

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

Greater White-fronted Goose

3 at Pulver/Whitemarsh Rd on 2-5 (DH)

Eurasian Wigeon 6 on Samish Flats on 1-2, 2 on 1-22 & 2-11 (YH)

Redhead 1 at Green Road Pond on 1-26 (GB)

Ring-necked Duck 6 on Samish Flats on 2-4 (YH)

Harlequin Duck 3 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-29 (SAS)

Long-tailed Duck 6 at SIPB on 1-21 (YH)

Common Goldeneye pair at Hope Island beach, La Conner on 1-7 (RWJ)

Barrow's Goldeneye pair at Hope Island beach, La Conner on 1-17 (RWJ)

GREBES

Eared Grebe 1 at Similk Beach on 1-21 (GB)

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

Dunlin 300 at West 90, Samish Flats on 1-23 (SAS)

Long-billed Dowitcher 4 at SWAWS on 1-28 (GB)

Wilson's Snipe 2 at Telegraph Slough on 2-1 (GB)

ALCIDS

Common Murre 43 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-29 (SAS)

Marbled Murrelet 38 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-29 (SAS)

Ancient Murrelet 53 at SIPB on 1-14 (GB)

Rhinoceros Auklet 19 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-29 (SAS)

GULLS and TERNs

Glaucous Gull 1 in Sedro-Woolley on 1-26 (GB)

LOONS

Red-throated Loon 1 at Hope Island beach, La Conner on 1-7 (RWJ); 2 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-29 (SAS)

Common Loon 17 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-29 (SAS)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 in Anacortes yard on 1-19 & 1-26 (YH); 1 at east Stanwood yard on 2-1 & 2-8 (MS/JS); 1 in Hope Island area on 1-20 (RWJ); 1 or 2 in east Fidalgo yard throughout sighting period (RW)

Cooper's Hawk 1 daily at east Stanwood yard throughout sighting period (MS/JS); 1 at SWAWS on 1-17 & 1 on Samish Flats on 2-11 (YH); 1 or 2 at east Fidalgo yard throughout sighting period (RW)

Red-tailed Hawk 1 "light-morph Harlan's" on Sullivan Rd on 1-15 (AW); 1 "light-morph Harlan's" on Minkler Flats on 2-4 (GB); 1 "dark morph Harlan's" on Samish Flats on 2-10 (AW)

Rough-legged Hawk 1 at West 90, Samish Flats on 1-23 (SAS); 1 "dark morph" on Samish Flats on 2-10 (AW); 1 "dark morph" on Samish Flats on 2-11 (YH)

OWLS

Great Horned Owl pair hooting regularly at east Stanwood home throughout sighting period (MS/JS); duet heard at east Fidalgo yard on 1-22 (RW)
Short-eared Owl 1 on Samish Flats on 1-16 (PP); 1 on Padilla Bay Trail on 1-26 (GB)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker 1 in Anacortes yard on 1-14, 1-24 & 1-25 (YH); 2 at east Fidalgo yard on 2-8 (RW)

Downy Woodpecker 1 at SWAWS on 1-14 (YH)

Hairy Woodpecker 1 at ACFL on 2-9 (YH)

Pileated Woodpecker 1 at Hope Island area, La Conner throughout sighting period (RWJ)

FALCONS

Merlin 1-6 seen 1-15 through 2-10 on Samish Flats (AW)

Gyrfalcon 1 on Samish Flats on 1-31 (GB); 1 on 2-3 & 2-6 on Samish Flats (AW)

Peregrine Falcon 1-6 seen 1-15 through 2-10 on Samish Flats (AW); 1 on Samish Flats on 1-22 & 2-11 (YH)

Prairie Falcon 1 on T-Loop Rd, Samish Flats on 1-15 & seen regularly on Samish Flats through 2-10 (AW); 1 on Samish Flats on 1-19 & 1-31 (GB); 1 on Samish Flats on 1-23 (YH); 1 at West 90, Samish Flats on 1-23 (SAS)

Field sightings continued on Pg. 5

Field sightings cont'd from Pg. 4

VIREOS

Hutton's Vireo 1 at Barnaby Slough on 1-23 (GB)

CORVIDS

California Scrub-Jay 1 in Sedro-Woolley on 1-17 (GB)

SWALLOWS

Tree Swallow 1 at slough north of SWAWS on 1-17 (YH)

Barn Swallow 2 at slough north of SWAWS on 1-17 (YH); 24 at SWAWS on 1-19 (GB)

NUTHATCHES

Red-breasted Nuthatch 1 at east Stanwood yard throughout sighting period (MS/JS)

WRENS

Pacific Wren 5 daily at east Stanwood yard throughout sighting period (MS/JS)

THRUSHES

Townsend's Solitaire 2 at WA Park, Anacortes on 1-21 (GB)

Varied Thrush 1 in Anacortes yard throughout sighting period (YH)

FINCHES and ALLIES

Common Redpoll 14 at SWAWS on 1-14 (GB); 23 at SWAWS on 1-14 (YH)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

White-throated Sparrow 1 at Debay Slough on 1-17 (GB)

BLACKBIRDS and ORIOLES

Western Meadowlark 1 at West 90, Samish Flats on 1-23 (SAS)

MAMMALS

Bobcat 1 at east Stanwood home on 2-8 (MS)

Coyote regularly "yipping" at east Fidalgo yard throughout sighting period (RW)

Elephant Seal 1 female and pup at Deception Pass State Park on 2-8 (RWJ)

Gray Whale 1 at Rosario Head on 2-8 (GB)

(ACFL) Anacortes Community Forest Lands; (GB) Gary Bletsch; (DH) Dianna Hoffman; (YH) Yvonne Houppermans; (RWJ) Rosi & Wes Jansen; (SIPB) Samish Island Public Beach; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SAS) Skagit Audubon Society Field Trip; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (AW) Andrea Warner; (RW) Regan Weeks

CONSERVATION REPORT - by Tim Manns

At this mid-February writing, the state legislature's sixty-day session is more than half over. By tonight, any bills not voted out of the chamber in which they were introduced will die. Barring extraordinary circumstances, the session will end March 10th. Among bills already dead for this year is the Lorraine Loomis Act (HB 1838 / SB 5727) to enhance salmon recovery. Requiring considerable vegetated stream buffers aroused bitter opposition and memories of Skagit's buffer wars of years ago. Also not moving forward is a bill to fund and improve the measure passed in 2020 encouraging farming practices that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon in the soil.

Still in play is SB 5042 to close a Growth Management Act loophole allowing developers to skirt prohibitions on so-called Fully Contained Communities (i.e., residential sprawl in rural areas). First introduced in 2008, this bill would help efforts in Skagit County to block FCCs once and for all. (Note: the Anacortes City Council on February 14th approved a letter to the County Commissioners opposing FCCs, joining three other Skagit communities.)

Audubon Washington's top priority this session is passing Senate Bill 5885. Adam Maxwell, Audubon's legislative lead, says, "(This bill) would require a regular and comprehensive assessment of shoreline conditions in Puget Sound, identifying illegal and potentially derelict structures that are impeding habitat function. It would also improve the guidelines for replacing marine structures. It's a straightforward bill that lays the groundwork for much bigger conservation efforts in years to come." The diets of seabirds, salmon, and marine mammals rely on forage fish, some of which spawn on beaches. Armoring interferes with beach replenishment ruining conditions needed for spawning. This bill passed the Senate and is still in play.

Also still alive is House Bill 1099 requiring counties and municipalities to address resilience to climate change in their comprehensive plans and shoreline master programs (SMP). Because it is not yet required by law, Skagit County is ignoring sea level rise in its current SMP revision. It should be noted that there are adverse forestry-related provisions in this amended bill which need to change before final passage. (*continued on Pg. 6*)

(Conservation continued from Pg. 5)

For how to follow bills, see the Conservation Report in February's *Skagit Flyer* on Skagit Audubon's website. For other issues Skagit Audubon is following see the Conservation Notes, also on the website www.skagitaudubon.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: Pamela Maxwell
Newsletter Distribution: John Edison
Webmaster: Ron Pera.....skagitaudubon@gmail.com

An Important Message from Your Nominations and Governance Committee: Would you like to become involved in the Skagit Audubon community? Nominations are open for all Board positions and will close at the end of the April 12th general meeting. In particular, we need candidates for Secretary, a Board officer position, as well as committee chairs for Youth and Adult Education, and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI). If you are interested in volunteering for any Board position, or nominating someone else, please contact any of the following: 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).

Spokane Audubon Field Trip to Skagit County 2021

By Jim and Bea Harrison

The last week of October, five brave souls from Eastern Washington embarked on a mission: to experience the phenomenon that is the Skagit delta during the Fall bird migration. Burdened with copious quantities of bird books, apps, scopes, cameras, binoculars and most importantly rain gear, we rose to the occasion.

Our first stop of the morning would have made the whole trip worthwhile. We arrived at daylight at Fir Island management area, (also known as Hayton Farms). The tide was very low, exposing acres of mud flats. Perfect conditions. The next hour was wonderful. Thousands of snow geese were roosting in the nearby bay. As the morning progressed, flight after flight came over us as they headed for inland ag fields. Bald eagles swooped through the geese, keeping them on the move, each flight starting with a cacophonous roar of geese calling, distracting us from the hundreds of dunlin and other shorebirds circling overhead and arriving to feed on the wetlands before the tide returned. We recorded 23 species before moving on.

Next, we visited Wiley Slough at the Skagit Wildlife Area, just a few miles away. This site has wetlands, a good riparian habitat and a nice walking trail along a levee. We saw a variety of birds from purple finches, a pileated woodpecker, a peregrine falcon to Wilson's snipe. We moved on to Lone Tree Point on Skagit Bay. We were looking for the black oystercatchers that hang out there, but the tide had come in and covered their normal shell flat. Luckily, 18 of them flew by as we were leaving. A raft of hundreds of double-crested cormorants was seen just offshore. We also picked up Eurasian wigeon there.

Next stop was Deception Pass State Park Cranberry Lake site. We parked and broke out the scopes. This is a good spot to get pelagics. We saw a variety of gulls including Heermann's and short-billed. Some highlights were harlequin ducks, surf scoters and pigeon guillemots in their winter plumage. We missed seeing the marble murrelets, which are often seen there. We moved on to Ship Harbor Preserve, close to the Anacortes ferry. This park is a well-kept secret. Purple martins nest there in the summer. American wigeons always seem to be feeding at a fresh-water runoff area, providing amazing views and photography opportunities. We got a great look at three Anna's hummingbirds, golden-crowned sparrows eating apples in a tree and a variety of riparian and waterbirds. We watched a bald eagle attack a family of river otters. For that matter, during the trip we saw eagles attacking loons, ducks, geese, and we saw one eagle catch and eat what looked like a coot. No shortage of bald eagles in that area. Speaking of eating, it was great to go out to dinner in a real restaurant again! Which we did each night.

The second day of our trip, we started at Fir and Wiley slough again. It was a beautiful morning, considering we had a 100% chance of rain predicted. The morning light over the slough was awe-inspiring, and everyone got some beautiful shots. Once again, snow geese were abundant, and we picked up a few peeps. At Wiley Slough, only Bea got to see the resident black phoebe, fleetingly, but everyone got to see some savannah sparrows, northern shovelers, and some green-winged teal.

From there we drove around March Point south of Anacortes where we found white-winged scoters. Next, we checked the bay behind the Swinomish casino. The rain prediction proved true, as we drove to the beach at Bayview State Park. We decided to persevere and drove to the overlook on Samish Island. This was another opportunity to *break out the scopes* as we tried to keep the optics dry enough to scan the bay. Alan found a Pacific loon and Bonaparte's gull. Our last location for the day was the driving loop around Washington Park in Anacortes. We stopped to glass the strait and we were attacked by chestnut-backed chickadees and sparrows. One chickadee landed on Jim's hand! Obviously, someone had been feeding the bird at this spot. It was a good opportunity to get some close-up photos of chestnut-backs. We also got good looks at more harlequin ducks and a brown creeper caught our eye near the car.



Wearily, we headed back to town. Final total 79 species, but the best reward of the trip was the opportunity to witness one of mother nature's special migration events in one of the most beautiful areas of the state. We crammed a lot of nature viewing into two days. It was a great trip for Spokane Audubon. We missed the swans this year, but there's always next October.....

**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)