



# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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## **MAY MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM**

*“Birds of the Amazon: Ecological Research & Conservation in the SE Peruvian Amazon”*

**Presented by Dr. Ursula Valdez**

**Tuesday, May 11, 7:00 PM**

The Peruvian Amazonia is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, and thousands of species are distributed in this region. Unfortunately, many bird species and their habitats in the region have been affected by deforestation, agriculture expansion, and illegal mining. Dr. Valdez and her colleagues assess the bird populations, their distribution among available habitats, and the related impacts of human activities. Dr. Valdez will share some of her research findings, and she will explain how these studies are also helping to engage people from Peru and other regions in science, conservation, education, and sustainability.



Dr. Valdez is a Peruvian-American Avian tropical ecologist and conservationist. She focuses on studies of bird community ecology, habitat use and works in conservation programs in the SE Peruvian Amazon. She collaborates with other scientists and professionals and local communities of Madre de Dios to develop conservation programs. At UW Bothell, through her courses, and field study abroad to Peru, she offers opportunities to connect her students with a body of local and international researchers, conservation organizations and students working on ecology, natural history field research and conservation.

Please register for this Zoom event at: <http://bit.ly/sasmay>.

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](mailto:carlajhelm@comcast.net).

If you missed the April 13th presentation “A Dead Tree’s Excellent Adventure” by Ken Bevis or want to watch it again, a recording is now available for viewing at the following link: <https://youtu.be/TDvPQw1ih-k>.

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**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.**

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

As spring turns into summer and we start getting out a little more, we can be surprised by the great week of 70-degree days which will inevitably turn into rainy 50-degree days later. The spring migrants are inviting us to take little day trips and maybe a longer journey to see them. More people are venturing out as the pandemic seems to slowly start to fade. Vaccines will become more available, and the weather will warm to summer temperatures. Your Board of Directors will take a well-earned break this summer in July and August. We went straight through the year in 2020 to try and provide some interesting and thought-provoking presentations to ease the discomfort of quarantine.

But what does the future look like for us? September will arrive and we will look forward to our meetings again. Will they be in person, on Zoom or hybrid? We really don't know yet. We have been lucky to have the Zoom option and some great programs that we can enjoy from our computer screens. But we miss our in person social hours and face to face greetings.

You can help us by letting us know what you think. I'm sure that there will be some that would like to avoid driving to meetings, especially in the dark months of December and January. Many also really value the social hour and miss having conversations before and after meetings.

If you are familiar with technology perhaps you can help us figure out what a hybrid meeting might look like. It would be great to have the ability to go to the meeting without the drive. Would it be acceptable to have future presentations via Zoom when we have the option of in person meetings? There are many questions that we will wrestle with in the next few months. If you could help by sharing with a board member how you feel about our future, it would really be helpful. You can always email me at [president@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:president@skagitaudubon.org)

One more short note - please take time to thank Phil Wright for his service to Skagit Audubon. The long time Board member and former President will step away from duties at the end of June. He has served for more than 20 years in a variety of positions, led field trips and kept us on track with financial audits. His voice on the Board will be missed.

Until next month, stay safe, wear a mask and wash your hands.

What's the best time to go bird watching? When you can!

Jeff Osmundson, President

**GLOBAL BIG DAY** is coming up and no matter where you are in the world, you can participate! Even if you have only 5 or 10 minutes to observe birds from your home or out in the field, your contribution helps scientists learn about birds, their population trends, and their habitat requirements. **100% free and easy to do – mark your calendar for May 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Learn more at: <https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-8-may-2021>.



## CONSERVATION REPORT – by Tim Manns

Last year, the Washington State legislature passed, and Governor Inslee signed House Bill 2311, “Amending state greenhouse gas emission limits for consistency with the most recent assessment of climate change science.” This law sets a schedule for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our state to, “By 2050 ... achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.” The scale, pace, and consequences of climate change call for immediate, determined, and multi-faceted approaches at every level: local, state, national, international. We’ve dithered long enough. In the 2021 state legislative session, to meet the legislated reduction targets multiple bills were introduced to cut carbon emissions and otherwise address climate change. The session ends April 25<sup>th</sup>, and tragically, despite dogged work by many organizations and individuals, the Governor’s staunch support, and for the most part, majority buy-in in both chambers, at this mid-April writing, it appears no significant climate change bill will reach the Governor’s desk - - another year lost! We all know there are State Representatives and Senators who reject the abundant evidence of anthropogenic climate change and/or the urgency to do anything. It is more than mildly unfortunate that some of the people elected to represent Skagit Audubon members not only see no need to act but apply their creativity and energy to actively opposing others working on this huge problem. How will they explain this to their children and grandchildren who will deal with the consequences?

Despite passing both House and Senate, the Clean Fuels Standard is, through some mysterious process beyond my understanding, now tied up with wrangling over the transportation budget and is likely to die, having made it so close to enactment after years of effort. Similarly bogged down are bills to create a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emissions or a carbon tax generating revenue to speed transition from fossil fuels. All these approaches have succeeded elsewhere in reducing carbon emissions, but here where we like to think ourselves more environmentally attuned, our legislature is hamstrung by those who choose to oppose and obstruct fellow legislators trying to solve real problems. Even a modest bill to require that county and city comprehensive plans address effects of climate change died in committee.

In the face of such a discouraging picture, for the sake of our mental health and the good of the planet we have to find what we can personally do. For most of us that means acting locally. Here we may find a basis for hope. That there is some possibility of national action on climate change after four disastrous years is certainly welcome though far from a done deal. At the opposite end of the geographic scale comes great news of a success many of you helped bring about. Skagit Land Trust has bought the 50 acres on Samish Flats between Padilla and Samish Bays mentioned in last month’s *Skagit Flyer*, adding to the 8,000 acres the Trust has protected in our county. There are loans to repay, confirmation of a big grant yet to come, and donations needed to clean up and restore the property, but the big hurdle of acquisition is done. Bit by bit, organizations we can all support are making a positive difference in protecting habitat and providing for resilience to climate change. We do what we can, at whatever scale we’re able, realizing that some of our elected leaders will all too often not act in our best interests, or even ultimately their own. We’re in the midst of beautiful Spring weather (if a bit ominously warm some days). Neotropical birds are returning to reclaim their summer homes and raise young. A rarely seen Ruff is adding to the excitement of the season at Wylie Slough. Here in western Washington, we’re blessed with abundant opportunities to experience the natural world, to get involved with community science and habitat restoration, and to protect this place we inhabit. Elections for public office will roll around again.

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](http://www.skagitaudubon.org)). Please particularly look at local issues where we each have a greater chance of making a difference.



**NESTING SEASON** is underway, and you can help scientists gather data about nesting birds in your area. **NestWatch**, a nationwide nest monitoring program through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is designed to track the status and trends of breeding birds. Participation is free, easy to do, and anyone can do it. To learn more and sign up, visit: [www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.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](mailto: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** 7 in farm field on Rekdal Road, Camano Island on 4-11 (PP)  
**Wood Duck** 10 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-27 & 2 at SWAWS on 3-31 (NOH); 2 at SWAWS on 4-10 & 4-11 (MS/JS)  
**Cinnamon Teal** 1 in Stanwood neighborhood pond on 4-1 (JO)  
**Canvasback** 1 at FIFR on 4-5 (GB)  
**Ring-necked Duck** 4 at SWAWS on 4-10 & 4-11 (MS/JS)

### GREBES

**Western Grebe** 4 in Burrows Bay, Anacortes on 3-31 (NOH)

### PIGEONS and DOVES

**Band-tailed Pigeon** 4 at east Stanwood home throughout sighting period (MS)

### HUMMINGBIRDS

**Rufous Hummingbird** 1 on 3-17, 1 on 3-31 & 3 on 4-11 at SWAWS (NOH); 1 on 4-1 & 1 on 4-4 at Channel Drive (NOH); 1 at SHIP on 4-3 (NOH); 1 at Deer Lagoon, Whidbey Island on 4-5 (NOH)

### RAILS and COOTS

**Virginia Rail** 1 at SHIP on 3-15, 1 on 3-25 & 1 on 4-3 (NOH); 1 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-27 (NOH)

### PLOVERS

**Black-bellied Plover** 20 at FIFR on 4-1 & 5 on Deer Lagoon, Whidbey Island on 4-5 (NOH)  
**Semipalmated Plover** 2 at Leque Island/Eide Road on 4-2 (JO)

### SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

**Whimbrel** 1 at SHIP on 4-3 (NOH); 20 at Barnum Point, Camano Island on 4-11 (JO)  
**Marbled Godwit** 4 at March Point on 4-9 (GB)  
**Ruff** 1 at SWAWS on 3-31 & 4-11 (NOH); 1 at SWAWS on 3-31, 4-1 & 4-7 (GB); 1 at SWAWS on 4-11 (MS/JS); 1 at SWAWS on 4-13 (JO) **RARE** (found by NOH)

**Dunlin** 10 at SWAWS on 4-10 & 4-11 (MS/JS)  
**Western Sandpiper** 5 at SWAWS on 4-11 (NOH)  
**Long-billed Dowitcher** 22 on 3-22, 11 on 3-31 & 9 on 3-31 at SWAWS (NOH); 3 at SWAWS on 4-10 & 4-11 (MS/JS)  
**Wilson's Snipe** 1 on Iverson Beach Road (flew out of ditch) on 4-8 (PP); 8 at Padilla Bay Shore Trail on 4-15 (JS)  
**Lesser Yellowlegs** 1 at SWAWS on 3-31 (NOH)  
**Greater Yellowlegs** 28 at SWAWS on 4-10 & 4-11 (MS/JS)

### ALCIDS

**Marbled Murrelet** 2 at WA Park, Anacortes on 3-15 & 2 on Burrows Bay, Anacortes on 3-30 (NOH)

### HERONS and ALLIES

**Great Egret** 1 at Burmaster Road, Sedro Woolley on 3-23 (DW); 1 on Minkler Flats on 3-24 (GB)

### VULTURES

**Turkey Vulture** 2 at SHIP on 3-20 (NOH); 1 at SWAWS on 4-11 (NOH); 1 flying near Oak Harbor on 4-12 (RH)

### OSPREYS

**Osprey** 1 flying over Bay View Ridge on 4-5 (JB); 1 at SHIP on 4-7 (NOH)

### HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

**Bald Eagle** 1 dilute plumage (Frosty) on Samish Flats on 4-3 (AW)  
**Cooper's Hawk** 2 at Hillcrest Park throughout sighting period (may nest) (TM)  
**Rough-legged Hawk** 1 at Channel Drive on 4-1 (NOH); 1 dark morph at the East 90, Samish Flats on 4-6 (AW); 1 soaring over Chuckanut (near Colony Road) on 4-15 (AW)  
**Golden Eagle** 1 on Samish Flats on 3-31 (GB)

*Field sightings continued on Pg. 5*

Field sightings continued from Pg. 4

### OWLS

**Great Horned Owl** 1 on 3-17 & 2 on 4-11 at SWAWS (NOH); 2 adults & 2 young at SWAWS on 4-10 & 4-11 (MS/JS)

**Barred Owl** 1 at Cranberry Lake, ACFL on 3-27 (NOH)

**Short-eared Owl** 3 at the East 90, Samish Flats on 4-6 (AW); 1 at Port Susan Bay TNC (restricted) on 4-13 (JO); 2 at Padilla Bay Shore Trail on 4-15 (JS); 1 at the East 90, Samish Flats on 4-15 (AW)

### WOODPECKERS

**Red-breasted Sapsucker** 2 at east Stanwood home throughout sighting period (MS/JS)

### FALCONS

**Merlin** 1 on Lincoln Hill, Mount Vernon throughout sighting period (may nest) (TM); 1 at FIFR on 4-1 & 1 at SWAWS on 4-11 (NOH)

**Prairie Falcon** 1 on Samish Flats on 4-3 (AW); 1 at the West 90, Samish Flats on 4-6 (AW)

### FLYCATCHERS

**Say's Phoebe** 1 at Marblemount Boat Launch on 4-6 (GB)

### WRENS

**Bewick's Wren** 2 at east Stanwood home throughout sighting period (MS)

### PIPITS

**American Pipit** 25 at Port Susan TNC (restricted) (JO)

### SPARROWS and ALLIES

**Swamp Sparrow** 2 at NSRA on 4-9 (GB)

### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** several seen throughout sighting period at SHIP (NOH); 1 at Cap Sante home on 4-3 (JH)

### MAMMALS

**Bobcat** 1 at east Stanwood home on 3-25 (MS/JS)

**River Otter** 1 at SWAWS on 3-25 (MS/JS)

(ACFL) Anacortes Community Forest Lands; (GB) Gary Bletsch; (JB) Jane Brandt; (FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; (JH) Joe Halton; (NOH) Neil O'Hara; (RH) Ramona Hammerly; (NSRA) Northern State Recreation Area; (JO) Jeff Osmundson; (SHIP) Ship Harbor Interpretive Preserve; (TM) Tim Manns; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (TNC) The Nature Conservancy; (AW) Andrea Warner; (DW) Daria Wheatley



© Mary Sinker

## BIRD N' CRUISE TO VENDOVI ISLAND PRESERVE (owned by the San Juan Preservation Trust)

Explore Vendovi on its easy, well-maintained 3-mile trail system and enjoy stunning views from lookouts and beaches for about 3.5 hrs. **Please plan to take COVID precautions consistent with current guidelines. This trip is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society.**

**Dates:** Saturdays May 15, 22; June 5, 19; July 10

**Time:** 9 am to 4 pm

**Departs:** Skyline Marina, Anacortes

**Cost:** \$168 p/p; **plus** \$5 donation for San Juan Island Preservation Trust

**Group Size:** 4-14 Adventurers

**Leaders:** Ivar Dolph and Stephanie Fernandez

**What to bring:** binoculars, camera, lunch, dress appropriately; toilet paper/bag (no bathroom on island)

**Reservations:** <https://skagitguidedadventures.com/adventure/vendovi-island-birding-cruise/>

**Contact:** Stephanie Fernandez at [steph@skagitguidedadventures.com](mailto:steph@skagitguidedadventures.com) or 360.474.7479



## Who's New at Wiley Slough? by Mary Sinker



A Ruff, that's who! Who might a Ruff be you ask? A long-distance migrant from Eurasia who has been holding an audience at Wiley Slough for birders and photographers who come from far and wide for the chance to glimpse this rare visitor. Our very own Neil O'Hara (whose photo is shown here) was the first to find this stocky, medium-sized shorebird with orange legs hanging out with the Yellowlegs and Dowitchers.

The Ruff (*Calidrix pugnax*) is a member of the Sandpiper family, so will never be far from water, and during migration popular habitats include marshes, mudflats and flooded fields. Ruffs forage for food by walking or wading in shallow water or mud. They pick prey like insects, spiders, and frogs from the surface or probe in the water or mud for worms, small mollusks and similar foods.

When it comes to breeding, there is a show on the sub-Arctic and Arctic tundra across Northern Europe and Russia that precedes the selection of mates. Colorful males adorned in their head tufts and neck ruffs gather on the spring breeding grounds, called "leks", and perform displays by posturing and leaping into the air to attract a mate. Females arrive and evaluate the different males before making their selection. This is where the pair bonding ends because after mating is completed, the male plays no further role in the raising of the young. The female builds the well-concealed nest by herself, incubates the eggs and cares for the young after they hatch.

Typically, four eggs are laid, and incubation takes 20-23 days. The downy-covered young leave the nest soon after hatching but aren't quite ready to feed themselves, so the female feeds them for a few days. First flight for the youngsters is about 25-28 days and then they need to pack on the calories in preparation for their long-distance flight to their wintering grounds in Southern and Western Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa and India.

Ruffs, like all shorebirds, are dependent upon wetlands. Some population declines of Ruffs in certain parts of Europe may have occurred due to loss of wetland habitats. However, there is evidence of a small breeding population of Ruffs in Alaska, so it is possible they are expanding their range into North America.

Sources and more info: [www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/ruff](http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/ruff) and [www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/ruff](http://www.birdweb.org/birdweb/bird/ruff)

## FROM YOUR EDITOR - by Mary Sinker

Are you excited for spring migration and nesting season? Once again the cycle begins as millions of birds leave their wintering grounds in the Southern Hemisphere and make their way northward. Some will remain here and raise their young, Western Tanagers, Common Yellowthroats and Rufous Hummingbirds are just three examples. Others, like Western Sandpipers and Whimbrels, will stay and feed for a few days or weeks before continuing their journey north, some going as far north as the Arctic.

As much fun as the long-distance migrants are, there are many species who hardly ever leave our yards! American Robins are year-round residents here and often remarkably tolerant of human activity near their nesting sites. Song Sparrows, Spotted Towhees, Steller's Jays, and Black-capped Chickadees are just a few of our common avian friends who are selecting homesites and raising families without ever leaving our zip code.



Although these birds choose to raise their families close to us, it is important to remember that they need their space. If we spend too much time trying to closely observe a nest, we may alert a predator to its location. If we make too much noise or leave unnecessary lights on near a nest, the parents may choose to abandon the eggs and/or young. Binoculars and longer camera lenses can be our best friends during nesting season – enjoy the spring!

**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](http://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

**WHO TO CALL FOR SICK OR INJURED BIRDS OR WILDLIFE**

**San Juan, Skagit and Northern Whidbey Island:** Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, located on San Juan Island, serves these areas and can be reached 24/7 by phone at 360.378.5000. Visit their website at [www.wolfhollowwildlife.org](http://www.wolfhollowwildlife.org) for more info.

**Snohomish County:** Sarvey Wildlife Care Center, located in Arlington, serves Snohomish County and can be reached by phone at 360.435.4817. Visit their website at [www.sarveywildlife.org](http://www.sarveywildlife.org) for more info.

**Snohomish County:** PAWS, located in Lynnwood, serves Snohomish County and for wildlife concerns can be reached by phone at 425.412.4040 or 425.787.2500 ext. 817. Visit their website at [www.paws.org](http://www.paws.org) for more info.

**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](mailto: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](http://www.audubon.org))