



# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Find us on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/skagitaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/skagitaudubon)  
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## NOVEMBER MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM

**“The Dinosaurs Among Us”**

**Presented by: Dr. Kim Adelson**

**Tuesday, November 9, 7:00 PM**

Virtually all paleontologists agree that birds evolved from dinosaurs, and most even believe that birds are, in fact, real living dinosaurs. The flood of new data coming from newly discovered fossil beds – primarily from China – has only solidified that position. Learn about the structural and behavioral similarities between birds and the more “classic” dinosaurs they evolved from. You will not only be surprised as to how dinosaur-like birds are, but also how very bird-like dinosaurs were. You will never think about *T. rex* or mallards or chickadees in the same way again!



Kim Adelson was a professor of psychology for almost 30 years; she has won teaching awards at 3 different universities. Before she switched fields to better study behavioral evolution, she earned a master’s degree in evolutionary biology. Paleontology has been one of her avocations since she was a child. She is an avid bird watcher and is on the Boards of the Black Hills Audubon Society and the Friends of the Nisqually National Wildlife Complex.

Register for this Zoom event at: <https://bit.ly/nov9sas> 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 excellent Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> presentation by David B. Williams about his recent book, *Homewaters: A Human and Natural History of Puget Sound*, here is the link to the recording: [https://youtu.be/rb\\_gfnIXw7c](https://youtu.be/rb_gfnIXw7c)

**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.**

**BIRDCAST, from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology**, is back for fall migration. Learn more about how to view real-time migration data from around the world or your neighborhood at: <https://www.birdcast.info>

**2021 PADILLA BAY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** will take place, under COVID protocols, on Sun., Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>. For info, please contact Tim Manns at [conservation@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@skagitaudubon.org) or 360.333.8985

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

Skagit Audubon Society is pleased to announce that Tim Manns has been awarded the Helen Engle Volunteer of the Year Award. Tim's service has spanned many years, benefiting birds and other wildlife, as well as supporting the local Skagit Audubon Chapter and other regional and national organizations. He joined Skagit Audubon Society (SAS) in 2006 and was elected to the Board of Directors in 2007 as Field Trip Chair. Tim has served an unprecedented four years as President of SAS. Since 2013 he has served as Conservation Chair and as a member of several other SAS committees.



This award is named after and inspired by Helen Engle who was a conservationist and activist that co-founded several organizations including the Tahoma Audubon Society. She served on the board of the National Audubon Society and was awarded a lifetime achievement award by them in 2013. This award is presented by Washington Audubon only once a year and recognizes a volunteer who has contributed outstanding service to our Audubon cause, at the chapter, state, regional, or flyway level. Out of the 25 Chapters in Washington, only one person is recognized each year.

Tim also contributes service as a volunteer monitor conducting surveys for organizations such as COASST (Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team), at Northern State Recreation Area for the Upper Skagit Tribe, a butterfly monitoring project for the National Park Service and Puget Sound Seabird Survey (PSSS), among others. For many years Tim has coordinated and participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count. In his spare time, he also leads field trips for the Skagit Audubon Society.

Tim is also a volunteer contributor to several other organizations including the Skagit Land Trust, past board member of the Padilla Bay Foundation and 15 years at Community Action tutoring students in English as a second language. He has the unique ability to contribute to all of these organizations and make each one just a little bit better.

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

Jeff Osmundson, President

## **2021 DECEMBER MEMBER PHOTO PROGRAM**

The ever-popular annual member photo program returns on Tuesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. This is not a competition but a chance to share and enjoy nature photographs taken by our members. The particulars:

**Number of photos:** 5 maximum per person; minimum size 500kb – 3mb with 1mb-2mb preferred (sorry, we are unable to accept videos)

**Description:** Please identify your subject, you may also tell us more – who/what/where/when – subject to a 60-word limit for each photo.

**Deadline:** Sunday, November 21<sup>st</sup>; emailed to Mary Sinker at [programphotos2@gmail.com](mailto:programphotos2@gmail.com)

**Please note:** we may not be able to use photos submitted after the deadline or that do not meet the size or description requirements. Questions? Please email Mary at [programphotos2@gmail.com](mailto:programphotos2@gmail.com). Thank you!



## FROM YOUR EDITOR - by Mary Sinker

The days are getting shorter, the holidays are approaching, and we begin to think of decorating to celebrate the fall and winter seasons. Pumpkins are center stage for the next couple of months and they make excellent colorful additions to front porches, walkways, and patios. Pumpkins also make great birdfeeders. Once the top is cut off, it is very easy for birds, squirrels, and other critters to access the nutritious seeds inside. When the pumpkin seeds are gone the resulting cavity space can be filled with birdseed and the feast continues. Placing the pumpkin bird feeder near a window adds to the enjoyment of watching a variety of birds come and go and

provides photography options too. Pick out a pumpkin and turn it into a fall bird feeder-enjoy! Photo: Mary Sinker  
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## Meet the Marbled Murrelet - by Jeff Sinker

A small chunky seabird, who is as much at home in the canopy of an old-growth forest raising its single chick as it is feeding on favorite forage fish like Pacific herring in marine waters perhaps 45 miles away from the nest, gets its name from the overall brownish “marbled” breeding plumage. Outside breeding season, these uncommon year-round residents are sporting mostly black-and-white plumage. Marbled murrelets are members of the Auk (Alcidae) family and can “fly” underwater using their wings as they dive and pursue their prey. Rocky coastlines and upwelling waters where currents congregate zooplankton, small shrimp, and herring are good places to look for these birds. They are the only North American auk to nest in trees and they also roost in trees year-round.



First named in 1789, the first nest wasn’t discovered until 1974. Sadly, during the 1950s-1960s, loggers in British Columbia had reported finding adults, juveniles, chicks, and eggs in fallen old-growth trees. This prompted scientists to begin looking for nests, but success wouldn’t happen for two more decades. Courtship begins in winter and continues into summer when pair bonding is completed. They do not nest in colonies, but it is likely that several pairs nest within the same territory where suitable habitat exists.

Marbled murrelets select large flat branches in the upper canopy of old-growth forests where epiphytic moss covers the tree limbs of Sitka spruce, coast redwood, Douglas-fir, Western Red Cedar, and similar species. A single egg is laid and incubated for 30 days in alternating shifts by both parents. The downy chick is fed at dawn and dusk and then fledges and flies by itself to the water about 28 days after hatching

Marbled murrelets are naturally low reproductive birds who do not lay eggs each year. Vulnerable on the water to oil spills, harmful algae blooms, gill nets, prey availability, and in the old-growth forest to logging, human-induced fires, land conversion, and habitat fragmentation, they are listed as Endangered in Washington and Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The Olympic Peninsula, northern Puget Sound, and the North Cascades support the highest number of breeding sites. Decades ago, marbled murrelets were not long-distance commuters between their feeding and nesting sites because old-growth forests extended to the coastlines. Developing conservation management plans is challenging and habitat fragmentation increases nest predation of eggs and chicks by owls, hawks, falcons, jays, and crows. The effects of climate change on both their marine and forest environments are another threat to overcome. Locally, marbled murrelets can be seen along the rocky coastlines of Deception Pass State Park and Washington Park in Anacortes.

Sources: US Fish & Wildlife Service-Oregon Fish & Wildlife Office, [www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/articles.cfm?id=149489445](http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/articles.cfm?id=149489445) and All About Birds (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology) [www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Marbled\\_Murrelet/overview](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Marbled_Murrelet/overview).

Photo credit: Breeding Marbled Murrelet by Joachim Bertands (All About Birds, Macaulay Library)

## 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](http://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](mailto:jdmelcher@comcast.net) or 360.424.0407.

**Nov. 3: Little Cranberry Lake**

**Nov. 10: The Tursi Trail**

**Nov. 17: Little Mountain**

**Nov. 24: Thanksgiving Week-No Scheduled Hike**

**Dec 1: East Shore Lake Whatcom and/or The Chanterelle Trail**

## THE BIG SIT IS A BIG SUCCESS! - by Pam Pritzl

**WOW - 52 species** (see list below) were seen/heard by Skagit Audubon Society's Team Wiley, plus a gaggle of SAS members who dropped by to visit and assist! We experienced a challenging variety of weather, saw some great birds, made new friends, enjoyed some Covid-friendly outdoor conversation, and raised some much-appreciated funds in support of the Skagit Audubon Society Environmental Conservation Scholarship. **Those of you who made a pledge based on the number of species seen by the team (\$1/species is a common pledge amount), or find that you're inspired by Team Wiley's effort, can make your check payable to:**

**Skagit Audubon Society**

**P.O. Box 1101, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-1101**

**Please make a note on the check "Scholarship Fund"**

*(Note - the offer of personal field trips for future donations to Skagit Audubon Society of \$100 or more is cancelled until further notice due to the continuing emergency response to the COVID-19 virus)*

If you conducted your own Big Sit on either Saturday or Sunday (but not both!) and haven't submitted your list with us via email or shared your eBird list please do so to [dennyquirk@gmail.com](mailto:dennyquirk@gmail.com) - there might be some Skagit Audubon swag in recognition of a high count, or seeing/hearing the secret species.

The Big Sit 2022 will likely be the weekend of October 8 - 9, so mark your calendar accordingly!

### Species List

Snow Goose

Cackling Goose

Canada Goose

Cinnamon Teal

Gadwall

Mallard

Northern Pintail

Green-winged Teal

Hooded Merganser

Ring-necked Pheasant

Pied-billed Grebe

Eurasian Collared-Dove

Mourning Dove

Virginia Rail

American Coot

Killdeer

Long-billed Dowitcher

Wilson's Snipe

Greater Yellowlegs

Lesser Yellowlegs

Ring-billed Gull

Glaucous-winged Gull

Double-crested Cormorant

Great Blue Heron

Northern Harrier

Cooper's Hawk

Bald Eagle

Red-tailed Hawk

Belted Kingfisher

Northern Flicker

Peregrine Falcon

Black Phoebe

American Crow

Common Raven

Black-capped Chickadee

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Marsh Wren

Bewick's Wren

European Starling

American Robin

Cedar Waxwing

House Finch

Purple Finch

Fox Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

White-crowned Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Spotted Towhee

Western Meadowlark

Red-winged Blackbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Yellow-rumped Warbler

## CONSERVATION REPORT – by Tim Manns

A far wiser and more articulate friend - Fred Hodge - dropped by Wiley Slough for Skagit Audubon's October 9<sup>th</sup> Big Sit and came away with this observation:

“In my opinion spotting birds is important because it tends to aggregate like-minded individuals who recognize the precarious condition of the environment. Birds become a catalyst to help focus attention on today's adverse conditions in order to help devise ways to combat them... Just my \$.02 worth.”

Thank you, Fred, for so succinctly describing what Audubon has been about since its founding in 1905 – conservation advocacy based on a shared interest in birds and their environmental needs.

This is the season when birds that winter here arrive from their northern breeding areas reminding us how seabirds, waterfowl, raptors, and shorebirds tightly link where we live to the much further north. Think of Dunlin breeding on the Arctic Coastal Plain, Trumpeter Swans on the ponds of inland Alaska and western Canada, Tundra Swans still further north, Rough-legged Hawks and Gyrfalcons nesting on ledges overlooking far northern rivers, Red-throated Loons raising their young along the treeless edge of Alaska and Canada, Snow Geese among polar bears on the



Russian Arctic's Wrangel Island. Oil and gas development periodically threaten the pristine quality of these areas, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Izembek Lagoon between the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea with the largest eel grass meadow in the western U.S. (Padilla Bay being second), another National Wildlife Refuge essential to many aquatic birds, is subject to the long-running threat of a road being constructed right through it. And then there is the overarching threat of a climate warming much faster in these far northern places than where we live.

Have a look around the “How to Help” section of National Audubon's website (<https://www.audubon.org>) and in “Get Involved” and “Conservation” on the Audubon Washington site (<https://wa.audubon.org>) to find many ways to go from an interest in birds to taking steps to protect the environment upon which they, and we, depend.

Here on the local front, the possibility that our County Commissioners will allow developers to construct so-called Fully Contained Communities is a very serious threat to Skagit bird habitat, including agricultural fields, forests, and undeveloped land. See the previous two Conservation Reports for information or go to <https://rightgrowthrightplace.org>.

On a positive local note, Skagit Land Trust has made great progress cleaning up the area many of you helped purchase this year at the entrance to Samish Island. See the Trust's website for how to access the adjacent land on Samish Island purchased earlier where there's now a forest trail and a route to the Padilla Bay shore. (<https://www.skagitlandtrust.org/properties/samishislandca.aspx>).

In July 2016 and April 2020 Skagit Audubon commented to the Washington Department of Ecology on the clean-up of the Whitmarsh toxic waste dump. This long-closed dump sits between the March Point heronry and Padilla Bay. Permitting for the clean-up is complicated and presently in process with some preparatory work being done. You may have noticed that most vegetation has now been cleared from the site. The contractor is preparing a management plan to address how the clean-up will proceed in a way that won't jeopardize the March Point heronry, largest in the western U.S. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will review the plan. Actual clean-up and capping of the dump will begin in 2023 at the earliest. Skagit Land Trust, owner of most of the heronry, and the local heron monitoring group are keeping a close eye.

For information on 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)). Photo credit: Lapland Longspur (Fir Island Farm Reserve-Hayton) by Mary Sinker

## 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

**Snow Goose** hundreds in field near Big Ditch on 10-9-21 (SRP); 1 "blue-morph" at FIFR on 9-24-21 (YH)

**Greater White-fronted Goose** 50 at FIFR on 10-4 & 10-8-21 (YH)

**Cinnamon Teal** 1 at Samish Y on 10-11-21 (GB)

**Eurasian Wigeon** 1 at Jensen Access on 10-4-21 (GB)

**Canvasback** 1 at FIFR on 9-24-21 (YH)

**Redhead** 1 at Jensen Access on 10-4-21 (GB)

### GREBES

**Eared Grebe** 1 at March Point on 10-8-21 (GB)

### RAILS and COOTS

**Virginia Rail** 4 at SWAWS on 9-30-21 (MS/JS)

### CRANES

**Sandhill Crane** 6 at SWAWS on 10-8-21 (GB)

### STILTS and AVOCETS

**Black-necked Stilt** 1 at FIFR 9-27 to 10-13-21 (GB); 1 at FIFR on 9-27 & 10-4-21 (YH); 1 at FIFR on 10-1 & 10-2-21 (MS/JS) **rare on west side**

### PLOVERS

**American Golden-Plover** 1 at Jensen Access on 10-2-21 (GB)

**Pacific Golden-Plover** 1 at SWAWS on 10-4-21 (GB)

### SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

**Surfbird** 1 at Williamson Rocks on 10-2-21 (GB)

**Pectoral Sandpiper** 1 at FIFR on 10-2-21 (MS/JS)

**Wilson's Snipe** 10 at SWAWS on 9-30-21 (MS/JS); 1 at Hillcrest Park, Mt. Vernon on 10-11-21 (TRM)

### JAEGERS

**Parasitic Jaeger** 1 at March Point on 9-20-21 (GB); 1 at Maple Grove, Camano Island on 9-21-21 (PP)

### GULLS and TERNs

**Caspian Tern** 2 at FIFR on 10-2-21 (JS)

### IBIS

**White-faced Ibis** 1 at Jensen Access on 9-28-21 (GB) **rare**

### HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-21-21 (RW)

**Cooper's Hawk** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-21-21 (RW)

### OWLS

**Northern Pygmy-Owl** 1 at Little Mountain, Mt. Vernon on 9-23-21 (TRM)

**Barred Owl** 1 at Anacortes yard on 9-20-21 (YH)

### WOODPECKERS

**Red-breasted Sapsucker** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-22 (RW)

**Pileated Woodpecker** 1 at east Stanwood yard on 9-23 (MS)

### FALCONS

**Merlin** 1 on Lincoln Hill, Mt. Vernon on 10-11-21 (TRM)

**Peregrine Falcon** 1 at FIFR on 9-24-21 (YH)

### FLYCATCHERS

**Pacific-slope Flycatcher** 1 at SWAWS on 9-27-21 (GB)

### SHRIKES

**Northern Shrike** 1 at SWAWS on 10-1-21 (GB)

### VIREOS

**Hutton's Vireo** 1 at Hillcrest Park, Mt. Vernon 9-23 to 10-10-21 (TRM); 1 at Camano Island yard on 10-14-21 (PP)

### LARKS

**Horned Lark** 1 at March Point on 9-20-21 (GB); 1 at March Point on 9-24-21 (YH)

### SWALLOWS

**Violet-green Swallow** 3 at east Fidalgo yard on 10-5-21 (RW)

### CREEPERS

**Brown Creeper** 1 at east Stanwood yard on 10-3-21 (MS)

### FINCHES and ALLIES

**Red Crossbill** 3 at SWAWS on 10-8-21 (YH)

### LONGSPURS and BUNTINGS

**Lapland Longspur** 1 at FIFR on 10-2-21 (MS/JS); 1 at FIFR on 10-4-21 (YH); 3 at FIFR in 10-8-21 (GB)

*Continued on Pg. 7*

Continued from Pg. 6

**WARBLERS**

**Townsend's Warbler** 1 at Little Mountain, Mt. Vernon on 9-23-21 (TRM); 2 at east Fidalgo yard on 10-5-21 (RW)

**TANAGERS and ALLIES**

**Western Tanager** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-30-21 (RW); 1 at March Point on 10-2-21 (GB)

**CRITTERS**

**Long-tailed Weasel** 1 at FIFR on 9-24-21 (YH)

**River Otter** 1 at SWAWS on 10-9-21 (MS/JS)

**Chipmunk** 2 at east Stanwood yard throughout sighting period (MS)

**Raccoon** 1 at east Stanwood yard on 9-24 (MS/JS)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; (YH) Yvonne Houppermans; (TRM) Tim Manns; (SRP) Sheila and Ron Pera; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (RW) Regan Weeks

**Remembering Catherine Carter,** a member of Skagit Audubon whose contributions to birding and land conservation are an important part of her legacy. Throughout her life Catherine traveled the world and these experiences helped to shape her passion for social, ecological, and environmental justice.

Catherine was an activist for what she believed in, and she was caring, compassionate, and consciously aware that actions spoke louder than words. She also served on the Board of Skagit Audubon as Program Chair for three years. During her Board tenure she worked hard to plan programs that challenged viewers to think outside their usual paths of thinking and this approach led to many lively discussions. Her contributions to Skagit Audubon and other organizations she helped to support will be greatly missed.



An Estate sale of Catherine’s personal property will be held on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> from 10 am-3 pm on Swan Rd. in Mt. Vernon. Inquiries regarding the Estate sale, as well as two larger items available now (a 20’ Jayco competition trailer and a partially completed teardrop trailer), are welcome at: [info@pflagskagit.org](mailto:info@pflagskagit.org).

**PROJECT FEEDER WATCH,** a joint project with The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada, turns your love of feeding birds into scientific discoveries. The 2021-2022 survey of birds that visit backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America begins Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> and runs through April 30, 2022.



**You don’t even need a feeder!** All you need is an area with plantings, habitat, water, or food that attracts birds that you observe on a schedule of your choice. **This schedule is completely flexible.** Count your birds for as long as you like on days of your choosing, then enter your counts online. Your counts allow you to track what is happening to birds around your home and contribute to a continental dataset of bird distribution and abundance.

Learn more and sign up at: <https://feederwatch.org/about>

Photo: Evening Grosbeaks by Mary Sinker

## RARE BIRD ALERT - by Mary Sinker

**Meet the Black-necked Stilt**, a rare shorebird on the West side of the Cascades, and capable of filling up a parking lot with birders and photographers from far and wide. Fir Island Farm Reserve-Hayton outside Conway has been hosting a single, Black-necked Stilt for a few weeks. High tide is an optimum time for viewing since he hangs out



with other shorebirds (Yellowlegs and Dowitchers) on the logs in the slough at the top of the trail after exiting the parking lot. There doesn't seem to be a better spot to grab a nap or two while waiting for the tide to recede so feeding can resume.

The Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*), dressed for a formal occasion every day in elegant black-and-white plumage, and purposefully walking on long rosy-pink legs, is ready to utilize a long, thin black bill on a moment's notice to grab a snack or a meal. If their long legs seem disproportionate to the rest of their body, you aren't imagining it because only flamingos have longer legs in proportion to their bodies.

Habitat requirements include shallow water saltmarshes, flooded fields, mudflats, rice fields, and some types of human-created wetlands harbor favorite prey items such as beetles, larval mosquitos, small crustaceans, tiny fish, snails, tadpoles, and brine shrimp. Limited to sparse surrounding vegetation is another requirement and although stilts sometimes briefly submerge their heads when feeding, it is not for long.

Both parents-to-be select the nest site and participate in nest construction. The site is always near or adjacent to water with limited nearby vegetation. The nest consists of a simple scrape about two inches deep in soft sand or similar substrate. The nest may or may not be lined with whatever materials are nearby, including pebbles, bones, shells, and grasses.

Incubation of 2-5 eggs takes 24-29 days and the downy chicks follow their parents around within two hours after hatching. The northernmost points of their breeding range in North America are southeastern Washington and western Montana. Photos by Mary Sinker



**LEAVE THE LEAVES** so butterflies, beetles, insects, and birds will have a snugly place to overwinter or find valuable food during the winter. Leaves provide valuable habitat and don't need to become a nuisance around the house. Leaves accumulating on a lawn can be mulched with the mower to decompose and provide fertilizer for the lawn. If leaves are covering a pathway, raking, or blowing them onto garden beds resolves a safety issue and provides habitat at the same time.

Enjoy the leaves and the birds and pollinators will thank you!



## FROM AUDUBON ALASKA

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the largest national wildlife refuge in the United States. It is also the biggest and wildest publicly owned land in our country. Located in Alaska's northeast corner, it is home to a wide variety of species, such as polar bears, caribou, and wolves. Millions of birds from around the world migrate to (or through) the Arctic Refuge each year.

Many thousands of Northern Pintails nest on the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain. Photo: Danny Brown, Audubon Photography Awards

### Keep the Arctic Refuge Wild

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an iconic American treasure. Birds migrate from across the United States and from six continents in order to feed, nest, and raise their young in the Arctic Refuge. It is an ideal location where birds can take advantage of the burst of plant and insect life during the long days of the Arctic summer. It is often referred to as the world's bird nursery.

First set aside by Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Arctic National Wildlife Range in 1960, this is the United States' only conservation unit that encompasses an entire Arctic ecosystem. When President Eisenhower acted, he had the wisdom and foresight to include the entire ecosystem, both north and south of the Brooks Range, including the biologically rich Coastal Plain, which is essential to the integrity of this ecosystem. The Coastal Plain is the heart of this wild Arctic ecosystem, supporting the 197,000-animal Porcupine Caribou Herd, millions of migratory birds, and a full-complement of large predators, such as wolves, grizzly bears, and polar bears.

In 1980, Congress enlarged the original range to protect additional wildlife habitat and to establish the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In the same move, Congress closed the Coastal Plain to oil development, and any move to allow oil drilling activity would require a new act of Congress.

In 2017, President Trump signed a tax bill into law that included a provision that opened the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling to offset massive corporate tax cuts. And in January of 2021, an oil and gas lease sale was held with the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority emerging as the highest bidder.

On January 20, 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration put a temporary halt on oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. There are also several lawsuits proceeding through the court system to stop oil and gas development in the Refuge, including [National Audubon Society v. Bernhardt](#).

The fight is not over until this special place is permanently protected! [Take action now](#).



## FROM AUDUBON CALIFORNIA

### Huntington Beach Oil Spill Fouls Beaches Home to Federally Threatened Snowy Plovers

*Petroleum-smearred shorebirds face slow death after ingesting contaminants*

(Huntington Beach, Calif.—October 6, 2021) Petroleum from the weekend’s massive oil spill off Orange County continues to endanger shorebirds as it washes up on beaches, including at wintering grounds for the federally threatened Western Snowy Plover.

“Tom Ryan, a biologist with Los Angeles Audubon, estimates that around 200 Western Snowy Plovers winter along the Orange County coast,” said Andrea Jones, director of bird conservation for Audubon California. “While that may not sound like much, it represents up to 10 percent of the entire population for these birds along the U.S. Pacific Coast. And we’re already seeing many examples of oil-smearred plovers and other migratory shorebirds that have come from the North to spend the winter on this stretch of coast.

While shorebirds may not become as heavily oiled as diving birds like Brown Pelicans or Pacific Loons, their feet and bellies get coated with oil while they run along the sand and search for insects in contaminated seaweed that washes ashore. They’ll ingest the petroleum smearing their feathers as they preen themselves. That can result in a slow, agonizing death for these birds over a period of days or weeks or make them more susceptible to predation. We’re expecting more sick birds and casualties in the coming days.



These shorebirds will be hard to catch, even oiled, and if anyone notices a shorebird, gull, or other waterbird on the beach that is coated, it is extremely important not to approach these birds and cause further stress. Rather, take a photo, note the exact location, and please call 1-877-UCD-OWCN (823-6926) and report immediately. Do not pick up oiled wildlife.

This incident – and the extremely disturbing details that are emerging about how and when the pipeline rupture occurred, who may have known about it, and how long it took them to act – should underscore for everyone that America’s reliance on fossil fuels should come to an end. Audubon’s research shows that a warming climate threatens two-thirds of our bird species with extinction if we don’t act to combat climate change. That starts with eliminating offshore oil drilling, which threatens the ecosystems and beauty of California’s incomparable coastline, along with the health of millions of Californians.”

Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency for Orange County on Sunday. The county board of supervisors also declared a local emergency last night. Reports indicate that more than 126,000 gallons of crude oil gushed into the ocean for 12 hours before the pipeline’s owner, Texas-based Amplify Energy, notified authorities.

**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.

**Board of Directors - Officers**

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 Vice President: Vacant  
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**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

**WINTER RAPTOR SURVEY PROJECT**, sponsored by East Cascades Audubon Society in Bend, OR is about to begin its 18<sup>th</sup> year of winter raptor surveys in WA, OR, ID, UT, and CA. For the first time, the project has been expanded into the northwest corner of Washington with survey routes based out of Sedro-Woolley. Surveys are conducted once a month from December-February with optional surveys available for November and March. A pair of binoculars are needed and a spotting scope if you have one. Participants should be comfortable with driving in winter conditions, safety is the number one priority for this project.



If you are interested in learning about the available survey routes and other details for this project, contact Jeff Fleischer, Project Coordinator, at [raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com](mailto:raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com). **NOTE: This survey project is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society.**

**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))