

# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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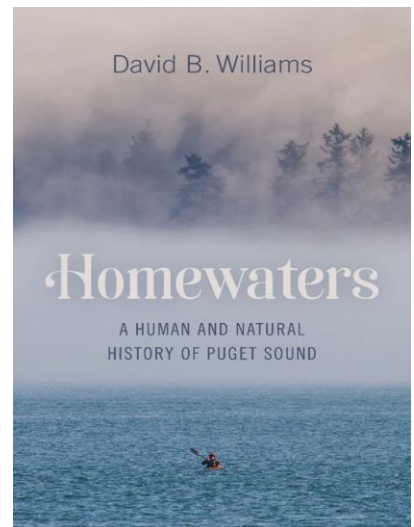
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**OCTOBER MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM**  
**“Homewaters: A Human and Natural History of Puget Sound”**  
**Presented by: David B. Williams**  
**Tuesday, October 12, 7:00 PM**

Please join Skagit Audubon Society on Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm for a presentation by David B. Williams, who will speak about his recently published book, *Homewaters: A Human and Natural History of Puget Sound*.

This book tells the story of the Sound, tracing human history from the earliest records more than 12,500 years ago to present. Along the way, Williams discusses Native people, the arrival of explorers and settlers, and how the various inhabitants adapted to place. He weaves in stories of the natural world, covering often overlooked species such as Olympia oysters, rockfish, geoduck, kelp, and herring, as well as the influence of salmon and orca on the Sound.

David B. Williams is an author, naturalist, and tour guide. He is also the author of the book *Too High and Too Steep: Reshaping Seattle’s Topography*, as well as *Seattle Walks: Discovering History and Nature in the City* and *Stories in Stone: Travels Through Urban Geology*. Williams is a Curatorial Associate at the Burke Museum. Follow him on Twitter @geologywriter.



Please register for this Zoom event at: <https://bit.ly/oct12sas>

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).

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A recording of September’s fascinating presentation about hummingbirds “To Feed or Fight” by Alejandro Rico-Guevara is now available at the following link: <https://youtu.be/LMlr7AyQTXs>

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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,

Last October this message focused on three things you can do to make a difference. It has been a pretty wild year since then and how we have seen changes from October 2020. But I think that it is still worthwhile to consider some things we can do this month to make a difference. Here is one from last year and two other ideas.

Please join me in garden procrastination and laziness and leave a messy garden. It is really easy to leave the old ornamental grasses and sunflowers gone to seed, and even a few weeds, especially now that the days are not as sunny and warm. These spent flowers and old foliage provide seeds and bugs for our wintering birds and so are an important source of food and cover. We can worry about cleaning up in the spring when the new growth has started and other birdy food sources become more available.

Second is a reprise from last year: Buy a Duck Stamp. If you recall, it is part art, part valid license to harvest waterfowl and part program of conservation.

According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service: “Buying a Federal Duck Stamp is among the simplest ways that anyone can participate in wildlife and habitat conservation... Ninety-eight percent of your purchase goes directly to protecting wetlands and associated habitats to benefit birds and other wildlife (and people, too). For your investment, you receive the ‘thank you gift’ of a beautiful and collectible miniature work of wildlife art.” Buying a Duck Stamp also shows a willingness to cooperate with other organizations and groups, including hunters, who share some of the same values as

Audubon. Many of our Skagit Audubon members make it a yearly practice. Will you too? More info here: <https://www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp.php>. Photo credit: USFWS.



Lastly, if you are in a funk over COVID, are in a funk over the shorter days and more rain, or if you are just in a funk, do something nice for someone else. Studies strongly suggest that doing something for someone else takes the focus off of our own problems and selves. There is a real and lasting benefit from changing that focus and it actually makes two people a little happier. If you want to make it a real challenge, do something nice for someone and don't let anyone find out!

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

Jeff Osmundson, President



### **BIRDCAST IS BACK FOR FALL MIGRATION**

**from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

BirdCast provides real-time information on the when, where, and how birds are migrating. Daily forecasts show the expected movements of migratory birds across the world and in your own neighborhood! Learn more at: <https://www.birdcast.info>.

## CONSERVATION REPORT – by Tim Manns

**Fully Contained Communities:** Last month’s Conservation Report focused on the very real possibility Skagit County Commissioners will reverse past decisions and allow so-called Fully Contained Communities (FCCs). These urban-density, multi-thousand home developments would be built on agricultural or forest lands or in other areas outside the established towns and cities and their adjacent designated urban growth areas. Allowing FCC’s would upend years of effort to maintain viable agriculture, working forests, and wildlife habitat in Skagit County. The effects on Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, on the diverse raptors that winter here, and on many other species would be devastating. Unless the Commissioners completely ignore the established approach to changing planning policies, city council members and mayors will also have a say in the decision about FCCs. Planning policies apply throughout the county. So, even if you live in an incorporated part of Skagit County, you pay county taxes, and your local elected representatives have a say about FCC’s. Are they hearing from you? To get up to speed on this important issue and learn what you can do, follow the links in last month’s Report (<https://www.skagitonians.org/fight-fccs>, <https://skagitscoop.org/blog/fully-contained-communities-and-why-we-should-be-worried-about-them/>) and this new one from the Right Growth Right Place coalition formed to block FCCs (<https://www.rightgrowthrightplace.org>).

**Shoreline Master Program:** Skagit County’s Planning Department and the appointed Planning Commission have devoted much time this year to the long-overdue comprehensive revision of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP). This plan governs development along marine and freshwater shorelines outside incorporated towns and cities (which have their own SMPs). While prepared by the county, the plan must meet the approval of the state’s Department of Ecology in compliance with the Shoreline Management Act. Skagit County has an unfortunate history of resisting state mandates for land use planning. While Skagit Audubon welcomes the fact that the county is finally revising its SMP, there is a glaring omission. National Audubon and other avian conservation organizations have documented anthropogenic climate change as the most significant threat to birds. One effect of climate change with significant implications for bird habitat as well as people is sea level rise. In commenting on the county’s draft SMP revision, Skagit Audubon joined many other groups and individuals in asking that planning for inevitable sea level rise be part of the SMP. On the Planning Department’s website, you can read the response stating simply that the Shoreline Management Act and Department of Ecology don’t require addressing sea level rise in SMPs, and therefore Skagit County is not bothering (<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/SMPmain.htm>), despite the very serious effects it will have on people, roads, buildings, farms, etc. - - and despite the fact that the Department of Ecology has grants for counties to plan for this inevitability. We appreciate that updating the SMP is a huge amount of work. To wait decades and then do less than even the obvious minimum is more than unfortunate.

**Migratory Bird Protection Act:** For a century following its 1918 passage, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act was the most important legal protection for birds in North America. The previous presidential administration suddenly weakened implementation of the act to only defend birds against deliberate harm, eliminating any incentive for industry to follow best practices to protect birds. The new administration has begun the rule-making process to reverse that change, but there is also the possibility of legislation to modernize bird protection and elevate it from regulation to law. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, “Congressman Alan Lowenthal and Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick reintroduced the bipartisan Migratory Bird Protection Act, legislation that would permanently codify important and much-needed protections for millions of migratory birds. The legislation would provide regulatory certainty for industries and help ensure that we meet the conservation goals of the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) which forms the backbone of our nation’s migratory bird conservation efforts.” To read about the importance of the MBTA and this potential new law, search: National Audubon, Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Photo credit: American Avocet by Susan Hodgson, Audubon Photography Awards.



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)).

## 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.



**Oct. 6: Ruby Arm**

**Oct. 13: Monte Cristo**

**Oct. 20: Baker Lake Trail from the South**

**Oct. 27: North Chuckanut Mountain**

**Nov. 3: Little Cranberry Lake**

## THE BIG SIT (Oct. 9 thru 10) - by Denny Quirk

The Big Sit is a free community birding event open to individuals and teams, all over the world. This year The Big Sit begins Saturday October 9 at 12:01 am and closes Sunday October 10 at 11:59 pm. The goal is to identify as many species as possible in 24 hours, from a circle no more than 17' in diameter. Sitting not required.

The Big Sit is Covid-friendly. Anyone can participate from wherever they want - backyard, park, public wildlife area, etc. Participate by yourself, or as a team with family and friends. *Covid-19 common sense dictates social distancing and face coverings as appropriate.*



Skagit Audubon Society is fielding a Big Sit team Saturday October 9 at Wiley Slough (Skagit Wildlife Area - Headquarters Unit - 21961 Wylie Rd, Mount Vernon). The circle will be located at the junction of the West Dike Trail and Spur Dike Trail - a short walk from the parking lot (w/restrooms) closest to the headquarters buildings. One-to-two-hour shifts are being scheduled 7:30 am to 5:30 pm with the goal of staffing the circle continuously during this period. ***We ask that Skagit Audubon Society team participants be vaccinated.*** Social distancing limits the number of team participants to four in the circle at any time. This event is for birders of all experience levels. We will pair those new to birding with more experienced team members. Anyone is welcome to just come by and visit, especially if you bring Covid-friendly snacks or refreshments to share! Vehicles parked at this location must display a current Discover Pass, or Vehicle Access Pass.

Some members have pledged \$1 per species seen by the team at Wiley Slough to the Skagit Audubon Society Environmental Conservation Scholarship. Please consider a similar pledge to support this annual award.

Visit [thebigsit.org](http://thebigsit.org) to learn more about the Big Sit. ***Email [thebigsit@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:thebigsit@skagitaudubon.org) if you would like to join the Wiley Slough team, conduct your own count (so we can track participation and your species list), or wish to make a pledge.*** There might be some Skagit Audubon swag for the individual count circle that sees the most total species or sees the “secret” species. Photo credit: Cedar Waxwing at Wiley Slough, 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

**Wood Duck** 3 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)  
**Blue-winged Teal** 3 at SWAWS on 9-1 & 4 on 9-3 (YH)  
**Hooded Merganser** 2 at SWAWS on 9-1 & 9-3 (YH)

### GREBES

**Pied-billed Grebe** 3 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)

### PIGEONS and DOVES

**Band-tailed Pigeon** 3 at east Fidalgo yard on 8-31 (RW)

### NIGHTHAWKS

**Common Nighthawk** 1 near Cockreham Island on 9-1 (GB)

### RAILS and COOTS

**Virginia Rail** 2 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)

### STILTS and AVOCETS

**American Avocet** 2 at FIFR on 8-18 (GB); 1 at Leque Island/Eide Rd on 9-11 (PP) **rare**

### PLOVERS

**American Golden-Plover** 1 at FIFR on 8-18 & 9-8 (GB)  
**Pacific Golden-Plover** 1 at FIFR on 8-20, 5 on 9-8 & 4 on 9-10 (GB)

### SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

**Black Turnstone** 3 at Bos Lake, Swantown on 8-29 (YH)  
**Red Knot** 2 at FIFR on 8-21 (YH)  
**Ruff** 1 at Bos Lake, Swantown on 8-29 (YH); 1 at SWAWS on 8-30 (GB)  
**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** 1 at FIFR on 8-23 (JB)  
**Stilt Sandpiper** 1 to 2 present at SWAWS from 8-18 to 9-11 (GB); 1 at FIFR on 8-23 (JB); 1 at FIFR on 9-3 (YH)  
**Sanderling** 2 at FIFR on 9-11 (GB)  
**Least Sandpiper** 4 at FIFR on 8-28 (MS/JS)  
**Pectoral Sandpiper** 1 at FIFR on 8-21 & 9-1 & 1 at SWAWS on 9-1 (YH); 1 at FIFR on 8-23 (JB)  
**Western Sandpiper** 17 at FIFR on 8-28 (MS/JS)

**Wilson's Snipe** 1 at FIFR on 8-28 (MS/JS); 3 at FIFR on 9-3 (YH); 10 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)  
**Spotted Sandpiper** 1 at FIFR on 8-28 (MS/JS); 1 at FIFR on 9-1 (YH)  
**Solitary Sandpiper** 1 at FIFR on 8-23 (JB); 1 at FIFR on 9-3 (YH)  
**Greater Yellowlegs** 15 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)  
**Wilson's Phalarope** 1 at SWAWS on 9-1 (YH)  
**Red-necked Phalarope** 1 at Channel Drive on 8-25 & 9-1 (YH)

**JAEGERS Parasitic Jaeger** 1 at FIFR on 9-8 (GB)

### GULLS and TERNS

**Sabine's Gull** 2 off Young's Park, Guemes Is on 9-6 (GB) **rare**

### SHEARWATERS

**Short-tailed Shearwater** 2 off Young's Park, Guemes Is on 9-6 (GB) **rare**

### PELICANS

**American White Pelican** 102+ on Padilla Bay on 9-8 (RW)

### OSPREYS

**Osprey** 1 (with fish) at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)

### HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

**Northern Harrier** 1 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk** 1 at east Stanwood yard on 9-13 (MS)  
**Cooper's Hawk** 1 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)  
**Northern Goshawk** 1 below Cutthroat Pass on 9-3 (GB)

### WOODPECKERS

**American Three-toed Woodpecker** 1 above Rainy Pass on 9-3 (GB)

### FLYCATCHERS

**Willow Flycatcher** 1 at east Stanwood yard on 9-13 (MS)  
**Black Phoebe** 1 at SWAWS on 8-23 & 9-1 (YH); 1 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS/JS)  
*Field sightings continued on Pg. 6*

*Field sightings continued from Pg. 5*

#### **VIREOS**

**Hutton's Vireo** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 8-31 (RW)

**Red-eyed Vireo** 1 late bird in Hamilton on 9-13 (GB)

#### **FINCHES and ALLIES**

**Pine Grosbeak** 1 above Rainy Pass on 9-3 (GB)

**White-winged Crossbill** 20 near Cutthroat Pass on 9-3 (GB)

#### **SPARROWS and ALLIES**

**Vesper Sparrow** 1 at Cutthroat Pass on 9-3 (GB)

**Fox Sparrow** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-10 (RW)

**Lincoln's Sparrow** 1 at Barnum Park, Camano Island on 9-6 (PP)

**Golden-crowned Sparrow** 1 juvenile at east Fidalgo yard on 9-5 (RW); 1 juvenile at Cap Sante yard, Anacortes on 9-15 (JH)

#### **WARBLERS**

**Orange-crowned Warbler** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 8-20 (RW)

**Common Yellowthroat** 1 at ACFL on 8-24 (YH); 1 at SWAWS on 9-13 (MS)

**Black-throated Gray Warbler** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-6 (RW)

**Townsend's Warbler** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-4 & 9-15 (RW)

**Wilson's Warbler** 1 at east Fidalgo yard on 9-4 (RW)

#### **CRITTERS**

**American Mink** 1 at ACFL on 8-24 (YH)

**Red-eared Slider (Turtle)** 1 at ACFL on 8-24 (YH)

(ACFL) Anacortes Community Forest Lands; (GB) Gary Bletsch; (JB) Joan Bird; (FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; (JH) Joe Halton; (YH) Yvonne Houppermans; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (RW) Regan Weeks

## **Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count 2021**

This year is the 122<sup>nd</sup> for the Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the nation's longest-running community science bird project. Each year between December 14 and January 5, volunteers across the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands count bird species and individuals in almost 2,500 count areas. Each area is a 15-mile diameter circle. Skagit Audubon's role in this large effort is organizing the Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count, named for the location of the count circle's center on the March Point peninsula by Padilla Bay.

**The 2021 Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count will take place Sunday, December 26<sup>th</sup>.** The count usually happens the last Saturday of the year, but this year that day is Christmas. Flexibility for moving the date is limited because some of the same volunteers are needed for other counts in the area whose traditional dates are ones we need to avoid overlapping. For information about participating in this all-day, rain or shine, survey birders should contact Tim Manns ([conservation@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@skagitaudubon.org) or 360/333-8985). The count will be conducted following Covid-19 protocols, i.e., vaccinations required, sharing rides only with members of your own household, masks worn when sufficient distance isn't possible. Photo credit: American Robin by Mary Sinker



**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

**FROM YOUR EDITOR – by Mary Sinker**

Lazy fall gardening last year paid off with an unexpected discovery this past spring. While working from home, I noticed a female Anna’s hummingbird taking what appeared to be little bits of white cotton down from the stalks of Japanese Anemones (windflowers) that I had left standing over the winter. Upon closer examination, this hardy perennial (native to China and grown in Japan for hundreds of years), produces small clumps of downy material from the old flower heads.



Filling the void between late summer and well into fall, Japanese Anemones bloom for 6-8 weeks and their tall, graceful stems sporting flowers in white, purple, or pink, are an important late season food source for butterflies. Deer and rabbits avoid them, and they are tolerant of acid, alkaline and neutral soils and can be grown in clay, loam, sandy or chalky conditions. Full sun, partial sun, average water needs, and low maintenance once established make them perfect additions to any garden space. Be a lazy fall gardener like me and leave them standing over the winter – the hummingbirds will thank you in the spring! Photo credit: Japanese Anemones in the garden by Mary Sinker.

**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))