

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 37, No. 7 www.skagitaudubon.org Sept. 2018

September Meeting and Program "Rafting the Marsh Fork of the Canning River" Presented by: Dan Streiffert Photography

Tuesday, Sept. 11th
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center
10441 Bayview Edison Road
Mt. Vernon, Washington

Join us on a 12 day wilderness birding adventure along the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Called "America's Serengeti" for its tremendous biological productivity and diversity, the coastal plain is one of the most intact and untouched ecosystems in

America. In addition to over 160 species of birds, the refuge is home to 42 mammal species, including more than 120,000 head of caribou. Thirty-six species of fish also call the refuge home. Many of the birds migrate to and from all fifty states and from six continents to feed and reproduce, taking full advantage of the burst of biological growth which blossoms here in the long days of the Arctic summer.



Beginning on the scenic Marsh Fork we descend through the rugged mountains of the Brooks Range, northeast to the confluence with the main stem of the Canning River. Wildlife photographer Dan Streiffert lets you experience this trip through his camera with photos of the journey. Our guide, "Burly" Bob Dittrick (www.wildernessbirding.com) has led trips for President Jimmy Carter and photographer Art Wolfe. Dan Streiffert is a retired Power Systems Engineer who now spends his time photographing wildlife and volunteering with both the Sierra Club and Audubon. He grew up in Rochester, NY and his dad worked for Eastman Kodak. <https://danstreiffert.smugmug.com>.

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Celebrate the Year of the Bird
Annual Puget Sound Bird Fest, Sept. 14-16,
Edmonds, WA.

www.pugetsoundbirdfest.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 Edison 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 Flyer*, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. *The Flyer* is produced monthly from September through June. Printed copies are black-and-white and electronic copies are full color. *The Flyer* is available online at www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED The Education Committee needs volunteers to help with a number of adult presentations coming up in the next several months. These Power Point presentations are scheduled at libraries and private organizations/clubs in the area. If you can help give part of a presentation (already written), that would be great; or, you can assist with the computer and help answer questions from the audience. If you can lend a hand, please contact Sheila at skagiteducation2@gmail.com. Thank you!

SEPTEMBER FIELDTRIPS, by Libby Mills

Beginning birders and friends are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips. Membership in Skagit Audubon is encouraged but not required for participation. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing and bring field guides, binoculars and spotting scopes (if you have them). Carpool whenever possible and contribute to the driver's expense. Watch the email reminders for the latest information, including any changes and/or additions to the field trip schedule. To be added to the email distribution list contact Libby Mills: libbymills@gmail.com. **NOTE:** If you plan to join a field trip some place other than the described starting point, call or email the trip leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Trip plans may change.

Skagit State Wildlife and Recreation Area, Fir Island Farms Reserve Unit (Hayton Access) and Wiley Slough,

Fall migrants: Shorebirds

Saturday, September 8, at 2:30 p.m.

Late start for a bird field trip? Tides and timing are everything when trying to watch shorebirds. Scopes and binoculars generally are essential too. Don't forget your Discover Pass for parking. We'll meet at Hayton Access on Fir Island Road, just south and around the corner east of the Snow Goose Produce stand. Look for sign along the road. Official directions: From Interstate 5, take Exit 221 (Lake McMurray/Conway) and turn west. Drive 0.1 mile. Turn right (west) onto Fir Island Road. Drive west 3.2 miles. Turn left (south) at Wash. Depart. of Fish and Wildlife sign. Drive 0.5 mile to parking area.



The birds can be quite distant there, especially when water first starts to fill the basin, so we encourage people who have them to bring scopes. The main focus will be shorebirds, but if they are present in numbers we'll likely see one or two predators (e.g., peregrine, merlin, northern harrier) and of course the fall migration will be in full swing by then so we should see some waterfowl and whatever passerines happen to be passing through. We will probably move to Wiley Slough after the first stop. Please join us for our first fall field trip. Leader: Neil O'Hara, neiloh52@gmail.com

Saturday, September 22

Washington Park, Anacortes

8:30 AM to Late Morning

Washington Park is both scenic and a good place to see Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Marbled Murrelets, Pacific Wrens, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and many other birds on the water or in the forest. Beginning birders are encouraged to come! We'll walk some or all of the loop road (2.2 miles) and perhaps a short trail or two, stopping often for birding. Please bring binoculars (and a spotting scope if you have one and don't mind carrying it.) Meet at the parking lot at the beginning of the loop drive. Dress for the weather, anticipating wind along the shore. Leader: Tim Manns, bctm@fidalgo.net, 360-333-8985.

AUDUBON COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON MEETS OCT. 13th – This year's annual meeting, where all Washington's Audubon chapters gather, will be held at the Brightwater Environmental and Community Center in Woodinville, WA. It will be a great day of discussions and presentations. Please plan to attend. The Wash. State Conservation Committee's meeting the afternoon of Oct. 12th is also open to all Audubon members. For more information and agenda please visit: <http://wa.audubon.org/events/audubon-council-washington-1>.

SEPTEMBER HIKES by Joan Melcher

Safety comes first so hikes may be canceled or destinations changed due to weather conditions, forest fires and/or smoke, logging, construction or other unforeseen circumstances. A hike will be canceled if there are high wind warnings, flooding conditions, snowy or icy road conditions, or forecasts of continued heavy rain. All the hikes are on a Wednesday and for questions or additional information contact Joan Melcher at jdmelcher@comcast.net or 360.424.0407. Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes and if dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times. General safety note: upon arrival at the destination, if cancellation of the hike is determined at the discretion of the Audubon trip leader, any individual who elects to proceed is no longer considered to be a member of an Audubon-sponsored activity. Additionally, carpools are arranged at the discretion of the driver(s). **NOTE: change of contact information for Sept. 26th hike – see hike information below.**



WILDERNESS HIKES: The information on the various wilderness hikes is too lengthy to print here. For information contact Joan Melcher 360-424-0407 or at jdmelcher@comcast.net. ***Northwest Forest Pass (parking permit) required.**

SEPT. 5 – CUTTHROAT PASS* - Do this hike on a portion of the Pacific Crest Trail as either a round trip, 10 or 11 miles, or as a one-way, 10.5 miles. Four options: hike east to Pass and return to where you started on the west side; hike west to Pass and return to where you started on the east side; hike from western trailhead to eastern trailhead; hike from eastern trailhead to western trailhead. Last two options will require shuttling. Meet at 7:30 am on east side of Sedro-Woolley Food Pavilion parking lot. 4 pm return to trailhead.

SEPT. 12 – WILDERNESS HIKE* See note above under “Wilderness Hikes” for more info.

SEPT. 19 – SCHRIBERS MEADOW HIKES* - Choose from three options: Railroad Grade, Park Butte or the Scott Paul Trail. Great views if the weather is good. Significant streams to cross by rock hopping or wading. Meet at 7:30 am on east side of Sedro-Woolley Food Pavilion parking lot. Two trailhead return times, 2 or 4 pm, carpool accordingly.

SEPT. 26 – NORTH BAKER LAKE* - Hike over the Baker River suspension bridge, over the Blum Creek bridge and along the northern section of the Baker Lake Trail to Noisy Creek and back 9.2 miles round trip; slight elevation gain. Meet at 8 am on east side of Sedro-Woolley Food Pavilion parking lot. 3 pm return to trailhead. **NOTE: Ronan Ellis will be the responsible person in charge, contact info: 360.420.5696 or ronaniellis@gmail.com.**

OCT. 3 – RUBY ARM AND/OR RUBY CREEK* -No parking permit required. For both hikes, meet at 7:30 am on east side of Sedro-Woolley Food Pavilion parking lot. Two return times, 2 pm for shorter hikes or 3:30 pm for longer hikes, carpool accordingly.

RUBY ARM: Hike on the east bank of Ross Lake Trail over a carpet and under a canopy of fall leaves, kicking leaves to your heart’s content. Hike to either Ruby Arm, Hidden Hand Pass or part way up Little Jack Trail. 7 to 8 miles round trip.

RUBY CREEK TRAIL: Hike the beautiful Ruby Creek Trail from Panther Creek to Canyon Creek and back. 7 miles round trip with 650 ft. total elev. gain.



SEPTEMBER CONSERVATION REPORT by Tim Manns

Puget Sound Seabird Survey: One of the great joys of living here is seeing and hearing the annual Fall return of seabirds, waterfowl, and raptors to winter on and around the Salish Sea. Since the 1970's various surveys have been done to establish a baseline estimate of seabird populations here and to detect trends. Volunteers have long been key to gathering this information, and now those of us living in or near Skagit County have an opportunity to get involved. Look elsewhere in this newsletter for how you can participate in the Puget Sound Seabird Survey (www.seabirdsurvey.org), which is expanding north to the border. Act now and sign up for training scheduled for later in September. At ten sites along the shores of Skagit County volunteers will count seabirds in fall and winter beginning October 6th. There's a role for everyone, no matter their level of birding expertise.

Protecting the Marbled Murrelet: The Puget Sound Seabird Survey, underway south of Skagit County for some years, has documented increases in certain seabird populations and decreases in others. One species in precipitous decline is the Marbled Murrelet, the only seabird in Washington listed as threatened on the federal list of endangered species. The murrelet connects the marine waters of the Salish Sea with the remaining ancient forests from the coast up to 50 miles inland. It lays its one egg in thick moss on a high branch of an old growth tree. Loss of nesting habitat is the single most important factor in the murrelet's continued decline. Water quality and diminished populations of the small fish which murrelets eat are among its other problems.



Our state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages much of the best remaining nesting habitat for the Marbled Murrelet. DNR faces the challenge of protecting the murrelet while also meeting its obligation to produce public revenue by selling timber. For years DNR has been working on a required long-term management plan to properly balance these requirements. Last year, Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz established a well-balanced committee of stakeholders to come up with positive solutions (<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/SolutionsTable>). Audubon is part of a coalition of conservation groups focused on ensuring that the outcome of DNR's planning is a science-based solution that will stem the bird's decline and also address the impact on timber-dependent communities. Skagit Audubon has participated in every public comment opportunity during the development of the long-term management plan and will do so again this fall. DNR received many comments on the draft environmental impact statement for the plan. The agency will release a revised draft for public comment on September 4th. While you're thinking about possible comments, remind yourself what this is all about by visiting Green Point in Washington Park and watching the Marbled Murrelets often feeding offshore. Imagine their flight inland to a huge branch high in an ancient Douglas-fir to feed their lone waiting chick.

The Guemes Channel Trail and Ship Harbor Interpretive Preserve: In an ever more developed Anacortes, Ship Harbor Interpretive Preserve (SHIP) is a refuge for birds and other wildlife and for people too. The city's plans to extend the Guemes Channel Trail, a wide, paved bicycle and walking path, right through the length of the preserve's wetland buffer has the potential to significantly degrade the quality of this habitat. Careful planning sometimes finds a way to preserve the ecological functions which wetland buffers are meant to provide and still allow some development, but this should not be assumed. The notion that we can have it all - - in this instance, a richly diverse biological preserve and a non-motorized transportation corridor - - is too often wishful thinking. Rather than plunging ahead

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without adequate study, review, and planning, the city should proceed with care and professionalism and not assume the trail must go through the buffer come what may. Skagit Audubon is allied with other groups in calling for a more considered approach to the Guemes Channel Trail project at SHIP and along its entire route. Rather than being granted a Categorical Exclusion from environmental review, this project should go through an Environmental Assessment, including consideration of alternate routes for the path. If you live in Anacortes, please ask your city councilmember and mayor to support this careful approach.

For more issues, go to the conservation section of the Skagit Audubon website.

HAWKFEST 2018

Pateros, September 15, 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Join the Chelan and Entiat Ranger Districts, North Central Washington Audubon Society, and HawkWatch International this fall for the ninth annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival!

This family-friendly event combines free activities in Pateros' Memorial Park with trips to Chelan Ridge to learn about and celebrate raptors as they journey to winter territories. At the park, participants will find vendors, live raptors, interpretive booths, and projects for kids.

Friday night, September 14, there will be a workshop with an expert from HawkWatch International on raptor migration and field identification to prepare you for your trip up to the ridge. The trip to and from Chelan Ridge lasts four hours and can include seeing banded raptors released. From 8 am to noon, there will be a field trip to Wells Wildlife Refuge. We are working on other field trips as well.

More information and on-line registration for the trip to Chelan Ridge, field trip(s), and workshop will be available July 15 at www.ncwaudubon.org. If you have any questions please contact Richard Scranton at rscran4350@yahoo.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Sept. 4 – Skagit Audubon Board Meeting

Sept. 5 – Skagit Audubon Hike – Cutthroat Pass

Sept. 8 – Skagit Audubon Field Trip – Skagit WMA Hayton and Wylie - Shorebirds

Sept. 11 – Skagit Audubon General Meeting and Program

Sept. 12 – Skagit Audubon Hike – Wilderness Hike

Sept. 14-16 – Puget Sound Bird Fest, Edmonds

Sept. 15 – Hawk Fest, Pateros, WA

Sept. 19 – Skagit Audubon Hike – Schribers Meadow

Sept. 22 – Skagit Audubon Field Trip – Washington Park, Anacortes

Sept. 26 – Skagit Audubon Hike – North Baker Lake

Oct. 3 – Skagit Audubon Hike – Ruby Arm/Ruby Creek

Oct. 13 – Audubon Council of Washington Meeting - Woodinville

Skagit Audubon Field Notes by Pam Pritzl

This column reports submitted sightings. Any rare sightings should be accompanied by detailed written documentation and if possible a photograph. A second person to verify rare sightings is extremely helpful. Do not hesitate to call any observer to help document unusual sightings. Also do not hesitate to call if you need clarification on locations.

Please submit your sightings to
birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org

For recent updates on bird sightings, check out **ABA Tweeters** and **Skagit County Ebird List** on the SAS website (Birding menu, Bird Sightings submenu).

WATERFOWL

Canada Goose 1 partially leucistic at Dugualla Bay on 7-7 (NOH)

Blue-winged Teal 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-9 (GB)

American Wigeon 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH)

Harlequin Duck 1 at Big Four in Stillaguamish River on 6-21 (SAS)

Hooded Merganser 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-9 (NOH)

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

California Quail 1 leucistic at Rosario on 7-31 (KC)

NIGHTHAWKS

Common Nighthawk 1 in Anacortes evening on 1-23 (JOC)

SWIFTS

Black Swift 6 at Big Four Ice Caves (SAS)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Black-chinned Hummingbird 1 near Cockreham Island on 6-3 (GB)

RAILS and COOTS

Virginia Rail 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 (NOH); 1 at Dugualla Bay on 7-7 (NOH)

1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-10 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-10 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-12 (NOH)

PLOVERS

Black-bellied Plover 16 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH); 19 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-9 (NOH); 50 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-12 (NOH)

Semipalmated Plover 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH); 14 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-12 (NOH)

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

Bar-tailed Godwit 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-16 and 7-18 (GB)

Least Sandpiper 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 (NOH); 40 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-10 (NOH); 30 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-22 (NOH); 12 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-9 (NOH)

Pectoral Sandpiper 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-12 (NOH)

Western Sandpiper 6 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-10 (NOH)

Spotted Sandpiper 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 (NOH); 1 at Dugualla Bay on 7-7 (NOH)

Wilson's Phalarope 1 juvenile at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-24 (PP); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-12 (NOH)

ALCIDS

Marbled Murrelet 1 on Duck Lake, Cypress Island on 7-24 (JW)

GULLS and TERNS

Heermann's Gull 1 at Washington Park, Anacortes on 7-5 (GB); 2 at Rosario on 7-19 (NOH)

Caspian Tern 40 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH)

Common Tern 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-10 (GB) **UNUSUAL**

Forster's Tern 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-10 (GB) **RARE**

Field Sightings continued on pg. 8

Field Sightings continued from pg. 7

LOONS

Common Loon 2 at March Point on 6-20 (GB)

PELICANS

American White Pelican 60 on Padilla Bay on 5-21 (RWJ); 75 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-22 (NOH)

HERONS and ALLIES

American Bittern 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 NOH)

Green Heron 1 in Burlington on 6-16 (GB); 1 juvenile flying near Burlington home on 7-3 (LE)

VULTURES

Turkey Vulture 1 at Rosario on 7-19 (NOH)

OSPREYS

Osprey 1 at Dugualla Bay on 7-7 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-10 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-22 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-12 (NOH)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Cooper's Hawk 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-12 (NOH)

OWLS

Long-eared Owl 1 at Northern State Recreation Area on 6-9 and 10 (GB)

WOODPECKERS

Williamson's Sapsucker 1 heard by several birders on 5-25 and 27 (GB)

Red-breasted Sapsucker 1 young at east Fidalgo home on 7-15 (RW)

American Three-toed Woodpecker 1 on trail between Rainy and Cutthroat passes on 6-24 (GB)

Pileated Woodpecker 1 working snag at Bow home on 5-22 (KR)

FALCONS

Peregrine Falcon 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-14 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-9 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 8-12 (NOH)

FLYCATCHERS

Willow Flycatcher 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 NOH)

Alder Flycatcher or "Trails" Flycatcher (experts still debating) at Bacon Creek from 6-24 to at least 7-7 (GB)

Eastern Kingbird 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-12 (NOH)

VIREOS

Hutton's Vireo 1 at Camano Island home on 8-11 (PP)

Warbling Vireo 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 8-14 (JH)

CORVIDS

California Scrub-Jay 1 at Burlington home on 7-31 and 8-11 (LE)

Common Grackle 1 at feeder near Cockreham Island on 6-8 (GB) **UNUSUAL**

LARKS

Horned Lark 2 at March Point on 7-24 (PP)

WRENS

Bewick's Wren fledged 4 young in early August at east Stanwood home (MS); 1 feeding young at La Conner home on 8-6 (RWJ)

THRUSHES

Western Bluebird 1 near Lake Cavanaugh on 5-20 (GB)

CATBIRDS

Gray Catbird 1 on Oso Loop Road on 6-7 (JO)

FINCHES and ALLIES

Evening Grosbeak 1 pair at Camano Island home on 7-11 (PP)

Red Crossbill pair at La Conner home week of 5-15 (RWJ)

Pine Siskin 2 at Rosario on 7-19 (NOH)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

Chipping Sparrow several at Whitehorse Park, Darrington on 7-12 (JO)

Brewer's Sparrow 1 at Corkindale on 5-25 (GB)

BLACKBIRDS and ORIOLES

Bullock's Oriole 1 on Oso Loop Road on 6-7 (JO)

WARBLERS

Common Yellowthroat 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 6-29 (NOH); 3 at *Field Sightings continued on pg. 9*

Field Sightings continued from pg. 8

Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 NOH);

1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-10 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-10 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Hayton Reserve on 7-14 (NOH)

American Redstart 2 at County Line Ponds on 5-25 (GB); 1 on Oso Loop Road on 6-7 (JO); 3 at County Line Ponds on 7-3 (GB)

Yellow Warbler 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 NOH);

3 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-10 (NOH); 1 female at Camano Island home on 8-15 (PP); 1 male at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 8-16 (JH)

Black-throated Gray Warbler 1 at east Fidalgo home on 8-11 (RW); 1 female at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 8-13 (JH)

Townsend's Warbler 1 female at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 8-18 (JH)

TANAGERS and ALLIES

Black-headed Grosbeak 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 7-3 NOH)

Lazuli Bunting 1 at Bryson Road near Darrington on 7-12 (JO)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (KC) Kathryn Cavil; (LE) Larry Edwards; (JH) Joe Halton; (RWJ) Rosi & Wes Jansen; (JOC) John O'Connell; (NOH) Neil O'Hara; (JO) Jeff Osmundson; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (KR) Kerry Rye; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SAS) Skagit Audubon Society Field Trip; (RW) Regan Weeks; (JW) James Whitcomb

Go birding and make a difference! - Puget Sound Seabird Survey by Toby Ross, Science Manager, Seattle Audubon Society

Are seabirds in the southern Salish Sea increasing or decreasing in numbers? Which species are changing their range? Help us find out. The Puget Sound Seabird Survey (PSSS) is a community and citizen science project managed by Seattle Audubon that empowers volunteer birdwatchers to gather valuable data on wintering seabird populations across the southern Salish Sea.



White-winged Scoter - Doug Schurman

This season we will be expanding the project north to the Canadian border and the San Juan Islands. We received funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program through the Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife to add 15-30 new survey sites, develop an oil spill plan and train volunteers on how to react to a spill. In cooperation with Skagit Audubon Society, we've identified 10 potential survey sites on Fidalgo Is., Guemes Is., and north along the coast to Clayton Beach.

You can contribute to this vital seabird science by helping us with surveying these new sites on this exciting project. Training on survey methodology and what we'd like you to do in the event of an oil spill will be provided at Deception Pass State Park on Friday, Sep 21st 5:30pm-7:30pm. Volunteers should ideally be able to identify Puget Sound's seabird species and be available on the first Saturday of each month, October through April, to conduct a 30-minute survey. But, if determining between Lesser and Greater Scaup is a challenge, we'll team you up with more knowledgeable surveyors. To help us determine each volunteer's seabird identification skills, visit www.seabirdsurvey.org to take our quick, fun Seabird ID quiz.

For other training locations and dates or to learn more, please visit www.seabirdsurvey.org and email Toby Ross, Senior Science Manager toby@seattleaudubon.org if you would like more information or to take part.

Lincoln's Sparrow, by Thomas Bancroft

The crisp morning air, maybe in the low 40s, gave the June morning freshness as I hiked along the trail by Lower Tiffany Lake. Tall living lodgepole pines and Engelmann spruce dotted the shoreline while straight skeletons of burnt trees rose above sapling pines and spruce on the slope above the trail. I had not heard an airplane or car motor since my buddy and I left Winthrop early on the previous day to head north into the Okanogan National Forest. This lake was more than an hour drive from any human habitation and quite a ways back from the nearest dirt road. The sun had not yet crested Rock Mountain to the east and the water, flat as glass, reflected the granite ridge on the west side. A bird sang, and my first thought was House Wren, but then I paused to look back and forth across this area, mumbling, "Not the right habitat, too high in altitude and the wrong plant community."

The song was bubbly, a jumble of trills, often husky in nature, lower in pitch, then going up, before coming back down. It was a musical song that seemed to have gurgles, trills, and buzzes. After ten minutes of searching, I found the bird sitting about eight feet up on an Engelmann spruce that grew right along the lake's bank.



Lincoln's Sparrow, National Audubon

A small plump sparrow with crisp streaks, a gray face and buff wash across the breast, and when it moved, its unmarked white belly flashed briefly. A Lincoln's Sparrow was defending its territory with a beautiful song and sitting prominently in plain sight. I had only seen this species outside of the breeding season when they tend to be secretive, skulking through thick brush often by themselves or with just a few other sparrows. The last time I saw one; it appeared at the edge of a briar patch for only a second before disappearing back into the thicket.

I found half dozen more along the eastern shore of Tiffany Lake. All of them were in the narrow boggy strip between the trail and the lake. They like wet areas with a thick cover of bushes and small trees. In 1833, John James Audubon discovered this species in Labrador and named it after his traveling buddy, Thomas Lincoln. This bird nests in montane forests of the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains and throughout the boreal forest of Canada and Alaska. Unlike the Song Sparrow, their song repertoire varies little across their range. Humans in the United States seem to have a more diverse dialect than these guys.

It was almost 7 AM when I turned to hurry back to camp, hoping my buddy was starting to stir; we had stayed up until 2 AM watching the half-moon rise over this wilderness valley and set behind the granite cliffs. The shadows, reflections, and winnowing snipe had kept our attention. He would be envious of my discovery. Lincoln's Sparrows are one of the more elusive of North American birds. Audubon had commented, "We found more wildness in this species than in any other inhabiting the same country." (Sound recording available at <https://soundcloud.com/tom-bancroft-2/lisp810>)

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

For members receiving a paper copy of *The Skagit Flyer*, the mailing label includes your membership expiration date in the upper right corner. If that date is highlighted in orange it is a reminder that your membership is about to or has expired. All other members will receive an email notice when their membership is about to expire. *The Skagit Flyer* is published monthly from Sept. through June. Unsolicited material for the next month's *Flyer* should be sent to the editor by the third Sat. of the current month. We reserve the right to edit. For questions or problems about your *Skagit Flyer* subscription, contact membership chair:

Pam Pritzl membership@skagitaudubon.org

FROM YOUR EDITOR – Leave the leaves and fall garden clean-up and provide valuable winter habitat for wildlife, including birds, bees and insects.

Native bees need a place to spend the winter and for these important pollinators, a winter home can be as cozy as being tucked inside the hollow stem of a bee balm plant. The eggs and larvae of bees also overwinter in burrows in the ground and if we cut everything down and remove every last leaf, we are not helping these important pollinators.

Insect eating birds like towhees, sparrows, chickadees, wrens, juncos and nuthatches are always welcome in the garden because they consume large quantities of caterpillars and other pesty insects when they are raising their young in the spring and summer months. By leaving the leaves and winter garden intact, they can feed off the hibernating insects in leaf litter and on tree and plant stems.



Spotted Towhee, Joe Halton



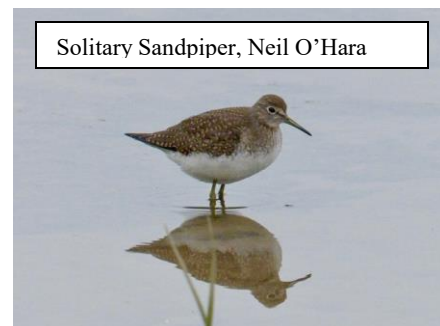
Swallowtail Butterfly, Mary Sinker

Many butterfly species overwinter as adults nestled into tree bark or in leaf litter awaiting the longer days and warmth of spring. Butterflies that overwinter in a chrysalis include swallowtails and cabbage whites. These chrysalises hang from dead plant stems or are tucked into the soil or leaf litter. Declining butterfly populations are one of the best reasons not to clean up the garden in the fall.

Native ladybugs spend the winter outside and begin to enter hibernation soon after the temperature begins to drop. Piles of leaves are one of the places they congregate and you will be helping these important pest eaters get a jump start in the spring.

Instead of doing a big fall clean-up, as much as your sense of neatness will allow, try waiting until April. By then, the longer days and warming temperatures mean these little critters are waking up from their long winter nap.

WORLD SHOREBIRDS DAY – Sept. 6th – Global counting period will take place this year from Sept. 5-11th and our Skagit Bay estuarine intertidal area (a designated Important Bird Area), is a magnet for over 60,000 shorebirds annually. Both migrating and wintering shorebirds are dependent upon the food-rich, tidally influenced mudflats and sloughs. The Global Shorebird Count, held every year on the weekend nearest Sept. 6th, is one of the key events of World Shorebird Day. The Count is intended to raise awareness of the importance of regular monitoring to protect bird populations and conserve their habitats. To find out more or to register to participate, visit: <https://worldshorebirdsday.wordpress.com>.



Solitary Sandpiper, Neil O'Hara

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