

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 39, No. 1 www.skagitaudubon.org Jan. 2020

January Meeting and Program "How Photographing Raptors Changed My Life" *Presented by Nancy Crowell*

Tuesday, Jan. 14th
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center
10441 Bayview Edison Road
Mt. Vernon, Washington



Nancy Crowell is a photographer based in Skagit County, whose beautiful images incorporate flora, fauna and landscapes. A resident of LaConner for 20 years, Nancy will share her photographic journey as inspired by the photogenic qualities of the "magic Skagit valley", and especially our migrating population of raptors.

Nancy will also describe the current threat to raptors from rodenticides, including what is currently being done to reduce this threat; and, what we can do as individuals and groups to help.

In This Issue:

About Skagit Audubon, Pg. 7
Bird Sightings, Pg. 3
Calendar, Pg. 7
Conservation, Pg. 6
Field Trips, Pg. 2
Finding a Snipe, Pg. 6
Fisher Release, Pg. 2
Hikes, Pg. 4
Press Release, Audubon Alaska, Pg. 5

UPCOMING EVENTS (not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society)

**April 17-19, 2020: Olympic Bird Fest, Sequim;
Dungeness River Audubon Center.** Celebrate spring birding
with guided birding trips, a boat tour, and gala banquet.
Registration begins Jan. 1, 2020. For details visit:
www.olympicbirdfest.org; email: info@olympicbirdfest.org; or
call 360.681.4076.

**April 24-26, 2020: Gray's Harbor Shorebird & Nature
Festival; Hoquiam. SAVE THE DATE** and regularly visit
www.shorebirdfestival.com for the 2020 schedule and registration
information.

JANUARY FIELD TRIPS, 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 trip, contact the leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Trip plans may change.



Saturday: January 11, 2020

Birding the Samish Flats

9am to 1 pm

Leader: Neil O'Hara, neiloh52@gmail.com

Our neighborhood is the envy of many birders in winter. Join us for a midwinter search for big white and wet winter birds close to home. We'll search for waterfowl and shorebirds, raptors and quiet songbirds. With mostly short if any walking, this is a trip you can do in any weather. Bring binoculars and scopes if you have them, rain gear and gloves, thermos and snacks. We will start and end at Padilla Bay Interpretive Center on Bayview Edison Road, where there are flush facilities. Bring your Discover Pass, and be sure to renew it to support our state parks and wildlife areas in 2020.

NORTH CASCADE FISHER RELEASE – by Kim Nelson

Last month, on a damp and chilly afternoon, I had the incredible opportunity of watching six fishers be released in the North Cascades. Fishers were once native to the area, but were unfortunately extirpated from the entire state of Washington by the 1950's due to habitat loss and over-trapping. These six fishers were captured by trappers in Alberta, Canada and received veterinary care and radio-tracking devices at the Calgary Zoo before crossing the border.



Photo credit: Jason Ruvelson

If you are not familiar with fishers, they are a cat-sized member of the weasel family and are closely-related to martens, but are larger and darker. They prefer to live in mature conifer forests that offer lots of large hollow tree trunks to den in. They also play an important ecological role as omnivores and are one of the few known predators of porcupines!

Eighty fishers have been released so far in the North Cascades with the hope that they will establish territories and start to breed. Successful reintroduction efforts have already taken place in the Olympic Peninsula and the South Cascades. Many different

organizations have been involved with these release efforts including Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Park Service, US Forest Service, Conservation Northwest, and local area Tribes.

It was such an inspiring experience watching the six fishers take off from their crates one-by-one returning to an area that was once a part of their historical range. I hope they are all successful in re-establishing a healthy population here in the North Cascades. If you are lucky enough to spot a fisher in the area, please contact the North Cascades National Park Service to submit your observation: <https://www.nps.gov/noca/contacts.htm>. Here is a video of the release: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15eYxrBuleXmw4tv-f2Ctj5J1ZEff5N4/view>

Skagit Audubon Field Notes by Pam Pritzl

This column reports submitted sightings. For help with rare sightings or locations, please contact birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org. For recent updates, check out **ABA Tweeters** and **Skagit County Ebird List** on the SAS website (Birding Menu, Bird Sightings submenu). Please submit your sightings to birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org.

WATERFOWL

Greater White-fronted Goose 6 at SWAHR on 11-28 (NOH)

Northern Shoveler 2 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH); 1 at SWAWS on 11-23 (NOH)

Eurasian Wigeon 1 at Skagit Flats on 12-6 (YH)

Long-tailed Duck 6 in Guemes Channel on 12-7 (YH); 4 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

Common Goldeneye 4 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH); 2 in Burrows Bay, Anacortes on 11-21 (NOH); 3 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

Hooded Merganser 4 at SWAHR on 11-21 (YH); 2 at SWAHR on 11-28 (NOH)

Red-breasted Merganser 6 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

GREBES

Pied-billed Grebe 4 at SWAHR on 11-20 & 11-28 (NOH)

Horned Grebe 1 in Burrows Bay, Anacortes on 11-20 (NOH); 8 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

Red-necked Grebe 2 in Burrows Bay, Anacortes on 11-20 (NOH); 2 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

Western Grebe 20 in Burrows Bay on 11-20 (NOH)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Anna's Hummingbird pair in Anacortes yard on 11-14 (TK)

PLOVERS

Black-bellied Plover 2 at SWAHR on 11-20 and 55 at SWAHR on 11-28 (NOH)

ALCIDS

Marbled Murrelet 2 in Burrows Bay, Anacortes on 11-20 (NOH)

LOONS

Common Loon 6 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Bald Eagle 8 at SWAHR on 11-20 & 11-28 (NOH); 2 at SWAWS on 11-23 (NOH); 24 on the Samish Flats on 12-1 (NOH); 1 at Weaverling Spit on 12-7 (SAS)

Northern Harrier 7 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH); 1 at SWAWS on 11-23 (NOH); 7 at SWAHR on 11-28 (NOH); 10 on the Samish Flats on 12-1 (NOH)

Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 in Anacortes yard on 11-9 (TK)

Cooper's Hawk 1 in Anacortes yard on 11-17 (YH); 1 at SWAWS on 11-22 (YH)

Northern Goshawk 1 juvenile at Sauk Valley on 12-8 (RM)

Red-tailed Hawk 2 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH); 2 at SWAWS on 11-23 (NOH); 1 at SWAHR on 11-28 (NOH); 7 on the Samish Flats on 12-1 (NOH)

Rough-legged Hawk 3 on the Samish Flats on 12-1 (NOH)

OWLS

Short-eared Owl 3 on the Samish Flats on 12-1 (NOH)

KINGFISHER

Belted Kingfisher 1 at SWAWS on 11-22 (YH)

WOODPECKERS

Downy Woodpecker 1 female in Anacortes yard on 10-21 & 28 (TK)

American Three-toed Woodpecker 2 at Washington Pass on 12-8 (RM); 1 at Rainy Pass on 12-8 (RM)

FALCONS

Merlin 1 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH)

Gyr Falcon 1 at SWAHR on 11-20 (YH) 1 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH)

Peregrine Falcon 1 at SWAHR on 11-20 & 11-28 (NOH); 1 at SWAHR on 11-21 (YH)

SHRIKES

Northern Shrike 1 at SWAHR on 11-20 (NOH)

VIREOS

Hutton's Vireo 1 at SWAWS on 11-23 (NOH)

CHICKADEES

Chestnut-backed Chickadee 1 in Anacortes yard on 10-17 TK)

KINGLETS

Golden-crowned Kinglet 1 in Bow yard on 12-10 (KR)

FINCHES and ALLIES

House Finch 1 "orange" bird at Anacortes yard on 12-8 (YH)

American Goldfinch 1 in Anacortes yard on 10-25 (TK)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

Spotted Towhee 1 in Anacortes yard on 11-8 (TK)

White-crowned Sparrow 1 in Anacortes yard on 10-26 (TK)

MAMMALS

River Otter 2 at SWAWS on 11-22 (YH)

(YH) Yvonne Houppermans; (TK) Trevor Kyle; (NOH) Neil O'Hara; (RM) Ryan Merrill; (KR) Kerry Rye; (SAS) Skagit Audubon Field Trip: (SWAHR) Skagit Wildlife Area Hayton Reserve; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough

JANUARY HIKES by Joan Melcher

Safety comes first so hikes may be canceled or destinations changed due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances. All 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 present they must be on a leash at all times. NOTE: upon arrival at 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. Carpools are arranged at the discretion of the drivers.



JAN. 2 (Thursday): INTERURBAN TRAIL (Easy): Walk off some of those holiday pounds on the Interurban Trail, several options available. Up to 14 or more miles; slight elevation gain. Meet at 9 am at the Lost Lake Trailhead parking lot, formerly known as the Clayton Beach Parking lot, at the south end of Larrabee State Park on Chuckanut Drive. Return time depends on hike option you select and the group you are with. WA State Discover Pass required for your vehicle.

JAN. 8: SUGAR LOAF and MT. ERIE (Moderate to Difficult): Hike in the popular Anacortes Forest Lands. Terry Slotemaker, 360-293-6514, or his designee, will lead us on a 5 mile hike, 1400 ft total el. gain. Meet at 9 am at the Mt. Erie parking lot off the Heart Lake Road south of Anacortes. Most are back to the trailhead by 1 pm. You may leave when you return to the trailhead.

JAN. 15: FRAGRANCE LAKE (Moderate to Difficult): Hike to a lovely mirror lake above Larrabee State Park. 7 mile loop. 1400 ft. total el. gain. Meet at 9 am at the Lost Lake Trailhead parking lot, formerly known as the Clayton Beach Parking lot, at the south end of Larrabee State Park on Chuckanut Drive. You may leave when your carload has safely returned to the trailhead. WA State Discover Pass required for your vehicle.

JAN. 22: THE TOMMY THOMPSON TRAIL (TTT) (Easy): Walk on the Tommy Thompson Trail in Anacortes from the Cap Sante Marina to the far end of the trestle on March's Point (7.2 miles round trip); and, if desired, walk around part of March's Point and back to Anacortes (up to 13 or more miles). Meet at 9 am at the north end of the Marina between the restroom and the Preston river boat. Walking shoes recommended. You may leave when you return to the starting point.

JAN. 29: WHATCOM FALLS & CREEK, BIG ROCK LOOP – Two options below:

I. Whatcom Falls & Creek (Easy): Hike along Whatcom Creek from Whatcom Falls Park to the I-5 Freeway bridge and back, 4.4 miles RT, slight elevation gain.

II. Big Rock Loop (Moderate): Instead of or in addition to the Whatcom Falls & Creek hike, you can do this hike, a 6 mile loop that begins and ends at Whatcom Falls Park. This loop takes the hiker north; some ups and downs; a few short, steep sections; mostly trail with some sidewalk/road walking.

MEETING PLACES & TIMES: Meet at 8:30 am at the I-5 Chuckanut Park-n-Ride near exit 231 from I-5 **OR** meet at 9:15 am at the Whatcom Falls parking lot on Arbor Street off Electric Avenue. Ride with those who plan to do the hike you want to do. You may leave when all in your car are safely back.

FEB. 5: LUMMI ISLAND (Easy): THIS HIKE IS DEPENDENT ON THE ROADS BEING DRIVABLE TO THE FERRY TO LUMMI ISLAND. Walk a 7 mile loop on the north end of Lummi Island. Island, sea, and mountain views. \$7 foot-passenger ferry fare required. Mostly level, walking shoes recommended. Meet at **8:15 a.m.** at the Chuckanut Drive park-n-ride, exit 231 from I-5 on the east side of I-5. No specified return time although most will take the 1 pm ferry back.

LaConner Birding Showcase Jan. 25th

Stop by and visit the Skagit Audubon Society display table during the 3rd annual LaConner Birding Showcase. This popular event will feature artists, education and specialty retailers. Keynote speaker Sue Cottrell will give a presentation on raptors of the northwest. For more information, visit: <https://members.lovelaconner.com/events/details/la-conner-birding-showcase-7841>.

Proposed management plan would gut protections for the largest Arctic lake in the United States and other Special Areas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE by Audubon Alaska

November 21, 2019

Joint statement from: Alaska Wilderness League * Audubon Alaska * Center for Biological Diversity * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice * Northern Alaska Environmental Center * Conservation Lands Foundation * The Wilderness Society * Sierra Club * Native Movement * Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition

Teshkepkuk Lake Wetlands. Photo: Kiliiii Yuyan

Another federal agency action threatens the health of Arctic land, water, wildlife, and people already suffering the consequences of industrialization and climate change. The Bureau of Land Management took the next step toward undercutting protections for designated Special Areas including the Teshkepkuk Lake wetlands, one of the most ecologically important wetlands in the entire Arctic; in the Western Arctic's National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA) by releasing a new draft Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) today.

BLM's proposal would potentially open some of our nation's most vital natural places to oil and gas exploitation: millions of acres of wilderness-quality lands with critical habitat for migratory birds, brown bears, caribou, threatened polar bears, walrus, whales and more. The Alaska Native communities that live in the region have maintained a subsistence way of life for thousands of years based on the Reserve's living resources.

The administration's proposal ignores local needs and input and could make large swaths of currently protected Western Arctic lands available for exploitation, regardless of the profound negative impacts for water, land, animals, and people in the region.



The existing Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) was completed in 2013 after years of extensive research and broad public involvement. Communities within the Reserve contributed information about land use and traditional knowledge of ecological patterns, and the Interior Department under President Obama spent years working with tribal communities, local governments, the state of Alaska, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and the public on the science-based protections ultimately adopted in the 2013 IAP.

The areas protected under the current land management plan, including Teshkepkuk Lake, Colville River, Utukok Uplands, Peard Bay, and Kasegaluk Lagoon, reflect this greater understanding and awareness that people, animals and plants depend on interconnected natural ecosystems, not fragmented migratory routes and watersheds. New information since the IAP was adopted, including increasing threats from climate change, underscores the critical importance and sensitivity of this landscape and demonstrates a need for increasing, not decreasing, protections.

Unfortunately, the administration remains focused on making as much of Arctic Alaska available for exploitation as possible, regardless of the profound negative impacts. Our coalition remains committed to defending and expanding the protections for Arctic lands, waters, and communities.

PUBLIC COMMENTS DUE BY JAN. 21, 2020: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage¤tPageId=174096>

FINDING A SNIPE – by Thomas Bancroft

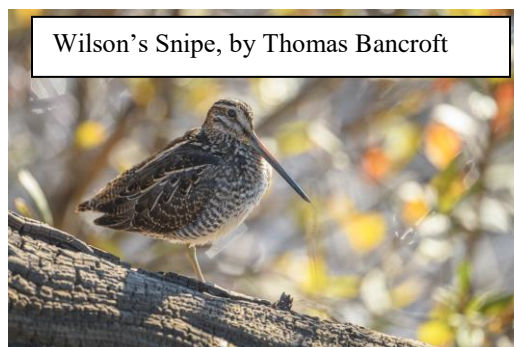
“What’s that,” someone said, and I whipped around. Just 10 feet off the dike at Wiley Slough sat a plump, melon-sized shorebird, standing on only one foot. It sat sideways, its long bill pointing down the log, its right eye glued on us, a perfect profile. The key field marks -- white buffy eye-stripe, crown stripe, back streaks, buffy chest, and barred sides -- were all visible. I stuttered for several seconds before “Wilson’s Snipe” came out. It was rare to have such a good view, so close. For most of my sightings, this bird had exploded out of a marsh, like a cannonball. It then zig-zagged and disappeared instantly. Their extra-large flight muscles give them that chunky look and also allow them to fly extremely fast, immediately hitting top speeds. People hunt this solitary sandpiper, and successfully shooting one is tough, taking a lot of skill. The word sniper in our lexicon comes from that ability.

Last summer, Wilson’s Snipes were displaying around Roger and Tiffany Lakes in the North Cascades. In the mornings and evenings, winnowing drifted through the subalpine landscape. Occasionally, I spotted a bird cruising across the sky, just barely visible in the subdued light. They make that sound with the outer tail feathers, spreading the rectrices while flying, the resulting airflow vibrates. They modulate the tone by controlling the beating of their wings. That haunting chord is part of their territory defense and an advertisement for females.

They have a sexual call, too, often given on the ground by either sex. Last summer, it had me stymied for the longest time. I kept searching for the source, never finding the bird, but finally realizing it was a snipe responding to the overhead winnowing. The eyes on these birds are set way back on the sides of their heads. They have binocular vision out the back. Consequently, their sight is excellent while they have their bill stuck down into the mud. Their eye location is a good strategy for detecting a predator while they feed. The tip of that long bill is full of sense organs and flexible, allowing them to capture prey without having to pull it back out of the mud. Females have slightly longer bills than males.

The bird shifted position, giving us a face-on view of its pectoral muscles and the barring on its chest, but it still kept that right eye zoomed right on us. We backed slowly away, trying not to disturb it.

“Now you can tell your friends you went snipe hunting,” I said to the ten people in my birding group. No one laughed; they just glared at me.



CONSERVATION, by Mary Sinker (filling in for Tim Manns)

What's Next for the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)? 2018 marked the 100 year anniversary of one of our nation’s most successful laws when it comes to protecting birds. National Geographic declared 2018 to be the “Year of the Bird”, and organizations from National Audubon to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to local birding clubs and groups celebrated how protecting bird deaths from incidental take and securing our energy and economic futures were not mutually exclusive.

Enter the new Administration. Within a year, a decades-long precedent that the Federal government recognized the MBTA applied to individuals, oil and gas development and other industrial development, was reversed by the Dept. of the Interior. Moving forward, only bird deaths resulting from actions undertaken for the specific purpose of killing the birds would be applicable to the MBTA. So, an individual could take down a barn, with full knowledge it was home to baby owls, and not be held liable for their deaths unless the intention of taking down the barn was specifically to kill the birds. What about an oil spill? Under the new interpretation, oil spills not caused for the specific purpose of killing birds would not be applicable to the MBTA. Imagine if Exxon Valdez or Deepwater Horizon occurred now? Both companies would be off the hook for damages under the MBTA.

National Audubon, numerous conservation groups, and eight states immediately sued to vacate the new interpretation. The lawsuit in the US District Court of New York (Southern District) is in the briefing phase. You can follow the case (Docket #18-CV-4596) at [Pacer.gov](https://www.pacer.gov).

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 Skagit Flyer*, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. *The Skagit Flyer* is produced monthly from September through June and full color issues are available at: www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter. Unless noted, all images, drawings, clip art, etc. appearing in *The Skagit Flyer* are in the public domain. We reserve the right to edit.

Board of Directors

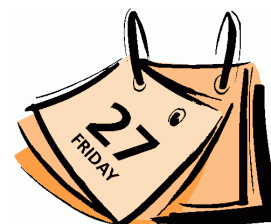
President:	Jeff Osmundson.....president@skagitaudubon.org
Vice President:	Jane Brandt.....janeb@skagitaudubon.org
Secretary:	Ron Holmes.....ronh@skagitaudubon.org
Treasurer:	Neil O'Hara.....treasurer@skagitaudubon.org.....781-290-9083
Immediate Past President:	Vacant

Committee Chairs and Representatives

Conservation:	Tim Manns.....conservation@skagitaudubon.org.....360-333-8985
Education:	Sheila Pera.....skagiteducation2@gmail.com
	Kim Nelson....kimn@skagitaudubon.org
Finance:	Phil Wright.....phil@skagitaudubon.org.....360-299-8212
Field Trips:	Libby Mills.....libbymills@gmail.com.....360-757-4139
Hikes:	Joan Melcher.....jdmelcher@comcast.net.....360-424-0407
Bird Sightings:	Pam Pritzl.....birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org.....360-387-7024
Membership:	Pam Pritzl.....membership@skagitaudubon.org
Programs:	Carla Helm.....carlajhelm@comcast.net
Publications:	Mary Sinker.....publications@skagitaudubon.org
Hospitality:	Pamelia Maxwell
Representative:	Kim Nelson.....kimn@skagitaudubon.org
Representative:	Katherine O'Hara.....katherineoh@skagitaudubon.org
Representative:	Denny Quirk.....denny@skagitaudubon.org
Representative:	Alice Turner.....alicet2@msn.com
Representative:	Don Jonasson.....donjonasson@hotmail.com.....360-299-1415
Representative:	Wes Jansen.....jansenwes7@gmail.com
Newsletter Distribution:	Barbara Craner.....craner2@frontier.com.....360-770-3898
Webmaster:	Ron Pera.....skagitaudubon@gmail.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Jan. 2 – Skagit Audubon Hike Interurban Trail
Jan. 7 – Skagit Audubon Board Meeting
Jan. 8 – Skagit Audubon Hike Sugar Loaf & Mt. Erie
Jan. 11 – Skagit Audubon Field Trip Birding the Samish Flats
Jan. 14 – Skagit Audubon Program and General Meeting
Jan. 15 – Skagit Audubon Hike Fragrance Lake
Jan. 22 – Skagit Audubon Hike Tommy Thompson Trail
Jan. 29 – Skagit Audubon Hike Whatcom Falls, Creek & Big Rock Loop
Feb. 5 – Skagit Audubon Hike Lummi Island



**SKAGIT AUDUBON SOCIETY
PO BOX 1101
MOUNT VERNON, WA 98273**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Skagit Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual membership in the Skagit Audubon Society includes 10 issues of our newsletter, *The Skagit Flyer*, available in color at <http://www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter>. Membership includes all members of your household.

Check one: _____ \$20/one year _____ \$40/two years _____ New _____ Renewal

Additionally, I wish to donate to Skagit Audubon Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, in the amount of \$_____. Donors of **\$100 or more** receive a personal field trip by a Skagit Audubon field trip leader.

Mail form and payment to: Skagit Audubon Society
PO Box 1101
Mt. Vernon WA 98273-1101

Name: _____	Areas of Interest (check all that apply)
Address: _____	Birds_____ Gardening_____
City/State/: _____	Education_____ Conservation_____
ZIP: _____ Phone: _____	Field Trips _____ Hiking _____
Email: _____	Other: _____

(To join National Audubon Society, a separate membership, please visit: www.audubon.org)