

# The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 39, No. 3 [www.skagitaudubon.org](http://www.skagitaudubon.org) Mar. 2020

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## March Meeting and Program

### "Room to Roam: Current Research in the North Cascades"

Presented by Roger Christophersen, Wildlife Biologist, North Cascades Nat. Park

Tuesday, Mar. 10th  
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program  
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center  
10441 Bayview Edison Road  
Mt. Vernon, Washington



Roger Christophersen has over 25 years of experience researching and monitoring a diversity of wildlife species in the North Cascades mountain range. His primary work has been on endangered, threatened, rare, sensitive, and keystone mammal and bird species including forest carnivores, bats, American pikas and hoary marmots. He currently serves on local and regional Wildlife Working Group Committees, Citizen Advisory Councils and is actively engaged with various community outreach programs. He is an avid mountaineer and backcountry skier.

With a view from the frontlines, Roger will present an overview of what's going on in our backyard with such projects as fisher reintroduction, wolf recolonization, and marmot predation studies.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT DEADLINE-Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>; 11:59 PM ET** on  
USFWS plan to revise management plan for killing Double-Crested  
Cormorants. Read about it here:  
<https://www.audubon.org/news/without-solid-science-government-plans-expand-cormorant-killing-efforts> and submit your public  
comment by Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>; 11:59 PM ET here:  
<https://www.regulations.gov/> (Docket #FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, from Jeff Osmundson

Greetings Skagit Audubon Members and Friends,

For some of us this has been a long winter and a very wet and dark January. As February helps us turn the corner with a few more bright days and the sun setting after 5:00 (finally), we might start to turn our attention to our yards and gardens. If you are lucky enough to have room you may have one of those Wildlife Sanctuary signs up or you may try to be bird friendly. If you are like me and took advantage of the lazy and messy garden over the winter, it may be time to start getting ready for new plants or seeds. If that is the case, as you plan your seed and plant additions this year, there are a couple of ideas for your consideration.

Did you know that those showy but non-native plants can be starving the birds? About 90% of the local bugs also like local plants. Without the help of some native plants in our garden it can become a desert for our bird friends. It was shocking for me to learn that the largest irrigated crop in our country is grass and it covers over 40 million acres coast to coast. Grass is not very attractive to birds, unless you are a robin. And many of the natives that are available take less water and fertilizer to look great and attract wildlife. Our bird friends, along with other local wildlife, do much better with a larger variety of plants in our garden and lesser use of herbicides and fertilizers. Native planting doesn't have to be an all or nothing proposition. I know that I love those showy flowers, the variegated leaves and the different textures that cultivars can bring to the garden. But, at least for me, I'm going to trend towards more native plants wherever I can in the garden this year. Hopefully it will be appealing and also rewarding for our insects and birds.

Many thanks to Brenda Cunningham for all of her help with sources and resources for this short article. Brenda is a Skagit County Master Gardener and display garden manager for the Salal Chapter of the Native Plant Society. Here is one of the very useful links that she provided:

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/environment/2020/02/07/yard-sustainability-native-plants/>

**FROM YOUR EDITOR,** the latest assault by the current Administration on hard-fought environmental legislation comes with proposed changes to the 50-year old National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Over the years, Congress and former Presidents have updated procedures to help modernize NEPA. However, current proposals would limit environmental review, curtail public comment and participation, and limit the government's ability to evaluate climate change impacts. Proposed changes would allow agencies to decide for themselves if a project or decision had significant impacts on our health, our economic wellbeing, or on our natural surroundings.

Proposed changes also include changing the definition of what constitutes a major federal action to exclude projects and/or decisions where minimal federal funding or minimal federal involvement would limit the agency's control over the outcome of the project. There is nothing minimal about the issuance of a federal permit or the cumulative effect of a decision or project 50 or more years into the future. NEPA recognizes and requires cumulative effects be considered and addressed because individual actions may add up to a significant impact over time and space. This is important for highways and coal or oil export terminals. **Public Comments Due Mar. 10, 2020 11:59 PM ET;** <https://www.regulations.gov; Docket CEQ-2019-0003>. Your voice matters, Mary Sinker

### BACKYARD BIRDS, by Mary Sinker



The Varied Thrush is a shy visitor, but if your yard includes (or borders) dense and damp habitat that includes conifers and fruiting shrubs, these birds can be surprisingly common in yards and parks during the winter months. In my yard, they appear underneath the suet feeders whenever snow is on the ground. Favorite foods include insects, arthropods, berries, nuts, fruits, and seeds. Native fruiting trees and shrubs are a good way to attract them. Found year-round here, they nest in mature forests with the poorly-concealed nest built 10' off the ground. They lay 1-6 eggs and have 1-2 broods. Photo of male Varied Thrush, by Mary Sinker

## MARCH 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](mailto: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.



**Sunday, March 1, 2020 (rescheduled from Sunday, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

**Whatcom County Shores**

**8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Leader:** Andrea Warner, [warneraj@me.com](mailto:warneraj@me.com); 360.734.9881 (home); 360.224.9291 (mobile)

The trip will start at Blaine Harbor, and move on to Semiahmoo, Birch Bay State Park and Sandy Point. Depending on how the time goes, we may make other short stops on the way to Sandy Point from Birch Bay State Park. Our stops will focus on water birds, targeting all three Scoters, three Loon species, Grebes, and Long-tailed Ducks, plus shorebirds, e.g. Sanderlings, Black Turnstones, and Dunlin. Bring binoculars, scopes, lunch, and wind and rain gear. If coming from south of Bellingham, meet (before and plan to leave) at 8:30 AM to arrange carpools at the Chuckanut Park & Ride lot just south of Exit 231 off I-5. We'll join the leader at 9:15 a.m. at the Arco Gas Station on Slater Road. Take I-5 Exit 260, turn right from the off ramp and you'll see the Arco station on your right. **Please Contact Leader: Andrea Warner (contact info above). A Washington State Discover Pass is required for parking at Birch Bay State Park.**

**Saturday, March 21, 2020**

**Beginning Birding at Deception Pass State Park – All Ages Welcome**

**9:00 a.m. to Noon**

**Leader:** Tim Manns, 360.333.8985 or [conservation@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@skagitaudubon.org)

**Leader:** Kim Nelson, [kimn@skagituaudubon.org](mailto:kimn@skagituaudubon.org)

Would you like to see what birding's all about? Join some Skagit Audubon members for an introduction to how we find, observe, and learn about birds and why we enjoy birding. We'll talk about field guides, binoculars and spotting scopes, and put them to use. We'll see and hear a variety of birds, large and small, in trees and bushes, and on the water – and, we'll help you identify them. Dress for the weather (expect wind along the shore). Bring binoculars and field guides, if you have them, but don't worry if you don't. Meet at the parking lot for Rosario Beach (Wash. State Discover Pass required). Extra binoculars and field guides will be available.

### Moses Coulee Field Trip – May 1-3, 2020

For the last few years The Nature Conservancy has given Skagit Audubon members the opportunity to spend a long weekend at their lodge in Moses Coulee. This year on the weekend of May 1-3, we will have the opportunity again. There are 10 furnished rooms and space for several trailers. We are asked to limit our group to 20 participants.

This year priority goes to anyone willing to plan and lead a field trip for the group that weekend. Field trips can be in Moses Coulee itself, at Breezley Hills, Jamison Lake or Sun Lakes State Park, to name a few. Geology watching and more hiking and birding can be found at Northrup Canyon and in the Banks Lake area.

If you would like to organize and lead a field trip please contact [Jeffo4297@gmail.com](mailto:Jeffo4297@gmail.com). We'll make all slots available at the beginning of April, giving priority to those who volunteer for Skagit Audubon in some way during any time of the year. This is a very special site, and we greatly appreciate the Nature Conservancy giving us this opportunity again.

## Skagit Audubon Field Notes by Pam Pritzl

This column reports submitted sightings. For help with rare sightings or locations, please contact [birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org](mailto: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](mailto:birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org). **NOTE: Field Sightings will return in the April Flyer.**

## CONSERVATION by Tim Manns

Washington State Legislature's 60 day session ends March 12<sup>th</sup>, barring an extension. At this writing in mid-February one of Audubon's top goals as a member of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) has failed to pass a cut-off date in the legislative calendar and will receive no further consideration. The "Healthy Habitat Healthy Orcas" bill (HB 2550) would have upgraded the standard for mitigating impacts of certain development projects from "no net loss" of ecological function to "net ecological gain." The existing standard has failed to reverse the habitat loss contributing to the decline of salmon and the plight of the Southern Resident Orcas, which feed on them almost exclusively. The other 3 EPC priorities are still in play as of mid-February. In the Conservation Notes posted on Skagit Audubon's website at the Conservation tab (<https://www.skagitaudubon.org/conservation/notes>), you can find the bill numbers and links for commenting to your elected officials about these important priorities. Scan down the Notes for other legislation of particular importance to Audubon. Your call or email can make a difference.

The daily sight of wintering Trumpeter and Tundra Swans in Skagit County is a reminder of the importance agriculture holds for certain birds in our area. Over 8,000 Trumpeter Swans (more than in any other county in the lower 48 states) and close to 2,000 Tundra Swans find the habitat they need right here: safe places like Barney Lake and Johnson-DeBay Slough to spend the night and wetlands and harvested corn and potato fields to feed. Corn is grown here for dairy cows. Dairies are struggling financially. Supporting dairies helps swans. The farm fields are also habitat for thousands of wintering raptors and provide for huge flocks of dunlin when high tide covers the shore. Climate change is a major threat to birds, and agriculture can help with that too by locking up carbon. Audubon Washington has launched a "Natural Climate Solutions" project to promote managing forests, wetlands, and farm fields in ways that sequester carbon. That's what State Senate Bill 5947 is about: a grant program to encourage farmers to follow carbon sequestration practices. As of today (mid-February), this bill has passed the Senate and is now in the House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources. Check on its progress and comment to your State Representatives at <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5947&Year=2019&Initiative=false>.

For information on more conservation issues of concern to Skagit Audubon: <https://skagitaudubon.org/conservation/notes>. Sign up to receive these notes directly by emailing [conservation@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@skagitaudubon.org).

**BIRD N' CRUISE TO VENDOVI ISLAND** (owned by the San Juan Preservation Trust) – Observe Pigeon Guillemots, other alcids, seabirds and forest birds while cruising to and on the island. Explore Vendovi on its well-maintained trail system (3 miles total) and enjoy stunning views from lookouts and beaches (for about 3.5 hrs.).

**Dates:** May 9; June 13; July 11

**Leaders:** Ivar Dolph and Stephanie Fernandez

**Time:** 9 am to 4 pm

**Cost:** \$137 per person plus suggested donation of \$2-\$5 for the SJPT (donation box on the island)

**Departs:** Island Express Charters, Skyline Marina, Anacortes

**What to bring:** binoculars, camera, lunch, appropriate footwear (dress for the weather)

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

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

*This trip is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society*



## MARCH 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](mailto: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.



**MAR. 4 GOOSE ROCK PERIMETER HIKE (Moderate to Difficult)** Hike a loop that includes Cranberry Lake, beaches, the south side of Deception Pass, Cornet Bay and a 450 foot climb up Goose Rock. Total el. gain for the day is about 1150 feet. Meet at 9 a.m. in the east side parking lot at Cranberry Lake near the main entrance to Deception Pass State Park 6.2 miles for the basic loop hike; add 4.0 miles if you hike on beach south to the naval station border (10.2 miles); Discover Pass required to park in the park. **NOTE: HAVE EAR PROTECTION WITH YOU IN CASE THE WHIDBEY JETS ARE FLYING LOW AND LOUD.**

**MAR. 11 AROUND MOUNT ERIE Mount Erie Base Circumference (Moderate to Difficult)** Hike around the base of Mount Erie through forests. On its south side are occasional views of lakes, straits, bays, passages and islands. Lots of ups and downs for 1300 ft. el gain. 6.3 mile loop or 6.6 with side trip to Whistle Lake view. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the Sugarloaf trailhead near the start of the Mt. Erie Road off the Heart Lake Road located south of Anacortes. Estimated return time is 1:00 p.m. **There may be an option to hike up Mount Erie from the south side if a guide is available. Portions of this steep trail include minor scrambling.**

**MAR. 18 LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN PRESERVE AND/OR STIMPSON FAMILY NATURE RESERVE (Moderate to Difficult)** The Lookout Mountain trail is on the east side of Lookout Mountain above Lake Whatcom. Basic loop is 5.8 miles which includes a side trail to a lookout; elevation gain is 1000 feet. The Lookout Mountain trailhead is located a mile or so south of the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve on the Lake Louise Road. Whatcom County hikers should drive directly to the trailhead. Other hikers meet at the Chuckanut Drive Park-n-Ride in Burlington at 8:30 am. These people will drive to the trailhead by way of the Alger-Caine Lake Road, the South Lake Whatcom Boulevard and the Lake Louise Road. Stimpson Family Nature Reserve maps will be given out at the Lookout Mountain trailhead. We will meet at the trail head about 9 am. **No dogs allowed at Stimpson Reserve.**

### **MAR. 25 PINE AND CEDAR LAKES AND RAPTOR RIDGE OR LAKE PADDEN (Easy to Difficult)**

**Pine & Cedar/Raptor Ridge:** Hike to two very pleasant lakes in the Chuckanut Mountain area. Up to 9.4 miles one way with shuttle cars. 1900 ft. total el. gain. The 1.7 mile uphill route from the Pine/Cedar Trailhead is steep. The 5.4 mile down-hill route via the new Raptor Ridge Trail down to the Lost Lake Trail and then on down to the North Chuckanut parking lot is less steep and will lead to Arroyo Park, the Interurban Trail, and finally the North Chuckanut parking lot.

**Lake Padden:** A number of hike options available from 3.6 to 6.7 or more miles. Relative small elevation gains.

**FOR BOTH HIKES MEET AT 9:00 AM** at the North Chuckanut parking lot located off Chuckanut Drive just north of California Street at about milepost 18.5. Return times and shuttles will be determined then.

**APR. 1 LILY LIZARD LAKES LOOP (The LLLL) (Difficult)** The Loop hike directions are written in a clockwise order. On Blanchard Mountain hike the Lily Lake, Larry Reed, and Max's Shortcut Trails to Lily Lake and then on to Lizard Lake by way of a connector trail from the North Butte Trail. Return to trail head via the Lizard and Lily Lake Trails. 8.6 mile loop, 1600 ft. total el. gain. Opportunity to go to Oyster Dome and North Butte. We will divide into a faster and slower group; car pool accordingly. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Chuckanut Drive park-n-ride, exit 231 from I-5 on the east side of I-5. 2:00 pm return to trailhead for the faster group; 3:00 pm for the slower group. Wash. State Discover Pass required to park at the trailhead.

## Costa Rica Birding Experience by Rosemarie Jansen

We always heard about the beautiful birds in Costa Rica, and decided that it was time to visit the country. Instead of booking a guided tour, we decided to go on our own and see what we can see! Our daughter and her boyfriend went along, and weren't so much into birds, but on a boat tour to see monkeys, they were the ones who spotted the rare Boat-billed Heron. That's how it starts, maybe?

The first night we stayed in a hotel in San Jose. It had a small court yard and we saw our first kiskadee, a beautiful yellow bird who made the sound of his name. The next day we rented a car and drove toward the Pacific coast to Quepos. We avoided the very busy Manuel Antonio Park, and drove to the small ferry landing to go to the Isla Damar. We saw lots of pelicans, frigatebirds and vultures from the five minute ferry. The owner picked us up with a quad ATV and an attached wooden cart for luggage, where Wes and I had to sit. Two miles over a bumpy road would've seemed long, if it hadn't been for all the beautiful scenery. The basic 'mother in law' basement with two bedrooms was clean, but with a cold shower that never got warm.

We saw the Rufous-naped Wrens nesting in a palm tree with huge silver colored leaves, next to the house and a Lineated Woodpecker. The Great-tailed Grackles were hopping around us, like the Stellar's Jays at home. Iguanas and hummingbirds were on the garden trellis and a Pygmy Owl was in the distance.

The owner had arranged a monkey boat tour for us and we had told him that we wanted to see birds too. It was our own private tour and the boat owner would slow the boat down when we wanted to take photos. We saw so many birds along the shores, from a Yellow-headed and Crested Caracara to a Roseate Spoonbill, an Osprey, Snowy, Great and Cattle Egrets, Little Blue Herons, White Ibises, Whimbrels and all kinds of plovers and sandpipers. In the



Kiskadee, by Rosemarie Jansen

mangrove we encountered the monkeys who knew the boat owner. We were told not to touch them, but they touched us, sitting on our shoulders and heads. Although we don't agree with making wildlife tame, so that we can get close to it, it was a special experience!

Our next destination was the small town of Uvita, further south on the Pacific coast. The Airbnb was high up on a steep dirt road where a very loud concert of cicadas greeted us. There must've been thousands, as loud as they were, we got used to them after a couple of days and didn't even hear them anymore. The villa was in the trees with a distant view of the ocean, and a small salt water pool that never got cold. We swam in the pool twice a day, and a kiskadee and a Yellow-headed Caracara came

in the morning to drink. A small 'Jesus Lizard' lived under the shrubs and occasionally ran across the pool. A sloth hung in a tree and we saw hawks and vultures. Large blue butterflies flew below through the shrubs and we also saw a Blue-Gray and a Summer Tanager. At night we heard Howler Monkeys and saw them later in the trees. I said to my daughter, "I always wanted to see a toucan" and she pointed up, there high up in the trees we sighted one. When a second bird arrived they preened each other. We explored the area along a few beaches and saw sandpipers, egrets, vultures and pelicans.

After our eventful three-day stay we drove high up into the mountains, 9,000 feet, a winding road to Gerardo de Dota. Our cabin was small and rustic but it felt cold and we had to make a fire in the large fireplace. We followed a trail along a small avocado orchard, to a waterfall, looking for quetzals. It was Wes's dream to see one. The following morning we saw small sparrows, Grey-capped and Long-tailed Silky-flycatchers, and woodcreepers on the property. We visited a coffee co-op (900 owners) in a nearby town and drank the best Costa Rican coffee we ever had.

Not far from there was the Quetzal Park, and they had a guide taking people to a private property where the Resplendent Quetzals are, and we signed up. These birds are rare, very beautiful and look elegant with their long tails. There were three males and a female, they were hiding behind the leaves and watching us. Everybody was quiet and we tried not to disturb them. The area had nesting boxes and a certain type of avocado trees that these birds feed on. We felt very privileged to be able to see them so close by, and it rounded up our exciting birding experience in this beautiful country. We were sad that our vacation was coming to an end, but felt that we had experienced so much more in this short time than we ever could ask for.

## 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](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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Immediate Past President:	Vacant

### Committee Chairs and Representatives

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

**Mar. 1 – Skagit Audubon Field Trip Whatcom County Shores**

**Mar. 3 – Skagit Audubon Board Meeting**

**Mar. 4 – Skagit Audubon Hike Goose Rock**

**Mar. 10 – Skagit Audubon Program and General Meeting**

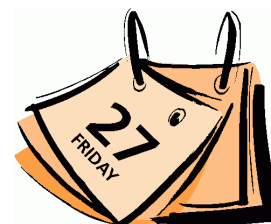
**Mar. 11 – Skagit Audubon Hike Mt. Erie**

**Mar. 18 – Skagit Audubon Hike Lookout Mtn/Stimpson Family Preserve**

**Mar. 21 – Skagit Audubon Field Trip Beginning Birders, Deception Pass State Park**

**Mar. 25 - Skagit Audubon Hike Pine/Cedar Lks/Raptor Ridge/Lk Padden**

**Apr. 1 – Skagit Audubon Hike Lily Lizard Lakes Loop**



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