

# *The Skagit Flyer*

Skagit Audubon Society  
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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## **FEBRUARY MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM ONLY**

### ***"In Search of Meadowlarks"***

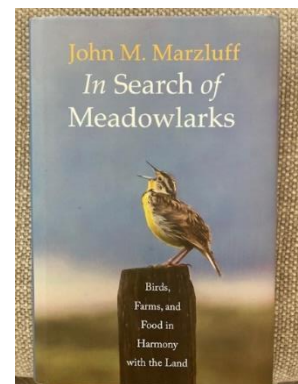
**Presented by: John Marzluff, PhD  
Tuesday, Feb. 13th at 7:00 pm**

Please join us on Zoom for a presentation by John Marzluff, PhD, on his book *"In Search of Meadowlarks."* Dr. Marzluff is an emeritus professor with the University of Washington College of the Environment. He studies bird conservation but is perhaps best known for his studies on crows, and how birds affect people in terms of culture and the arts. He currently lives in Montana.

The Zoom link is below and if you have questions, contact [programs@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:programs@skagitaudubon.org).

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82191303436?pwd=bUwWCMOdQ48BvW9Ur31xXFIrPDM8kZ.1>



## **The Great Backyard Bird Count is Coming!**

**When: February 16-19, 2024**

**Where: Wherever you are (this is a global event)**

Learn more on how to participate and submit your checklists (daily participation is not required) here: [www.birdcount.org](https://www.birdcount.org) (this annual event is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society)

**Monthly Meeting Update:** In response to the COVID-19 virus, some of our general meetings are being held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center while others will be available on Zoom only. Hybrid meetings are not currently offered. Please check the monthly program description for meeting details. As with our field trips and other events, only vaccinated, symptom-free individuals should attend meetings in person. Please visit our website: [www.skagitaudubon.org](https://www.skagitaudubon.org) for updates.

**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 on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 pm. Some meetings will be presented in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon and other meetings will be available on Zoom only. Hybrid meetings are not currently offered. Check the monthly Flyer for upcoming meeting details. The board of directors meets on the first Tuesday of each month, September through June, at 7 pm. Skagit Audubon membership provides a local chapter affiliation and newsletter, the Skagit Flyer, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. The Skagit Flyer is produced monthly from September through June and full color issues are available at: [www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter](http://www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter). Unless noted, all images, drawings, clip art, etc. appearing in The Skagit Flyer are in the public domain. We reserve the right to edit.

#### **Board of Directors-Officers**

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Renee Westlund [renew@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:renew@skagitaudubon.org)

#### **Other Volunteers**

Hospitality: Ann and Larry Kramer  
Newsletter Distribution: John Edison

**NEW PHONE NUMBER FOR REPORTING SICK/INJURED/DEAD SWANS AND GEESE:** WDFW has updated the hotline number for reporting sick/injured/dead swans and geese. Please call 360.466.0515 for assistance. WDFW continues to remind the general public not to handle sick, injured, or dead swans and geese.

## FIELD TRIPS – by Colleen Shannon

Beginning birders and friends are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing and bring field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes (if you have them). Please note specific COVID guidelines in each field trip description. Questions? Contact Colleen Shannon, [fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org).



### SignUp Genius

Skagit Audubon subscribes to SignUp Genius. Most field trip leaders are using it to register for their field trips. It is quite easy to use. Just click on the link provided and follow all the prompts. You should receive an email confirmation within a couple of minutes if your registration was successful. If you have difficulty please let Colleen know at [fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org).

### February 11<sup>th</sup> – Samish Flats and More – 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

**Trip Leader:** Neil O'Hara, [treasurer@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:treasurer@skagitaudubon.org)

**Meeting Place – Padilla Bay Interpretive Center (pre-registration required; see below)**

We will look for raptors, waterfowl, western meadowlarks, and shorebirds on the Samish Flats. We'll make one or two stops on the way to the West 90 and walk while there (duck hunting season will be over). Our stop by the church on Samish Island should turn up some passerines and we'll check out the nearby Skagit Land Trust property. The Samish Island Day Use Access should yield sea ducks, brant, cormorants, loons, grebes, and gulls. Bring binoculars, spotting scope (if available) and dress for cold and wet weather. All participants must be fully vaccinated, and carpooling is by private arrangement or at the discretion of participants on the day. Please sign up using the following link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-47221817-samish>

### February 18 – Blaine/Semiahmoo/Birch Bay – 9:00 am until 2:00 pm

**Trip Leader:** Andrea Warner, 360.224.9291 (text) ( pre-registration required; see below)

We will be looking for water birds and any land birds we encounter along the way. We will begin the trip at the first overlook on the right-hand side of the road as you drive into the Blaine harbor area. From Blaine, we will go to Semiahmoo, then Birch Bay. We will be looking for our winter water residents, with target birds being long-tailed ducks, eared and western grebes, black scoters, and hopefully oystercatchers and turnstones. If you have a scope, please bring it as most of the birds we will be viewing are far out. Dress for the weather, including rain and wind, and bring your snacks and beverages. **The trip will be limited to 12 due to parking at some of the areas.** Carpooling is suggested. Questions – text Andrea at 360.224.9291 and using the following link to register:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-46998924-blainesemiahmoo#/>

### February 21 – Lake 16 Swan Fly-In – 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

**Trip Leader:** Colleen Shannon, [fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org)

We will meet at 21180 Lake Sixteen Rd the evening of Feb. 21st to watch the swans fly in for the evening. Sunset that evening is 5:40. Arrive early to bird the woods on this welcoming private piece of lake shore. There will be a fire but bring your own beverages. Dress warmly with layers and bring binoculars and scopes if you have them. Be advised that the property is down a long and woodsy driveway. The trip will not be limited but please do use the link below to sign up in case of any last-minute changes:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-47006175-lake>

## CONSERVATION – by Tim Manns

**Washington State Legislative Session:** The session currently underway goes through March 7<sup>th</sup>. For a one-page summary of Audubon Washington's legislative priorities go to [2024 audubon legislative priorities one pager 12.2023 2.pdf](#). On the Skagit Audubon website ([Skagit Audubon Society - Home](#)), scroll down to "2024 Legislative Session-Audubon Washington Priorities" for a link to Audubon Washington's legislative tracker ([Bill Tracker: 2024 Legislative Session | Audubon Washington](#)). The "Take Action" link with each bill listed allows easily communicating your support to your state representatives and senator. Each bill number links to the particular bill's page on the legislature's website. There you can find the bill's text, related reports, and where it stands in the legislative process. On a particular bill's page, scroll down to "Bill History, 2024 Regular Session" to see what committee is currently considering the bill. At the upper left of the page, click on "Legislative Committees," then on the relevant House or Senate committee to find the date when the committee will hold a hearing on the bill. From there you can go to a page where you may be able to enter your support for or opposition to the particular bill before the hearing and testify via zoom if you wish. Alternatively, on any page of the [Legislature Home \(wa.gov\)](#) website, scroll to the bottom of the page and at the left click on "Comment on a Bill," "Participate in Committee Hearings," etc. Legislators want to hear from us, and this website makes it easy.

**Barred Owl Management Strategy:** As mentioned in the December and January Conservation Notes ([Skagit Audubon Society - Conservation Notes](#)), within its responsibility for implementing the Endangered Species Act the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposes to remove non-native, invasive Barred Owls from parts of the range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Since the highly adaptable Barred Owl arrived in the Northwest about fifty years ago, its numbers have greatly expanded, increasingly displacing the Northern Spotted Owl, which has been on the Endangered Species List since 1990. Scientists now project that the Northern Spotted Owl will be extinct in one to several decades if Barred Owls are not removed from at least some of the Spotted Owl's range. The six alternatives in the environmental impact statement (EIS) accompanying the proposed strategy include the "No Action" alternative required in every EIS and five "Action" alternatives, all calling for killing Barred Owls. In mid-January Skagit Audubon submitted a comment letter supporting the USFWS strategy and suggesting a number of adjustments. The chapter's board vote on this letter was not unanimous. Several members expressed strong reservations about killing one species to benefit another. Some members voting in favor expressed strong reservations about not taking action when that decision likely would mean extinction for the Northern Spotted Owl and possibly for another subspecies, the California Spotted Owl. To read Skagit Audubon's letter, go to <https://skagitaudubon.org/conservation/notes>. For information on conservation issues and advocacy, see Conservation Notes on the Skagit Audubon website ([www.skagitaudubon.org](http://www.skagitaudubon.org)) under the Conservation tab.

## SKAGIT AUDUBON READS – February 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm on Zoom

You are cordially invited to join in on a small group Zoom discussion led by Colleen Shannon and John Farnsworth about John Marzluff's book, *In Search of Meadowlarks*. You do not have to have read the book to join us. Dr. Marzluff will be our guest speaker, via Zoom, for our February 13th membership meeting. The link for the membership meeting is on page one of this newsletter. Dr. Marzluff's book is about birds, farms, and food in harmony with the land. If these topics interest you, please join Colleen and John on the 8th at 7:00 by clicking on this link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81129413812?pwd=RV4eiXaqiyDTZvLrMtyZSZDHSCzA6b.1>

## FUN FACTS – HOODED MERGANSER - by Mary Sinker – visit

[www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Hooded\\_Merganser](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Hooded_Merganser) to learn more. Photo: Hooded Merganser with a shrimp lunch by Joe Halton.

- Female Hooded Mergansers often lay their eggs in the nests of other cavity nesting ducks, such as Wood Ducks, and females can lay up to 13 eggs in a single clutch.
- The nest of a Hooded Merganser, concealed within the hollow of a tree, might be as high as 50' above the ground. How do the ducklings get down when it is time for them to leave the nest, only 24 hours after hatching? The mother calls to them from ground level and then the ducklings jump out of the nest hole and flutter down to the ground.
- Newly fledged ducklings may have to walk with their mother for one-half mile or more to find the nearest water.
- Hooded Mergansers are the only merganser species restricted to North America.



## MEET THE ROUGH-Legged HAWK (*buteo lagopus*) by Jeff Sinker

Unless you plan to trek to the far northern Arctic tundra during the summer breeding season, the best places to spot these large boldly patterned hawks are wide open farm fields, deserts, prairies, and similar habitats on their wintering grounds in southern Canada and across the United States. They display a distinctive hunting pattern by facing into the wind and hovering in one spot while searching the



ground below for rodents and other small mammals. Rough-legged Hawks also perch on fence posts, utility poles and slender tree branches - places where most other large hawks don't often perch.

Although Rough-legged Hawks share their cliffside breeding grounds in close proximity to Gyrfalcons and Peregrine Falcons, they don't tolerate other Rough-legged Hawks nesting within one-quarter mile. The male selects the nest site, usually exposed on a cliff, and supplies most of the

nesting materials to the female who builds the nest over 3-4 weeks. The nest is a bulky mass constructed with sticks, animal bones, fur, and feathers. Females lay 1-7 eggs and incubate over 31-37 days. The nestling period is 31-45 days, and both parents care for the young. Nestlings are big eaters – they can swallow whole prey at 16 days old and it has been estimated that two nestlings will eat 26 lbs. of food during 40 days in the nest.

Populations appear to be stable but will fluctuate locally or regionally based on prey availability and weather on both breeding and wintering grounds. Learn more at: [www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rough-legged\\_Hawk](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rough-legged_Hawk) Photo: Rough-legged Hawk on the Samish Flats by Joe Halton

## FIELD SIGHTINGS – by Ann Skinner

This column reports a summary of selected sightings. Rare sightings should be submitted with detailed written documentation and if possible, a photograph. A second person to verify rare sightings is encouraged. Do not hesitate to contact any observer to help document unusual sightings.

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).

### OWLS

Short-eared Owl E-90, 1/7, (MS/JS)  
Great-horned Owl (1+) SA, 1/3 (MS), EFI, 1/7 (RW)

### WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker (3) EFI, 12/29 (RW)  
Hybrid Flicker (2) EFI, 1/13 (RW)  
Hairy Woodpecker (2) EFI, 12/20 (RW)  
Downy Woodpecker (2) EFI, 12/20 (RW)  
Pileated Woodpecker (1) EFI, 12/20 (RW)

### NUTHATCHES & CREEPERS

Brown Creeper (1) EFI, 1/7 (RW)

### THRUSHES

Varied Thrush (2) SA, 12/31 (MS) & EFI, 1/13 (RW)

### WRENS

Pacific Wren (2) daily, SA (MS/JS)  
Bewick's Wren (2) daily, SA (MS/JS)

### WARBLERS

Townsend's warbler, (1) Shelter Bay Marina, 12/30 (CBC)

### RARE & UNUSUAL CBC SIGHTINGS

Black Phoebe 12/30 (Skagit Count)  
California Scrub-Jay 12/30 (Skagit Count)  
Barn Swallow 12/30 (Skagit Count)  
White-Breasted Nuthatch 1/1/24 (Everett Circle)

**(CBC)** Christmas Bird Count; **(EFI)** East Fidalgo Island; **(E-90)** East 90; **(SA)** Stanwood Area; **(JS)** Jeff Sinker; **(MS)** Mary Sinker; **(RW)** Regan Weeks

## HELP WANTED!

Skagit Audubon is an all-volunteer organization that seeks individuals who enjoy socializing with other bird people, wearing binoculars, and proudly own at least one pair of muck boots to join our team! Benefits include working with other awesome volunteers, getting the first scoop on birding opportunities, and feeling good by giving back to your community! If you have skills or interests in the following areas, we would love to hear from you!

- **Audio/Video Skills:** Help set up and operate equipment for meetings and/or events.
- **Field Trip Leaders**
- **Social Media:** Create posts for our Facebook and Instagram accounts.
- **Hospitality:** Help our current volunteers with coffee, cookies & greeting at in-person functions.
- **Programming:** Help coordinate or create programs for our meetings.
- **Bird Sightings:** Compile the latest and greatest sightings for our newsletter & website.
- **Christmas Bird Count Organizer:** Help to coordinate the annual CBC! Training will be provided.

To apply, please contact: John Day [president@skagitadubon.org](mailto:president@skagitadubon.org) OR Ann Skinner [anns@skagitadubon.org](mailto:anns@skagitadubon.org)



## RESULTS OF THE DECEMBER 30, 2023 PADILLA BAY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Seventy-five participants turned out on a cloudy but mild day to document 129 species (up from 122 in 2022). Each Christmas Bird Count happens within a 15-mile diameter circle, this one centering on the March Point shore of Padilla Bay. A different team covers each of the circle's 21 segments. Many thanks to this year's participants and to Ann and Larry Kramer for setting up the excellent potluck enjoyed afterwards. The anticipated date of the next Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count is Saturday, December 28, 2024.

(Species order: Official WA State Checklist of Birds, WA Bird Records Committee, Nov. 2021)

|                        |                          |                                    |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Snow Goose             | Least Sandpiper          | <b>California Scrub-Jay</b>        |
| Brant                  | Greater Yellowlegs       | American Crow                      |
| Canada Goose           | Wilson's Snipe           | Common Raven                       |
| Trumpeter Swan         | Spotted Sandpiper        | Black-capped Chickadee             |
| Tundra Swan            | Common Murre             | Chestnut-backed Chickadee          |
| Northern Shoveler      | Pigeon Guillemot         | <b>Barn Swallow</b>                |
| Gadwall                | Marbled Murrelet         | Bushtit                            |
| Eurasian Wigeon        | Ancient Murrelet         | Golden-crowned Kinglet             |
| American Wigeon        | Rhinoceros Auklet        | Ruby-crowned Kinglet               |
| Mallard                | Bonaparte's Gull         | Cedar Waxwing                      |
| Northern Pintail       | Short-billed (Mew) Gull  | Red-breasted Nuthatch              |
| Green-winged Teal      | Ring-billed Gull         | Brown Creeper                      |
| Ring-necked Duck       | California Gull          | Pacific Wren                       |
| Greater Scaup          | Iceland Gull             | Marsh Wren                         |
| Lesser Scaup           | Glaucous-winged Gull     | Bewick's Wren                      |
| Harlequin Duck         | Red-throated Loon        | European Starling                  |
| Surf Scoter            | Pacific Loon             | Hermit Thrush                      |
| White-winged Scoter    | Common Loon              | American Robin                     |
| Long-tailed Duck       | Brandt's Cormorant       | Varied Thrush                      |
| Bufflehead             | Pelagic Cormorant        | House Sparrow                      |
| Common Goldeneye       | Double-crested Cormorant | American Pipit                     |
| Barrow's Goldeneye     | Great Blue Heron         | House Finch                        |
| Hooded Merganser       | Northern Harrier         | Purple Finch                       |
| Common Merganser       | Sharp-shinned Hawk       | Red Crossbill                      |
| Red-breasted Merganser | Cooper's Hawk            | Pine Siskin                        |
| Ruddy Duck             | Bald Eagle               | American Goldfinch                 |
| California Quail       | Red-tailed Hawk          | Fox Sparrow                        |
| Wild Turkey            | Rough-legged Hawk        | Dark-eyed Junco                    |
| Ring-necked Pheasant   | Barn Owl                 | White-crowned Sparrow              |
| Pied-billed Grebe      | Great Horned Owl         | Golden-crowned Sparrow             |
| Horned Grebe           | Short-eared Owl          | Savannah Sparrow                   |
| Red-necked Grebe       | Belted Kingfisher        | Song Sparrow                       |
| Western Grebe          | Red-breasted Sapsucker   | Lincoln's Sparrow                  |
| Rock Pigeon            | Downy Woodpecker         | Spotted Towhee                     |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove | Hairy Woodpecker         | Western Meadowlark                 |
| Mourning Dove          | Northern Flicker         | Red-winged Blackbird               |
| Anna's Hummingbird     | Pileated Woodpecker      | Brown-headed Cowbird               |
| Virginia Rail          | American Kestrel         | Brewer's Blackbird                 |
| American Coot          | Merlin                   | Orange-crowned Warbler             |
| Black Oystercatcher    | Peregrine Falcon         | Yellow-rumped Warbler              |
| Black-bellied Plover   | <b>Black Phoebe</b>      | Townsend's Warbler                 |
| Killdeer               | Northern Shrike          | <b>Total species observed: 129</b> |
| Black Turnstone        | Hutton's Vireo           | <b>Individual birds: 77,656</b>    |
| Dunlin                 | Steller's Jay            | (preliminary)                      |

**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.

Payment: (1) Pay online with a credit card or PayPal (see [skagitaudubon.org](http://skagitaudubon.org) for details) **OR** (2) Mail this form & your check 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 \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_

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