

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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May 2023

MAY MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM (no in-person attendance)

“Endangered Tufted Puffins of Smith Island”

Presented by: Amanda Colbert, The Salish Sea School

Tuesday, May 9th at 7:00 pm

Please join us for this month’s meeting which will be held on Zoom only (no in-person attendance). To attend the Zoom event, please register at: <https://bit.ly/SASMay923>. Preregistration for Zoom is required and please only one Zoom registrant per household. After you register, you will receive an email with the link to sign in at the time of the event. If you register and are unable to attend the Zoom event, please cancel your registration. Thank you. Questions? Contact programs@skagitaudubon.org.

Amanda Colbert is a Lead Educator, Naturalist, and Deckhand for The Salish Sea School. She is passionate about wildlife, their habitats, and preserving the natural resources that this unique bioregion provides.



At eight years old, the movie Free Willy was the gateway to Orcas for Amanda, and that passion eventually brought her here. Through obtaining her marine naturalist certification, she was introduced to this region’s avian world and found a fast love for birds! Over the last several years she’s become an avid birder and hobbyist photographer. Amanda is assisting The Salish Sea School in gathering survey and behavioral data on the endangered Tufted Puffins that breed at Smith Island in cooperation with WDFW and Oikonos.

UPCOMING PROGRAM: June 13th – Jared Strawderman will present a program on the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge located in Vancouver, WA

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 on Zoom only. Others will be hybrid meetings on Zoom and in-person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon. 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. 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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Field Trips: Colleen Shannon; fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org
Finance: Lisa Hopkins; finance@skagitaudubon.org
Hikes: To be Determined (see hiking section for temporary contact)
Membership: Pam Pritzl; membership@skagitaudubon.org
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Katherine O'Hara katherineoh@skagitaudubon.org
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Other Volunteers

Hospitality: Pamela Maxwell
Newsletter Distribution: John Edison

In response to the COVID-19 virus, some of our general meetings are being held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center with an option to attend via Zoom, while others will be available on Zoom only. Please check the monthly program description for meeting details. As with our hikes and field trips, only vaccinated, symptom-free individuals should attend meetings in person. Please visit our website: www.skagitaudubon.org for updates.

HIKING

Skagit Audubon is pleased to offer scheduled hikes. Please visit our website: www.skagitaudubon.org/activities/hikes for full details on the hikes. All hikers must have a current signed liability release form (available on the website) on file prior to participating in any Skagit Audubon hike. Please be prepared to follow current COVID pandemic safety protocols and all hikers must be fully vaccinated. Questions? Contact Tom Ozretich, tom.ozretich@gmail.com; 360.424.8466 *Means Wash. State Discover Pass required.



May 3: Thunder Creek
May 10: Joan Melcher's Memorial (2-5 pm) – see website for details
May 17: Fort Ebey State Park* and/or The Kettles
May 24: Lost Lake Trail* (Discover Pass required to park at Larabee State Park)
May 31: Skagit River Gorge
June 8: Orcas Island*/** (*Discover Pass required to park at Moran State Park plus **advance Wash. State Ferry reservation required for your vehicle)

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.



May 15-19 about 30 Skagit Audubon members will be on a field trip to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in SE Oregon. We will return with stories and photos to share.

May 27 Northern State Recreation Area (NSRA)/Rasar State Park Highway 20

Time: 8 am – 3 pm

Trip Leader: Allison Warner; allisivy@gmail.com; 425.344.7829

This trip also includes an option to visit Howard Miller Steelhead Park. This trip will focus on birds to be found in two different sites as you move up elevation in the Skagit watershed along Highway 20 with varied habitats including riparian, old growth, and scrub-shrub, as well as see the swallows that nest at Northern State. We'll look for passerines, woodpeckers, flycatchers, hummingbirds, hawks, and Vaux's swifts and mergansers on the Skagit River. We'll spend approx. 3 hrs. at NSRA; then visit the wetlands at the intersection of Helmick Rd and Highway 20, then head east to Rasar SP, where we can eat lunch and do a loop through old growth forest and riparian areas with a view of the river. Dress for variable weather, bring your lunch, binoculars, spotting scopes (if available) for Rasar SP, and Discover Pass. Carpooling encouraged and pre-registration required. Please contact trip Leader Allison Warner; 425-344-7829; allisivy@gmail.com for more information. Meet at 8AM at NSRA parking area.

Pre-registration required and please include your phone number in the comments section. Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c094ba4af28a4f4c16-may27northern>

CONSERVATION – by Tim Manns

Skagit County Shoreline Master Program

In compliance with the Shoreline Management Act, Skagit County has updated its 1970s Shoreline Master Program (SMP) describing how it will protect the county's fresh and saltwater shorelines. The revised plan must meet the Department of Ecology's (DOE) approval. Through May 18th, DOE is accepting public comment on the draft SMP revision. You can read the draft and find instructions on commenting here: [Skagit Hamilton Lyman Coalition - Washington State Department of Ecology](#). Though the county has signaled its intention to eventually address the effects of climate change in this plan, the present draft does not. Skagit Audubon has been coordinating with Audubon Washington (the state office) and several other conservation organizations urging the county to quickly proceed to amending the SMP to take account of sea level rise, changing flood regimes in the Skagit, Samish, and other watersheds, and to be more protective of shoreline ecological functions. If you would like suggested points to make in commenting to DOE, contact conservation@skagitaudubon.org.

North Cascades Elk Herd

Elk ranged the Skagit Valley for thousands of years before Euro-American settlers extirpated them by over-hunting. The North Cascades Elk Herd grew from animals moved from Yellowstone National Park, Mount Saint Helens, and other areas. Today the herd numbers between one and two thousand.

In early April, the Fish & Wildlife Commission, which oversees the Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), held its regular meeting in Anacortes. On April 7th WDFW staff updated the Commission on the status of the North Cascades Elk Herd and issues related to the presence of elk in the Skagit Valley. WDFW co-manages this herd with Point Elliott Treaty Tribes to ensure a viable population and meet treaty obligations. Before the staff presentation members of the public could present brief testimony to the Commission on any relevant wildlife topic. The majority who spoke addressed the elk situation. A vocal minority of valley residents have long been extremely critical of WDFW for what they see as a failure to control these wild animals with resulting economic injury to farmers, collisions on State Route 20, grazing of school play fields, and damage to gardens. County Commissioner Ron Wesen, a dairyman, questions why WDFW does not take the same responsibility for elk that his extended family does for their dairy cows. The most extreme critics demand that elk be entirely removed from the valley bottom, an important part of their natural range since time out of mind.

Skagit Audubon presented comments to the Commission supporting the continued presence of elk in the Skagit Valley, as did most speakers. WDFW has gone to great lengths to compensate legitimate claims of economic loss, provide free fencing to protect crops, arrange for safely removing problem or diseased elk, etc. You can read about WDFW's perspective at:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/north-cascade-elk>. Why do elk matter to Skagit Audubon?

Our organization's purpose is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Elk belong in the Skagit Valley. People who live in elk habitat but insist that elk stay off their property as if wild animals were trespassers are perhaps living in the wrong place. Fortunately, there are Skagit Valley residents who welcome wildlife, including elk, and who actively restore and protect habitat and ecological corridors for them from the foothills to the river. Elk and people have long co-existed quite well in many parts of the U.S. and can do so in the Skagit Valley too.

For more information about conservation issues Skagit Audubon is following, see Conservation Notes on the Skagit Audubon website ([Skagit Audubon Society - Home](#)) under the Conservation tab.

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

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

Eurasian wigeon (59-mixed w/50 American wigeon), SF, 3/22 (TM)

GREBES

Red-necked grebes, WA Park, 4/5 (BH/JH)

PIGEONS, DOVES

Band-tailed pigeon (1) Stanwood area, 4/2 (MS/JS)

CRANES

Sandhill crane (1) Pt. Susan Bay, 3/30 (JOS)

SHOREBIRDS

Black oystercatcher (10) Guemes Trail, 4/6 (BH/JH)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Rufous hummingbird (2) EFI, daily since 3/26 (AS/RK)

OWLS

Great Horned owl (1), CISP, 4/4 (MS/JS)

KINGFISHERS

Belted Kingfisher (1) SHIP, 4/8 (PMNT)

SHRIKES

Loggerhead shrike (1) Pt. Susan Bay, 3/30 (JOS)

CORVIDS

California scrub-jay (1) 3/17 & 4/2, MVLH (TM), (2) BUR, 4/1 (CKG)

NUTHATCHES

Red-breasted nuthatch (2) Stanwood area., daily (MS/JS)

WRENS

Bewick's wren (2) Stanwood area, daily (MS/JS)

THRUSHES

Mountain bluebird (1) NSRA, 4/6 (JOS)

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped warbler (1) MVLH, 3/21 (TM)

(SHIP) Ship Harbor; **(SF)** Samish Flats; **(EFI)** East Fidalgo Island; **(CISP)** Camano Island State Park; **(MVLH)** Mount Vernon Lincoln Hill; **(PMNT)** Purple Martin nest box team; **(BUR)** Burlington; **(JS)** Jeff Sinker; **(MS)** Mary Sinker; **(JOS)** Jeff Osmundson; **(BH/JH)** Bob and Judy Higgins; **(TM)** Tim Manns; **(CKG)** Chris & Kym Gutierrez; **(AS)** Ann Skinner; **(RK)** Randy King



Photo: Bewick's Wren with nesting material by Mary Sinker



THE PURPLE MARTINS RETURNING TO SHIP HARBOR IN ANACORTES

thank the dedicated team of Skagit Audubon volunteers who recently cleaned and repaired the nest boxes located at Ship Harbor, adjacent to the holding area, at the Anacortes Washington State Ferry Terminal. Led by project coordinator Don Jonasson on a cold and windy day, team members took each box down, cleaned and checked for signs of possible "squatters" (i.e., starlings, house sparrows) and dead birds from the previous season. After each box was cleaned out, starter nesting material was added, and the box put back up. One box that disappeared over the winter was replaced with a new one.

Purple Martins are North America's largest swallow, and they take communal nesting to new heights. They are known for their speed and agility in flight, diving from the sky at high speeds with their wings tucked when approaching their housing. In the West, Purple Martins

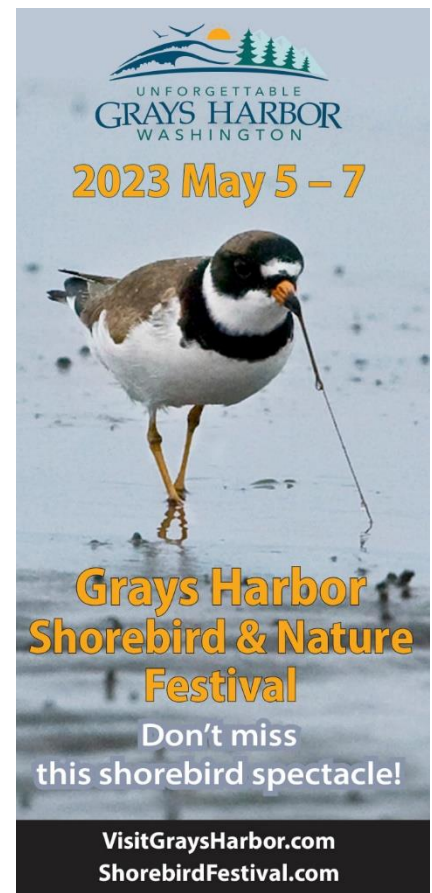
can be harder to find because they nest in woodpecker holes; however, they can be attracted to boxes if they are located in wide open spaces near water. These aerial acrobats hunt insects at higher elevations than other swallows. They migrate in large flocks to and from South America – be sure to look for them over the summer at Ship Harbor.

Team Members: Lisa Hopkins, Colleen Shannon, Charles Talman, Carol Farnsworth, John Farnsworth, Bernard Selting, Mary Selting, Stan Kostka, Lynn Schmitt, Carla Helm, Bruce Fithian, Ann Skinner, Don Jonasson.

Photo: Don Jonasson and Carla Helm by Ann Skinner

UPCOMING BOARD ELECTIONS ON JUNE 13th

Board elections will be held during our annual meeting on Tuesday, June 13th. The voting process and final slate of candidates will be communicated in a separate email in mid-May. The format of the annual meeting (Zoom only or hybrid meeting) is yet to be determined. Please save the date and plan to join your fellow chapter members in our annual meeting on June 13th.



FROM WASHINGTON STATE AUDUBON: Wenas Campout June 2-5 You are invited to a celebration of birds, bats, butterflies, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington. Each year, Audubon chapters and their friends gather for a few days of camping, birding, and exploring the Wenas Wildlife Area near Ellensburg, WA. In 2023, the campout will be held the first weekend in June, avoiding the crowds of Memorial Day.

The casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, wildflower walks, field sketching, and evening campfire presentations. Come for the weekend or a single day. There is no charge to attend, and no registration is required. Donations are accepted for organizing costs, including sanitation service. Information on dispersed camping, activities, and what to expect are on the website, wenasaudubon.org, or [follow the group on Facebook](#) for current information. (This event is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society)

FROM NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON AUDUBON: Leavenworth Bird Festival

North Central Washington Audubon Society invites you to join us and Wenatchee River Institute for the 21st annual Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest from May 18th-21st, 2023! Highlights of this year's event include:

- May 18: Field trips to Foster Creek, Swakane Canyon and Nason Ridge Community Forest
- May 19: Field trips to Chelan Coulees, Fish Lake and Badger Mountain, workshops on raptors, photography and hummingbirds, and a Bird Games and Trivia gathering with beverages.
- May 20: Birding field trips to Spiva Butte, Cashmere Canyons, Douglas Creek and also trips focusing on dippers, geology, and wildflowers. Saturday includes Family Day from 10am-2pm, an afternoon Social, and a BBQ on the WRI lawn.
- Saturday evening's Keynote Address will be given by John Marzluff, PhD and Professor in the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences within the College of the Environment at the University of Washington. Dr. Marzluff is the award-winning author of several books including *Gifts of the Crow*, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens* and *Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife*.
- May 21st: Field trips to #2 Canyon, Mountain Home, and Dan Stephens famous all-day trip to the Douglas County coulees.

Registration for all events will open on April 11th. All current information and details can be found at <https://wenatcheeriverinstitute.org/education-programs/community-programs/bird-fest.html>. (Not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society)

FROM THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY – GLOBAL BIG DAY – MAY 13th! Be a part of birding's biggest team! [Global Big Day](#) is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are in the world on May 13th, you can help celebrate [World Migratory Bird Day](#), and share the birds you find with eBird. Last year, Global Big Day brought birders together virtually from more countries than ever before. More than 51,000 people from 201 countries submitted 132,000 checklists with eBird, setting [new world records](#) for a single day of birding. For more information please visit: www.ebird.org/globalbigday (not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon Society)

**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 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)

I want to be involved in (check all that apply): Education ____ Conservation ____ Field Trips ____ Hiking ____ Other ____

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