

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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NOVEMBER MEETING – PRESENTED IN PERSON ONLY

"Skagit Valley's Winter Swans and Snow Geese"

Presented by: Martha Jordan

Tuesday, Nov. 14th at 7:00 pm

**7:00 pm Meeting
6:30-7:00 pm Social**

Please join us at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 10441 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon, for a program on the winter swans and snow geese that visit the Skagit Valley.

Martha Jordan, director of the Northwest Swan Conservation Association, will be speaking on Skagit's winter swans and snow geese. This session is the second in our series highlighting local bird ecology this year and will help maximize your appreciation of these winter guests to the Samish and Skagit flats. Photo: Snow Geese on Fir Island by Mary Sinker



Call for 2023 Bird Photos!

The December Holiday Photo Program will be held in person at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center on Dec. 12, 2023 at 7:00 pm and Neil O'Hara will be the master of ceremonies. This is not a competition—it's more of a celebration of the birds in our lives. Please submit no more than 5 photos per person. Minimum size = 500kb Maximum size = 3mb (1-2mb preferred) Sorry, we are unable to accept videos.

Important note: A description is required. Please tell us about your subject, and where/when it was taken in 25 to 50 words. **Submission deadline: Nov. 20, 2023** Send to: photoprogram2023@gmail.com

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 hikes and field trips, only vaccinated, symptom-free individuals should attend meetings in person. Please visit our website: 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. 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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Other Volunteers

Newsletter Distribution: John Edison

Please join the Board of Directors in welcoming Allison Warner who has volunteered to serve as Secretary for the current term ending June 30, 2024. Thank you Don Jonasson for your many years of service as Secretary, for assisting with the transition for Allison and continuing to serve as a Director At-Large.

Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count 2023

The 2023 Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count (CBC) organized by Skagit Audubon will take place Saturday, December 30th.

The fifteen-mile diameter count circle is one of nearly 2,500 where volunteers will document the species and numbers of birds present late this year. Because the CBC is such a long-running project its data make an important contribution to avian science. Rather than a birding field trip, the CBC is an effort to collect the most complete and accurate data possible on the birds within the count circle. We particularly need the help of experienced birders. For information about participating in this all-day, rain or shine survey birders should contact Tim Manns (conservation@skagitaudubon.org or 360.333.8985). Photo: Steller's Jay by Mary Sinker



FROM AUDUBON ALASKA – Action Alerts for the Arctic

The Biden Administration and the Dept. of the Interior are moving forward to address climate change in the Arctic and to strengthen conservation protections in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the National Petroleum Reserve-NPR(A)-Western Arctic. Please visit the links below for more information and how to take action:

Audubon Alaska's summary and take action:

<https://ak.audubon.org/news/whats-going-on-in-the-arctic>

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement - comment period extended to Nov. 7, 2023:

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2015144/510>

Proposed Conservation Rule for the Western Arctic NPR-A:
comment period ends Nov. 17, 2023:

<https://www.regulations.gov/document/BLM-2023-0006-0001>

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TREASURER by Neil O'Hara

The fourth quarter is traditionally the season when many people focus on charitable donations to their favorite causes. I hope you will consider Skagit Audubon among those causes. Some members have already made donations this fiscal year and the board is most grateful for their generosity. We rely on donations to cover almost half our operating expenses (dues and funding from National Audubon make up the balance). Your invaluable support enables us to continue community education and outreach.

Our website makes it easy to support Skagit Audubon using a Donate button on the Home page (also on the Join Us page). This links to PayPal but no account is needed-any credit card will do. If online payments make you uncomfortable in any way, we are happy to take checks by mail. About 22% of members now pay their dues online through PayPal as recurring payments. I would like to ask those members not to forget a possible donation to SAS because donations are not on autopay.

Additional thanks to donors who pledged to The Big Sit on Oct. 7th which raised over \$2,500 for our environmental studies scholarship program with Skagit Valley Community College. Such robust support may enable the board to consider awarding a third scholarship this year, as it did last year.

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

Snow Goose (1-100+) FS, 10/4 (JOS),
SW HWY 20/Best Rd. (AS)
Harlequin Duck (4) WP, 9/17 (NOH)
Cinnamon Teal (2) CD, 10/1 (NOH)
Northern Shoveler (2) CD, 10/1 (NOH)

JAEGERS, ALCIDS

Marbled Murrelet (5) WP, 9/17 (NOH)

GULLS, TERNS

Heermann's Gull (10) WP, 9/17 (NOH)

CORMORANTS, PELICANS, HERONS

Great Egret (1) PB, 10/4 (CG) photo verified

RAPTORS/VULTURES

Northern Harrier (1) CD, 10/1 (NOH)
Cooper's Hawk (1) EFI, 10/10 (RW)

OWLS

Great-horned Owl (2) EFI, 10/4 (RW)
Barred Owl (1) EFI, 9/27 (RW); RS, 10/7 (JOS)
(2) SA, 10/6 (MS/JS)

NUTHATCHES & CREEPERS

White-breasted Nuthatch (1) CS, 9/19 (JH)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker (1) SA, 10/8 (MS)
Pileated Woodpecker (1) EFI, 9/16 (RW)
Downy Woodpecker (1) CL, 9/29 (NOH)
Hairy Woodpecker (1) CL, 9/29 (NOH)

CHICKADEES

Chestnut-backed Chickadee (2) EFI, daily (AS)
Black-capped Chickadee (3-4) EFI, daily (AS)

BUSHTITS, KINGLETS

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (2) CL, 9/29 (NOH)
Golden-crowned Kinglet (6) CL, 9/29 (NOH)

NUTHATCHES

Brown Creeper (1) EFI, 9/16 (RW); CL, 9/29 (NOH)

WRENS

Pacific Wren (2) SA, 10/7 (MS)
Bewick's Wren (1) SA, 10/7 (MS)

THRUSHES

Varied Thrush (1+) EFI, 10/9 (RW); SA, 10/7 (MS)

FINCHES, SPARROWS

Spotted Towhee (2) EFI, daily (AS)
Red Crossbill (1) RS, 10/7 (JOS)
Fox Sparrow (1) CL, 9/29 (NOH)
White-throated Sparrow (1) CI, 9/30-10/11 (PP)

WARBLERS

Black-throated Grey Warbler (1) EFI, 9/16 (RW)
Townsend's Warbler (2) EFI, 9/26 (RW)

(BLCA) Barney Lake Conservation Area; **(BUR)** Burlington; **(CI)** Camano Island; **(CISP)** Camano Island State Park; **(CS)** Cap Sante; **(CD)** Channel Drive; **(CL)** Cranberry Lake; **(EFI)** East Fidalgo Island; **(FS)** Fisher Slough; **(GV)** Guemes Valley; **(MV)** Mount Vernon; **(PB)** Padilla Bay; **(PTF)** Pilchuck Tree Farm; **(RS)** Rosario Strait; **(SF)** Samish Flats **(SHIP)** Ship Harbor; **(SA)** Stanwood Area; **(WP)** Washington Park; **(JS)** Jeff Sinker; **(MS)** Mary Sinker; **(AS)** Ann Skinner; **(RW)** Regan Weeks; **(DH)** Diana Hoffman; **(JH)** Joe Halton **(NOH)** Neil O'Hara; **(JOS)** Jeff Osmundson; **(CG)** Carolyn Gastellum **(PP)** Pam Pritzl

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 **NOTE: *means WA State Discover Pass required**



- Nov. 1:** Little Cranberry Lake
- Nov. 8:** The Tursi Trail*
- Nov. 15:** Lost Lake*
- Nov. 22:** Little Mountain
- Nov. 29:** East Shore Lake Whatcom and/or The Chanterelle Trail

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.



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.

Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023 - Clayton Beach Trail, Larabee State Park - 8:30 am-Noon (approx.)

Trip Leader: Tim Manns (360.333.8985)

The recently completed new trail to Clayton Beach provides for safe crossing over the BNSF tracks. The trail traverses mixed forest for 0.6 miles to reach this 0.25-mile-long beach on Samish Bay. We should hear and/or see typical forest species and, from the beach, a good variety of wintering sea birds and ducks. The trail has 3 sets of stairs and is mostly gravel from the parking lot to the railroad crossing with a few steep bits. From the tracks to the beach the trail has only been roughed out but is readily passable. Round trip if the tide permits walking the full length of the beach: 1.7 miles.

Directions: Follow Chuckanut Drive (SR 11) to the Lost Lake Parking Lot in Larabee State Park (**Discover Pass required**). The lot is just off the road on the east side of Chuckanut Drive. Bring binoculars and scope if you have one. Dress for the weather and potential wind at the beach. Wear shoes or boots suitable for hiking. Please register using this SignUp Genius Link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-45321443-birding>

Sunday, Nov. 26, 2023 – Barnum Point (Camano Island) – 9 am until 12 noon

Trip Leaders: Colleen Shannon (fieldtrips@skagitaudubon.org) and Pam Pritzl

Meet at the parking area of Barnum Point Park at 9 am. There is limited parking there so carpool if you can. We will limit the trip to 12 people due to the parking. Be ready to see any number of seabirds who have returned to the Salish Sea for the winter. We have been known to see up to 600 Barrow's Goldeneyes there. We will hike about a half mile through fir forests to arrive at Triangle Cove, so we will also be able to hear and view forest species. If you haven't been to Barnum Point you are in for a real treat. There are a variety of habitats in the park. It is not an accessible area. Dress for the weather, including windy conditions or rain. Please sign up using this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094BA4AF28A4F4C16-45421121-barnum>

CONSERVATION – by Tim Manns

Audubon Advocacy Days: Skagit Audubon cannot endorse political candidates but does advocate for legislation related to its wildlife protection mission. This year Audubon Washington is once again organizing Advocacy Days (December 4 – 8) to facilitate urging our state legislators to support priority conservation bills. There will be information forthcoming about priorities around climate resilience, restoring and protecting habitat, and more. Audubon Washington will provide on-line training for the brief, virtual (Zoom) meetings we will have with elected representatives for our home districts. Read more and register today at: [Join Audubon Washington's Advocacy Days | Audubon Washington](#). Our representatives want to hear from us before and during the state legislative session which begins January 8th.

Restoring the North Cascades Grizzly Bear: November 13th is the deadline for written comments to the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the plan to restore this missing species to the North Cascades. Read the plan and comment at [ParkPlanning - Draft Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan / Environmental Impact Statement, North Cascades Ecosystem \(nps.gov\)](#). Trapping and hunting wiped out grizzlies, which had been common for thousands of years in the North Cascades. In 1991 the North Cascades Ecosystem was designated one of six recovery zones for this animal listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1975. The on again, off again process of restoring this keystone species is finally inching forward again. Skagit Audubon is a member of the Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear coalition, whose website offers more background (<https://www.northcascadesgrizzly.org/>).

Skagit County Shoreline Master Program (SMP): The Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) is reviewing Skagit County's first comprehensive update since 1976 of this required plan for managing shoreline development and protection. Counties are not yet required to address sea level rise in their SMPs, but it would seem commonsensical to do so in one of the counties most vulnerable to this consequence of climate change. In the last few years, a coalition of groups including Audubon Washington and Skagit Audubon have repeatedly made this point to the Skagit Board of County Commissioners. While the commissioners approved forwarding the SMP update to the Department of Ecology without addressing climate change or sea level rise, there was a commitment that the county would apply for a readily available DOE grant to amend the SMP to address these topics soon. It comes, then, as a great disappointment that the county planning department pulled the completed application, and the SMP will likely not address sea level rise until a new state law requires it to do so in eight years at the next mandated update. As is so often the case, the county has been opaque about the reasons for this reversal in the face of repeated, detailed, and expert input from the coalition organizations and their memberships. Other counties around Puget Sound have without fuss or resistance voluntarily incorporated sea level rise into their SMPs years ago.

For more information on conservation issues, please see Conservation Notes on the Skagit Audubon website which can be found here: <https://skagitaudubon.org/conservation/notes>

THE BIG SIT – A BIG SUCCESS! by Colleen Shannon

Skagit Audubon had a very successful Big Sit on Sat., Oct. 7th at Rosario Head in Deception Pass State Park. The weather smiled on us, and 26 Skagit Audubon members and friends came out for the birds and our scholarship program. We counted 45 species at Rosario and one home count yielded another 10 species for a total of 55 species. Our donations should be just over \$2,000 for the day which means we will offer two scholarships to Environmental Education students at Skagit Valley Community College. Thank you to all who came out and volunteered and to all those who pledged to support us. A good time was had by all!

MEET THE EVENING GROSBEAK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) – by Jeff Sinker

Colorful, chunky, and unpredictable when and where they will show up at backyard feeders during the winter, Evening Grosbeaks spend their summers in coniferous forests of the western US and northern North America. They are so fond of the spruce budworm, a serious forest pest, that the presence of these birds feeding voraciously in a given area can be an early alert that a budworm outbreak is beginning. When they aren't eating budworms, caterpillars, aphids, seeds of many trees and a wide variety of fruits make up the rest of their diet. Their large bills easily crack open big tough seeds, and Pine Siskins or Common Redpolls may travel with Evening Grosbeaks to eat the scraps left behind.



The nest of an Evening Grosbeak is built entirely by the female and located high up in trees such as Norway spruce, white pine, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and similar species. She will lay 2-5 eggs and incubate them for 12-14 days. Both parents care for the nestlings (13-14 days) and a successful pair can raise 1-2 broods per season. Breeding pairs are monogamous and will tolerate other birds nearby but do not defend their feeding territories during breeding season.

According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, populations of Evening Grosbeaks declined by an estimated 74% between 1966-2019 and Partners in Flight includes them on their Yellow Watch List. Because they don't routinely show up in the same places, it is difficult to make large-scale surveys of their numbers. Climate change is likely to negatively affect these birds in some ranges if balsam fir recedes from New England. Aerial spraying by the US and Canada reduces the numbers of forest insects and spruce budworms plus logging and avian-related disease outbreaks also contribute to population declines.

Photo credit: Evening Grosbeak by Mary Sinker

Learn more at: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Evening_Grosbeak/

FROM OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK – Action Alert – Elwha River

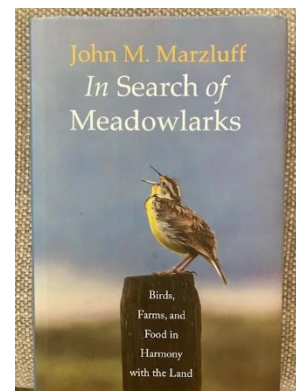
Olympic National Park is seeking public input on an environmental assessment that proposes to construct 12 engineered log jams - structures designed to mimic natural river dynamics - to mitigate impacts from the construction of the U.S. 101 Elwha River Bridge. Earlier this year, the Washington State Department of Transportation began construction to replace the almost 100-year-old bridge.

Public comments will be accepted from October 22, 2023-November 22, 2023. For more information on the project and how to submit a public comment, please visit:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=116039>

Skagit Audubon Reads, by Colleen Shannon

This year your Program Committee is initiating a new program, Skagit Audubon Reads. The book chosen for our inaugural year is [In Search of Meadowlarks](#) by John Marzluff. We encourage you to read it and plan to have a discussion centered around the book prior to Dr. Marzluff's program for Skagit Audubon next February. We are also planning to host a field trip to one of the farms featured in the book. Please join us in reading Dr. Marzluff's exciting book about the impact of agriculture on birds and other creatures. Might be a good Christmas or Hannukah present!



**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)