

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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Volume 40, No. 1 www.skagitaudubon.org January 2021

JANUARY MEETING – PRESENTED ON ZOOM

Bring Back the Pollinators
Presented by Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
Tuesday, January 12, 7:00 PM

Xerces Society Ambassadors, Katie Hefner and Rebekah Gaxiola, will present this fascinating introduction to native bees, their natural history, and tips on how you can provide what they need in small spaces. The information will focus on the four principles of Xerces *Bring Back the Pollinators* campaign: grow flowers, provide nest sites, avoid pesticides, and share the word.



Rebekah hails from Oregon and is currently a PhD student at WSU Vancouver studying insect pollinator community

response to disturbance. She grew up down the road from the Portland Audubon Society and spent a lot of time there, which influenced her to become a biologist.

Katie has been a Xerces Volunteer for almost 2 years. She is passionate about both invertebrates and education. She is happy to have opportunities from Xerces to put the two together.

Please register for this event at: http://bit.ly/januarysas.

Preregistration is required and is limited to 100 attendees. Please only one registrant per household. After you register you will receive an email with the link to sign in at the time of the event. Questions? Please contact Carla Helm at carlajhelm@comcast.net.

If you missed the excellent **December 2020 Member Photo Program**, or want to watch it again, a recording is now available for viewing at the following link: youtu.be/H2hZT2p1P84

Due to the continuing emergency response to the COVID-19 virus, our in-person member meetings, field trips and hikes, and most other activities have been cancelled until further notice. This includes the offer of personal field trips for future donations to Skagit Audubon Society of \$100 or more. Please visit our website for updates.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - Greetings members and friends of Skagit Audubon,

By the time you read this message our winter solstice will have passed. The days are starting to get longer ever so slowly. At about the same pace we are finally seeing the vaccine for Covid arriving and being provided to those most in need. Your Board of Directors is also looking ahead to the New Year and the challenge of filling board positions.

We are currently in immediate need of a secretary and the Nominating Committee would gladly accept suggestions. If you, or someone you know, might be interested in helping out as secretary, please contact any board member.

We will also have two open seats to fill, Vice President and President. Denny will be stepping down and off the board for a while. He has been a marvelous contributor to our programs but would like to work on special projects and enjoy his retirement a little more. I will also be at the end of my term in June. Typically I would transition to Past President and we would fill that slot with some new energy and ideas.

If you know of anyone that might be interested in a Board of Director position please contact any current member.

I really hope that you have noticed all the hard work and creative things that the Board has been involved in this year. The December slideshow was just the latest and best example of our group stepping up to offer opportunities for you, the membership. But it doesn't happen without help. We have committees (Hiking, Field Trips, Programs, Adult Education, Youth Education, and Conservation) that can always use help or fresh ideas. Special projects like The Big Sit, Christmas Bird Count, and others, always welcome helping hands.

You all have done a wonderful job this year keeping up with membership dues and contributions that help us keep our chapter moving forward. With your support we can transition into the new normal and get back to some of the things that we used to enjoy so much. Fingers crossed with the promise of a New Year. Until next month, stay safe, wear a mask and wash your hands.

What's the best time to go bird watching? When you can!

Jeff Osmundson, President

Birding with Congressman Rick Larsen

It's good news for birds and Skagit Audubon members that Congressman Rick Larsen (WA-02), who represents many Skagit members, is himself an enthusiastic birder. In 2018 and again this fall, the Congressman's community liaison contacted Skagit Audubon about doing some birding and sharing our chapter's views on bird-related issues. On December 14th, a few days after a similar outing with Pilchuck Audubon, Skagit board members Jeff Osmundson and Tim Manns spent an hour at Fir Island Farms/Hayton Reserve with Congressman Larsen, Jenn Rogers of his staff, and Kimberly Cauvel and Olive Hamlin from the *Skagit Valley Herald*. The tide was favorable for a good display of waterfowl, a distant peregrine having breakfast, flocks of dunlins zipping past, and more. The Congressman is a fairly new birder, eager to learn more and ready to take action in Washington, D.C. on behalf of birds. Notably, he is an early co-sponsor of the Migratory Bird Protection Act (H.R. 5552) which would embody in law the long-time interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The present administration has severely weakened the effectiveness of this act as a deterrent by establishing a rule that only deliberate harming of protected birds is illegal and by excluding harms that are foreseeable and avoidable but not deliberate. Kimberly Cauvel's December 15th *Skagit Valley Herald* article is at: https://www.goskagit.com/news/local_news/federal-battle-ahead-for-migratory-bird-protections/article_5b206b76-4127-5d7b-ae2b-28a19bdce2a6.html.

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Snowy Owls Featuring Paul Bannick



Skagit Audubon Society and North Cascades Institute are thrilled to be partnering together to welcome award-winning author and photographer Paul Bannick for a special class on the Snowy Owl. We hope you'll join us as Paul shares an intimate look into the life history of one of North America's most charismatic birds, the Snowy Owl!

Paul will combine his breathtaking images, first-hand accounts, video, sound, and science to help inspire conservation and education efforts as well as to help spread awareness about the threats facing these owls and what we can do to protect them. You will also be given a chance to ask Paul all of your burning owl questions after his presentation.

This program will take place on Tuesday, January 19th, at 7 pm. The cost is only \$5 and you can sign up at the following link: https://ncascades.org/signup/programs/classes.

Paul is proud to have recently published two new books: *Great Gray Owl: A Visual Natural History and Snowy Owl: A Visual Natural History*. Both books feature several dozens of never-before-published images, some of which capture behaviors rarely witnessed and perhaps never before photographed. The photos work with first-hand field accounts, which are illuminated by our most up-to-date understanding of these species. You can order copies of the books signed by Paul if you go to his website: http://paulbannick.com/shop.

"Hawk Watching in Western Washington", with Sue Cottrell

This ever-popular class taught by Sue Cottrell returns beginning Tuesday, January 12, 2021 via Zoom meeting. In this 5-session class, you will learn about the 15 species of diurnal raptors that can be found in western Washington, emphasizing field identification and the particularly fascinating element of winter behavior. It will also cover raptor terminology, migration, the daily and annual cycle, birding ethics, equipment and bird ID guides and apps.

Instructor Sue Cottrell has studied raptors and guided outdoor trips for over 30 years, and has a vast knowledge of local populations. For more information about the course, visit www.RaptorResearchNW.org. (This class is not affiliated with or sponsored by Skagit Audubon.)

FROM YOUR EDITOR - by Mary Sinker

The Christmas decorations are barely put away when my thoughts begin to turn towards once again getting out into the yard and plotting the next season's strategy for some vegetables and flowers. Our five-acre property already includes salmonberry, huckleberry and we have the constant battle to beat back invasive Himalayan blackberry. Birds and other wildlife enjoy the berries from all these shrubs but I want to add more manageable bird-friendly berry-producing shrubs in the garden.

With the help of resources from National Audubon, the Washington Native Plant Society and Seattle Audubon, I've identified some possible candidates: Highbush Cranberry, Western Serviceberry, Salal, Oregon Grape, Thimbleberry, Rugosa roses and Snowberry. All of these shrubs produce berries or fruits that attract birds.

As a gardener, I look forward to each new season with excitement and anticipation. As a birder, I am equally excited to improve the garden for birds and to see who is attracted to the new plantings. Are you perhaps thinking of adding bird-friendly shrubs or plants to your garden but might be uncertain where to start? Bird-friendly plants and shrubs are available for spaces large and small and you don't have to take on a commercial-size landscape project to benefit the birds in your yard. The birds in your yard will thank you and you may even attract new visitors! Resources: www.audubon.org; www.audubon.org;

CONSERVATION REPORT - by Tim Manns

Protecting the Skagit River's Headwaters: Skagit Audubon recently signed letters to Governor Inslee and British Columbia Premier Horgan from a coalition of U.S. and Canadian conservation and governmental groups urging permanent protection for the "Donut Hole". This is an area surrounded by B.C.'s Manning and Skagit Valley Provincial Parks where Imperial Metals Corporation owns rights to an allegedly large copper deposit. The company's request to begin mineral exploration has raised alarm among environmental groups in British Columbia and Washington State and among other entities with downstream interests, from the Swinomish, Upper Skagit, and Sauk-Suiattle Tribes to municipalities such as Mount Vernon and Anacortes which draw water from the river. There is a significant chance that toxic runoff from mining the Donut Hole would drain to the Skagit with dire effects on salmon, people, and any others dependent on the river. A coalition of groups in the U.S. and Canada is meeting biweekly to pursue permanent protection for the Donut Hole and, thereby, the Skagit River.

Washington State Legislature: The state legislative session will run from January 11th to April 25th. Audubon Washington staff and chapters statewide will pursue 3 priorities:

- 1. Protect conservation funding in the state operating and capital budgets
- 2.Pass a Clean Fuel Standard
- 3.Update the Growth Management Act to include climate change and environmental justice as planning elements

You may have heard Governor Inslee discussing the Clean Fuel Standard, which has gone before the legislature several times and may succeed in 2021. With transportation the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Washington, this bill would be a significant step in addressing climate change, a crisis for both birds and people. Read about Audubon's work in the legislature and get involved: https://wa.audubon.org/conservation/legislative-session-2020. Audubon is also part of the Environmental Priorities Coalition. Learn about the coalition's priority issues at www.wecprotects.org.

Protecting Heronries – A Disappointing Reversal: In late November, Skagit County's Board of Commissioners deliberated on the 2019 docket of proposed changes to the county's Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). This ordinance has long included attention to protecting great blue heronries, but vagueness makes the protection largely ineffective. The County Planning Commission, which lacks background in wildlife science and shows little sympathy for habitat protection, voted against staff recommended improvements to the ordinance that emphasized following Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife guidance. The Planning Commission even censured the one Commission member who voted differently and distributed a minority, pro-heronry protection opinion. Thank you to the many Skagit Audubon members and others who wrote the Board of County Commissioners urging them to reject the Planning Commission's recommendation and instead follow science and common sense and adopt what the planning staff advised. And thank you to Skagit Land Trust for initiating this project. Unfortunately, Commissioner Ron Wesen switched his vote between November and the final vote on December 21st, joining Commission Dahlstedt in rejecting the staff recommendation. Just before the vote, Commissioner Lisa Janicki said, "I would argue that ignoring the plight of the Great Blue Heron is not something I want to be remembered for."

In early December, Skagit Land Trust did the annual nest count in the March Point heronry, believed the first or second largest in the western U.S. The total: 706 nests. The fragility of such mega-colonies was brought home in 2017 when the adult herons suddenly abandoned their over 300 nests during the breeding season. If the March Point heronry suffers a similar fate, we'll remember December 21st, 2020, when Commissioners Dahlstedt and Wesen voted to do nothing.

For more about issues Skagit Audubon is tracking, go to "Conservation" on the Skagit Audubon website (www.skagitaudubon.org) and click on "Conservation Notes".

FIELD SIGHTINGS - by Pam Pritzl

This column reports submitted sightings. Any rare sightings should be accompanied by detailed written documentation and if possible a photograph. A second person to verify rare sightings is extremely helpful. Do not hesitate to call any observer to help document unusual sightings. Also do not hesitate to call if you need clarification on locations. **Please submit** your sightings to birdsightings@skagitaudubon.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

Brant 300 at SIPB on 11-22 (NOH)

Wood Duck 2 at SWAWS on 12-1 (GB)

Eurasian Wigeon 1 on Samish Flats on 12-16 (NOH)

Canvasback 1 at Dugualla Bay on 11-29 (NOH)

Redhead 1 at Heart Lake on 12-8 (GB)

Black Scoter 1 at SIPB on 12-10 & 12-17 (GB)

Long-tailed Duck 2 at

Swantown on 11-29 (NOH)

Common Goldeneye 5 at SIPB on 10-26 (GB) **early**

Red-breasted Merganser 1200 at SIPB on 11-17 (GB) high number

GREBES

Clark's Grebe 1 at SIPB on 12-10 (GB) RARE

RAILS and COOTS

Virginia Rail 2 on 11-21, 1 on 11-26, 1 on 12-5 & 1 on 12-14 at SWAWS (NOH)

PLOVERS

Black-bellied Plover 17 at Swantown on 11-29, 8 on Samish Flats on 12-12 & 6 on Samish Flats on 12-16 (NOH)

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES Long-billed Dowitcher 40 at SWAWS on 12-14 (NOH) **Wilson's Snipe** 4 at SWAWS on 12-5 (NOH)

ALCIDS

Ancient Murrelet 3 at SIPB on 12-13 (GB)

GULLS and TERNS Franklin's Cull 1 at FIFR

Franklin's Gull 1 at FIFR on 10-22 (GB)

LOONS

Yellow-billed Loon 1 at March Point on 11-8 (GB) **RARE**

HERONS and ALLIES

American Bittern 1 at Port Susan Bay TNC (restricted) (JO)

Great Egret 1 at Swinomish Channel, La Conner on 11-15 (AM); 1 at Francis Rd, Mt. Vernon on 12-4 (RY); 1 north of Fir Island on 12-11 (JH); 1 west of Mt. Vernon 12/12-16 (DR); 1 on Rekdal Rd, Camano Island on 12-17 (PP)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Bald Eagle 2 on 11-22, 14 on 11-28 & 3 on 12-16 on Samish Flats (NOH); 1 "dilute" plumage on dike viewed from West 90, Samish Flats on 12-10 (AW) Northern Harrier 6 on 11-22. 13 on 11-28, 11 on 12-11 & 4 on 12-16 on Samish Flats (NOH) Cooper's Hawk 2 at east Stanwood home throughout sighting period (JS/MS) Red-tailed Hawk 3 on 11-22, 4 on 11-28, 9 on 12-12 & 3 on 12-16 (NOH); 1 "Harlan's" on dike viewed from Samish Is. Rd on 12-10 (AW)

Rough-legged Hawk 3 at FIFR on 11-21; 4 on 11-22, 8 on 11-28 & 4 on 12-12 on Samish Flats, including 1 dark morph each day on Samish Flats (NOH); 1 juvenile dark morph at East 90 on 12-10 (AW)

OWLS

Great Horned Owl pair dueting at east Fidalgo home throughout sighting period (RW); 1 at SWAWS on 12-14 (NOH)
Northern Pygmy-Owl 1 in Bow yard on 10-22 (KR); 1 on Blanchard Mt on 12-4 (NOH)
Barred Owl 1 during week of 11-23 at Burlington home on 11-

Short-eared Owl 1 at Martin Rd on 11-21 (GB) RARE, upriver; 3 on 11-22, 6 on 11-28 & 6 on 12-12 on Samish Flats (NOH)

Northern Saw-whet Owl 1 heard at east Fidalgo home on 11-26 (RW)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker 2 at east Fidalgo home on 12-3 (RW) Northern Flicker 1 hybrid at east Fidalgo home on 10-31 (RW)

FALCONS

American Kestrel 3 on 11-28, 1 on 12-12 & 1 on 12-16 on Samish Flats (NOH); 1 male & 1 female on Sullivan Rd, Samish Flats on 12-10 (AW)

Merlin 1 at SWAWS on 12-5 (NOH); 1 at Leque Island/Eide Rd on 12-17 (PP)

Peregrine Falcon 1 on 11-26 & 1 on 12-14 at SWAWS (NOH); 1 adult on Church Rd, Samish Flats & 1 adult on T-Loop Rd on 12-10 (AW); 1 at Leque Island/Eide Rd on 12-18 (JO)

Field sightings cont'd on Pg. 6

Field sightings cont'd from Pg. 5

SHRIKES

Northern Shrike 1 at Leque Island/Eide Rd on 10-26 (PP); 1 at SWAWS on 11-26 (NOH)

CORVIDS

Canada Jay 3 at Casky Lake on 12-11 (GB)

California Scrub-Jay 1 during week of 11-23 at Burlington home (LE); 1 in Stanwood on 12-15 (JO)

BUSHTITS

Bushtit 50 on suet at east Fidalgo home on12-12 (RW)

THRUSHES

Townsend's Solitaire 1 at Martin Rd on 11-28 (GB)
Hermit Thrush 1 in Anacortes yard on 10-21 (JB); 1 at SWAWS on 11-21 (NOH); 2 at east Fidalgo home on 12-15 (RW)

Varied Thrush 2 at east Stanwood home on 12/10 & 12/12 (JS); 1 at SWAWS on 12-14 (NOH)

FINCHES and ALLIES Evening Grosbeak 5 near Lake Cavanaugh on 12-2 (GB) Red Crossbill 10 at east Fidalgo home on 11-7 (RW)

White-winged Crossbill 35 near Lake Cavanaugh on 12-2 (GB); 35 near Lake Cavanaugh on 12-4 (JO)

LONGSPURS and BUNTINGS

Snow Bunting 7 at FIFR on 10-24 (GB); 3 at Skyline on 11-13 (GB); 2 at Leque Island/Eide Rd on 12-13 & 12-17(PP)

SPARROWS and ALLIES
American Tree Sparrow 1 at
SWAWS on 12-12 (GB)
Swamp Sparrow 1 at Lindgren
Rd on 10-27 11-9 (GB)
White-throated Sparrow 1 at
Pressentin Park on 10-25 (GB);
1 during week of 11-23 at
Burlington home (LE)
Dark-eyed Junco 1 "slatecolored" on 10-21 at east
Fidalgo home on 10-21 (RW); 1
"leucistic" at Cap Sante home,
Anacortes from 10/22-25 (JH)

BLACKBIRDS and ORIOLES

Western Meadowlark 4 on Samish Flats on 11-28 (NOH) Rusty Blackbird 1 at the West 90, Samish Flats on 11-5 (GB)

WARBLERS

Northern Waterthrush 1 at SWAWS on 12-12 (GB) Orange-crowned Warbler 1 at March Point on 12-4 (GB)

MAMMALS

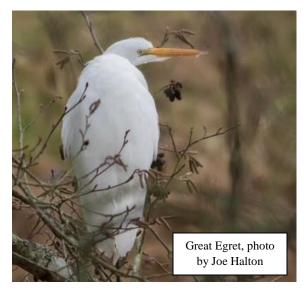
Beaver observing family of 3 near Burlington throughout sighting period (JKW)

Coyote heard often and occasionally seen at east Fidalgo home throughout sighting period Humpback Whale 1 off
Rosario Head on 12-16 (GB)
Red Fox observed in Cap Sante, Anacortes neighborhood throughout sighting period (JH)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (JB) Jane Brandt; (LE) Larry Edwards; (FIFR) Fir Island Farm Reserve aka Hayton Reserve; (JH) Joe Halton; (AM) Ann McFeely; (NOH) Neil O'Hara: (JO) Jeff Osmundson; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (DR) Dan Reese; (KR) Kerry Rye; (SIPB) Samish Island Public Beach; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SWAWS) Skagit Wildlife Area Wylie Slough; (AW) Andrea Warner; (RW) Regan Weeks; (JKW) J & K Wiggers; (RY) Roland Yerba

WDFW SWAN HOTLINE ACTIVATED

From now through the end of March, 2021 anyone observing or finding a sick, injured or dead Trumpeter or Tundra Swan should call the hotline number 24/7: 360.466.4345 ext. 266. Please be prepared to leave a short detailed message, including your name, phone number, location and condition of the swan(s). WDFW stresses the importance of now approaching or handling the swan(s).



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- 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 - Officers

President: Jeff Osmundson....president@skagitaudubon.org Vice President: Denny Quirk....denny@skagitaudubon.org

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Neil O'Hara....treasurer@skagitaudubon.org...781-290-9083

Immediate Past President: Vacant

Board of Directors - Committee Chairs and Representatives

Conservation: Tim Manns.....conservation@skagitaudubon.org.....360-333-8985

Education: Sheila Pera....skagiteducation2@gmail.com

Kim Nelson....kimn@skagitaudubon.org

Field Trips: Libby Mills....libbymills@gmail.com....360-757-4139

Finance: Phil Wright....phil@skagitaudubon.org

Hikes: Joan Melcher....jdmelcher@comcast.net....360-424-0407

Membership:Pam Pritzl....membership@skagitaudubon.orgPrograms:Carla Helm....programs@skagitaudubon.orgPublications:Mary Sinker....publications@skagitaudubon.org

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Representative: Jane Brandt....janeb@skagitaudubon.org

Representative: Katherine O'Hara.....katherineoh@skagitaudubon.org

Representative: Vacant

Other Volunteers

Bird Sightings: Pam Pritzl....birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org....360-387-7024

Hospitality: Pamelia Maxwell Newsletter Distribution: John Edison

Webmaster: Ron Pera....skagitaudubon@gmail.com

Open Board Position – Secretary

We are now recruiting for a new Secretary and if you could spare some volunteer time, Skagit Audubon would be grateful.

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in the Secretary position, please contact any Board member or President Jeff Osmundson at **president@skagitaudubon.org**.

SKAGIT AUDUBON SOCIETY PO BOX 1101 MOUNT VERNON, WA 98273

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

	Skagi	t Audu	bon Society Memb	ership Fo	orm			
Membership: _	\$20/one year	OR _	\$40/two years	***	New	OR _	Renewal	
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City/State/:								
ZIP: Phone:				postings, for notices about SAS business. You may revoke this consent at any time on written request to				
	nail:				the Secretary of SAS.			
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