



The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

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October Meeting and Program

Presented by Ginny Broadhurst from the Salish Sea Institute

Tuesday, Oct. 9th
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center
10441 Bayview Edison Road
Mt. Vernon, Washington

Bonaparte's Gull is in steep decline.

The mission of the Salish Sea Institute is to foster responsible stewardship of the Salish Sea, inspiring and informing its protection for the benefit of current and future generations. One important facet of the Institute is the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference. An assembly of scientists, First Nations and tribal government representatives, community and business leaders and many more share the latest scientific research, and plan future actions for protecting and restoring the Salish Sea ecosystem. Policies are developed to preserve the health of the Sea. For instance, 12 marine bird species have lost more than 60% of their population between 1979 and 2005, according to WWU's John Bower.



The Shannon Point Marine Center and Redfish School are also part of the Institute. Redfish is designed for people who want to lead the way in creating ecological sustainability *and social equity* in their communities. Ginny Broadhurst was the Executive Director of the Northwest Straits Commission for 10 years.

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FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Sat. Oct. 20th 10 AM-12 PM

Washington Native Plant Society

Salal Chapter, Mt. Vernon

More info: www.wnps.org/salal/

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 Flyer*, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. *The Flyer* is produced monthly from September through June. Printed copies are black-and-white and electronic copies are full color. *The Flyer* is available online at www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter.

Board of Directors

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Interim Secretary:	Jane Brandt..... janeb@skagitaudubon.org
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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED The Education Committee needs volunteers to help with a number of adult presentations coming up in the next several months. These Power Point presentations are scheduled at libraries and private organizations/clubs in the area. If you can help give part of a presentation (already written), that would be great; or, you can assist with the computer and help answer questions from the audience. If you can lend a hand, please contact Sheila at skagiteducation2@gmail.com. Thank you!

OCTOBER FIELDTRIPS, 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. **NOTE:** If you plan to join a field trip some place other than the described starting point, call or email the trip leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Trip plans may change.

Whatcom County Shores

Saturday, October 13

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

The field trip will visit Sandy Point, Birch Bay State Park, Semiahmoo and Blaine Harbor. Depending on how the time goes, we may make other stops. The stops will focus on water birds, and move along with the best tidal conditions we can get. We target all three scoters, three loon species, grebes, and Long-tailed Ducks, plus shorebirds, e.g. Sanderlings, Black Turnstones, and Dunlin. We can also use our gull ID skills, should we happen to see some groups. Bring binoculars, scopes, lunch, and wind and rain gear. If coming from south of Bellingham, meet and be ready to leave in carpools by 8:00 AM from the Chuckanut Park-and-Ride lot just south of exit 231 off I-5. There are no restrooms there, FYI. We'll join our leader Andrea Warner, at 8:45 AM 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.



Leader: Andrea Warner, warneraj@me.com, home phone **360.734.9881**, cell **360.224.9291**
Drivers will need a Discover Pass for parking at Birch Bay State Park.

South Fidalgo Island: Deception Pass State Park, Rosario Head and Lake Erie

Saturday, October 27

8:30 am to 12:00 Noon

The varied habitats near Deception Pass, from old growth forest to the open waters off Rosario Head, attract a variety of birdlife. Expect to see winter songbirds, waterfowl, gulls, and other seabirds. Past trips have yielded Brandt's, Pelagic, and Double-Crested Cormorants, Belted Kingfishers, several ducks and gull species, and more. We will drive to Lake Erie below Mt. Erie after the Deception Pass foray to look for the several species of ducks and waterfowl that we didn't see at Rosario. Discover Pass (parking permit) required. Meet at March Point Park and Ride at 8:30 am to carpool and be sure to dress for the weather. Leaders: Phil Wright, phil@skagitaudubon.org, **360.299.8212**

AUDUBON COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON MEETS OCT. 13th – This year's annual meeting, where all Washington's Audubon chapters gather, will be held at the Brightwater Environmental and Community Center in Woodinville, WA. It will be a great day of discussions and presentations. Please plan to attend. The Wash. State Conservation Committee's meeting the afternoon of Oct. 12th is also open to all Audubon members. For more information and agenda please visit: <http://wa.audubon.org/events/audubon-council-washington-1>.

OCTOBER HIKES by Joan Melcher

Safety comes first so hikes may be canceled or destinations changed due to weather conditions, forest fires and/or smoke, logging, construction or other unforeseen circumstances. A hike will be canceled if there are high wind warnings, flooding conditions, snowy or icy road conditions, or forecasts of continued heavy rain. All the hikes are on a Wednesday and for questions or additional information contact Joan Melcher at jdmelcher@comcast.net or **360.424.0407**. Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes and if

dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times. General safety note:

upon arrival at the 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. Additionally, carpools are arranged at the discretion of the drivers.



WILDERNESS HIKES: The information on the various wilderness hikes is too lengthy to print here. For information contact **Joan Melcher 360.424.0407** or at jdmelcher@comcast.net. ***Northwest Forest Pass (parking permit) or Senior Pass required.**

OCTOBER 3: WILDERNESS HIKE* Meet at 7:30 am at the Sedro-Woolley Food pavilion parking lot. See information above regarding wilderness hikes.

OCTOBER 10: THE PNT BETWEEN BAKER LAKE ROAD AND THE MT BAKER HOT SPRINGS AND/OR RAINBOW CREEK* This is a new hike for Skagit Audubon as of October 2018. It is a forest hike with streams and some mountain views on Forest Service road 1144 which has been converted to trail and is part of the route of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, the PNT. One can hike to the Mt Baker Hot Springs and/or down to Rainbow Creek. 8.2 miles if one does all the options, with approx. 900 ft elev gain. Meet at the Sedro-Woolley Food Pavilion parking lot by 7:30 am.

OCTOBER 17: NEWHALEM-AREA HIKES The deciduous trees in the Newhalem area should be in spectacular color. Enjoy hiking on trails in this area such as Ladder Creek Falls, Trail of the Cedars, the Rock Shelter Trail and the Lower Newhalem Creek Trail, and a multitude of trails in the Newhalem Creek Campground and North Cascades National Park Visitor Center areas. Small elevation gains. Meet at 7:30 am at the Sedro-Woolley Food pavilion parking lot.

OCTOBER 24: BAKER LAKE TRAIL FROM THE SOUTH* Hike to Maple Grove and Anderson Point, 8 miles round trip, 620 ft elev gain. Beautiful forest and views of Baker Lake with views of Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan if the weather is clear. Meet at 8 am on the east side of the Sedro-Woolley Food Pavilion parking lot. Two return times to trail head: 1:30 pm or 2:30 pm; car pool accordingly.

OCTOBER 31: NORTH CHUCKANUT MOUNTAIN Hike trails on the northwest side of Chuckanut Mountain. Two options: (1) Raptor Ridge, 11.3 miles, about an 1800 ft total elev gain. (2) Madrone Crest, 8.7 miles, about a 1600 ft total elev gain. Shorter hikes are available for both options. Meet at 9 a.m. at the North Chuckanut Parking lot located on the east side of Chuckanut Drive between the Old Samish Highway and California Street. This is about milepost 18.5. You may leave when your car-load has returned.

NOVEMBER 07: LITTLE CRANBERRY LAKE Do a hike around Little Cranberry Lake in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. 6.0 miles, 670 ft. total elev gain. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the trailhead located on "A" Ave between 37th and 41st Streets in Anacortes. You may leave when all in your vehicle return to the trailhead. Historically, all are back by 1 pm.

OCTOBER CONSERVATION REPORT by Tim Manns

Our Public Lands

Fifty years ago, at a time of political turmoil in the U.S. and other countries, during the Vietnam War, one bright day stands out as unusually important for the conservation of nature and wild places in the U.S. and in our state. On Oct. 2, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed one significant bill after another. 684,000 acres of public land managed by the U.S. Forest Service transferred that day to the National Park Service and were re-designated as North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan National Recreation Areas (parts of the first two in Skagit County). The same bill established the Pasayten Wilderness, re-designating over half a million acres of beautiful, wild country east of Ross Lake along the border with Canada, and expanded the Glacier Peak Wilderness, south of the North Cascades Highway.

That same day, President Johnson signed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act creating the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, "to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations." In Washington that system includes parts of the Skagit River and sections of its major tributaries: the Cascade, Sauk, and Suiattle Rivers and the more recently protected Illabot Creek in Skagit County.

Oct. 2, 1968, was also the signing date of the National Trails System Act, calling for establishing trails in both urban and rural areas, "to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation." This act immediately created two national scenic trails: the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail, which passes through very eastern Skagit County. The Pacific Northwest Trail, from Glacier National Park in Montana to the Pacific Coast in Olympic National Park and passing through our county, was designated the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail by Congress in 2009.

I hope you've visited Redwoods National Park in California, home to the world's tallest trees. President Johnson signed the bill adding that area to the National Park System on, yes, Oct. 2, 1968, in the centennial year of the Save the Redwoods League and at a moment when 90% of the ancient redwoods had been logged.

So, 2018 is a great year for conservation anniversaries and for some associated ironies too. The



most important act protecting birds in the U.S., the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which President Woodrow Wilson signed July 3rd of that year, under the present administration faces its most significant weakening ever (www.audubon.org/takeaction).

For many of us, the fact that Skagit County has a national park, several wilderness areas, nationally designated rivers and trails, not to mention fine state, county, and local parks, is a point a pride, a reason we live here. These are
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places we go for rejuvenation; these are the places we show to visiting friends and relatives. These are places we protect so that other species can survive. Yet, listen closely to what our top elected county officials and some of our state elected officials representing Skagit County say about public lands, particularly national public lands, the ones that belong to all Americans, and you would see they think differently. Imagine regarding designated wilderness areas and national parks as just so many foregone opportunities to log, mine, and otherwise generate private profits and revenues for local use. National public lands are the common heritage of all Americans. They bind us together. They belong equally to the child in Newark, New Jersey, and to a Skagit County Commissioner. There are those among us who hold that there should be no publicly owned land, and there are those who believe that county officials should have the final say in how national public lands are managed simply because they live closest to them. That does not honor the spirit behind the body of bipartisan legislation establishing and protecting our public lands now for many decades, in some cases more than a century. Earlier this year, citizens of Skagit County through persistence and public communication caused our County Commissioners to end a long-standing relationship with a Washington, D.C. lobbyist. He advocates for the legally unsupported notion of “county supremacy” over national public land (remember the Malheur armed occupation), for the dissolution of national monuments, and for many other actions long sought by people opposed to public lands and for privatization of the same. This November’s ballot gives us the opportunity to do something about this from the county level on up. Please be sure to vote. Present and future generations of people and wildlife are depending on us.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

- Oct. 3** – Skagit Audubon Hike – Wilderness Hike
- Oct. 10** – Skagit Audubon Hike – PNT Mt. Baker Area
- Oct. 11** – Skagit Audubon General Meeting and Program
- Oct. 13** – Skagit Audubon Birding Field Trip – Whatcom County Shores
- Oct. 13** – Audubon Council of Washington Meeting – Woodinville
- Oct. 17** – Skagit Audubon Hike – Newhalem Area
- Oct. 24** – Skagit Audubon Hike – Baker Lake Trail
- Oct. 27** – Skagit Audubon Birding Field Trip – South Fidalgo Island
- Oct. 31** – Skagit Audubon Hike – North Chuckanut Mountain

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

For members receiving a paper copy of *The Skagit Flyer*, the mailing label includes your membership expiration date in the upper right corner. If that date is highlighted in orange it is a reminder that your membership is about to or has expired. All other members will receive an email notice when their membership is about to expire. *The Skagit Flyer* is published monthly from Sept. through June. Unsolicited material for the next month’s *Flyer* should be sent to the editor by the third Sat. of the current month. We reserve the right to edit. For questions or problems about your *Skagit Flyer* subscription, contact membership chair:

Pam Pritzl membership@skagitaudubon.org

Skagit Audubon Field Notes 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

Greater White-fronted Goose 6 at Hayton Reserve on 9-8 (GB)

Wood Duck 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-22 (NOH); 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-23 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 9-2 (NOH)

Cinnamon Teal 8 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-22 (NOH); 15 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-23 (NOH); 5 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-28 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 9-2 (NOH)

Northern Shoveler 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-14 (NOH); 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-22 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-23 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-23 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 9-2 (NOH)

Northern Pintail 4 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH)

Green-winged Teal 5 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 9-2 (NOH)

Canvasback 2, then 1, at Hayton Reserve between 8-23 and 9-8 (GB)

Redhead 1 at Hayton Reserve 8-23 and 24 (GB)

Harlequin Duck 4 at Libbey Beach, Whidbey Island on 9-9 (NOH)

Hooded Merganser 1 on Ship Harbor Trail, Anacortes on 8-30 (NOH)

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS

Spruce Grouse 1 below Cutthroat Pass on 9-1 (GB)

Sooty Grouse 1 below Cutthroat Pass on 9-1 (GB)

GREBES

Pied-billed Grebe 1 at Skagit Game Range, Wylie Slough on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 1 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Game Range, Wylie Slough on 8-23 (NOH); 1 at Dugalla Bay on 9-9 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Game Range, Wylie Slough on 9-10 (AT)

Red-necked Grebe 10 at Libbey Beach, Whidbey Island on 9-9 (NOH)

Eared Grebe 1 at March Point on 8-23 (GB)

PIGEONS and DOVES

Band-tailed Pigeon up to a dozen at east Stanwood home daily in September (MS)

RAILS and COOTS

Virginia Rail 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Game Range, Wylie Slough on 8-22 (NOH); 3 at Skagit Game Range, Wylie Slough on 8-23 (NOH); 1 at Dugalla Bay on 9-9 (NOH)

PLOVERS

Black-bellied Plover 7 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 10 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH)

Pacific Golden-Plover 1 at Hayton Reserve on 8-19 (GB)

Semipalmated Plover 5 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 5 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH); 1 at Hayton Reserve on 9-8 (SAS)

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Field Sightings continued from Page 7
SANDPIPERS and ALLIES

Ruddy Turnstone 1 at Hayton Reserve on 8-23 (GB)

Red Knot 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-19 (GB); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-22 (NOH); 1 at Swantown, Whidbey Island on 9-9 (NOH)

Stilt Sandpiper 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-28 (NOH); 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-31 (GB); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-2 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-8 (SAS)

Sanderling 3 at Hayton Reserve on 8-31 (GB)

Baird's Sandpiper 5 at the West 90, Samish Flats on 8-17 (GB); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

Least Sandpiper 8 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-22 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

Pectoral Sandpiper 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-19 (GB); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-22 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH); 3 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-28 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-2 (NOH)

Wilson's Snipe 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-2 (NOH); 8 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-8 (SAS)

Spotted Sandpiper 1 at Dugualla Bay on 9-9 (NOH)

Solitary Sandpiper 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH); 1 at Hayton Reserve on 9-8 (GB)

Wilson's Phalarope 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-22 (NOH)

Red-necked Phalarope 3 at Hayton Reserve on 8-24 (GB)

JAEGERS

Parasitic Jaeger 1 off March Point on 9-8 (GB)

GULLS and TERNS

Heermann's Gull 8 at Libbey Beach, Whidbey Island on 9-9 (NOH)

LOONS

Red-throated Loon 1 at Swantown, Whidbey Island on 9-9 (NOH); 1 at Libbey Beach, Whidbey Island on 9-9 (NOH)

HERONS and ALLIES

Great Egret 1 near Samish Island bridge on 9-16 (LM)

VULTURES

Turkey Vulture 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

OSPREYS

Osprey 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH); 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

HAWKS, EAGLES and ALLIES

Bald Eagle 3 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH)

Northern Harrier 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-23 (NOH)

Sharp-shinned Hawk regular visitor almost daily during September at east Stanwood home (MS)

Cooper's Hawk 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-28 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-2 (NOH)

OWLS

Barn Owl 1 at east Stanwood home on 9-5 (MS)

WOODPECKERS

Lewis's Woodpecker 1 juvenile at Bay View home on 9-17 (LM)

Pileated Woodpecker 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH)

FALCONS

Peregrine Falcon 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-23 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

Field Sightings continued on Page 9

Field Sightings continued from Page 8

FLYCATCHERS

Black Phoebe 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

Eastern Kingbird 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Rasar State Park on 8-20 (GB); 4 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

VIREOS

Warbling Vireo 1 in Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-6 (JH); 1 in Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-10 (JH)

CORVIDS

California Scrub-Jay 1 in Mount Vernon yard on 9-7 (MT)

Clark's Nutcracker 4 near Cutthroat Pass on 9-1 (GB)

SWALLOWS

Bank Swallow 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

Cliff Swallow 2 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

CHICKADEES

Mountain Chickadee 6 near Cutthroat Pass on 9-1 (GB)

BUSHTITS

Bushtit 5 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH); 12 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH)

WRENS

Pacific Wren 4 on Victoria tract, Pilchuck tree farm on 9-13 (JS)

WAXWINGS

Cedar Waxwing flock eating mountain ash berries in Bow yard on 8-28 (KR)



Black-throated Gray Warbler, Joe Halton

PIPITS

American Pipit 12 flyover at Hayton Reserve on 9-8 (SAS)

SPARROWS and ALLIES

Lincoln's Sparrow many in Bay View area on 9-17 (LM)

Golden-crowned Sparrow 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 9-13 (JH)

BLACKBIRDS and ORIOLES

Yellow-headed Blackbird 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-24 (GB)

Bullock's Oriole 2 eating huckleberries in Bow yard on 8-28 (KR)

WARBLERS

Ovenbird

Northern Waterthrush 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough on 8-31 (GB)

Orange-crowned Warbler 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 9-1 (JH); 2 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 9-4 (JH); 2 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 9-9 (JH); 2 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 9-11 (JH)

Common Yellowthroat 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-14 (NOH); 1 at Hayton Reserve on 8-20 (NOH); 2 at Hayton Reserve on 8-22 (NOH); 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 9-8 (SAS)

Yellow Warbler 1 at Skagit Wildlife Area, Wylie Slough, on 8-23 (NOH); 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes home on 9-1 (JH); 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-9 (JH); 2 females at east Stanwood home on 9-9 (MS); 2 males at east Stanwood home on 9-13 (MS)

Black-throated Gray Warbler 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-4 (JH); 1 at Cap Sante home, Anacortes yard on 9-11 (JH)

Wilson's Warbler 3 on Guemes Channel Trail on 8-26 (NOH); 1 male in Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-1 (JH)

TANAGERS and ALLIES

Western Tanager 1 female at Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-10 (JH)

Black-headed Grosbeak 1 at Cap Sante, Anacortes yard on 9-11 (JH)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (JH) Joe Halton; (NOH) Neil O'Hara; (LM) Libby Mills; (KR) Kerry Rye; (JS) Jeff Sinker; (MS) Mary Sinker; (SAS) Skagit Audubon Society Field Trip; (AT) Alice Turner; (MT) Martha Thornburgh

PUGET SOUND SEABIRD SURVEY

It's not too late to join the teams of observers doing the Puget Sound Seabird Survey (www.seabirdsurvey.org), which starts Saturday, Oct. 6th. For a few hours the first Saturday of each month through April, participants will note the seabirds at one or more of 10 sites along Skagit County's shoreline. Over the years, this survey will document the status and trends of seabird populations and thereby help understand the environmental condition of the Salish Sea.

MIGRATION TOOLS FROM THE CORNELL LAB OF

ORNITHOLOGY – with Fall migration underway, the Cornell Lab has developed a migration forecast tool that is designed to help birders determine when migrating birds will be on the move: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/heres-how-to-use-the-new-migration-forecast-tools-from-birdcast/?utm_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm_campaign=2f41e51ecd-Cornell-Lab-eNews-2018-09-06&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-2f41e51ecd-283246213.

FROM YOUR EDITOR – Sometimes the best birding surprises are in your own backyard. Recently I was drawn outside in the early evening because some chickadees were visibly upset and a couple of song sparrows, who never harass anyone, were chirping in distress while hidden in some thick conifer bushes. After a few minutes of searching, I discovered the source of the alarms. A Northern Pygmy Owl had caught and killed a black-capped chickadee and was preparing to eat dinner.



Northern Pygmy Owl, Mary Sinker

The little owl has been here before. The habitat on our property consists of a salmon-spawning creek, mixed deciduous and conifer woods, mixed brush and berries, pasture, lawn and garden. Bird feeders hang from trees close to the house and it was here the little owl caught dinner. Size can be deceiving with these little guys because while songbirds, insects, small rodents and small mammals make up the majority of their diet, they have been known to attack much larger prey such as California Quail!

These owls actively hunt during the day and therefore rely more on vision rather than hearing. Notably they lack the asymmetrically placed ears as well as flattened facial discs around the eyes. Both of these traits are adaptations for better hearing when owls are hunting at night. Northern Pygmy Owls are cavity nesters but they do not dig their own cavities. Instead, they depend upon rotten snags or abandoned woodpecker holes, and we have quite a few of both on our property, so perhaps this little owl has raised a family somewhere close by.

Black-backed Woodpecker, by Thomas Bancroft

A persistent “*Kyik, Kyik, Kyik, Kyik, ...*” filled the ponderosa pine forest and muffled incessant begging of nestlings in a nearby dead snag. An adult Black-backed Woodpecker was agitated even though I was 200 feet down the road from the nest. A scouting party had found this nesting pair along the road in Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. Many people over the last several days had had a chance to add this enigmatic woodpecker to their list. I was stopping one last time on this June day to listen to these babies let their parents know that they were still hungry. Their calls seemed to stir something deep within me that filled me with strength for the five-hour drive back to Seattle.

Earlier this morning, I had brought four birders to see this elusive species. Black-backed Woodpeckers respond to forest fires, moving into recently burned areas where they stay for a few years before shifting to another. They feed on the larva of beetles that bore into the coniferous trees to feed on the cambium layer under the bark. Their dark black backs, wings, and bodies allow these woodpeckers to disappear against the charred trunks. Ponderosa pine forests are fire-dependent, and this forest looked like a low-intensity burn had occurred several years ago; most of the trees were vigorously growing, and the



understory was alive with new growth. The pair had built their nest cavity in a leaning snag, and the entrance was on the backside of the tree, just out of sight, maybe 15 to 20 feet up. When we stopped by early this morning, the male woodpecker was thirty feet up in a live ponderosa pine just hanging on the trunk by his three toes. Every minute or two, he would drum on the tree as if to tell the world that this was his place, and he was happy. The young were calling not a hundred feet from him, but he seemed to have no concern with what they were saying. The female came in once during our half-hour stay. When she fed the nestlings, they chattered even more.

As I stood along the road at Conboy, the male drummed a few times, and the babies called even louder. He was back in the woods and out of my sight. Ponderosa pine forests do best if a fire happens every decade or two. The trees and understory vegetation prospers, and the forest then supports birds like the Dark-eyed Juncos, Chipping Sparrows, Gray Flycatchers, and White-headed Woodpeckers. Humans, though, naturally become fearful of fire because their homes and structures now dot these fire-dependent ecosystems. Fire suppression has caused many forests to become thick, and when fires do come, they often kill trees that would have survived a more regular fire frequency.

The area near the Aiken Lava Flow had many dead grand firs. These trees were several feet in diameter and must have been two hundred years old. The intense fire was too much for them, most were dead. Climate change will only aggravate the situation. Managers at Conboy seem to be keeping fire in their forest, and the Forest Service is working to reintroduce fire into the national forests where years of suppression has allowed fuel loads to build high. Persistence and perseverance will be essential, and we need to provide the moral and financial support to land managers to maintain this new paradigm.

Sound recording: Black-backed Woodpecker <https://soundcloud.com/tom-bancroft-2/bbwo736>
Black-backed Woodpecker image: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/black-backed-woodpecker>

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