



2018 Conservation Challenges

By Allen Gibbs, PAS Conservation Chair

The headlines coming out of Washington, DC are scary! Climate changes and denials and expanded exploitation of federal public lands are gaining traction. Olympia headlines are mixed—state leases for net-pen salmon farming in Puget Sound revoked, the state Department of Ecology’s consideration of applications for pesticide use in some SW Washington oyster farms near wildlife refuges, and a major defeat preventing a new state regulation to reduce carbon emissions. Here are some recent examples.

“Judge bottles up Inslee’s much touted clean air rule” (*Everett Herald*) – Judge’s decision dashes hopes for a “top down” effort from the governor’s office, through the WA Dept. of Ecology (DOE), to reduce carbon emissions. Twenty-seven months ago, Governor Inslee attempted to rewrite the state’s clean air rules, which are linked to the federal Clean Air Act of 1970. It took a while for opponents to assemble a complaint to work through the Thurston County Superior Court. The judge says DOE lacks authority to impose the new rule without legislative approval. Who opposed the new rule? According to Jerry Cornfield who wrote the *Herald* story, “...the state’s largest emitters of greenhouse gases, such as natural gas distributors, petroleum product producers and importers, power plants, metal manufacturers, and landfill operators.”

The governor recently announced another executive request for the short-session in 2018, this time through the legislature now controlled by slim Democratic majorities (Senate by one seat; House by two seats). That announcement came before the court decision.

Environmental groups are discussing carbon emission reduction options, using the ballot and/or legislation in 2018. Discussions began after last November’s defeat of I-732. Stay tuned. Audubon Washington’s top priorities for this legislative session are about climate change.

(Continued on Page 2)

In this issue

Backyard Birding.....6	Birding Trip Report, Malheur. 6
Backyard Habitat4	Book Donations 4
Birding Classes4	Event Calendar..... 8
Birding Farther Afield.....8	Hospitality Chair 4
Birding Trip Calendar5	Smart Growth Report 3
	Yellow-breasted Chat Song.... 7

JANUARY PROGRAM MEETING

Friday, January 12, 2018

BAT NIGHT IN EVERETT

7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Everett Firefighters’ Hall

2411 Hewitt Avenue, Everett ([map](#))

After finishing two Christmas Bird Counts in December, Pilchuck Audubon will begin the new year on Friday night, January 12, with a different subject, Bat Night in Everett. Pilchuck Audubon is pleased to have Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife District Biologist Ruth Milner as the speaker for its January meeting. Ruth will be providing information on the status of bats in Washington State and what is happening to them in today’s world. She and her staff have been following up on the reports of White Nose Syndrome in bats. They will share what they have learned so far and advise us on what we can do to try to control the problem and prevent spreading of diseases in bats, including rabies. Ruth has also had responsibilities for BATS since she started with DFW in 1992. She has a Bachelor’s degree as well as a Master’s degree in Wildlife Biology from University of Washington.



Many members of Pilchuck Audubon know Ruth for her outstanding work with birds including Snow Goose, swans, other waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and more in Snohomish and Skagit counties.

Bat Night is free and open to everyone who is interested in learning about our Washington bats. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. with a very short business meeting, followed by Ruth Milner’s presentation. The meeting will be held at the Everett Firefighters Hall, [2411 Hewitt Ave.](#), in Everett. There is parking in the lot on the east side of the building as well as convenient street parking. ✧

2018 Conservation Challenges

Continued from Page 1

A 100% Climate Change Lobby Day in Olympia will be on January 22. If PAS members want to participate, contact Allen Gibbs at <mailto:agibbspr@gmail.com>.

“Our national parks belong to us all – say no to entrance fee hikes” (*Seattle Times*) –Tripling entrance fees for 14 out of 400 popular national parks, the Trump administration’s budget requests millions less for national park administration; repair and maintenance of buildings, roads, trails, and staffing. That demanded a big “Boo” from PAS members! We sent emails to our congressional members, who agreed. Look for a bipartisan “legacy act” in 2018 to pay down through 2047 the \$11 billion backlog of needed repairs and restoration in our national parks.



“Fight to save Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil drilling is not over” (*Seattle Times* editorial) – This is a positive headline now that the so-called “tax reform” bill is law. It carries a poison pill directing the federal government to allow development of oil/gas reserves in a part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The editorial lauded the very strenuous efforts by our own Senator Maria Cantwell and all other WA Democrats plus Republican congressman Dave Reichert in opposing. Damage will be done in ANWR before this sellout to oil/gas interests can be defeated. When Senator Cantwell and cohorts see ways to reverse, let’s be ready to join the fight!

Leque Island restoration Phase I completed – Leque Island is again open to public use, birding, and hunting. Completion of all phases for wetland restoration waits on state funding and future matching federal funds. PAS will continue to work with the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, our legislators, and fellow Audubon chapters, supporting funding requests. We and other users support construction of walkways for disabled visitors to parts of the refuge, and perhaps viewing towers.

Lords Hill Regional Park – Close to home, Snohomish County Parks and Recreation pulled back a proposal to convert part of Lords Hill County Park into a mountain bike center, destroying important and diverse bird habitat. Don’t think this proposal in some fashion will not reappear. Thanks to the leadership of PAS President Cindy Easterson, the help of PAS members, and with new volunteer youth working with Vice President Terry Nightingale, important field work was quickly done to survey bird species at Lords Hill, bringing birds and avian data for the first time to the attention of Snohomish County Parks folk. PAS looks forward to working with other users and county planners in coming years to preserve open space and a wide diversity of recreation uses.

Singletary Timber Sale – Over the past two to three years, Kathy Johnson and Kristin Kelly have worked with other conservation groups, Snohomish County Council, WA Dept. of Natural Resources, and the Washington Forest Law Center to protect the view of Wallace Falls from the US 2 corridor, and retain visual/hiking enjoyment in the state park. Public Lands Commissioner Hillary Franz and the Board of Natural Resources are now aware of proposals from PAS and other stakeholders to develop a citizen group to assist DNR in developing a long-range management plan of state trust lands in the larger watershed. ✧

About Pilchuck Audubon Society

The Pilchuck Audubon Profile, official newsletter of Pilchuck Audubon Society, is published monthly.

Pilchuck Audubon Society (PAS) is a grass-roots environmental organization with members throughout Snohomish County and Camano Island, Washington.

Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife, for the benefit of the earth’s biological diversity.

Through education, advocacy, and community activism, PAS is committed to bringing people closer to wildlife in order to build a deeper understanding of the powerful links between healthy ecosystems and human beings, and to encourage the involvement of our members in efforts

to protect the habitat this wildlife depends upon for survival.

We serve as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. PAS is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization incorporated in the state of Washington.

Newsletter Submissions

Submit articles to newsletter@pilchuckaudubon.org or mail to 1429 Avenue D, PMB 198, Snohomish, WA 98290. Submissions must be received by the 21st of the month preceding publication. We reserve the right to edit.

To contact Pilchuck Audubon Society, call 425.610.8027.

The monthly Profile is available online at

www.pilchuckaudubon.org

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SMART GROWTH REPORT

by Kristin Kelly

Executive Director, Smart Growth



With the start of the new year, it's time to look forward to a brighter future. The challenges of 2017 for the Smart Growth Program are continuing into 2018. My work plan will be both proactive and reactive on several key issues; it will include on-going important collaborative committee work and will focus on building more capacity as a result of last year's local elections and this year's state and federal elections.

Docket XIX—Reactive

Docket XIX is the yearly amendment process to Snohomish County's Comprehensive Plan. During 2017, it consisted of three proposals to expand the Southwest Urban Growth Area (SWUGA) along 43rd Avenue SE. One of the SWUGA expansions is for the Northshore School District High School. While this UGA expansion isn't necessary, we are not concerned with the effects. However, the other two proposals (SW-2 and SW-3) are problematic and encompass hundreds of acres along 43rd Avenue SE between Maltby Road and 196th Street in Lynnwood.

The first step in the docketing process is for applicants to put in their proposals and then county planning staff analyzes the proposals to see if they are consistent with the Growth Management Act, the regional council's multi-planning policies, the county-wide planning policies through Snohomish County Tomorrow, and the county's own General Policy Plan.

SW-2 and SW-3 includes 3 sub-proposals: one is to expand only the UGAs, and two would be to do the expansion with a reduction in the UGA either along Lowell-Larimer Road or in Granite Falls. All three sub-proposals do not meet the criteria, and the planners and the County Executive recommended denial for further environmental analysis and costs to county taxpayers.

However, the County Council has embarked on changing the county-wide planning policies to allow for UGA land swaps when the overall population targets remain the same for the county. Because of this new step, Docket XIX will continue robustly in early 2018. Even if the County Council decides to put SW-2 and SW-3 on the docket, that will just continue the process for another year or two. We will continue to oppose these UGA expansions (please see previous Smart Growth articles in our past newsletters for more details), and know you will be hearing more about this issue as the year progresses.

Tree Ordinance—Proactive

About three years ago, I, with several citizens throughout the county, worked to overhaul the regulations that guide the retention and replacement of trees in our urban growth areas, especially as new development proceeds. Our hope was to have more large, significant trees retained, which provide an abundance of environmental and aesthetic features. Unfortunately, the county adopted a Tree Canopy Ordinance chock full of "incentives" without real teeth to ensure trees are not just clearcut to make room for more houses and condos. We would like to encourage the County Council to revisit this issue. I will need all of you to help in convincing our council of the importance of protecting some of our urban trees.

Sustainable Lands Strategy (SLS)—Committee

The SLS began eight years ago; it has been a tremendous breakthrough because it brought together competing interests along our two main river systems: The Skykomish-Snohomish River Basin and the Stillaguamish River Basin, and their estuaries. For years, the Tribes and the farmers have battled over land for the important interests of restoring salmon habitat and ensuring our farmers stay in business. These competing interests have resulted in tensions and sometimes lawsuits. The SLS was created to help overcome these barriers and provide a forum to work together to have net gains in both salmon habitat and farming; included with these two goals is flood protection. I have been honored to be part of this committee from its inception and will continue to serve on the Executive Committee as one of the members representing the environmental community. For more information, please visit our website, <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/2194/Sustainable-Lands-Strategy>.

Everett Station District Alliance (ESDA)—Committee

The ESDA began more than four years ago and was going to be only a one-year project to try to find ways to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD) in the Everett Station area. Within that first year, it became clear that this was a ground-breaking opportunity from stakeholders, outside of city and county government, that could work together to come up with solutions to move TOD forward in the next 20 years in a collaborative, thoughtful way. I also have been on this committee since its inception, and the committee is now a non-profit organization. The committee's goals are growing, and opportunities for 2018 will coincide with Everett's metro planning process. I will continue serving for at least through 2018 as part of the Board as of their election in December. For more information, please visit our website, <https://www.everettstationdistrict.com/>.

As 2018 moves forward, one of my goals is to grow the membership of the Smart Growth Program as well as Pilchuck Audubon Society. Your help in spreading the word about the important work I do on growth and development and how it relates to our overall environmental quality will help me help all of you. As always, I am here to assist Snohomish County residents and our membership with questions and concerns regarding land use. Please feel free to contact me any time by email at execdirector@pilchuckaudubon.org. ✨

Hospitality Chair Needed!

Do you bake an incredible chocolate chip cookie? Or make one of those “to die for” dips that is good with chips or veggies? If you answered “yes!” we need your help.

After many years of amazing service as Pilchuck Audubon Society’s Hospitality Chair, Virginia Clark is passing the mantle. All of us who have savored and relished Virginia’s cookies these past years salute her talent and pass along a hearty appreciation for her gifts.



We need someone to help either provide snacks and set up the coffee for our monthly program meetings **OR** organize some folks to take care of these tasks. There is leeway to make this position your own by planning what to bring or purchase as provisions. We need you right away! The January program meeting is just around the corner.



If you are interested in the position of Hospitality Chair, please get in touch with Cindy Easterson either by phone, 425-876-1055 or email, president@pilchuckaudubon.org. Looking forward to hearing from you! ✧

EVERETT BACKYARD BIRD HABITAT PROJECT SUCCESS

By Kathleen Snyder

Last January, the Pilchuck Audubon Backyard Habitat Committee hired Jed Holmes to head up our Everett program. The goal was to get 200 homes in Everett zip codes certified as backyard wildlife sanctuaries with the WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife. The committee of Ann Stanton, Barb Smith, and Kathleen Snyder figured they should shoot for the moon.

With Jed at the helm from January through October, we came very close to that dream. At the end of October, 173 houses in the target area had completed the certification process. The committee is ecstatic, and we totally attribute this success to Jed’s strong and creative leadership.

One of the highlights of this effort is a collaboration with Everett Community College to remodel and expand a native plant area on campus. Pilchuck Audubon will be funding a water feature there for birds and other wildlife.

None of this would have been possible without the legacy gift from Robert Royce. It was his generous gift which funded Jed’s salary and other expenses. We do have some funds left in this account so Jed will continue for a few months, at a much reduced level, to encourage homeowners to start or complete the paperwork involved. Who knows? We may reach that 200 dream yet! (If you are interested in more information, please contact Jed at habitat@pilchuckaudubon.org). ✧



BIRDING CLASSES

Winter/Spring 2018 Classes

Taught by Candy Brown

WATERBIRDS

We will discuss several of the different kinds of ducks that live in the Puget Sound region as well as geese, gulls, blackbirds, herons, shorebirds, and others. We will see the unique nests they make and how their babies are very different from those of songbirds.

Edmonds at Frances Anderson Center — Tuesday, February 13, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. \$15 for residents, \$17 for non-residents. To register, call 425-771-0230.

MORE AMAZING BIRDS

Many interesting and beautiful birds visit our region at different times of the year or are permanent residents. We will look at and discuss the habits of sparrows, warblers, wrens, woodpeckers, cedar waxwings, and more.

Edmonds at Frances Anderson Center — Wednesday, March 7, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. \$15 for residents, \$17 for non-residents. To register, call 425-771-0230. ✧

Book Donations

If you are in the process of downsizing or simply de-cluttering, you may be able to help Pilchuck Audubon.



We hold a used book sale featuring birding books at our program meetings. Any bird books that need a new home would be very welcome additions. Simply call or email Kristin, our executive director, to arrange pick up. You can reach her at 425-923-8625 or execdirector@pilchuckaudubon.org.

Donations are tax deductible. The funds raised are used for our many conservation, education, and general expenses. ✧

TRIP CALENDAR

Check our website at www.pilchuckaudubon.org
for the latest information



Tuesday, January 2 **Smith and Spencer islands**

Langus Riverfront Park, Everett. Go North on SR529 (Broadway) over the Snohomish River; turn right onto 28th Pl. NE. Follow signs to Langus Waterfront Park. Continue past the Shell House and Everett Animal Shelter, making a left turn onto 4th St SE to a parking lot on the right side of the street. Trying for raptors and returning waterfowl. Walk the Trails, view the Everett Sewage Ponds. Lots of walking. Pack a Lunch.
Trip Leader: Virginia Clark, [360-435-3750](tel:360-435-3750)

Tuesday, January 9 **Deception Pass Area**

Meet at 7:30 AM at Quilceda Village Walmart west of Marysville (I-5-Exit 200). Park away from store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5. Oystercatchers, loons, mergansers, LBJs. Pack a lunch.
Trip Leader: Virginia Clark, [360-435-3750](tel:360-435-3750)

Tuesday, January 16 **Fir Island and Samish Flats**

Meet at 7:30 AM at the Quilceda Village Walmart west of Marysville (I-5 exit 200). Park away from store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5. Shorebirds, eagles, hawks, owls, falcons, songbirds, and surprises. Pack a lunch. Trip Leader: Virginia Clark, [360-435-3750](tel:360-435-3750)

Saturday, January 20 **Riverview Wildlife Refuge**

Come join us for a joint outing with our friends at Snohomish Rising! We'll spend the morning at the Riverview Wildlife Refuge, where we hope to see ducks, geese, gulls, small songbirds, and whatever other surprises the refuge may have for us. Our meeting time will be 9:00 AM and our meeting place will be 1801 1st St, Snohomish, WA 98290. We will gather at the lift station building and proceed on the trail from there. No experience is necessary—you need bring only your curiosity and binoculars, if you have them. We have several pairs of binoculars to lend for the event if you do not have your own. To be most comfortable, you will want to dress warmly and bring snacks, water, and foul-weather gear, just in case. This is a family event and children are welcome. Please, no pets. The bird walk will last until about 12:00 PM and there will be an optional lunch afterward for anyone interested. Leader: Terry Nightingale, tnight@pobox.com, 206-619-2383

Tuesday, January 23 **Guemes Island**

Meet at 7:30 AM at Quilceda Village Walmart west of Marysville (I-5-Exit 200). Park away from store, to the

east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5. Ride a tiny ferry, then relax and enjoy unique Guemes Island, its people, birds, and dogs. Pack a lunch.

Trip Leader: Wilma Bayes, [360-629-2028](tel:360-629-2028)

Sunday, January 28 **Scriber Lake Park**

Back by popular demand! Meet at Scriber Lake Park, 5601 198th Street Southwest in Lynnwood at 1:30 PM for a family picnic. At about 2:00 PM, after the picnic, we'll walk the flat loop trail around the lake, looking for waterfowl on the lake and listening for warblers and other small birds in the trees. No experience is necessary—you need bring only your curiosity and binoculars, if you have them. We have several pairs of binoculars to lend for the event if you do not have your own. For the bird walk, bring snacks, water, sunscreen, binoculars, and foul-weather gear, just in case. This is a family event and children are welcome. Please, no pets. Leader: Terry Nightingale, tnight@pobox.com, 206-619-2383

Tuesday, January 30 **Silvana Roads**

Meet at 7:30 AM at Quilceda Village Walmart west of Marysville (I-5-Exit 200). Park away from store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5. Pipits, waterfowl, shorebirds, falcons, all the winter LBJs. We may also visit the Nature Conservancy site. Pack a lunch. Trip Leader: Wilma Bayes, [360-629-2028](tel:360-629-2028)

Saturday, February 3 **Two Trails in Lynnwood**

Meet at 7:30 AM at the Lynnwood Transit Center, which is in the vicinity of I-5 Exit 181; come to Bay D1, which is near the southwest corner of the parking lot. We'll walk the Scriber Creek Trail, then carpool to the Golf Course Trail. Note that the ground along Scriber Creek may be wet; please wear appropriate footwear. Trip Leader: Douglas Resnick, [425-776-4811](tel:425-776-4811) ✧



Trumpeter Swan © Mick Thompson

BACKYARD BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

by Mara Price, Sightings Coordinator

October 26, 2017 to November 25, 2017

Happy Holidays to everyone, and stay warm!

Carole and Larry Beason's report from Lake Bosworth listed 2 Anna's Hummingbirds, 2 Bald Eagles over the lake, a Belted Kingfisher on the dock, 26 Bufflehead on the lake, 112+ Bushtit in the trees, 14 Canada Goose on the lake, 2 Common Raven, 12 Common Merganser, and 7 Double-crested Cormorant on the lake, 2 Downy Woodpecker, a Fox Sparrow, 4 Golden-crowned Sparrow, an Osprey over the lake, 2 Pileated Woodpecker, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatch, 22 Red-winged Blackbird, 7 Ring-necked Duck, and a Varied Thrush, for a total species count of 38.

Debbie Dern's report from her home in Snohomish listed 4 Anna's Hummingbird, 1 Pileated Woodpecker, 5 Steller's Jay, 3 Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 5 Black-capped Chickadee, 5 House Sparrow, 5 Red-winged Blackbird, 10 Dark-eyed Junco, 2 Downy Woodpecker, 2 Northern Flicker, a Eurasian Collared Dove, a Song Sparrow, and 2 House Finch, for a total species count of 16.

Reporting from Mukilteo, Hilka Egtvedt listed a Sharp-shinned Hawk, 5 Anna's Hummingbird, 5 Northern Flicker, 2 Pileated Woodpecker, 8 Steller's Jay, 3 Black-capped Chickadee, a Bewick's Wren, 2 Spotted Towhee, a Fox Sparrow, 3 Golden-crowned Sparrow, 20 Dark-eyed Junco, 5 House Finch, 2 Hairy Woodpecker, a Downy Woodpecker, and 3 Chestnut-backed Chickadee, for a total species count of 19.

Kriss Erickson's report from Everett included 8 American Robin, 2 Bewick's Wren, 2 Spotted Towhee, 4 Steller's Jay, 3 Song Sparrow, 8 Northwestern Crow, 12 Mallard Duck flying over, 32 European Starling, 6 Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 21 Black-capped Chickadee, a Hairy Woodpecker, 19 Bushtit, 8 Western Gull and 14 Canada Goose flying overhead, and a Barred Owl in the yard, for a total species count of 21.

Mary Sinker's total species count of 25 from her home in Stanwood included 9 American Robin, 7 Anna's Hummingbird, 2 Bald Eagle, 12 Black-capped Chickadee, 10 Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 35 Dark-eyed Junco in the yard and on the feeders, 7 Downy Woodpecker, a Great Blue Heron at the creek, 11 Kinglet species, 20 Mourning Dove, 4 Northern Flicker, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, a Red-tailed Hawk, 8 Song Sparrow, 12 Steller's Jay, 4 White-crowned Sparrow, and 2 Pacific Wren.

My report from my home in Marysville included 30+ American Crow, 4 American Robin, 4 Black-capped Chickadee, a Pileated Woodpecker, a House Finch, 20 Dark-eyed Junco, 18 Mourning Dove, 6 Northern Flicker, 2 Spotted Towhee, 6 Steller's Jay, 3 Kinglet species, 20 Pine Siskin, 100+ European Starling, a Song Sparrow, and a Varied Thrush, for a total species count of 21.

If you are interested in participating in our Backyard Birding count, please email me at pricemara1@gmail.com or leave a message on my cell phone at (425) 750-8125. ✧

TRIP REPORT: Destination Malheur, 8-15 June 2016

by Reg Reisenbichler

The following is a continuation of the summary of the exploits of seven intrepid birders from Pilchuck Audubon Society traveling from Snohomish County to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and back 8-15 June 2016. The report will be published in several parts due to space limitations.

Three of us met at 6:00 the next morning (Friday) to bird Bullard Canyon at the eastern edge of town. The small canyon was terrific and held a goodly number of birds including Prairie Falcon, Yellow Warbler, BH Grosbeak, and Lazuli Bunting. We returned to the lodge at 7 a.m. for a quick breakfast, and the entire group headed back north to Highway 140 and CR 3-10 to see Crump Lake, Hart Bar, and Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. We had lots of wildflowers, beautiful meadows, some rugged terrain, and lots of rolling sage brush terrain.

We saw a Nighthawk roosting on the top rail of a buck-and-and-rail fence, serenaded by Western Meadow Larks. We also found Pronghorn, Sage Thrasher, Horned Lark, American Pipit, Brewer's Sparrow,



American Avocet ©
Mick Thompson

Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow Warbler, Am. Avocet, Western Grebe, Turkey Vulture, Am. Kestrel, RT Hawk, Mule Deer, Black-tailed Jackrabbit, Mountain Cottontail, Townsend Ground Squirrels (emitting what sounded to us like a bird-like call—confusing until we recognized the source), White-tailed Antelope, Ground Squirrel, and more. We enjoyed beautiful wildflowers including Tansy-leaf Evening Primrose, Mallow, Blue Iris, Lupine, Balsam Root, wild Onion, Buckwheats, Cinquefoil, Blue Flax, and Penstemon.

We continued to Hwy 205 and a brief stop at Frenchglen, then further north to Diamond Lane and east to Hotel Diamond for a large, delicious family-style dinner. We enjoyed talking with the staff whose family, we learned, has been there for five generations. After dinner we continued north on Lava Beds Road and Hwy 78 to Crystal Crane Hot Springs, where we spent the next three nights. We had high wind and cold temperatures from Diamond to Crane, which made us glad that we were not tent camping at the hot springs. ✧

To be continued in February.

The Yellow-breasted Chat Song

by Thomas Bancroft

The morning opened calm but suggested it would be hot before long. Cottonwoods lined Lower Umptanum Creek in Kittitas County, and patches of quaking aspens grew along the trail. The morning bird chorus would start in a half hour and the trail seemed sublime in the subdued light of my headlamp. On this mid-June morning, the aspens smelled sweet, and the grass lapped at my waist. Except for the nearby creek, the valley was quiet as I sat down under some aspens to wait.

The first squawk came from the far side of the grove. Whistles, mews, catcalls, cackles, and rattles then penetrated the



Yellow-breasted Chat © Mick Thompson



trees. The song seemed more rapid than I remembered from western Pennsylvania, but definitely, a Yellow-breasted Chat had begun to declare that morning had arrived, and this part of the valley was his. After twenty minutes, when nothing else had started to sing, I began to work slowly around the aspen grove. He sang from the opposite side of an elderberry bush and was down out of sight.

My first Yellow-breasted Chat was on our neighbor's farm when I was in junior high in western Pennsylvania. The neighbor had not mowed his field down over the back hill for many years, and the bushes had grown thick. I was trudging up the dirt lane through the patch when this series of whistles, catcalls, clucks, and rattles came piling out the thick bushes. I went home and immediately put my mother's LP of Peterson's Birds of Eastern North America on the phonograph in the dining room. Eventually, the Yellow-breasted Chat call

came through the speakers. I never did see the bird on several return trips to the abandoned field.

This spring the American Ornithologist Union removed this bird from the wood warbler family, *Parulidae*, and put it into a monotypic family, *Icteriidae*. The two "i" in Icteriidae keep it from being with blackbirds, meadowlarks, and orioles. Scientists now think it is more closely related to the tanagers and old world buntings than it is to the wood warblers. The reality is that it still is an enigma. The call seemed different from any wood warbler I knew and different from almost anything else, too.

Dr. Donald Kroodsma once answered a question about how he learned to identify bird songs by saying that he listened with his eyes.

Here is a sonogram movie of [10 minutes of this yellow-breasted chat's song](https://vimeo.com/221848178) (<https://vimeo.com/221848178>). His calls are shown by intense red. Where the sonogram becomes almost white, it is showing the loudest notes. Individual calls, songs, and screeches range from 1,500 kilohertz to about 15,000 kilohertz. He constantly shuffled his different notes in the sequence. A Lazuli Bunting and an American Goldfinch can also be heard in the background.

The male chat sang non-stop for more than an hour along Umptanum Creek, never taking more than a few-second pause in his rattling. Finally, I left to hike farther up the canyon. ✧



The two photos of the Kittitas County Umptanum Creek area are courtesy of Thomas Bancroft.

Noteworthy Events for Your Consideration

- Annual Puget Sound Shorebird Count.....January 6
 For more information or to volunteer contact Ecostudies Institute. Information can be found here:
<https://www.ecoinst.org/conservation-programs/waterbird-conservation/puget-sound-shorebird-count/>
- Program Meeting.....January 12
- Lobby Day.....January 22
 This is a co-sponsored event with Audubon in Olympia and will be focused on climate change issues. Anyone interested in attending for a great day of advocacy with our legislators can get in touch with me for more details.
- Port Susan Snow Goose Festival..... February 24-25
 Pilchuck Audubon Society is a proud sponsor of the Snow Goose Festival. Our own Jonathan Blubaugh, Terry Nightingale, and Judy Hall will be helping with birding tours at the event. If you are interested in volunteering for this event, please let Cindy Easterson know at 425-876-1055, or contact the Stanwood Chamber of Commerce by email at stanwood-chamberwa@gmail.com or by calling 360 -629-0562.
 For more information go to www.snowgoosefest.org/ ✧

UPCOMING EVENTS, CLASSES, and FESTIVALS farther afield

Compiled by Rick Brauer

Wings Over Willcox Willcox, AZ **Jan 11-14**

In its 25th year, this festival is a nice opportunity to see winter migrants that visit Southeastern Arizona. Tour and seminar subjects include photography, geology, history, botany, agriculture, and, of course, birds.
<http://www.wingsoverwillcox.com/>

Class: White Birds of Winter Everett, WA **Jan 19**

Join biologist Martha Jordan and learn myths, legends, and facts about Washington's White Birds of Winter: our native Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, and Snow Goose populations. Martha will present spectacular photographs and teach you about their life history, biology, and identification tips. http://www.streamkeeper.org/aasf/Jan_Classes.html

Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival Titusville, FL **Jan 24-29**

The 21st annual edition of this rather large event promises to continue to enhance its reputation as one of the premier birding festivals in the United States. <http://www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlifefestival.org/main.php>

SparrowFest Bertram, TX **Feb 3**

This modest, one-day festival focuses on the more than 20 species of sparrow that over-winter in the Texas Hill Country. Nearby Balcones NWR is the field trips' destination. Little brown birds need love, too!
<https://www.friendsofbalcones.org/event-2728701>

Class: Winter Visitors Lower Skagit Valley, WA **Feb 17**

Birder's World calls the Skagit Valley "one of the nation's best birding destinations." Join Libby Mills for a field excursion designed to celebrate one of the Northwest's natural treasures. This class will survey the area's bird life, with a focus on raptors, wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, and the relationships that bring these various species together in this particular place. <https://ncascades.org/signup/programs/winter-visitors-birding-the-greater-skagit-delta> ✧

Pilchuck Audubon Society Membership Information

Support your local Audubon chapter by becoming a member. PAS dues are tax deductible (consult your tax professional for details). The PAS tax ID number is 91-6183664.

- New Member \$28
- Renewal..... \$28
- Lifetime Member..... \$1,000
- 10 monthly payments of \$100
- 4 quarterly payments of \$250
- 1 payment of \$1,000
- Donation.....\$ _____
- My employer will match my contribution
 My employer's gift-matching form is enclosed with my contribution

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Mail to: Pilchuck Audubon Society
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