



Fowl Weather

By Cindy Easterson, PAS President

Wet weather this spring has proved problematic for engaging with birds. I've had to cancel monitoring surveys, educational events were cut short after groups huddled under the eaves of buildings for an hour to avoid a downpour, and even the Pilchuck Audubon birdathon team I was on suffered low numbers of detected species due to the drippy weather on the day of our excursion. So I suppose I find some comfort in the cartoon on page 4 by xkcd.com to know that people worry about birds in the rain.

Rain poses a couple of threats to birds, and understanding the different strategies that birds use to handle wet weather sheds light on where to find birds on those rainy birding days, and also on how we can help with sheltering alternatives in our bird-friendly yards.

The biggest threat to most songbirds in rainy weather is hypothermia. In a drizzle to moderate rain, birds' flight feathers will shed droplets due to their structure. A gland at the base of a bird's tail secretes an oil used in preening to help zip up the barbicels or hooklets in a Velcro-like fashion to keep these feathers somewhat watertight. Birds stay warm by fluffing up their inner insulating layer of down feathers to trap air pockets and hold in body heat. However, if that pocket fills with water instead of air, that bird is going to get cold very quickly, and there is a learned response to sleek down feathers in heavy rain and the appropriate "fluff" for keeping warm in a lighter drizzle. The smaller the bird, the bigger a problem this is, because smaller birds have higher surface-area-to-volume ratios, meaning they lose heat more quickly, and they generally have smaller energy reserves.

Studies have shown that some birds, when exposed to rain, have the ability to increase their metabolic rate to compensate for heat loss (Wilson *et al.* 2004), but most songbirds simply go into energy conservation mode by hunkering down motionless in the foliage.

Cavity nesters will often find a hole in which to hunker down until the rain passes. Some species, like Pigmy

(Continued on page 4)

JUNE PROGRAM MEETING

The Birdy Dozen

Local Photographers Showing Their Art

**Rick Brauer • Cathy Clark • Rex Guichard
John Hollis • David Richman • Ray White
and, we hope, a few more**



Join us as PAS birders who are also photographers will bring and show their favorite Birdy Dozen photos of Washington birds and the rest of us will get to see all these great bird photos and show our appreciation of our fellow birders' photography skills. We will also celebrate the successful conclusion of our Bird-a-thon and congratulate our winning participants. It should be a fun evening. Everyone is invited to bring photos to share (please register with Judy Lowell, 425-353-8150 or jlorganicjudy@gmail.com).

You won't want to miss this program!

Friday, June 10, 2016

7:00 p.m.

Everett Firefighters' Hall

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

For more information, leave message at 425-610-8027.

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*Conservation Northwest and
Western Wildlife Outreach present*
**Ghost Bears: Looking for Grizzly Bears in
Washington's North Cascades**

Wednesday, June 15, 7:00 p.m.
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.
Snohomish County PUD
2320 California Street
Everett, WA 98201



This event is free and open to the public.

Go behind the scenes with wildlife ecologist Bill Gaines as he discusses his three-year search for elusive grizzly bears in the North Cascades. Along the way, you'll hear about the history of grizzlies in the Pacific Northwest and the potential for grizzly bear recovery. Dr. Gaines will also describe ingenious—and often smelly—methods to study these charismatic bruins deep in the back country. We'll also hear "hairy" tales of climbing, hiking, wading, and rappelling through this iconic landscape in the quest to document the presence of the ghost bears of the North Cascades.

Dr. Gaines is the Director of the Washington Conservation Science Institute and has spent the past quarter century studying the role of large carnivores in ecosystems. He has searched for snow leopards in the Karakorum Mountains of Pakistan and studied spectacled bears in the Andes of Ecuador and wolves in Denali Park. His favorite, most demanding and physically challenging adventures were in pursuit of the elusive North Cascades grizzly bear.

Oil, Orcas, and Oystercatchers: Preparing for the Inevitable

Numerous proposals to increase oil-by-rail transport are underway in Washington State. In Skagit County, Shell Oil is looking to add an oil-by-rail facility to its existing refinery in Anacortes, bringing in six oil trains per week and 60,000 barrels per day. As we prepare to comment on the Shell-Anacortes Draft Environmental Impact Statement this fall, we are also learning how citizen science action could make a difference during an inevitable oil spill disaster in our marine waterways.

Join us at the scenic Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve the afternoon of Sunday, June 26, where we will celebrate what we know and love about marine life in the Salish Sea, learn about the health of Salish Sea marine bird populations and the region's iconic Southern-resident orca population, hear in detail the threats they face due to increased oil tanker traffic, and participate in a hands-on introduction to citizen science first response observance training—a meaningful way volunteers can take action in the event of an oil spill.

The event is being coordinated by WEC, Audubon Washington, Skagit Audubon Society, and others.

What: Oil, Orcas, and Oystercatchers:
Preparing for the Inevitable

Date: Sunday, June 26, 2016

Time: 12:00 Noon

Location: Padilla Bay National Estuarine
Research Reserve, 10441 Bayview-Edison Road, Mount
Vernon, WA 98273



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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	Kathy Johnson forest@pilchuckaudubon.org
	Jay Ward 425.418.3226
	David Gladstone

Consultant

Committee Chairs

Bird Sightings	Mara Price 360.722.5752
Citizen Science Coord.	Sherrill Miller field.birds.pas@gmail.com
Communications	Lindsey May 425.610.8027
Conservation Awards	Laurel Cheap classroom.awards@pilchuckaudubon.org
Donations	Judy Chapman donations@pilchuckaudubon.org
Education	Jim Beneteau develop@pilchuckaudubon.org
Field Trips	Art Wait 360.563.0181
Forest Practices	Kathy Johnson forest@pilchuckaudubon.org
Hospitality	Virginia Clark 360.435.3750
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Programs	Susie Schaefer garden@pilchuckaudubon.org
Webmaster	Terry Nightingale webmaster@pilchuckaudubon.org

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Smart Growth/PAS ExecDir Kristin Kelly execdirector@pilchuckaudubon.org

PILCHUCK AUDUBON'S FIRST BIRD FEST FOR KIDS

The first Kid's Bird Fest was held May 7 at the Imagine Children's Museum in Everett. This event, sponsored by a grant from PAS, is intended to provide fun activities that will help children understand some bird behaviors and, particularly, learn a little bit about bird migration.

There were four major activities: a Bird Beak game, a Migration Game, a Ring Toss Migration challenge, and a Bird Find activity. In addition, several "make and take" craft activities were available.

In general, we had a very successful first run. While we were competing with great spring weather, the build-up to Mother's Day, end-of-term school activities, and other events, the attendance was rated as pretty good for the conditions by the ICM staff.

PAS, unfortunately, was able to field only three volunteers for the event. Lesson one, learned: scheduling. The week before Mother's Day is not good for getting volunteers. Fortunately for the event, a large number of sailors from the USS SHROUP showed up to provide staffing! Yea for the Navy! Might say, it made for smooth sailing!

Two of the activities, the Bird Find challenge and the Bird Beak game, are intended to be available for PAS to use at future

tabling events. The Bird Beak game uses ordinary household utensils to mimic the functions of various shapes of bird bills. The challenge for the kids is to discover which shape works best for which kind of food source. One of the things we discovered is this activity would work best with at least two people conducting it. Water is involved and that limits where we can use the game.

The other activity should be familiar to us all. Photos of eight common birds (slightly enlarged, cut out, and laminated) are placed around an area. The challenge is to locate all the birds pictured on the colored hand-out (a lot harder than it sounds; as we should all know from our bird-watching trips). Here, the ICM had very nice, inexpensive binoculars for the kids to use. (Didn't need binocs to find the birds, but the kids really liked them!) One of the lessons learned here is that it is hard to keep track of those bins! Lots of kids want to take them home. We probably wouldn't use them in any of our tabling events. Otherwise, this is a fun event and could easily be modified to fit the display environment.

So, fun time. Long day. Great weather. Cute kids. And birds! Who could ask for anything more?

Jim Beneteau, Education Chair ✧

Pioneer Elementary School Science Fair

For several years now, PAS has provided a table and activity at the Pioneer Elementary School in Arlington. This event is a chance for the young people to display some of their science projects and for Audubon to provide a little outreach to children (and their parents) and try to pique their interest in birds.

This year it was obvious that a major science unit for the kids focused on birds. Fully a fourth of the projects had bird themes. What a great tie-in!

In the past, we've tried our pine cone-bird feeder activity at this event, but it can be a little messy for an indoor setting. The activity also needs at least two people to operate. So, this year, we had just the bird match game along with our tri-fold displays.

Again, there are some pretty sharp kids out there, demonstrated by their projects and by their ability to match up those babies! See to the right an example of one of the projects.

Jim Beneteau, Education Chair ✧

JULY PROGRAM MEETING—SAVE THE DATE

July 8, 2016 7:00 PM

Once-a-year program meeting in Stanwood.

Ecostudies Institute (<http://www.ecoinst.org/>) will be sharing its information on the pre- and post-dike breaching studies at Leque Island.



Fowl Weather

(Continued from page 1)

Nuthatches will launch a collaborative effort with several birds packing into the same hole to stay dry and warm.

Birds whose diet is primarily insects may suffer the worst in an extended rain. Frequent flyers, these birds may need to feed more often, and rain reduces the availability of insects. Using native plants in your backyard, installing nesting boxes, and retaining cavity-pocked tree snags provides shelter and more readily available food sources during rainy spring weather.

Shorebirds will adopt the classic bird-in-heavy-rain posture, as described by Hume (1986), as “head withdrawn, bill pointed towards the rain, body rather upright and feathers sleeked.” This strategy combines staying warm; the “head withdrawn” is a heat-conserving position that minimizes the body surface area and exposure to rain, and facing upright into the rain uses the natural topography of the bird to allow for raindrops to slide off the feathers rather than being absorbed.

Birding in the rain can pose some challenges. Birds tend to be quiet, and even the ones vocalizing are harder to hear in the rain. Still, some of my more memorable birding experiences have come from toughing it out in wet weather. At a Spokane birding event a couple years ago, I was signed up for a “Local Highlights” field trip. The group guide was a genial fellow with enviable knowledge about local birds, and he had clearly invested time into scouting for prime areas to take us birding. Sadly, we woke to a downpour, not the drizzle we often get here west of the mountains but a true downpour that seeped through wet-weather clothing no matter how “premium” it might be and chilled one to the bone after only a few minutes. The weather discouraged most registrants and, by mid-day, we’d lost most of the participants. In a plea for people to stay with him, the guide let us know he’d saved the best for last, but by the end of the day, there were only a small handful of us who trudged with him through an urban forest to a quiet, and relatively dry, spot deep within some

CONSERVATION REPORT

By Allen Gibbs, Conservation Chair

Oil Pipeline news from Canada

Perhaps by the end of 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s cabinet will decide whether to approve the Kinder Morgan Canada’s plan to nearly triple its current pipeline terminus capacity near Vancouver, BC. The oil is from Alberta. Canada’s National Energy Board’s report, issued in May, recommends approval.

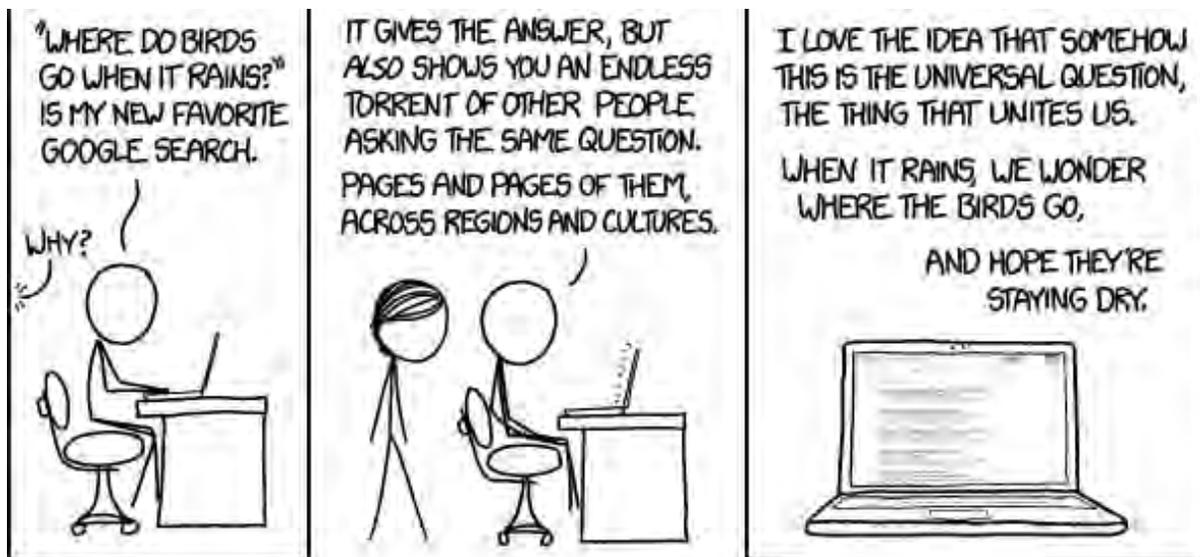
The increased capacity will be from 300,000 to 890,000 barrels a day for export to the USA and Asia. The route of oil tankers will likely be through the now-used route of Haro Strait west of San Juan Island and through the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Washington State Department of Ecology estimates there will be an additional 350 oil tankers moving through Washington State waters, according to an Associated Press story. There is no indication the Washington State refineries will receive deliveries from Kinder Morgan Canada. ✧

mature woods. Without saying a word, the guide pointed to a spot about 25 feet up in a tree. We all pulled back the edges of our rain-soaked parkas to see a female Pileated Woodpecker protectively hovering over three tiny miniatures of herself.

So in answer to the “universal question” about where do birds go when it rains, I encourage you to go find them even on rainy days. Or better yet, install some welcome features in your yard so birds might shelter and snack through our drizzly days, and you can enjoy them from the comfort of your warm home.

References:

- Hume R. 1986. Reactions of birds to heavy rain. *British Birds* 79:326-329.
- Wilson G, Cooper S, Gessaman J. 2004. The effects of temperature and artificial rain on the metabolism of American kestrels (*Falco sparverius*). *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology, Part A*. 139(3):389-394. ✧



TRIP CALENDAR

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



Saturday, June 4

Seabeck

Guillemot Cove Nature Reserve

Meet at 8:30 AM at Everett Mall. Park in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. We'll carpool to the Edmonds ferry terminal and thence to the park. This is a relatively less-developed Kitsap County Preserve, accessible only by walking in. A trail leads downhill from the parking area to where a stream enters Hood Canal. The preserve has trails through beautiful forests and down to the beach with lovely views of the Olympic Mountains. Along the stream the trails are a bit unpredictable because the stream tends to meander and there are beavers in residence. Waterproof hiking boots may be beneficial. Bring snacks, water, sunscreen, binoculars, hat, and foul-weather gear, just in case. Perhaps a little socializing over a late lunch. Family event; no pets, please. Estimated round-trip ferry toll: \$44.70 per car. Carpooling encouraged. Trip Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425-244-7633, aracfi@msn.com

Tuesday, June 7

Mid Whidbey Island

Meet at 7:30 AM at the Quilceda Village Wal-Mart lot west of Marysville (I-5 exit 200). [Park away from the store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd (next to I-5).] This is the area between Crockett Lake and Swantown, an always exciting experience for both birding and scenery. Pack a lunch. Trip Leader: Art Wait, [360-563-0181](tel:360-563-0181)

Sunday, June 12

Scriber Lake Park

Back by popular demand! Meet at Scriber Lake Park, 5707 198th St SW, Lynnwood, WA 98036, 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, 206-619-2383, tnight@pobox.com

Tuesday, June 14

Big Four Meadows

Meet at 7:30 AM at the Lake Stevens Frontier Village Park & Ride (9600 Market Place). From State Highway 9, turn east-bound onto Market Place (the street the Target Store is on), then north into the Park & Ride just west of Target. Big Four Meadows is a beautiful setting for our annual potluck bird trip. Bring something to share. Virginia provides hot dogs and potato salad and will advise if you want to know what to bring. Expect Swallows, Hummingbirds, Swifts, Warblers, Vireos, and Dippers. A trailhead pass or Golden Age Pass will be needed, but is obtainable en route. Pack a lunch. Trip Leader: Virginia Clark, [360-435-3750](tel:360-435-3750)

UPCOMING EVENTS, CLASSES, and FESTIVALS

Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival

Sisters, OR

June 2-5

Oregon's East Cascades Audubon Society presents this all-volunteer event featuring their region's 11 species of woodpeckers. Several new trips have been added to previous favorites, and the Saturday Social will feature local author Steve Shunk, whose new *Peterson Reference Guide to the Woodpeckers of North America* will be available. <http://ecaudubon.org>

Yakutat Tern Festival

Yakutat, AK

June 2-5

The Yakutat Tern Festival is a celebration of the natural and cultural resources of Yakutat, Alaska – especially a breeding colony of Aleutian Terns. The family-friendly festival offers field trips, seminars, kid's activities, evening banquets and other programs, bird banding demonstrations, and cultural events. Alaska Airlines will do you a good tern with a discount code for travel to the fest: <http://www.yakutatternfestival.org>

Lake Tahoe Bird Festival

South Lake Tahoe, CA

June 11

Presented by the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, this one-day event celebrating migratory birds and Lake Tahoe's role in their lives takes place (mostly) at the USFS Taylor Creek Visitor Center. <http://www.tinsweb.org/lake-tahoe-bird-festival>

Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua

Lee Vining, CA

June 17-19

This is a unique event covering an extensive region of the Eastern Sierra Nevada. The Chautauqua's mission is to enhance appreciation and understanding of the Mono Lake Basin's diverse and abundant bird life and to educate the public about the area's value to birds and people. With more than 50 individual presenters/guides, and 90+ presentations/field trips squeezed into three days, you'll be busy! <http://www.birdchautauqua.org/> ✨



Tuesday, June 21

Highway 20, Sedro Woolley to Rockport

Meet at 7:30 AM at Quilceda Village Wal-Mart west of Marysville (I-5-Exit 200). [Park away from store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5.] We are going to visit areas along the North Cascades Highway. Included are Lyman, Hamilton, Rasar State Park, and the Howard Miller Steelhead Park. Pack a lunch. Trip Leader: Virginia Clark, [360-435-3750](tel:360-435-3750)

Tuesday, June 28

Ellensburg Area

Meet at 6:00 AM at Monroe Park & Ride on Highway 2, 1/2 mile west of the Fairgrounds. We will bird portions of Umtanum Creek area, Robinson Canyon, and other areas. This will be a long, rewarding day. Hope to see Yellow-breasted Chat, Warbling Vireo, Lazuli Bunting, and maybe Canyon and Rock Wren. Pack a lunch. Trip Leaders: Virginia Clark, [360-435-3750](tel:360-435-3750) and Wilma Bayes, [360-629-2028](tel:360-629-2028) ✨

Birding Adventures in Trinidad

By David B. Richman

In the summer of 1999 (27 June to 2 July), I traveled to the island of Trinidad (off the coast of Venezuela) to attend the first international meeting of the American Arachnological Society, hosted at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine. Our host was Chris Starr of the university. In addition to the usual presentations on the science of arachnology, he had planned several interesting outings, including the Northern Range rain forest, the lowland tropical forest at Arena, the leatherback turtle nesting site at Matura Beach, the tar pits on the southern end of the island, and the scarlet ibis colony in the Caroni Swamp. Two of these trips failed to materialize (the island cruise was cut short by a boat failure, and torrential rains ended the Caroni Swamp excursion), and I did not go on the tar pit visit, but I made all the rest, plus an extra—a visit to the Asa Wright Nature Center in the Northern Range after the meeting. I also spent some time on Mt. St. Benedict, which was easy to reach by maxitaxi from the university (maxitaxis are the ubiquitous roving vans found all over the island; the vans, unfortunately, ran on leaded gasoline).

Trinidad is really a piece of Venezuela, rather than an oceanic island, and it thus possesses a fauna that is a lesser reflection of the South American tropics. This is also exemplified by the reptile fauna, which includes two species of coral snake—the bushmaster and the turciopelo (sometimes called the fer-de-lance, *Bothrops asper*)—but lacks the variety of vipers of the continent. In the Arena lowland tropical forest, we were warned to be on the lookout for the turciopelo as it was the breeding season and the snakes were very dangerous.

The birds are especially interesting and a little less overpowering for a beginning Neotropical birder than the Venezuelan fauna. I lacked the photographic equipment I have now, so my possibilities were limited in this regard, but visual birding was very rewarding. The campus of the university immediately provided views of birds that I had read about in the books of William Beebe—tropical kingbirds, great kiskadees, tropical mockingbirds, orange-winged parrots and palm swifts were sighted. Nearby Mt. St. Benedict provided a constant circling flock of both black and turkey vultures. On the field trips to the Northern Range and the central Arena Forest, I had further opportunities as I watched black hawks circling over the forest from above them in the Northern Range and spotted small flocks of banaquits, silver-beaked tanagers, and blue-black grassquits in the Arena Forest. At the same time I made the acquaintance of the rather pretty, but possibly dangerous, paddle-legged mosquitoes in the genus *Sabethes*, as well as hoards of leaf-cutting ants in the genus *Atta*.

However, the premier bird-watching opportunity came with a visit to the Asa Wright Nature Center in the Northern Range after the meetings were over. A group of scientists from the meeting had lunch there and took a guided tour of the trails into the rain forest. The lunch was all one could hope for from a British colonial-

style affair, with a life-sized portrait of Prince Philip on the wall, good silver and fine china, and generous helpings of curry, rice, and tropical fruit. As we started out on our tour, blue-crowned motmots flew overhead. These were hard to see in the canopy, but I caught a glimpse now and then. Our tour was highlighted by an encounter with a lekking group of white-bearded manikins and the strange metallic calls of a male bearded bellbird, which sounded like an anvil being struck by a hammer. We found the singer calling from a tree in the forest. On our return, we ran into a small column of army ants!

The feeders at the center provided even more species as I found purple, red-legged, and green honeycreepers (birds that look like they were designed by Disney Studios) and such wonderful species of hummingbird as the white-necked Jacobin and the ruby-topaz hummingbird, along with several others. A short walk around the entrance produced a cocoa thrush and a *Brugmansia* plant (a relative of the sacred *Datura*) in full bloom. Back at the pavilion, I asked a guide if I could see William Beebe's old laboratory at Simla. She said the roofs were visible with a spotting scope and showed them to me. A minute or so later she called to me to view a pair of feeding channel-billed toucans in the forest. This was the last of my bird sightings while on the island and certainly one of the most exciting!

I left Trinidad thoroughly entranced with the tropics. ✧



David B. Richman is an American arachnologist who was Professor of Entomology and Curator of the Arthropod Museum at New Mexico State University (Las Cruces) for 28 years. He also worked on research in biological control of range weeds; pests of pecans, cotton, and alfalfa; and as a spider taxonomist (he described 14 new species), ethologist, and evolutionary biologist. He taught classes in aquatic insects, immature insects, arachnology, and general entomology. He also ran outreach programs, along with the state entomologist, Carol Sutherland, for K-12 on entomology and, with her, made species determinations for New Mexico Cooperative Extension and the general public, and wrote the state 4-H curriculum in entomology.

He has authored or co-authored more than 50 journal articles and 12 book chapters, with a new set of 10 chapters to be published shortly in *Spiders of North America, 2nd Ed.* He lives with his wife, Lynda Goin, in Edmonds. They have two daughters and a foster daughter, all adult, as well as a grandson. ✧

WEEKEND BIRD WALK to NORTH KITSAP HERITAGE PARK

By Jonathan Blubaugh

On April 9, the bird walk was to North Kitsap Heritage Park. I selected the locale simply because it showed up as a green spot on the map. Kitsap County's website showed a short loop trail, which is what I'm looking for when leading weekend bird walks.

Five individuals met at Everett Mall and carpoled to the Edmonds ferry. For me, the biggest surprise of the day was at the Everett Mall mitigation ponds—a Western Meadowlark was at the south edge of the parking lot beside the pond.

One participant asked, "What does the term 'mitigation pond' mean?" I am not an expert on the topic, but I explained my understanding: that any new development which includes paving or new construction must take into account storm-water run-off. The mitigation ponds are intended to let street or building-related contaminants settle before they can enter the surface streams. Maybe I should call them settling ponds. Interestingly, one of the ponds at the mall now has a newly installed zip line hanging from towers at the ends of the pond to thrill shoppers and moviegoers. These little settling ponds at the mall attract not only zip line enthusiasts, but also numerous birds, especially Bufflehead and Ring-Necked Ducks in winter and breeding Mallard and Canada Goose in spring.

At the ferry terminal, our group somehow split up. Our new friend, Scott, had "carpoled" on his motorcycle. When we pulled into the ferry parking lot, he was able to cruise right on by, boarded the ferry and, unbeknown to us, sailed away. We were stuck waiting for the next boat. When we finally boarded, I found no trace of Scott or his cycle. I wasn't too worried. After arriving in Kingston, we pulled off the road to do a little birding at a lovely cove just south of Kingston. On my smart phone, I found an eMail from Scott. He was already at Heritage Park waiting patiently for us. So we jumped back in and caught up with him there. We used the brief stop at the cove, Arness Park, to introduce new PAS Treasurer Judy Hall to the joys and frustrations of citizen science on the eBird smart phone application. I have found it to be the best method for getting a good record of what we saw.

The loop trail at North Kitsap Heritage Park was about three miles through woodland with a small elevation gain. We took it slowly, stopping occasionally to listen for birds. We found 17 species on the trail and about 35 total, including the birds we saw from the ferry rides.

As usual, we stopped for lunch on the way back, finding a small café (specializing in gourmet crepes) on the Kingston waterfront.

All our sightings were uploaded to eBird. Here's a list of most of the birds we saw: a couple of Canada Geese, a Mallard, a Surf Scoter, four Bufflehead, a couple of Red-Necked Grebes, three Pelagic Cormorants, a couple of Pigeon Guillemots, a couple of Great Blue Herons, a couple of adult Bald Eagles, 50 Glaucous-Winged Gulls, heard a Northern Flicker, a raucous Steller's Jay, 9 crows, 8 Tree Swallows, a Violet-Green Swallow, 3 Black-Capped Chickadees, a couple of Chestnut-Backed Chickadees, heard a Pacific Wren, heard a Golden-

UGAs and RUTAs

By Kristin Kelly, Smart Growth Executive Director

During the last week in May, the Snohomish County Planning Commission held a public hearing on several amendments to the comprehensive land use plan, which Snohomish County refers to as "docketing." One of the issues, the Rural-Urban Transition Area (RUTA) is confusing to many citizens. If you live in or near a RUTA, you most likely received a notice from the County regarding the hearing. If you didn't understand it and would like to comment, then I hope this article will be informative. There will be another opportunity to comment when it comes before the County Council for public hearing.

RUTAs were established in 1995 when the first county comprehensive land use plan was written and adopted. At that time, when urban growth area (UGA) boundaries were drawn around cities, a RUTA overlay was also established next to some of the UGA boundaries as possible expansion areas for the future. Some may have looked at these RUTA areas (rural land next to UGAs) as a home as well as a future investment, thinking that, at some time in the not-so-distant future, the UGA might expand into these areas and increase the value of their property. Over the last 25 years, some RUTAs may have been included in UGAs, but most have not.

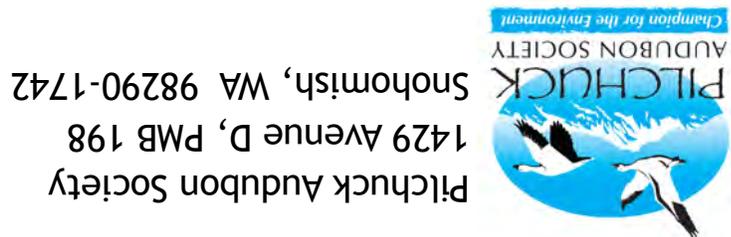
The Comprehensive Plan major update now occurs every eight years, and the most recent update was 2015. That would have been the perfect time to eliminate the RUTAs from the land use map, but the Council decided to do that in a separate process, which is happening now. In my view, the reason RUTAs should be eliminated is because, even with 200,000 people expected to move into Snohomish County in the next 20 years, there is plenty of land inside our UGAs and cities to accommodate most of that growth (90 percent), with some of the growth to our rural areas (10 percent), without expanding UGAs.

Therefore, RUTAs are giving some landowners a message that is not valid any more: that there will be a UGA expansion at some point into their rural neighborhoods. While a UGA expansion could happen if doing so meets all the criteria of the Growth Management Act, the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 and Multi-County Planning Policies, the County-wide Planning Policies, and the County's own comprehensive plan policies, those UGA expansions could very well happen in areas not part of the RUTA.

Eliminating this overlay will bring more predictability for current and new homeowners in rural areas adjacent to UGAs.

To learn more about Planning Commission and County Council public hearings, as well as other meetings, hearings, and events throughout Snohomish County, visit www.pilchuckaudubon.org, click on Smart Growth, then click on Calendar. ✧

Crowned Kinglet, heard a Swainson's Thrush (unchallenged by the screeners), a couple of American Robins, a couple of European Starlings, a couple of Orange-Crowned Warblers, a Common Yellowthroat, a couple of Yellow-Rumped Warblers, a Savannah Sparrow, heard a couple of Song Sparrows, 3 White-Crowned Sparrows, heard a Dark-eyed Junco, a Spotted Towhee, the Meadowlark, heard a Red-Winged Blackbird, and heard a Purple Finch (matched the playback). ✧



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