

Don't forget the 2011 Christmas Bird Counts

It's December ... and you know what that means?! It's time for the Christmas Bird Counts!



North county (Everett) count is December 17

The north county count, led by compiler Scott Atkinson, is scheduled for Saturday, December 17, and includes north Everett, much of the Snohomish River Delta, Jetty and Spencer islands, the Tulalip Indian Reservation and Marysville. For more info, contact Scott at scottratkinson@hotmail.com or Susie Schaefer at susie.schaefer@comcast.net.

A potluck for north county participants will follow at Art and Shirley Wait's home in Snohomish.

South county (Edmonds) count is December 26

The south county count circle reaches from south Everett to Woodway on the west and roughly from the SW corner of Snohomish to Cathcart to Bothell on the east. Three of the count areas extend into King County and include the northern parts of Shoreline and Lake Forest Park, most of Kenmore and a large part of Bothell.

The south county circle also includes the SE corner of Whidbey Island – an area that hasn't been covered in recent years. Duane Karna, south county compiler, is looking for a leader to establish a small team of observers to count birds there. The area extends roughly from Glendale to Possession Point, a distance of about 3 miles along the shoreline. A map of the area will be provided.

A pizza party is in the works for south county participants. The exact location for this gathering will be announced prior to count day.

If you can't make it out to count, but would like to count the birds at your feeder, that's also an option. Feeder counters report the total hours of observation and the *total number of birds seen at one time*, not the total number of birds seen during the observation period. Counts are then reported to the lead person in your area.

Volunteers – including students – are welcome to participate. If you're interested in counting in the field or at home or in leading the south Whidbey Island count – or if you'd like to know who the leader is in your area – contact Duane at karnadk@comcast.net or 425.776.5756.

The Audubon Society requests observers older than 18 years pay a \$5 fee to support data compilation and publication. Participants in the feeder counts do not pay this fee.

**No December program meeting
Happy holidays!**

**January program meeting
Friday, January 13, 7 p.m.**

***Rafting the Marsh Fork of
the Canning River***

Join Dan Streiffert, a wildlife photographer, as he shares a 12-day birding adventure along the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, home to 42 mammal species, 36 species of fish and more than 160 species of birds. Many of these birds migrate to and from all 50 states and from six continents to feed and reproduce, taking full advantage of the burst of biological growth which blossoms during the long days of the Arctic summer.

Everett Firefighters Hall
2411 Hewitt Avenue, Everett

For more information, call 425.252.0926

**Watch www.pilchuckaudubon.org
for the most up-to-date information.**

Another way to donate

Taxpayers older than 70.5 years may make tax-free distributions up to \$100,000 to a charity from an IRA. This counts toward the minimum distribution requirement. It's another way you may donate to PAS.

For other contributions or membership renewals, donate on the PAS web site: www.pilchuckaudubon.org, then click on "Join/Donate."

Please consult your tax advisor for specific information.

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President's message

By Mike Blackbird, President, Pilchuck Audubon Society



The City of Snohomish has proposed creating a wildlife refuge on property west of its waste treatment plant. A trail is planned to encircle the area. On a Tuesday birding trip in November, Pilchuck Audubon members were joined by the

Snohomish city engineer as we walked the proposed wildlife refuge trail. It was evident he was pleased with the prospect of the refuge. It was also evident that the city council and mayor were 100% supportive to the project. Good stuff!

In the course of our walk, he talked in some detail about the city's waste treatment plant from its not-too-sophisticated beginning to what it is today – and what it will become in the near future. His walking tutorial was fascinating regarding something most people never think about. It's not a visible part of our lives, but still plays a significant part in our lives. In reality: our relative long and healthy lives.

Each summer during the Middle Ages in England, the king would leave London in what was known as "royal progress." The professed reason for the royal progress was to show the flag to his subjects in all parts of the realm.

To be honest, the real reason to go on progress was to avoid London's endemic pestilence, like cholera and other water-borne diseases, that accompanied hot summer weather. Cholera is a democratic disease and is indiscriminate in its visitations. Royalty or commoner were subject to being victims.

Those who failed to receive an invitation from the king to accompany him on progress and remained in London were confronted with death – particularly children. In those long

ago days, a third of children died of disease before the age of 5. The age of 40 was old age. No one understood the correlation between human waste and drinking water. In the Middle Ages, disease wreaked a greater death rate than the sword could even begin to contemplate.

It wasn't until the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century and the importance of maintaining a relatively healthy workforce that the concept of public health began to be seriously addressed on a national scope. Still, it was a slow but steady process to gain widespread acceptance. Even after the United States adopted the idea of English public health, it was a prolonged undertaking to reach all corners of the country, particularly in rural states and communities. The small rural community where I grew up is a good example.

Pinehurst was built on the flood plain of Pine Creek. Every spring, as the snow melted, the water table rose to just under the surface. Most homes had less-than-elegant septic systems (usually two or three buried 50 gallon barrels with holes punched with a pick). Most wells were shallow, around 30 feet and were often infiltrated by sewage from flooded septic tanks during the spring runoff. The result was that every spring, there was an outbreak of hepatitis. Many of the kids I went to school with eventually came down with hepatitis.

Fortunately, no one in my family ever contracted hepatitis – because my father dug a 90-foot deep well, rather than a shallow 30-foot well. Sewage never leached into our deep well. I never asked my father why he dug a deep well. I doubt he understood that sewage leaching into a shallow

(See "Blackbird" on page 10)

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 annette.colombini@pilchuckaudubon.org or mail to 1429 Avenue D, PMB 198, Snohomish, WA 98290. Submissions must be received by the fifth of the month preceding publication. We reserve the right to edit.

To contact Pilchuck Audubon Society, call 425.252.0926.

The *Profile* is available at www.pilchuckaudubon.org



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Trip calendar

Check our web site at www.pilchuckaudubon.org for the latest information.

Tuesday, December 6 Smith and Spencer islands

Meet at 8 a.m. at Langus Riverfront Park, Everett. Go north on SR 529 (Broadway), over the Snohomish River and turn right on 28th Place NE. Follow the signs to Langus Waterfront Park. Continue past the park to a parking lot beyond the left curve in the road (under I-5 and just after the shell house and Everett Animal Shelter). Should see lots of waterfowl and raptors. Walk the Langus Riverfront Trail and Spencer Island. Lots of walking. Pack a lunch.

Leaders: Ed Cushing, 425.438.4146; Art Wait, 360.563.0181

Tuesday, December 13 Samish Flats

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Quilceda Village Walmart west of Marysville (I-5, exit 200). Park away from the store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5. Waterfowl, seabirds, shorebirds, raptors and passerines to delight and excite. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

Tuesday, December 20 Lummi Flats

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Quilceda Village Walmart west of Marysville (I-5, exit 200). Park away from the store, to the east, near Quilceda Blvd. and next to I-5. Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Shrike and Snow Bunting are very likely. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

Tuesday, December 27

No trip scheduled since the south county Christmas Bird Count is scheduled the day before.

Notice to field trip participants: Field trips are open to members and non-members alike. No advance notice required unless otherwise stated in the trip description. Trips go, rain or shine. However, in case of snow or ice, contact trip leader! Bring a sack lunch, beverage, binoculars, scope and field guide if you have them. If not, we'll share. Please, no perfume or cologne. Be prepared to share gas money with carpool drivers. Pets, even leashed, are prohibited on field trips. Please leave them at home.

Have fun, be entertained and get smarter

American Alps Legacy Project proposal celebration

December 9 Mountaineers Club, Seattle

You're invited to a celebration of the American Alps Legacy Project proposal for extending the North Cascades National Park on December 9, from 6-9 p.m., at The Mountaineers Club's committee rooms, 7700 Sandpoint Way, Seattle.

The celebration will feature an explanation of the proposal, as well as mountain climbers Jim Wickwire, John Roskelly and Steph Abbegg, who will share their experiences climbing in the North Cascades. The proposal seeks to protect 230,000+ acres of pristine wild country from Bacon Creek near Marblemount to Washington Pass by adding it to the North Cascades National Park.

Light refreshments will be served. Please RSVP to nccorg@gmail.com.

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 17-20, 2012 Your backyard and beyond!

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count provides a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. Anyone can participate in this free event and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 17-20. Enter your results on the web at www.birdcount.org, where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations.

Results from the 2011 GBBC included:

- Increased reports of Evening Grosbeaks, a species that has been declining.
- A modest seasonal movement of winter finches farther south in their search for food.
- Reports of Eurasian Collared Doves in Alaska for the first time, more evidence of an introduced species rapidly expanding its range.

The count extends well beyond backyards. Lots of partici-

pants head for national parks, nature centers, urban parks, nature trails or nearby sanctuaries. For more info, including bird-ID tips and past results, visit www.birdcount.org. The count also includes a photo contest and a prize drawing for participants who enter their bird checklists online.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible in part by sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

Port Susan Snow Goose and Birding Festival February 25-26 Stanwood, Washington

The geese are back and plans are in the works for the 2012 Port Susan Snow Goose Festival on February 25-26. Watch the official festival web site - www.snowgoosefest.org - for an upcoming list of field trips, seminars and other activities.

PAS sponsors the event, so we hope lots of members and friends will join us in Stanwood, as well as volunteer to help out. Please contact Susie Schaefer at 425.771.8165 or susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org if you can help.

Birds and whales of San Ignacio Lagoon

March 5-13, 2012 Baja, Mexico

Join Cabrillo Marine Aquarium March 5-13, 2012, for a trip that truly is the journey of a lifetime, especially for bird fans!

Gray whales return to San Ignacio Lagoon to mate and give birth. During this nine-day excursion, you'll spend three exciting days anchored in the lagoon where friendly gray whales and curious calves swim within arm's length of the skiffs.

For birders, this is a chance to see albatrosses, osprey, frigate birds, a variety of herons and egrets, not to mention all the birds that hang out in the mangroves found in San Ignacio. The trip also includes naturalist-led visits to uninhabited desert islands where passengers will have the chance to see even more birds, unique habitats and tons of other wildlife.

Contact Carolyn Kraft (310.548.7562 or cmaprograms@gmail.com) or visit the aquarium web site at www.cabrillomarineaquarium.org for more info.

PAS partners with biologist to study Dunlin

Ruth Milner, District Wildlife Biologist from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, recently updated the executive board on her work in Port Susan Bay. For the past five years, she's worked to have the area designated an important bird area by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). These areas are comparable to National Audubon Important Bird Areas, except they focus on shorebirds. With surveying help by PAS volunteers and our financial help for air surveys, Ruth has data to submit to WHSRN for listing Port Susan Bay as an area of regional importance – a site that acts as staging, nesting or breeding grounds for at least 20,000 shorebirds annually.



A large flock of Dunlin is flushed by a pair of Peregrine Falcons, by Annette Colombini

Ruth is interested in continuing research in the area. Researchers from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia theorize that the increase in falcons, especially peregrines, has changed how shorebirds are using shoreline habitats. It's been noted in Boundary Bay, BC, that shorebirds are using marginal bays and estuaries more than in the past. These areas aren't as rich in food as the primary areas. It's also been noted that Dunlin are flying more during high tide than in the past. They are not stopping to rest.

The theory is that the threat from increased numbers of

Peregrine Falcons is causing the shorebirds to avoid primary feeding areas, as well as resting during high tide. Ruth would like to see if this is happening here, as well. She wants to use PAS volunteers during high tides this winter to record how much Dunlin are flying.

The Pilchuck Board approved a partnership with Ruth to explore this possible change in shorebird behavior. With grant money designated for Port Susan Bay, we hired Megan Westervelt to coordinate the recruitment, training and scheduling of volunteer surveyors, as well as compiling data and educating PAS members with the project results. Megan is an expert birder

and has a degree in marine biology. She has worked on a number of research projects, so she's familiar with research protocols.

This research project allows Pilchuck Audubon to again engage in citizen science and make valuable contributions with our time and expertise. If you're interested in assisting Megan in her work, please contact her at 401.662.7545 or megan.pettebone@gmail.com. Unlike past survey work in Port Susan Bay, participants will only be required to identify Dunlin, not all shorebirds.

Conservation committee following variety of issues

By Allen Gibbs, Conservation Chair, Pilchuck Audubon Society

My name is Allen Gibbs and I've succeeded Jan Van Niel as Pilchuck Audubon's Conservation Chair. Starting this month, I'm resuming his practice of contributing remarks to *The Profile*. I invite PAS members to bring to the committee's attention issues/concerns they believe PAS should track or take action on. In addition, the committee and I will monitor state legislative sessions for situations when PAS should take a position and to join with other groups of like minds.

Some issues currently of committee interest:

Lake Tye wakeboarding course in Monroe: PAS is monitoring city council discussions. To our knowledge, we have no Monroe city residents in PAS and welcome non-member residents' thoughts on this proposal.

Reiter Hills DNR ORV Park: PAS encourages better storm water runoff containment during the construction and operation of the facility than is currently proposed.

Snohomish County Shooting Range: PAS will be involved from the beginning in county planning to ensure the design prevents groundwater contamination. There are public safety benefits to this project.

Snohomish County PUD green energy proposals: PAS will work with the PUD and other groups in researching both beneficial and potentially adverse effects of geothermal, tidal, wind, solar and hydro projects in the county, to better deter-

mine when to support, modify or oppose.

Lead bird shot and other lead ammunition use: We support the ban of lead bird shot for all bird hunting – not just waterfowl. We urge the ban to include lead ammunition in small and big game animal hunting, as well.

Coal transport by rail through Washington to ports: This is an issue important to all Washington chapters, but, especially to North Cascades Chapter. Exports from near Ferndale to coal-fired plants in Asia are part of this discussion.

Puget Sound: PAS supports cleanup and protection of Puget Sound and its wetlands. Migratory shorebirds, waterfowl and aquatic creatures need habitat protection.

The Forest Practices Committee (Kathy Johnson, Chair) follows issues focused on local public and private forest lands, such as the proposed reconstruction of the Suiattle River Road, remediation of contamination at the Monte Cristo mines and implementation of the new Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan. Land and shoreline management planning by Snohomish County and the municipalities are tended to by Kristin Kelly of PAS's Smart Growth staff.

Please contact me with your questions and counsel. If you would like to join the Conservation Committee, let's talk. You can reach me at 425.338.5466.

New Snohomish refuge in the works

By Kathleen Snyder, Secretary, Pilchuck Audubon Society

After years of limited access, the area adjacent to the City of Snohomish water treatment ponds is becoming a wildlife refuge. The new access trail begins behind the Combined Sewage Overflow building at 1801 First Street, passes under Highway 9 and then follows the Snohomish River dike – with 25 acres of open area on the right and the river on the left.

The PAS Board approved a partnership with the City of Snohomish to work on further improvements to this area, beginning with signage stressing its significance to wildlife. PAS and one other landowner own wetlands to the

north. Together, these three properties support thousands of waterfowl, songbirds, raptors and other wildlife.

Ideas for the future include extending the trail into a loop walk, erecting an owl house and funding the already-plumbed CSO building for bathrooms. Make a visit yourself and give ideas to Kathleen Snyder, Joyce Kelley or Cathy Clark (you can use the e-mail "contact us" form at www.pilchuckaudubon.org).

Stay tuned to this PAS station for future updates.

Hotline to report dead or ill swans available

In an effort to monitor Trumpeter Swans that have succumbed to lead poisoning, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has re-established a hotline to report dead or ill swans in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties.

People should call 360.466.4345, ext. 266, to report dead or sick swans. Callers should be prepared to leave a message including their name and phone number, as well as the location and condition of the swans. The hotline is available 24 hours a day through the end of March.



Trumpeter Swans, by Terry Green

Trumpeter Swans in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties and southwestern British Columbia, die each winter from lead poisoning after ingesting lead shot in areas where they feed.

Lead shot has been banned for waterfowl hunting in Washington and British Columbia for more than a decade, but biologists believe swans are likely reaching shallow underwater areas in fields and roosts where spent lead shot is still present.

People who see sick or dead swans are advised not to handle or attempt to move the birds, said Paul DeBruyn, WDFW wildlife biologist. WDFW and Puget Sound Energy employees, as well as volunteers from the Washington Waterfowl Association and the Trumpeter Swan Society, will pick up the birds, he said. WDFW and other agencies and organizations have been working since 2001 to locate sources of toxic lead.

Since 2006, hazing crews have worked to discourage swans from using Judson Lake, a significant source of lead poisoning on the US-Canada border in Whatcom County. As a result of that effort, the number of lead-related swan mortalities in northern Puget Sound dropped to about 75 per year, about 65 percent less than the previous five-year average, said DeBruyn.

For the third straight year, biologists will place bamboo poles in portions of the lake to keep birds from landing or swimming in areas with concentrations of lead shot, DeBruyn said. Swans will also be hazed from the lake.

Student seeks help with pollinator study



Have a certified backyard habitat? Interested in helping a local graduate student study bees, butterflies and hummingbirds?

Hillary Burgess, who's working on a master's in

urban ecology and environmental horticulture at the UW, is investigating vegetation and spatial variables that may influence pollinator abundance in residential gardens in south Snohomish County. She's looking for volunteers willing to collect data at their homes this spring and summer.

The study is straightforward, not greatly time consuming and

involves making regular, timed observations of bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinating fauna. You don't need ID skills – just an interest in observing and a willingness to allow Hillary to visit your yard.

If you'd like to help, you can contact Hillary at hkb10@uw.edu.

Meetings open to all

The PAS board meets the first Tuesday of each month, at 6 p.m., at the Sno-Isle Coop meeting room (2804 Grand Ave., Everett). All are welcome to attend to learn about chapter goals and priorities. For more info, contact Kathleen Snyder at 425.438.1505.

Thanks to some of our unsung PAS heroes

By Susie Schaefer, Vice President, Pilchuck Audubon Society

Carolyn Lacy and **Jay Ward** for organizing the two most recent birdseed sales.

Margaret Bridge for the dues reminder system now in place.

Laura Spehar for finding outstanding speakers for our monthly program meetings.

Martha Jordan and **Kathleen Snyder** for making sure we updated our PAS by-laws.

Virginia Clark for the outstanding cookies at our monthly program meetings and at the weekly birding trips.

John Snyder for helping with the audio visual system at the program meetings.

Jonathan Blubaugh and **Terry Nightingale** for the on-going commitment to offering weekend birding trips.

Kathleen Snyder for updating the web site calendar regularly and for trying to organize the PAS storage shed again.

Annette Colombini for her patience in getting newsletter content from people who don't track deadlines very well.

Kathy Piland for getting out the thank-you letters to PAS donors in a timely manner.

And, to all the other PAS members who keep our PAS chapter going!

Vaux's Swift data continues to grow

Although we're finished counting Vaux's Swifts at chimneys along the migration route this year, many of us never forget about this wonderful species and all we've learned about it in the last four years. Larry Schwitters, our swift expert, has compiled the "mother-of-all-spreadsheets" filled with data gathered all along the western routes. You can see it at www.vauxhappenings.org.

Larry was also featured in a recent article in *Smithsonian Magazine*. You can check it out here: www.smithsonianmag.com. Search by "Vaux's."

Larry is ever vigilant in trying to locate as-yet-unidentified

chimneys and trees used by the swifts. In Washington and Oregon, there are known roosting sites all along the route. But, in California, no sites between San Francisco and Los Angeles have made it to Larry's data sheets. So, the search is still on.

There is still a need to connect the wintering information in Central and South America. Despite our good counts, we're seeing a decline in this species. Our goal is to get the Vaux's Swift listed as a species of concern at the international level. So, the work goes on. We'll soon start planning to welcome back our little friends next spring.

Candidates sought for PAS board

The 2012 Pilchuck Audubon Society nominating committee is continuing to identify potential new board members and officers. We would welcome suggestions from current members.

The PAS Board of Directors meets monthly – although not usually in August – on the first Monday of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Sno-Isle Food Co-op in Everett. Board meetings are rarely dull, as PAS is an active and important organization in Snohomish County. PAS members are welcome to attend and an ever-changing board is vital for this organization.

If you'd like to be considered for the board or know someone who would be willing to help keep PAS lively and important, please contact one of the nominating committee members right away.

Susie Schaefer, 425.771.8165 or susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org

Bill Davey, ldavey4227@aol.com

Mara Price, pricemara@clearwire.net

Kathy Piland, piland4@earthlink.net

Summit and candidate forum a great success

Special thanks and congratulations to Kristin Kelly for organizing the third annual Livable Snohomish County Summit and Candidate Forum, *SnoH2Omish: learning about our water resources*. Everyone who attended this outstanding event – and there were lots of people – got something from it. The PAS table was popular, as well.

Great speakers, good workshops, tasty lunches and much more!

Call 24 hours a day for help for injured wildlife

Second Chance Wildlife Care Center
Snohomish, 425-335-0788



Deer Creek Wild Animal Rehab
Everett, 425-334-8171



Sarvey Wildlife Center: Arlington, 360-435-4817

PAWS: Lynnwood, 425-787-2500, ext. 817

Weekend hikers find bevy of winter finches

By Jonathan Blubaugh

For October's Weekend Bird Hike, we went to Snoqualmie Pass – a trip I'd wanted to take for years. We planned to hike nature trails along I-90 – and did do a couple of them. However, when we met up with Terry, he mentioned recent sightings of crossbills at Rattlesnake Lake near North Bend. We were excited at the prospect of seeing crossbills. Little did we know, this report actually portended an irruption of winter finches.

For several years, I've reviewed the national results of Christmas Bird Counts. Many of the writers mention "winter finches" as a category of birds in a way I would describe other groups such as "waterfowl" or "diurnal raptors." Some of the winter finches, crossbills specifically, are classified as irruptive. This is in contrast to migratory species. Irruptive species don't migrate in predictable patterns like migratory ones do. They follow seed crops, which vary from place to place due most likely to seasonal precipitation. Crossbills feed on seeds of conifer cones and their bills evolved specially to efficiently exploit this resource.

Rattlesnake Lake lies in Seattle's municipal watershed. A city's watershed is land that's been protected to provide a reliable source of clean drinking water. Typically – in an effort to ensure the reliable collection of abundant clean water – access is limited and native plants are allowed to flourish. The hills surrounding Rattlesnake Lake are administered by Seattle Public Works.

Recently, the city installed a visitors' center and a lovely rain garden. We were so glad we went there! As soon as we got out of the car, we spotted a flock of Evening Grosbeaks. Obviously, we know from Mara's column that they are here, but I'd never seen them in western Washington before. You just don't expect to see big yellow birds in the fall or winter around here.

We explored around the visitors' center and wandered down to the lake. It is pristine and clear. We were thrilled to see Ospreys fishing. One person actually witnessed an Osprey snatch a fish out of the water through her binoculars.

In the distance, across the lake was a small flock of Western Grebes. Some of them were performing their graceful bowing display to their mates. We also heard a Bald Eagle and saw a couple of kingfishers.

At the shore, in the crystal clear water, we found a sizable trout trying, unsuccessfully, to choke down a somewhat smaller fish. John Snyder's photos show its epic meal. We don't know how it turned out. The last time we saw the trout, it was still trying to swallow its lunch. It turned out badly for at least one of them.

As we milled about on the lakeshore, some of us glimpsed the crossbills making a quick flight. We never got a good look at them, but we recognized the distinctive calling. Unfortunately,

Sue, perhaps distracted by the fish, missed them. We excitedly came back to her and asked if she'd seen the crossbills. She said, "Oh no, you're kidding! You're just pulling my leg because we were briefly separated and you know I haven't seen them before."



Hungry trout, by John Snyder

Not to worry. A few minutes later, some came fluttering down the trail in the opposite direction. I think we all saw them that time. Turns out, we were just getting started with winter finches. This abundant fauna and luxuriant flora has benefitted from the watershed status. It's also ensured a paradise for native plants and animals perfectly adapted to the local climate after eons of co-evolution. It just goes to illustrate a somewhat under-

whelming converse conclusion: protecting habitat for wildlife inevitably benefits people because we share many of the same requirements for survival.

Our next stop (and first pre-planned stop) was the Asahel Curtis nature trail just off I-90. We ate lunch at its picnic area within the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. The trail wasn't well marked, nor was there much of a picnic area. To use a cliché, I might describe it as benign neglect. Fine with me: let it go back to nature. In any event, it's consistent with the freeway corridor's billing as a mountain-to-sound greenway. The surrounding forest looked to be second growth, but hasn't been disturbed since it was cut and the freeway pushed through. As a result, the trees are huge and the forest looks to be healthy and lush. It sits within the notorious Puget Sound convergence zone and is practically a Hoh River style temperate rain forest.

Evergreen forests harbor relatively fewer bird species compared to some mixed forest, wetland or shoreline habitats. (It makes up for it in numerous, seldom-seen vole and squirrel species.) However, the birds that were there were spectacular. We encountered a tremendous flock of feeding Pine Siskins to make this a winter finch trip for the record books. They were foraging in the crowns of large Western Red Cedars. We revised our consensus estimate upwards four times from 280 to 300 to 500 thence to 1000.

Massive flocks covered the boughs of the cedars high overhead. We could never see the entire flock due to the dense forest. But, Terry knows their calls because they frequent his feeder. By standing in the middle of the deserted camp drive, we could get a sense of the enormity of the flock. We could see little bits of cedar cone detritus filtering down to the forest floor. John took several photos – one with more than 300 individuals in it. We're convinced it represents only a small portion of the flock. Clearly a flock this size could attract predators.

The site sits on the left bank of the Snoqualmie River, really just a brook in early fall, but watch out. It's real easy to see

(See "Weekend Bird Hike" on page 10)

Birding highlights

By Mara Price, Sightings Coordinator

October 26, 2011–November 25, 2011

Dr. John G. Hewston from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, is again conducting the annual Thanksgiving Bird Count. It's easy. The count area is a 15-foot diameter circle in the location of your choice for one hour only on Thanksgiving Day. If you wish to participate, you can count and e-mail your results to me. I'll forward them to Dr. Hewston. Or, you can e-mail them to him at thanksgivingbirdcount@gmail.com.

Fall is definitely here. The leaves are on the ground and many bird species have headed south. Although there were still quite a few around for this report.

Evening Grosbeaks were still at Carole and Larry Beason's home near Lake Bosworth. They reported 23, along with a Belted Kingfisher, 2 Common Loons, 7 Hooded Mergansers, 2 Hutton's Vireos, 21 Mourning Doves, an Osprey, 36 Red-winged Blackbirds, 3 Townsend's Warblers, a Varied Thrush and 8 Turkey Vultures circling overhead for a total species count of 48.

John Davis spotted his first Hutton's Vireo in Forest Park. It was a lifer for him. His total species count of 40 also included 6 Barn Swallows, 21 Bushtits, a Fox Sparrow, 8 Golden-crowned Sparrows, 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 2 Orange-crowned Warblers, 2 Pacific Wrens, a Swainson's Thrush, 3 Varied Thrushes, a Western Tanager, 40 Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Hermit Thrush.

A Eurasian Collared Dove made several visits to Hilka Egvedt's home in Mukilteo. She also reported 11 American Robins eating Mountain Ash berries, while ignoring the ripe Evergreen Huckleberries (which I think would taste better). Her total species count of 24 also included 7 American Goldfinches, 14 Band-tailed Pigeons, a Black-headed Grosbeak, 4 California Quail, 4 Golden-crowned Sparrows, a Pileated Woodpecker, 2 Spotted Towhees, a Townsend's Warbler and a Varied Thrush.

Kriss Erickson's report from Everett included a Bewick's Wren, 2 male Northern Flickers, 8 Dark-eyed Juncos, 16 Black-capped Chickadees, 11 Bushtits, 3 Steller's Jays, 6 American Crows and 2 Song Sparrows for a total species count of 8.

Julie O'Donald had the same problem as I did with a Cooper's Hawk that spent days in the yard. The Cooper's Hawk in her yard in Brier was feeding on a Band-tailed Pigeon for three days. It finally managed to move it to the edge of the green-belt. Her total species count of 21 included 16 Band-tailed Pigeons, 2 Bewick's Wrens, 3 Cedar Waxwings, 4 Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2 Townsend's Warblers and a Varied Thrush.



Hutton's Vireo, by Matt Knoth



Dark-eyed Junco, by Paul Kusmin

Mary Sinker had a busy month counting birds in her yard in Stanwood. She counted 29 American Robins, 26 Band-tailed Pigeons, 63 Dark-eyed Juncos, 17 Mourning Doves, 9 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 7 Pacific Wrens, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, 6 House Finches, 7 American Goldfinches, 12 Black-capped Chickadees, a Brown Creeper, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Great Blue Heron for a total species count of 33.

Dick Vanderhoff's report from Stanwood included 10 Steller's Jays on the deck, 5 Black-capped Chickadees, a Bald Eagle, a Red-tailed Hawk and a young pigeon on the deck for a species count of 6.

I've had swarms of Pine Siskins visiting the waterfall in our pond. My total species count of 26 from Marysville included the 20+ Pine Siskins, 10 American Robins along the road, 9 Dark-eyed Juncos, 7 Evening Grosbeaks, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 30+ Rock Doves, 2 California Quail, a Black-throated Gray Warbler at the pond, a Common Raven, a Wilson's Warbler and a Bewick's Wren.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please e-mail me at pricemara@clearwire.net or leave a message at 425.750.8125.

Tuesday birders strike life-list gold



Snow Bunting, by Rex Guichard

On a recent field trip, the Tuesday morning birders spotted a Snow Bunting near Blaine, Washington. It was a valuable find – a life-list bird for everyone. Congratulations!

Smart Growth report

By Nora Haider, Intern, and Kristin Kelly, Smart Growth Director

Hello, Pilchuck Audubon Society. My name is Nora Haider. I am honored to write this month's Smart Growth Report. For the past few months, I've been interning with Kristin – assisting with projects including the Transit Oriented Communities Workshop, Feast with Friends and the Livable Snohomish County Summit.

Kristin asked me to write this month's Smart Growth Report so I can share my journey into the complex world of environmental policy. I was born in Everett and have lived my entire life in Snohomish County. Puget Sound, the Snohomish River and the Cascade Mountains are all a part of my daily life. I truly believe we live in one of the best places in the world. In order to protect our corner of the world, I've chosen to focus my studies on the environment. I'm grateful Kristin has taken the time to share her role in protecting land and building communities in the Puget Sound region.

I'm currently in my senior year at Western's Huxley College of the Environment on the Peninsulas. This is an off-campus degree program offered through Everett Community College's University Center. Classes are taught via teleconference, with students attending at Olympic College in Bremerton and Peninsula College in Port Angeles, as well as in Everett. The instructors are active in environmental fields and offer a real-world perspective on issues we may encounter in our careers. This June, I'll graduate with a degree in Planning and Environmental Policy and a minor in Environmental Science. After I graduate, I hope to continue my involvement with land use issues in the Puget Sound region.

To me, one of the more interesting aspects of land use planning is reversing and restoring land to its pre-developed state. I am glad to be involved in this era of land use planning so I can help undo poor land use decisions of the past. In Snohomish County, it's happening all around – such as the restoration of the Union Slough estuary and the rural land conservation projects near Lake Roesiger and on Cavalero Hill.

During my time at Huxley, I've followed closely the removal of the Elwha River dams on the Olympic Peninsula. Because of the proximity of the Elwha River to Port Angeles, we've joined our classmates at Peninsula College in adopting the project as an informal theme for the Huxley program. In my Environment and Resource Policy class, I learned about the salmon that still butt their head against the surface of the dam. In the Parks and Protected Areas course, we discussed how Olympic National Park is planning to restore the river to its pre-dam state. Stream Ecology taught me how dams alter water quality by affecting stream temperature. Puget Sound Research was the most in-depth overview of the Elwha River. During this class, I attended the Elwha Nearshore Consortium Workshop, which focused on the impacts the dams have on sediment in the Elwha River Estuary.

Considering what I have learned about the Elwha dams and their impacts on the Elwha River, I felt a wave of concern when I heard that Snohomish County PUD was considering building a new dam on the south fork of the Skykomish River above Sunset Falls. How will the proposed dam impact salmon, water quality and sediment? This decision could alter a northwest river for generations to come. This is the kind of land use decision I look forward to contributing to as I grow in my planning career. The balance of infrastructure needs and the natural environment is the basis of what constitutes a livable community. But, would this dam meet the smart growth goals of our region?

I look forward to participating in the process to help determine the fate of the Skykomish River. My internship with Kristin will

continue until June. However, I expect to continue working with her on Smart Growth policy for years to come. Our shared passion for rural land conservation, clean water and livable communities ensures a partnership that will outlast my degree requirements. As a part of this relationship, I also hope learn more about Pilchuck Audubon Society and its members. I look forward to using what I have learned at Huxley to advocate for smart land use decisions in Snohomish County.

SnoH2Omish: learning about our water resources – a success story

Thanks to all who attended the third Livable Snohomish County Summit and Candidate Forum, *SnoH2Omish: learning about our water resources*, on October 29. The event was sponsored by PAS's Smart Growth Program, Futurewise, Snohomish Group of Sierra Club, Transition Port Gardner, Citizens to Protect the Upper Snohomish River Valley (CPUSRV) and KSER 90.7FM radio. About 150 people attended and all of the breakout sessions were well-attended. If you did attend, I'd love your feedback. Please take a few minutes and share your thoughts with me at kristin@futurewise.org.

Thanks, also, to all the volunteers – especially the experts who presented a wealth of information on the challenges and solutions to protecting our water resources for Snohomish County and Puget Sound. These volunteers include Alan Shank (Certified Farm Planner), Heather Trim (People for Puget Sound), Jerry Hebert (H2e Family of Companies), Joanne Hedou, John Anderson (Sound Salmon Solutions), Kerri Cechovic (Washington Environmental Council), Monte Marti (Snohomish Conservation District), Morgan Schneider Ruff (Puget Sound Partnership), Dr. Ralph Bennett, Ruth L. Milner (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Suzie Wong Swint (Snohomish Surface Water Management), Sheila McKinnon (Snohomish County Master Gardner), Terri Strandberg (Snohomish County PDS), Terry Williams (Tulalip Tribes) and Zsofia Pasztor (Innovative Landscape Technologies).

One summit goal was to bring people together for networking and support. As such, your attendance automatically means you're part of the Livable Snohomish County Coalition (LSCC). This isn't a group or organization. It's a way to communicate, through me, on issues affecting Snohomish County. I use the list to update folks on important land use and environmental policy and regulation issues and for education and action alerts – so you can be involved if you choose.

I urge you to register and visit the LSCC web site (www.livablesnohomish.org). If you want to post information about an event or area of concern, please send the information to me. And, if you have web site experience, we are looking for a volunteer to make these sorts of updates.

As part of the LSCC, you'll have opportunities to encourage decision makers to do good things for the environment. Since the inception of the coalition six years ago, LSCC members have worked together to ensure protections for water quality with critical areas regulations, shoreline master plans and comprehensive planning.

If you aren't a member of Pilchuck Audubon Society, consider joining and donating to the Smart Growth Program. Your donations ensure our work will continue. Send membership fees of \$28 to the Membership Chair and Smart Growth donations to Kristin Kelly, 1429 Avenue D, #198, Snohomish, WA 98290.

Blackbird ...

(continued from page 2)

well resulted in sick kids. Simply put, shallow wells had a tendency to run dry in late summer. Deep wells didn't. Regardless of the reason for my father digging a deep well, the Blackbird kids never developed hepatitis.

Today, Pinehurst, like Snohomish, is an incorporated city with sewer and water systems. Septic tanks and shallow wells

are a distant memory. Pinehurst families, as most American families, take for granted that their kids will be free of water-borne disease and give little thought as to why. Just as they never wonder why Queen Elizabeth doesn't go on summer progress.

Weekend bird hike ...

(continued from page 7)

that the water is way higher during flood events. There was an American Dipper in the stream, too.

Our next stop was at the much better marked Franklin Falls Wagon Road Trail just west of the summit. Again, this path is through nearly mature evergreen forest and lacks bird species diversity. By then we'd spent lots of time at Rattlesnake Lake and working the siskins.

We wrapped up our walk up the falls trail to take a peek at the water treatment plant at the summit. This last stop was brief, but productive. There were a few tiny Green-winged Teals. In the sunshine, their green specula (the distinctive colored patch on ducks' secondary flight feathers) shone brilliantly. We also saw a couple of Common Goldeneyes.

Here's a summary of the birds we saw or heard that day: 2 Mallards, 5 Green-winged Teal, 2 Common Goldeneyes, 9 bowing Western Grebes, a Great Blue Heron, 6 Canada Geese, 2 Ospreys, a Bald Eagle, 4 Glaucous-winged Gulls, 27 Rock Pigeons, 2 Belted Kingfishers, 2 Northern Flickers, 2 Steller's Jays, 35 crows, 4 Common Ravens, 4 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, a Bushtit, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 3 Pacific Wrens, 2 American Dippers, 15 Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 12 American Robins, 4 European Starlings, a Cedar Waxwing, 2 Spotted Towhees, a Song Sparrow, a Dark-eyed Junco, 16 Red Crossbills, ~1000 Pine Siskins, 15 Evening Grosbeaks and a House Sparrow.

Audubon membership information

Joint membership in National Audubon Society (NAS) and Pilchuck Audubon Society (PAS) includes NAS's quarterly magazine *Audubon* and PAS's *Profile* e-newsletter for one year. Cost is \$20 for an Introductory Membership or \$35 for renewals. When you join National Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of PAS. **All PAS membership dues are tax-deductible.* The PAS tax ID number is 96-6183664.**

PAS receives only a small portion of your national dues to support the work of the chapter. If you do not want to be a national member or you want your dues to stay local, you can join PAS separately. Local membership in PAS includes a one-year subscription (12 issues) to PAS's *Profile* newsletter. Cost is \$28. A special limited income category is available for \$16.

Local PAS membership
<input type="checkbox"/> New member \$28
<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal \$28
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime PAS member \$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 monthly payments of \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 quarterly payments of \$250
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 payment of \$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> Donation..... \$_____
Make check payable to: <i>Pilchuck Audubon Society</i>
Mail your check and this form to: <i>PAS Membership Chair</i> <i>1429 Avenue D, PMB 198</i> <i>Snohomish, WA 98290</i>

NAS membership (includes PAS membership)
<input type="checkbox"/> Introductory membership \$20
Make check payable to: <i>National Audubon Society</i>
Mail your check and this form to: <i>PAS Membership Chair</i> <i>1429 Avenue D, PMB 198</i> <i>Snohomish, WA 98290</i>

NAS renewal (includes PAS renewal)
<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal \$35
Make check payable to: <i>National Audubon Society</i>
Mail your check and this form to: <i>NAS, Membership Data Center</i> <i>POB 420235</i> <i>Palm Coast, Florida 32142</i>

- Contact me about volunteer opportunities.
- I am interested in the Conservation Committee.

* Consult your tax professional for full details.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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E-mail: _____