

# Change the community one bird at a time

By Alan and Bonnie Mearns

In early 2009, two volunteers from the Edmonds Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program (EBWHP) provided local citizens with training and encouragement to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). A dozen people participated in the 2-3 hour training at the Willow Creek Hatchery campus. Even more people attended the 2010 training.

**Great Backyard Bird Count**  
Training: Feb. 11  
Count: Feb. 17-20

How can we measure the effectiveness of these citizen-science activities? For the GBBC, one way is to look at the data. The GBBC web site includes a pull-down window,

"Explore the Results." Click on it, then enter "Edmonds and Washington" in the "detailed reports>A Particular Place" windows. *Viola!* The 2011 checklist for Edmonds.

For February, 2011, a total of 2041 birds – representing 72 species – were counted. This more than doubled the number of birds (1135) and increased by one-third the number of species (51) reported for 2010, which was the largest tally since the counting began in 1998.

If you click on "see a summary for Washington" at the bottom of the list, you'll see a map of the state. There, if you click on "see list of localities in Washington with reports" you will find that people counting in "Edmonds" submitted 61 checklists, putting Edmonds in the top 10 of count locations in Washington for the first time in GBBC history.

The training and local advertising efforts aren't the only reasons for this increase. Participation in the GBBC has been on the increase here and across the country. Many people come from outside the city to count birds in the Edmonds Marsh, along the shoreline and in the parks. Sometimes, the turnout might vary with the weather. But, our advertising and activities certainly helped. Regardless, citizens are now documenting an incredible variety of birds in the Edmonds area and that is reflected in these GBBC results.

EBWHB, Pilchuck Audubon Society, Edmonds Parks and the Willow Creek Hatchery will again sponsor GBBC citizen training on Saturday, February 11. The GBBC count is scheduled for the four-day Presidents Day weekend, February 17-20. Within a few days following, we'll likely see another outstanding report of birds and bird counts on the GBBC web site, giving citizens and the city real information about wildlife diversity and trends. This information can be used to understand climate change and help guide development activities in Edmonds.

As our daughter, Michelle, said, we are "changing the community ... one bird at a time." Thanks to all who participate!

**February program meeting  
Friday, February 10, 7 p.m.**

***Urban wildlife habitat design with Kelly Brenner***

Kelly Brenner writes *The Metropolitan Field Guide*, a blog about urban wildlife habitat design. She'll discuss the focus of her blog, the huge resource library, recommended books, favorite urban habitats and stories, as well as other projects she's involved in.

Kelly lives in Seattle and has a degree in landscape architecture. She writes *The Metropolitan Field Guide* and contributes to other blogs, as well. Kelly is a photographer, traveler and naturalist and is working on a book about the urban wildlife habitat of Seattle. Kelly also serves on the board for Seattle Audubon.

Everett Firefighters Hall  
2411 Hewitt Avenue, Everett

**For more information, call 425.252.0926**

**Watch [www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org) for the most up-to-date information.**

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**One birder's trash ...**

You probably have a few bird books. Maybe you even have many bird books. If there are some you no longer want, please consider donating them to Pilchuck Audubon for resale.

Donated books are offered for sale at program meetings and other events. The money raised from book sales is used for operating expenses, educational programs and environmental action.

Donations of books (and money) are tax deductible. Please contact Kathleen Snyder at 425.438.1505 if you can help. She'd be happy to arrange pick up.

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# President's message

By Mike Blackbird, President, Pilchuck Audubon Society



While sitting at my desk, staring at my bookcase, waiting for inspiration for this month's column, I realized I have a lot of bird field guides. I have 10 covering the United States, seven foreign countries, 20 for specific regions and a couple where to stay when on birding trips. I doubt, though, that I probably have half the birding books many Pilchuck members do. But, I bet almost everyone has Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*.

In latter part of the nineteenth century, a group of young Boston Brahmins formed an ornithological club. Until that time, birdwatching as a hobby had been mostly a solitary pursuit. Shortly, similar groups formed in other cities. For the most part, birdwatching was initially a patrician pleasure, but it didn't remain that way. Over time, birdwatching garnered interest in plebeian habitats.

But, it was Roger Tory Peterson who made birdwatching accessible to a wider and wider public. Peterson unlocked the door and made birdwatching relatively easy and fun with his emphasis on identifying field marks. For years, his book stood alone: the one book everyone used, the unchallenged bestseller. It almost didn't come to pass. Five publishers turned it down. It was the heart of the Depression and none were convinced it would sell. When he finally did find a publisher, the first printing was only 2000 copies, but sold out in the first couple of weeks – in the midst of the worst economic times. Eventually, some 3,000,000 copies were sold.

Peterson's success rested on the efficiency of the spare renderings, singling out what was unique about the bird with little black lines pointing at the distinctive field marks of the bird. One or two identifying lines are enough to identify 95 percent of the birds.

Fortunately for birdwatchers, success generates competition. Birders today have a myriad of birding field guides to choose from, each offering information or a point of view that expands our universe.

With the proliferation of bird field guides on the market, one would think there would be a glut. However, that's not the case. Birders may have a favorite field guide, but, like cooks with cookbooks, they have a lot of them. No matter how many we may own, we're always ready to buy another. Probably some million general bird field guides are sold in the United States every year, plus auxiliary guides – guides to birds of a specific region, state or city, or guides to the best places to find birds, or guides to birdsongs – even guides to places to find bird watchers.

With more leisure time and long lived retirement, birding field guides have become an important key to our greater appreciation of nature. Among outdoor activities connected with nature, only fishing stands ahead of bird watching, hunting is about on a par with it. Fishing and hunting are utilitarian activities since one object, though often secondary, is to get food. Birding is decidedly non-utilitarian. For most, the reason for watching birds is aesthetics.

On the surface, birders find watching a wholesome pastime which gets them out into the fresh air, alerts them to stimulating sights and sounds, provides the fun of being both competitive and companionable. On a deeper level, it becomes a peculiarly intense personal experience, conscious or subliminal. The advent of field guides and the development of better and less expensive binoculars has brought a greater interest in nature and deeper concern for the environment. More than any other group in natural science, bird-watchers have led the conservation movement in America.

Roger Tory Peterson enjoyed a life of well deserved fame and prestige as perhaps one of the world's foremost experts on birds. I believe an argument could be made that his most important contribution to the natural world was when, as a young artist and birdwatcher, in the depths of the Depression, he jump started the conservation movement by drawing a simple black line to emphasize the field marks of birds.

## 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](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org)



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# Trip calendar

Check our web site at [www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org) for the latest information.

## Tuesday, February 7

### Fir Island

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. Expect almost anything: Golden Eagle, Northern Shrike, Tundra Swans, Merlin, etc. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

## Tuesday, Feb. 14 Port Gamble to Port Townsend

Meet at 7:25 a.m. at the Edmonds Marsh (south of West Dayton St., turn left just before the railroad tracks). We'll take the ferry to Kingston, go through Port Gamble and across the Hood Canal Floating Bridge. On the way, we'll visit Marrowstone Island and Indian Island with views of Admiralty Inlet. Waterfowl, seabirds and maybe Orcas. Past year's trips have been memorable. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

## Sunday, February 19 Narbeck Wetland Sanctuary

This weekend bird walk is planned in conjunction with the Great Backyard Bird Count. Meet at 8 a.m. at the sanctuary parking lot. Take I-5 to the SR 526 (the Boeing Freeway). Take the Seaway Blvd. exit. Go straight through the first light at 75th St. Then take the next right into the parking lot.

Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425.244.7633, [aracfi@msn.com](mailto:aracfi@msn.com)

## Tuesday, February 21

### Samish Flats

Meet at 7:30 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, February 28

### Birch Bay, Semiahmoo, Drayton Harbor

Meet at 7 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. Expect Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks, Brant and lots of other seagoing avian species. Wilma will serve hot soup, rolls and dessert at her waterfront cabin.

Leader: Wilma Bayes, 360.629.2028

## Sunday, March 11

### Japanese Gulch

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. We'll carpool to Japanese Gulch in Mukilteo. We'll hike down to the water and check out the waterfowl and up the trail into the gulch in search of forest birds. Elevation gain is gradual and is about 200 feet on a former railway grade. Based on time, weather and the will of the group, we may also bird the Mukilteo Lighthouse Park. This is a half-day hike so pack a lunch or plan to join us in Mukilteo for a hot meal.

Leader: Terry Nightingale, 206.619.2383, [tnight@pobox.com](mailto:tnight@pobox.com)

## Sunday, March 18

### Montlake Fill

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. The Montlake Fill – or Union Bay Natural Area – is a renowned Seattle birding hotspot. We'll walk the shoreline and maybe part of the adjacent campus. Like many college campuses, the UW grounds are park-like in their own right. About a half a day. We'll probably stop along Lake Union or in Freemont on the way home for socializing over a late lunch. Maybe we'll see a few early migrants.

Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425.244.7633, [aracfi@msn.com](mailto:aracfi@msn.com)

## Sunday, April 15

### Wiley Slough and Samish Flats

All done with your taxes? Celebrate by birding with us! Meet at 7:30 a.m. 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. We'll carpool to Wiley Slough in Skagit County and walk the trails. There will likely be mud, so bring your hiking boots. We'll look and listen for marsh birds and shore birds. Then we'll drive a short distance further north to the Samish Flats in search of raptors. This will be a half-day or full-day hike, depending on the will of the group. Pack a lunch and snacks for the trail. Discovery Pass is required.

Leader: Terry Nightingale, 206.619.2383, [tnight@pobox.com](mailto:tnight@pobox.com)

## Walla Walla birding

### June 7-11

The trip to Walla Walla is still on. But, please note the dates have changed to June 7-11. The birding will be even better then. Our plan is to look for the Green-tailed Towhee in the Blue Mountains – possibly the only place in Washington to find them. Susie has been working with the Blue Mountain Audubon chapter and is following their web site. We'll spend three days birding there and two days of travel to Walla Walla. This area is unique and offers great birding. The trip will be limited to three cars (12 people). Please contact Susie Schaefer if you're interested: [susie.schaefer@comcast.net](mailto:susie.schaefer@comcast.net).

*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.*

**Birdathon is fun and easy.  
You should try it!**

**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**

# Have fun, be entertained and get smarter

## **Beavers: the biggest dam movie you ever saw** **Friday, February 3** NW Stream Center, Everett

Take a virtual swim with beavers and experience the rich habitat of one of nature's greatest engineers. Join the Adopt-a-Stream Foundation on Friday, February 3, 7 p.m., for a free screening of *Beavers*. Set in the pristine forest and lakes of the Rockies, the film follows the lives of a family of beavers as they grow, play and transform the world around them.

The movie is free and suitable for all ages. Advance registration is required. Please call 425.316.8592 to sign up.

The Northwest Stream Center is located in McCollum Park, Everett. Take the 128th Street exit from I-5 and drive east for one-half mile. Turn right into the entrance of the park and drive to the south end. The Northwest Stream Center is the last structure at the end of the road.

## **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](http://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 participants 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](http://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](http://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](mailto:susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org) if you can help.

**Birdathon is good for you!**

## **All about bears**

**Saturday, February 25** NW Stream Center  
Join biologists from the Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) for an educational and entertaining presentation about bear habits and habitat requirements on Saturday, February 25, beginning at 1 p.m., at the NW Stream Center.

The presenters are enforcement officers Nick Jorg and Bruce Richards (who you may have seen on Animal Planet or local television news shows). However, the real stars of the show are Mishka and Colter, Karelian Bear Dogs who are friendly to people, but scary to bears. They'll teach about human encroachment in bear habitat in the Pacific NW and show how those situations are managed by WDFW.

This event is appropriate for those age 10 and older and will likely sell out. Cost is \$5 for PAS members and advance reservations are required. Please call 425.316.8592.

The Northwest Stream Center is located in McCollum Park, Everett. Take the 128th Street exit from I-5 and drive east for one-half mile. Turn right into the entrance of the park and drive to the south end. The Northwest Stream Center is the last structure at the end of the road.

## **Birds and whales of San Ignacio Lagoon** **March 5-13** 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](mailto:cmaprograms@gmail.com)) or visit the aquarium web site at [www.cabrillomarineaquarium.org](http://www.cabrillomarineaquarium.org) for more info.

## **Killer Whale Tales**

**Saturday, March 10** Northwest Stream Center, Everett  
See our southern resident orca whales "swimming" on the walls at the Northwest Stream Center. Thanks to amazing videography by Jeff Hogan from Killer Whale Tales ([www.killerwhaletales.org](http://www.killerwhaletales.org)), you can learn how to identify each of the 86 members of the southern resident pods, who call the Salish Sea their home.

The presentation begins at 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 10, at the Adopt-a-Stream Foundation auditorium in McCollum Park, 600 128th Street SE, Everett. Take the 128th Street exit from I-5 and drive east for one-half mile. Turn right into the entrance of the park and drive to the south end. The Northwest Stream Center is the last structure at the end of the road.

Cost is \$5 for PAS members. Advance purchase required. For more info, call 425.316.8592.

(See "Festivals" on page 9)

# Important issues in the legislative session

By Allen Gibbs, Conservation Chair, Pilchuck Audubon Society

Washington State Audubon is a member of the Environmental Policy Council (EPC), a group of 25 conservation organizations unique to Washington or branches of national groups. In the current state legislative session, EPC has voted to advocate for the following three issues:

**Toxic-free kids:** Expand an existing ban on cancer-causing flame retardants in fabrics and other products made for children's use, to include additional harmful chemicals. Encourage businesses to substitute toxic chemicals for non-toxic chemicals that won't harm the environment.

**Clean Energy Initiative implementation:** Washington voters approved I-937 in November 2006. To date, 17 of 63 state utilities have invested nearly \$7.5 billion to develop clean energy alternatives. Their investments have created green jobs and green economic development with long-term benefits. This is a great example of pollution-free prosperity! But, there are some utilities behind the curve, claiming the law is onerous. They say they will miss timelines and want regulatory relief from the law.

**Pollution-free prosperity:** Opponents of past green legislation assert that environmental gains over the past decades have contributed to today's recession. They claim that many environmental gains now prevent economic recovery in Washington and add to budget deficits. Our reply is that rolling back the laws protecting our families, the flora and fauna of our state and preserving and improving air and water quality won't end the recession. We know better: \$7.5 billion in investments producing jobs because of the clean energy initiative, now a law, is proof that environmental progress can be good for our economy.

Choosing between a healthy environment and a strong economy is a false choice. We have generations of Republican and Democratic politicians to thank for building Washington's science-based environmental protections. EPC is vigilant in working to prevent the rollback of environmental successes.

There is a bill of interest to birders, but not among the EPC's priorities. House Bill 2241 bans (by 2014) the sale of lead fishing sinkers weighing an ounce or less, as well as weighted lead fishing hooks. It affects only sports fishers. It doesn't apply to commercial fishing, which uses larger weighted lead equipment. There are ample nontoxic materials to substitute for small lead fishing sinkers and weighted fishing hooks. I know of fishers who are also waterfowl hunters and have successfully made the switch.

Water birds ingest the small lead sinkers lost when fishing line snags and breaks on rocks and brush. The monofilament fishing line "rots," but the sinkers remain and are attractive as grit and ballast to water birds. Lead poisoning and death occur when enough of the sinkers are consumed.

HB 2241 received a hearing before the House Environment Committee on January 19. A copy of the PAS comment letter is posted on the PAS web site under "Advocacy."

Letters to your legislators on any of the above matters are encouraged. If you want help to identify your legislator, please contact the Conservation Committee through the chapter web site ([www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org)) or me by phone: 425.338.5466.

## Bird seed sale in March

Just in time for the spring migration, the next PAS birdseed sale is scheduled for Saturday, March 3. To order birdseed and suet, contact Carolyn Lacy at [carolynlacy137@frontier.com](mailto:carolynlacy137@frontier.com) or 206.245.5836. Orders must be placed by Tuesday, February 28.

Pick up your order in Everett between 10 a.m. and noon on Saturday, March 3, at Bering Sea Fisheries, 3862 Railway Avenue. Jay Ward and other volunteers will be on hand to collect payment and help load the seed.

To get to Bering Sea Fisheries from I-5 northbound, take exit 193 (Pacific Ave.) and head north on Walnut Street to Hewitt. Turn right onto Hewitt. Hewitt becomes Highland Drive. After about a mile, turn right onto California Street. California becomes Railway Avenue. Bering Sea Fisheries is ahead on the right.

From I-5 southbound, take exit 194 (Everett Avenue). At Everett Avenue, turn left. Follow Everett Avenue to Harrison Avenue and turn right. At Railway Avenue, turn left. Bering Sea Fisheries is ahead on the right.

To pick up your seed in Edmonds, let Carolyn know when you place your order. You'll need to arrange a pickup time with Paul or Laura Spehar at 425.672.2150.

*Please remember: the price of seed fluctuates. So, the price the day you pick it up might be slightly different from what you were told when the order was placed.*

## Volunteers needed for Dunlin study

Researchers theorize that the threat from increased numbers of Peregrine Falcons is causing shorebirds to avoid primary feeding and resting areas during high tide. Pilchuck Audubon has partnered with Ruth Milner, District Wildlife Biologist from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, to see if this is happening with our local wintering population of Dunlin. (For more information, see the December 2011 issue of *The Profile* at [www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org).)

We've had two successful survey weeks. And, with support from willing volunteers, we'll be able to survey two more sites this winter. We're adding the Big Ditch Access in Stanwood and English Boom on Camano Island to the other four survey sites: Warm Beach and the Nature Conservancy Preserve in Stanwood, Iverson Spit on Camano Island and Jensen Access in Conway.

We need volunteers at each site on February 12, 13 and 14, to observe Dunlin and raptor behaviors for 2-3 hour periods at high tide.

If you can help, please contact Megan Westervelt at [megan.pettebone@gmail.com](mailto:megan.pettebone@gmail.com) or 401.662.7545.

# Winter feeding brings more birds to backyards

By Joan Carson, courtesy of The News Tribune

If there is one thing constant about birds, it's change. Bird populations throughout North America have been undergoing changes for centuries. Some have been forced on them by human actions, most notably habitat alterations. Other changes have come about because of birds taking advantage of human actions.

The first thing to come to mind is the feeding of wild birds in the proportions we see today. Changes brought about by these actions have taken place during a relatively short period of time.

Most of us began feeding birds by putting a birdseed mix in our feeders. The chickadees, nuthatches and finches ate the sunflower seeds and scattered other seeds on the ground. Towhees, juncos and sparrows benefited the most. Then came a major change. Black oil sunflower seeds began to come into vogue. They were touted as "the food of choice" for seed-eating birds. We have a lot of seed-eaters in the Pacific Northwest. When we began filling our feeders with this seed, the bird population at our feeders started to change.

Chickadees and nuthatches became regulars. Then the Evening Grosbeaks, goldfinches and Pine Siskins discovered this food source. Until the change, most of us with feeders had never had grosbeaks and siskins in our yards – much less at our feeders. The goldfinches were another rare visitor that soon became a regular at many feeding stations.

The growing number of Anna's Hummingbirds that stay in our yards year-round is a more recent change. This has come on slowly for several decades and has now gained enough momentum to where we expect them to stay all winter. They've been resident birds in the northwest for longer than many of us realized. But, now, their population has exploded. Today, we keep their feeders up all winter and that's bringing on even more change.



Wintering Anna's Hummingbird, by Minette Layne

## Some birds have a sweet tooth and enjoy a little sugar in their diet

House finches learned how to drink from hummingbird feeders many years ago. They also like to munch on fruit tree blossoms when they appear in the spring. Now, other birds are sipping at hummingbird feeders that are in place all year.

Reports of Townsend's Warblers feeding at hummingbird feeders began last year. One reader discovered it when their motion-activated camera caught a shot of the feeding bird.

Several weeks ago, they reported the bird was back.

Townsend's Warblers are resident birds that nest in the mountains and part of their population spends the winter in our yards. They are attracted to the lard/oatmeal mix or its commercial suet version. Now that some are sampling the sugar-water syrup, will it catch on?

A report of a Hutton's Vireo doing the same was a surprise that started me thinking. What about other insect-eaters that come to our feeders in the winter? Will the Bushtits, kinglets, wrens, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Orange-crowned Warblers begin coming to the hummingbird feeders now that they are in place all winter?

It will be interesting to watch. When looking back over the years and the changes that have occurred in a short period of time (on nature's clock), I wouldn't be surprised.

## Christmas count update

Big thanks to Duane Karna for taking on the role of coordinator and compiler for the South County Christmas Bird Count (Edmonds). Duane did a fantastic job recruiting leaders and participants and keeping track of the multitude of details involved in a count this large.

Thanks, also, to Scott Atkinson for again handling the compiler duties for the North County Count. A round of applause, too, for Art and Shirley Wait for hosting a potluck dinner at their home after the North County Count and to John Snyder for helping with the fun pizza party after the South County Count. And, of course, thanks to all who participated in the 2011 counts.

Watch for count data on the PAS web site ([www.pilchuckaudubon.org](http://www.pilchuckaudubon.org)) and in future newsletters.

## Edmonds (is) Alive

Edmonds was alive and well on January 10. Local environmental organizations hosted an interesting and informative evening for Edmonds residents. Thanks to Joan Poor and Cindy Easterson for talking to all sorts of people interested in PAS. Nancy Moore, designer of the demo garden, was on hand to talk to people about the Edmonds Wildlife Habitat Native Plant Demonstration Garden (known as the Demo Garden) and to answer questions about native plants. Tom Murphy had a table all about the interesting things happening at Edmonds Community College. People signed up with Laura Spehar at the Edmonds Community Backyard Habitat to certify their backyards. Sally Lider and her crew were there with information about the Edmonds Discovery Program. Other tables included Sustainable Edmonds Solar Panels Program, Beach Watchers, Edmonds Mussel Watch, The Edmonds Tree Board, Seal Sitters, Floretum Garden Club, Master Gardeners, Friends of the Edmonds Marsh, The Edmonds Salmon Club, Trout Unlimited and many more. This may become an annual event in Edmonds!

# Birding highlights

November 26, 2011-December 25, 2011

By Mara Price, Sightings Coordinator

First, I must apologize. The Birding Highlights featured in last month's issue should have been dated October 26, 2011-November 25, 2011. We're always two months behind the Profile date.

I hope everyone had a wonderful and safe holiday. Welcome to winter! Be sure to keep the suet and bird feeders full. It is going to be a cold one.

Varied Thrushes are showing up all over. Carole and Larry Beason reported 3 Varied Thrushes from their home near Lake Bosworth. They also reported a Kingfisher, 39 Buffleheads on the lake, 4 Common Goldeneyes, 5 Double Crested Cormorants, 31 Evening Grosbeaks, 4 Golden-crowned Sparrows, 2 Greater Scaups, 27 Pine Siskins, 4 Golden-crowned Sparrows, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, 42 Red-winged Blackbirds, 9 Song Sparrows and 13 Spotted Towhees for a species count of 43.

Annette Colombini reported 2 Varied Thrushes that kept hanging around her place at Lake Stevens. Her total species count of 13 also included a Pileated Woodpecker, 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, a Northern Flicker, 2 Brown Creepers, 12 Black-capped Chickadees, 10+ Golden-crowned Kinglets, 8 Dark-eyed Juncos, 2 Spotted Towhees, a Song Sparrow, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 8 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, 2 Steller's Jays and 2 American Crows.

John Davis spotted a Wilson's Warbler on his walk through Forest Park. This is unusual because they should be down in Mexico this time of year. His total species count also included 120 American Crows, a Bewick's Wren, a Brown Creeper, a Cooper's Hawk, 2 Glaucous-winged Gulls, 3 Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Hermit Thrush, 4 Pacific Wrens, 70 Pine Siskins, 6 Song Sparrows, 2 Townsend's Warblers and 6 Varied Thrushes.

Reporting from Brier, Gail Dibernardo listed 20 species. Her count included a Cooper's Hawk (looking for a meal), 8 Dark-eyed Juncos, a Bewick's Wren, 5 Anna's Hummingbirds, 2 White-crowned Sparrows, 3 Pileated Woodpeckers, 45+ American Robins eating in an apple tree, 18 Bushtits, a Golden-crowned Kinglet and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Hilkka Egtvedt also reported a Varied Thrush from her Mukilteo home. She had a busy month with a total species count of 28. She listed a Bald Eagle, 30 Band-tailed Pigeons, 5 California Quail, 45 Dark-eyed Juncos, 7 Golden-crowned Sparrows, 5 Northern Flickers, 5 Steller's Jays, a Townsend's



Varied Thrush, by Debbie Burrous Stika



Dark-eyed Junco, by Graham Simons



Short-eared Owl, spotted by Kathleen Snyder and Judy Rowe-Taylor. Photo by Judy Rowe-Taylor.

Warbler, a White-crowned Sparrow, an Eurasian Collared Dove, a Sharp-shinned Hawk and a White-throated Sparrow.

Kriss Erickson reported an American Kestrel, 32 American Coots and a Sharp-shinned Hawk near Lowell in Everett. Her total species count of 21 included 16 American Robins in her yard, 8 Black-capped Chickadees, a Pacific Wren, 12 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 130 American Crows overhead, 2 Mallards, 3 Steller's Jays, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Varied Thrush and 62 European Starlings.

I have a correction for last month's report for Julie O'Donald. I reported that she listed 78 Bushtits. I mistook a 1 for a 7. The actual figure was 18. During this period she reported 18 Bushtits again from her home in Brier. She also reported 15 American Crows mobbing a Barred Owl in a tree nearby. Her total species count of 22 also included 5 Band-tailed Pigeons, 3 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Fox Sparrow, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 2 Spotted Towhees, a Varied Thrush and a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Mary Sinker reported 2 Varied Thrushes near her home in Stanwood. She also reported 4 Pacific Wrens, 2 Bewick's Wrens, 12 Black-capped Chickadees, 7 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, 55 Dark-eyed Juncos, 5 Downy Woodpeckers, 9 Evening Grosbeaks, 11 Mourning Doves, a Red-breasted Sapsucker, 9 Spotted Towhees, 12 Steller's Jays, 2 White-breasted Nuthatches and 7 House Finches for a species count of 30.

No Varied Thrush in my yard yet, but I am sure they will show up with the first snow. My total species count of 21 from my home in Marysville includes a Cooper's Hawk, 2 Great-horned Owls, 20+ Pine Siskins at the pond, 6 American Crows, 5 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, 12 Dark-eyed Juncos, a Merlin, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 50+ Glaucous-winged Gulls, 200+ Mallards and 60+ European Starlings in the fields and on the wires, plus 4 Steller's Jays and 8 Evening Grosbeaks.

I also received an e-mail from Ray Chestnut who reported 4 Western Bluebirds northeast of Stanwood on December 16.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please e-mail me at [pricemara@clearwire.net](mailto:pricemara@clearwire.net) or leave a message at 425.750.8125.

# Smart Growth report

By Kristin Kelly, Smart Growth Director

Last month, I wrote about why Washington State needs to move forward aggressively to solve our transportation crisis. The growing Transportation for Washington campaign, led by coalition partners Futurewise and Transportation Choices Coalition, is at the table in Olympia to talk about the three principles of the statewide campaign: fix it first and save lives, more transit and building healthy, livable communities.

Fueled by a bad economy, the transportation crisis has forced transit agencies to cut services and routes, leaving Washingtonians in a bind. Gas tax revenues are losing buying power, leaving bridges and roadways in a state of decay. More than half the state's greenhouse gas emissions stem from transportation, but revenue challenges leave citizens with fewer clean transportation choices.

Governor Christine Gregoire recently released her transportation plan. In it, she asked the legislature to pass a \$3.6 billion transportation package. (For more details, [click here](#).)

With so much at stake, it's important the Transportation for Washington campaign works to ensure any plan that comes forward – from this legislative session or the next – focuses on three important principles.

## **Transit ridership on the rise – people depend on transit:**

Local, regional and intercity transit service provides critical economic, social and environmental benefits to citizens: creating jobs, reducing congestion, providing mobility for vulnerable and special needs populations, offering transportation choices to citizens and reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Transit systems have reached a breaking point. Many don't have the authority to increase revenue (that's controlled by the State) to sustain systems. As a result, they are forced to cut back service, which compromises mobility, economic development and quality of life. This is especially devastating as gas prices continue to rise.

**The problem:** Transit agencies in Washington have experienced three waves of financial unrest during the past 12 years. The first wave occurred in 1999 with the loss of motor vehicle excise tax revenues after Tim Eyman's initiative 695 was implemented. The second wave, in 2007, occurred as fuel price volatility increased operating costs. The current recession represents the third wave, beginning in 2009 when sales tax revenues dropped by nearly 13%, forcing service cuts, fare increases and deferred capital investments.

Transit agencies rely on local sales tax revenue for most of their funding – with only 1 percent coming from state sources for operations. The recent volatility of sales tax revenue has left many transit agencies grossly underfunded: five systems have reached their maximum 0.9% sales tax rate, 22 agencies have increased fares since 2008, 12 agencies have reduced service since 2009 and many agencies are deferring capital projects. Sound Transit, which has maxed out its taxing authority, projects a revenue shortfall in the next decade, seriously compromising the agency's ability to build the planned 36 miles of light rail.

Meanwhile transit ridership in Washington has seen tremendous increases over the past six years. Ridership in the central Puget Sound region increased by 23% from 2005-2008. Statewide, ridership was up 12% during the same period.

However, insufficient funding has left transit agencies unable to meet current ridership needs, let alone the anticipated ridership growth in the next 20 years. Greater pressure on public transportation services will come with Washington's expected population and employment growth, along with an increased population 65 and older. Studies project a greater demand for transit will accompany the onset of tolling on major Washington corridors like the Alaskan Way Viaduct, the 520 Bridge and Columbia River Crossing.

Instead of expanding service to meet the growing demand, devastating cuts are hurting bus service across the state. Community Transit in Snohomish County has already cut all Sunday service and is cutting overall service by 38 percent. Pierce Transit is making 43 percent cuts and C-Tran in Vancouver will cut 35 percent of service unless they find new revenue. Spokane Transit will lose 30,000 hours of service. These cuts make it difficult for thousands of Washingtonians to travel between their homes and jobs and everywhere in between.

**More facts:** There is a \$4.5 billion revenue shortfall for public transportation for 2010-2020. Sound Transit's shortfall is \$2.8 billion. King County Metro's shortfall is \$.93 billion. The shortfall from other large urban areas statewide is \$.89 billion. The shortfall from small urban areas is \$.16 billion and from rural areas \$.04 billion.

Statewide, local sales tax revenue for 2006-2010 decreased from \$840+ million in 2006 to around \$690 million in 2010.

**Solutions:** Current local transit funding sources are too limited to meet ridership needs and too volatile to withstand economic changes. Washingtonians need more diverse, progressive and robust local transit investment options to preserve and enhance transit service. The legislature should authorize more and diverse revenue options so individual jurisdictions can work with their constituents to determine the best way to fund transit in their area. We need new, voter-approved revenue mechanisms that are robust enough to weather economic fluctuations and diverse enough to meet the different needs of communities across the state.

We know that when given the choice, voters want more transit. In the past three years, 13 of 18 local transit ballot measures have passed because citizens understand the economic, social and environmental benefits of transit service. Also, the state should establish stable and meaningful statewide funding sources for state and regional transit grant programs, intercity rail service and congestion mitigation programs. Tolling revenue presents a growing opportunity to generate revenue to support transit and entire transportation systems. There are other potential statewide revenue streams that should be looked at for dedicated transit funding, including a sales tax on gas and weight fees.

Transit service is critical to the state's economy. Local transit system planning and operations support tens of thousands of jobs in Washington, while transit service itself provides a necessary means for people to access their jobs, homes and destinations.

Transit ridership is on the rise. Supporting the demand is crucial to congestion management, saving jobs, preserving mobility for citizens and protecting the environment.

# Applicants sought for TogetherGreen program

The National Audubon Society is pleased to invite applications for the *TogetherGreen* Conservation Leadership Program. *TogetherGreen* is a major conservation initiative of Audubon, supported by a generous gift from Toyota.

The goals of the program are to nurture conservation leadership, achieve conservation results and engage millions of Americans in conservation action. Since 2008, *TogetherGreen* has supported a series of national conservation initiatives, including the Conservation Leadership Program, that advance these goals and the underlying notion that everyone can make a difference.

The *TogetherGreen* Conservation Leadership Program invests in promising and proven leaders who are committed to empowering others and to creating positive environmental change in their communities and organizations.

Each *TogetherGreen* Fellow will receive professional development opportunities, a \$10,000 grant to help support an innovative Conservation Action Project and an opportunity to network with a cadre of committed leaders.

In 2012, up to 40 Fellows will be selected to participate in this 12-month-long program.

All Fellows will be required to conduct a Conservation Action Project that achieves measurable outcomes in one or more of the following *TogetherGreen* conservation goals:

**Habitat:** Protect habitat and species in targeted landscapes.

## Festivals ...

(continued from page 4)

### Wings over Water Northwest Birding Festival March 17 Blaine, Washington

Don't miss this great event for avid bird enthusiasts and casual observers alike! Fun festival activities take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and include guided field trips to Semiahmoo Spit, a wildlife cruise, an art show, live raptor presentations, family activities, prizes and more!

For more information, visit [www.blainechamber.com](http://www.blainechamber.com) or phone 800.624.3555.

### Othello Sandhill Crane Festival March 23-25 Othello, Washington

Plan to attend the 15th Othello Sandhill Crane Festival, March 23-25. The festival features field trips to view Sandhill Cranes, along with other specialty tours such as Columbia National Wildlife Refuge/Potholes wildlife tour, Lower Grand Coulee birding tour and Wahluke Slope/Shrub Steppe birding tour. Trips fill up quickly. Pre-registration is recommended.

With your paid admission into the festival, you're entitled to attend lectures on topics such as falconry, Grouse of Washington, Othello History within the Drumhellar Channeled Scablands, Shrub-Steppe Flora and Fauna, Owls of Eastern Washington and Spring Migration in the Columbia Basin.

For more information, visit the festival web site at [www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org](http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org) or contact Susie Schaefer: [susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org](mailto:susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org) or 425.771.8165.

**Water:** Protect water resources by improving water quality and water supply for all living things.

**Energy:** Reduce the threat of greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy use and/or improving energy efficiency.

For more information, visit [www.togethergreen.org](http://www.togethergreen.org).

## Thanks for going paperless

By Kathy Piland, PAS volunteer

Thank you, Pilchuck Audubon donors, for your "acceptance of change" to electronic delivery of thank you letters. The savings-to-date for the December 2011 fundraising appeal is nearly \$15 (33 stamps *not used!*). This savings allows our chapter to use your generous donation in the classroom, in the field and/or for a program meeting.

When you donate and include your e-mail address, you're conserving paper, as well, since an e-mail requires no envelope.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact me at [kathy.piland@pilchuckaudubon.org](mailto:kathy.piland@pilchuckaudubon.org).

### Olympic BirdFest March 30-April 1 Sequim, Washington

Join the Olympic BirdFest 2012 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, March 30-April 1. The stage is set ... quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a long sand spit and an island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Wetlands, tide pools, rainforests and lush valleys. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours and a gala banquet.

Come bird with us and experience the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula ... you just might go home with a new bird for your life list! Check out the offerings at [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org) or call for a brochure: 360.681.4076.

### Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival May 4-6 Hoquiam, Washington

Each spring, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed in Grays Harbor estuary on their migration north. These Arctic-bound shorebirds are among the world's greatest migrants. This concentration of birds offers people a good chance to view a number of shorebird species, and with luck, to see the birds fly in beautiful formations while trying to escape the fastest creature on earth, the Peregrine Falcon.

This year's festival features field trips to view shorebirds and raptors, plus lectures, workshops, a nature fun fair, a birding marketplace and more. The keynote address will be by Richard Crossley, author, birder and photographer.

For more information, visit [www.shorebirdfestival.com](http://www.shorebirdfestival.com) or phone 360.289.5048.

# Bird of the month: Snowy Owl



## Quick facts

- Large, white owl
- 21-28" long, 50-57" wingspan
- Young males have dark bars, but grow whiter as they age. Adult males often have a white bib, too.
- Females tend to retain dark bars throughout their lives.

The Snowy Owl lives and breeds mainly on the Arctic tundra. It is the northernmost, heaviest and most distinctly marked owl in North America.

This largely diurnal bird spends much of its time perched still and silent on prominent lookouts, waiting to make forays for prey, including lemmings, rabbits, rodents, birds and fish. A Snowy Owl might eat three lemmings a day, when available.

When the Snowy Owl food sources crash, they are known to migrate away from the Arctic – as far south as Washington and Oregon. These migrations are called "irruptions." We are experiencing a Snowy Owl irruption this year.

**Cool fact:** Snowy Owl pairs usually mate for life. The female lays from 3 to 11 eggs at a time, in a nest built on the ground. When there is plenty of food available, Snowy Owls tend to lay more eggs than when food is scarce.

## 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

- New member ..... \$28
- Renewal ..... \$28
- Lifetime PAS member ..... \$1000
  - 10 monthly payments of \$100
  - 4 quarterly payments of \$250
  - 1 payment of \$1000
- Donation ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to:  
Pilchuck Audubon Society

Mail your check and this form to:  
PAS Membership Chair  
1429 Avenue D, PMB 198  
Snohomish, WA 98290

### NAS membership

(includes PAS membership)

- Introductory membership \$20

Make check payable to:  
National Audubon Society

Mail your check and this form to:  
PAS Membership Chair  
1429 Avenue D, PMB 198  
Snohomish, WA 98290

### NAS renewal

(includes PAS renewal)

- Renewal \$35

Make check payable to:  
National Audubon Society

Mail your check and this form to:  
NAS, Membership Data Center  
POB 420235  
Palm Coast, Florida 32142

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

\* Consult your tax professional for full details.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_