

Pilchuck Audubon Profile

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www.pilchuckaudubon.org

An Osprey story ... part one

By Susie Schaefer, Vice President, Pilchuck Audubon Society

On May 6, I took a call from Katherine, the daughter of a PAS member. She was concerned about what she'd witnessed at Archbishop Murphy High School that day. She reported personnel in a truck marked "USDA" had removed an Osprey nest from a light standard near the football field. She said one of the occupants of the nest caught its talons in a mesh the personnel had put over the nest. Katherine said the bird and nest were handled poorly and she feared the bird had been injured in the process. She videoed the process with her cell phone.

She sent me the video, which I forwarded to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) office in Mill Creek. Katherine and I talked again the following night to try to piece together what happened and why.

As I understand, the school applied to the US Department of Fish and Wildlife to remove an Osprey nest. The Ospreys nested there before and the school had apparently filed for a removal permit for at least two years. It's not clear to me why the school wanted to remove the nest.

US Fish and Wildlife granted the permit and contracted with a team from the USDA to remove the nest. The federal department is the only agency that can approve the removal of a migratory bird nest. That department does contract with the USDA for the work, but usually the team is more professional – and usually doesn't do its work on camera or in front of a group of students.

The video didn't show what happened to the mishandled bird, although we learned it had been released in the Yakima area – even though its mate remained near the school.

That is the first chapter of this story. Our friends at the WDFW in Mill Creek jumped into action and discovered this wasn't the first complaint against this team from USDA for rough handling of migratory birds. Thanks to Katherine's quick thinking – and video – they have evidence to show the team didn't follow protocol in handling the bird, then releasing it in Yakima. Our friends filed an official complaint, which is moving upstream to the US Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The last chapter of this story is still to come. Hopefully, the official complaint will result in teams following the correct protocol in handling migratory birds – which includes exploring other solutions before removing the nest.

And, if all goes as planned, the biology teacher and parents – with consultation from PAS – may construct an Osprey nesting platform in the area in hopes this pair will reunite and return.

PAS thanks Katherine for her quick action and conscientious follow-through – which could help other birds in the future. Thanks, also, to local WDFW biologists for taking action and filing the complaint.

June program meeting
Friday, June 8, 7 p.m.

Birding as fun and adventure

Michael and Lorenzo Rohani, authors of *A kid's guide to birding*, will talk about using bird behavior and bird photography to get kids involved in nature and conservation. Families welcome.

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.

Mark your calendar!

The July 13 program meeting – featuring Vaux's Swift expert, Larry Schwitters, will take place at the Stanwood Public Library.

Help wanted: PAS secretary

There is someone out there with the skills to take notes and compile minutes and who is available one Tuesday night a month. We need you! The position of secretary for the Board of Directors is open and the need is great. Please consider volunteering for this position (a two-year term) and the promise that the responsibilities will only include attending a monthly board meeting, producing the minutes and writing an occasional article for the newsletter. The rewards include working with a great group of people and making a difference in the Snohomish/Camano environmental community.

Please contact Kathleen Snyder at 425.438.1505 for more information.

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President's message

By Kathleen Snyder, President, Pilchuck Audubon Society



There are big changes afoot in the National Audubon Society. David Yarnold became the tenth NAS president in September, 2010, and brought a new vision to the organization.

Audubon is beginning to use the migratory flyways that birds travel each spring and fall as a basis for political and environmental action. "Flyways transcend geographical and political boundaries," Yarnold said. "They give us a literal birds-eye view of environmental issues and trends, and help direct our work." We are part of the Pacific Flyway, which includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California.

Here at PAS, the perfect example of this is our Vaux's Swift program in Monroe. This year, it was possible to follow the swifts' migration from their winter home in Central America to California, then Oregon, southern Washington and finally Monroe (on April 18 this year). Geopolitical lines are of no consequence to them. Our local swift expert, Larry Schwitters, has traveled up and down the coast to locate roosts the birds use during migration. This involves coordinating with Audubon chapters in three states.

In Monroe, we work with the Seattle and Eastside (east King County) chapters to maintain the "Save Our Swifts" program, which includes video cameras, classroom education, data collection and the Swifts Night Out celebration. By combining the efforts of many, our impact is greater and the benefit for birds far better. By the way, Larry will be our program speaker in July.

You can imagine the possibilities of using the flyway

approach for conservation efforts and what international collaboration could mean for the survival of neotropical migrants. It's an exciting time, for certain. But, like all new efforts, there will be a learning curve. One stumbling block is the reality that one state's legislation for habitat conservation has no status in a neighboring state. Another is finding resources to pay for coordination between chapters that can be hundreds or thousands of miles apart. And, of course, whenever two international cultures interact, there is the possibility of misunderstandings.

All that aside, we can enjoy our Vaux's Swifts now and think of them as ambassadors connecting Audubon chapters and wildlife professionals across states and countries. And we can applaud National Audubon's vision of using flyways to organize avian conservation projects – a much more comprehensive approach than before. As the world becomes smaller and our technology improves exponentially, the study of birds and the impact of civilization on them (including climate change) will become more exact and enable us to focus our conservation energy on what is most effective. For example, researchers using light-level geolocators have recently found that Brazil is the wintering site for Black Swifts. This leaves the Antillean Nighthawk and the Flammulated Owl as the only North American species whose wintering areas remain unknown.

If you have an interest in what National Audubon is doing, please visit their website, www.audubon.org, and take a look under the Conservation tab. You will be invigorated to see the extent of NAS efforts worldwide.

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 pas_profile@gmail.com 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, June 5 Snohomish and outskirts

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Snohomish Park and Ride, located at the junction of Highway 9 and Bickford Ave. Enjoyable and relaxed trip. We usually have high species counts and surprises. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Art Wait, 360.563.0181

June 7-11 Walla Walla

The trip to Walla Walla is almost full, but Susie is compiling a waiting list. Please check and make sure you're on the list if you think you've already registered. 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.

Tuesday, June 12 Big Four Meadows

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Frontier Village Park and Ride (9600 Market Place). From Highway 9, turn eastbound onto Market Place (the street Target is on), then north into the park and ride just west of Target. A beautiful setting for our annual pot-luck bird trip. Bring something to share. Virginia provides hot dogs and potato salad and will advise if you want to know what to bring. Expect swallows, hummingbirds, swifts, warblers, vireos and dippers. A trailhead pass or Golden Age Pass is needed, but is obtainable en route.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

Saturday, June 16 Nighthawks at the Harry Osbourne State Forest

**Special
chapter
event!**

It isn't very often we get to see Common Nighthawks here in Western Washington. But, this month, there is a good chance you can – and enjoy a barbeque dinner, too.

On Saturday, June 16, Pilchuck Audubon will host an unusual bird trip. We'll meet at the Stanwood Park and Ride (next to I-5) at 3 p.m. to carpool up Highway 20 to Rasar State Park. We've reserved the picnic shelter and will provide sausage and sauerkraut for dinner.

While dinner is cooking, join a bird walk through the park. Possible sightings include Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Cassin's Vireo. After dinner, we'll drive up to Harry Osbourne State Forest, park and then walk a quarter-mile to a clearing where Common Nighthawks are regularly seen fly catching at this time of year. Of course, there's no guarantee, but we are hopeful.

So plan for a wonderful evening of food, friends and birds. Bring the following: side dish to share, \$5 per person to cover meat and picnic shelter, non-alcoholic drinks, utensils and plate and a folding chair. We plan to be back in Stanwood before 9 p.m.

There is no limit to the number of participants, but please RSVP so we can be sure to have enough food for dinner. Please contact Kathleen Snyder at 425.438.1505 or ksnyder75@gmail.com.

Tuesday, June 19 Ellensburg area

Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Monroe Park and Ride on Highway 2, a half-mile west of the fairgrounds. We'll bird portions of Umtanum Creek, Robinson Canyon and other areas. This will be a long, rewarding day. Hope to see Yellow-breasted Chat, Warbling Vireo, Lazuli Bunting and maybe Canyon and Rock wrens. Pack a lunch.

Leaders: Margaret Bridge, 360.862.1694
Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

Sunday, June 24 Mt. Rainier NP Silver Falls Loop

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. This is a repeat from last year because we really didn't do the planned loop trail. Six mile loop along the Ohanapecosh River near the park's southeast Stevens Canyon Entrance. The falls are 75 feet high. National Park entrance fee \$15 or Golden Eagle Pass. Pack a lunch. We'll probably make an additional stop on the way home to socialize over dinner. (Usually I use the third Sunday of the month, but this month the third Sunday is Father's Day.)

Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425.244.7633, aracfi@msn.com

Tuesday, June 26 Mid-Whidbey Island

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 (next to I-5). This is the area between Crockett Lake and Swantown, always an exciting experience for both birding and scenery. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Art Wait, 360.563.0181

Sunday, July 15 Snoqualmie National Forest, Franklin Falls Wagon Road Trail

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. Northwest Forest Pass \$5 per car. This one goes uphill along a cascading creek through the forest on the west side of the pass, and loops back downhill on the other side of the creek. We may sneak over to the Snoqualmie "ponds" again. There were Green-winged Teal and Yellow Warblers there last year. We'll probably make an additional stop for a socializing over dinner – maybe at the summit.

Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425.244.7633, aracfi@msn.com

Sunday, August 12 Langus Riverfront Trail, Everett

Let's gather for a walk before the chapter picnic. Meet at 10:30 a.m. More detailed information to come. The picnic will be at the park afterwards.

Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425.244.7633, aracfi@msn.com

Sunday, Sept. 16 Mercer Slough Canoe Trip

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. Canoe trip starts at 8:45 and lasts three hours. Limit 10. Cost is \$16 per person. Call to register early with me. We will be led by Bellevue park rangers – who are lifeguards, naturalists and canoe instructors. They will lecture about the natural and cultural history of the area. We may make a stop on the way home for lunch.

Leader: Jonathan Blubaugh, 425.244.7633, aracfi@msn.com

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

Gifts of the crow: how smart birds behave like humans **Wednesday, July 18 Northwest Stream Center**

Join John Marzluff, UW professor and crow researcher, at the Northwest Stream Center on Wednesday, July 18, beginning at 7 p.m. and be amazed by his stories of crows from around the world.

New research indicates that crows are among the brightest animals in the world. They can make tools and respond to environmental challenges, including those posed by humans. Indeed, their long lives, social habits and large, complex brains allow them to observe and learn from us, as well as think, plan and reconsider their actions.

Marzluff portrays creatures that are nothing short of amazing: they play, bestow gifts on people who help or feed them, use cars as nutcrackers, seek revenge on animals that harass them, are tricksters and dream.

Marzluff has teamed up with artist and fellow naturalist, Tony Angell, to offer an in-depth look at the incredible creatures in a new book, *Gifts of the crow, how perception, emotion and thought allow smart birds to behave like humans*, to be released in June. There will be a book signing after the presentation.

Cost is \$5 for PAS members. Space is limited. Please call 425.316.8592 to reserve your spot. This presentation is recommended for middle schoolers and older.

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.

Cascades bird banding camp for teens **August 6-10 McDaniel Field Station**

The Puget Sound Bird Observatory invites teens ages 15-18 to learn birdbanding techniques in Washington's Cascade Mountains. Under the guidance of expert trainers, Dan Froehlich and Don Norman, participants will focus on the basics of net placement, bird handling and net extraction, ageing, sexing, molts and plumage.

Cost is \$500 per person, plus a \$50 materials fee. The fee covers training, materials, text book, meals and group camping equipment. Adult training is scheduled for August 12-18 at a cost of \$750 per person, plus a \$50 materials fee.

For more information, visit www.pugetsoundbirds.org or contact Emily Sprong at emily@pugetsoundbirds.org.

Feast with Friends **Thurs., August 30 AngelArmsWorks, Snohomish**

The sixth annual Feast with Friends fundraiser is scheduled for Thursday, August 30, 6:30-9:30 p.m., at AngelArmsWorks, the home and studio of Snohomish Mayor Karen Guzak and Warner Blake. This fantastic and delicious event raises money for the Smart Growth program. Local farmers donate local products. Local chefs create great food. Local wineries donate great wine. All you do is eat, drink and enjoy!

AngelArmsWorks is located at 230 B Street, Snohomish.

For more info – including sponsorship opportunities – visit www.futurewise.org or contact Kristin Kelly at Kristin@futurewise.org.

Puget Sound Bird Fest **September 7-9**

Edmonds

Plan on being in Edmonds September 7-9, for the eighth annual Puget Sound Bird Fest. This three-day event includes speakers, guided walks, land and water-based field trips, exhibits and educational activities for children and adults.

Friday evening features an opening reception and keynote address by Paul Bannick, bird and nature photographer. Paul's book *The Owl and the Woodpecker* is one of five finalists for the 2009 Washington State Book Awards in the general non-fiction category. More recently, Paul finished first among professional photographers in the "Birds and their habitat" category in the 2011 Audubon Magazine Photography Awards, with his photo of a Northern Pygmy Owl.

Saturday field trips include a morning birding cruise on Puget Sound with the Edmonds Yacht Club. There will be workshops and presentations all day Saturday at the Frances Anderson Center featuring bird photography, basic to advanced birding techniques, choosing and using bird feeders and nest boxes and current research on Puget Sound bird species. On Sunday, there will be more guided walks and activities at the Willow Creek Hatchery Wildlife Habitat and Native Plant Demonstration Garden. So, mark your calendar to be in Edmonds September 7-9 to celebrate birds and nature!

Visit www.pugetsoundbirdfest.org for more information. If you're interested in volunteering at Puget Sound Bird Fest or serving on a committee, please contact Sally Lider at 425.771.0227 or lider@ci.edmonds.wa.us.

BARN DANCE!

FEATURING THE 2012 INTERNATIONAL BLUES CHALLENGE WINNERS - THE WIRED! BAND

\$20 at the door, kids under 12 are free. Free chili dinner served with wine, beer and non-alcoholic drinks

4 to 8pm
Sunday June 10
Craven Farms
13817 Short School Rd
Snohomish WA

A fundraiser to support work in Snohomish County for the statewide non-profit organization Futurewise -- working to protect our shorelines and farms and forests -- hosted by Snohomish County Program Director and WBS member Kristin Kelly

RSVPs are mandatory. RSVP to Kristin@futurewise.org or call 425-923-8625

More information regarding Futurewise can be found at www.futurewise.org

futurewise
Building communities
Protecting the land

More information regarding the WIRED! Band can be found at wiredbandinfo.com

SUNDAY JUNE 10
CRAVEN FARM

Update on local conservation issues

By Allen Gibbs, Conservation Committee Chair,
Pilchuck Audubon Society

Everett central waterfront

At a public meeting on May 15, officials from the City of Everett presented the results of a survey about the future use of the Kimberly-Clark mill site on the Everett waterfront. When the company announced the mill would close (in late 2011) and the property sold, the city imposed a six-month moratorium on new development. The moratorium expires August 15.

Roughly 300 citizens responded to the survey and proposed a range of possible uses of the site. Public access to the waterfront ranked high. Redevelopment suggestions included a theme park, ferry landing, shopping mall with waterfront views, mixed use with housing, green businesses and parks and a wetland for birds.

The City of Everett also contracted with an economic consultant. The consultant's report is expected in June.

The Port of Everett is considering purchase of the property. The Port favors continued zoning of the 66-acre site and adjacent channel for heavy manufacturing. Apparently, Kimberly-Clark will remove all structures and do some hazardous materials cleanup.

PAS will monitor the process. It has no position on the future use, pending more information generated by the city and other parties.

Sultan shooting range

Correction to last month's update on the Sultan shooting range now in planning by Snohomish County: the PAS board hasn't voted in favor of any aspect about the shooting range. It has agreed that closing an illegal shooting range in a gravel pit on state trust lands near Sultan, which over the years became a garbage dump and place for activities harmful to the forest and public safety, is a good action by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

DNR and Snohomish County executed a land transfer elsewhere in the Sultan area, so the county can develop new recreation facilities. The county wants to include a state-of-art shooting range, to be managed following best practice standards for such facilities. PAS will monitor the planning.

Suiattle River Road EA update

In April, the PAS board approved comments prepared by Kathy Johnson and the Forest Practices Committee, favoring "Alternative C," which reopens the road to the Green Mountain Road junction. The comments were submitted to the Federal Highway Administration, which will do the repairs. A series of intense rain storms produced floods, washouts and landslides between 2003 and 2006, closing the upper 27 miles of the road to autos. Alternative C wouldn't repair remaining four miles of the road.

It's unknown when a decision will be made. The PAS board will review the decision when released, and consider whether to accept it or litigate – if the decision is not acceptable. The decision can't be appealed. If you have questions, please contact Kathy Johnson or Allen Gibbs.

Purple Martin gourd "tree" planted in Edmonds



PAS volunteers position a Purple Martin gourd "tree" in Edmonds Marsh. Photo by Bill Anderson.

On May 5, Pilchuck board member, Jay Ward, supervised the "planting" of a Purple Martin gourd tree. Jay had scrounged up a thin cedar log to which he attached some branches. Then he added porches to gourds donated by the Purple Martin Society, painted them and drilled holes at the tops for hanging. The Edmonds Parks and Recreation Department agreed to let Pilchuck Audubon put the gourd tree in the Edmonds Marsh. Reg Reisenbichler and Rick Brauer filled the gourds with cedar shavings, dug the hole, carried the tree and stood it up with the gourds hanging 10 feet off the ground. Bill Anderson photographed the entire process and Kathleen Snyder provided cookies. Now, we're anxiously waiting to see if any Purple Martins are enticed into these fabulous new homes with starling-resistant entries.

Mark your calendar for 2012 chapter picnic



The annual Pilchuck Audubon picnic is scheduled for Sunday, August 12, at Langus Riverfront Park in Everett. Mark your calendar now and watch for further details in upcoming issues of the *Profile*.

Last year's picnic featured a fun bird walk to Spencer Island, delicious food, fun, games and more. You don't want to miss it!

Lifers galore at Wylie Slough, Nisqually

By Terry Nightingale

The weather has been beautiful lately and the Pilchuck Audubon weekend bird hikers have been taking full advantage! Here are the highlights of two recent trips.

On April 15, we celebrated tax day with a trip to Wylie Slough in Skagit County. The slough is part of the Skagit Wildlife Management Area, established in 2005 as a collaborative project between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and others "to benefit the diversity of fish and wildlife species that rely on estuaries, including salmon and a wide variety of migratory birds." To accomplish this goal, the parties involved strategically breached historical dikes and allowed saltwater from Skagit Bay to come and go with the tides. It's a nice spot for waterfowl, marsh, forest and shorebirds. If you decide to go, you'll need a Discover Pass.

In the parking lot, we were greeted by sunshine and birdsong. We heard a White-crowned Sparrow and a Purple Finch, both singing their spring songs. A Mourning Dove was cooing from a distance and Song Sparrows were adding their voices to the chorus.

As we rounded the first bend in the path, we were treated to a brilliant pair of Cinnamon Teal in the sun of the early day. We quickly learned that waterfowl were abundant this day, as we saw 60 Green-winged Teals, 10 Northern Pintails, a pair of Northern Shovelers, a pair of American Wigeons, five Gadwalls and three Mallards. Just as Sue began to ask, "Where are all the raptors," she spotted a Peregrine Falcon flying by at speed, apparently in pursuit of prey. Speaking of, 21 Tree Swallows and a handful of Violet-green Swallows, Cliff Swallows and Barn Swallows were busy vacuuming up the morning's insect breakfast.

Moving west on the trail toward the bay, we stopped at another pond and admired the shorebirds. We counted 30 small peeps flying by, but we never got a good enough look to narrow them down to an exact species. Much larger, more raucous and more easily identifiable were the Greater Yellowlegs, 13 in all, which we first identified by their rapid *cleek-cleek-cleek* calls.

We noticed another large shorebird in the water near the yellowlegs. We took a long look, but concluded it was another yellowlegs. Later that day, a report came through on eBird that changed our minds. Michael Willison had seen a Short-billed Dowitcher in the same spot where the yellowlegs had been. After reviewing our photos, it became obvious that we had seen the same bird. This was a lifer for several of us birders (including me) and we didn't realize it until after the fact!

Next on our agenda was a lunch stop at Bay View State Park, where we saw beautiful Red-breasted Mergansers in breeding plumage, Surf Scoters and Common Loons. We rounded out the day with a visit to the nearby Samish Flats, where Northern Harriers, a Short-eared Owl, and nine Great Blue Herons made the extra trip worthwhile.

Four weeks later, on May 12, the weekend bird walkers journeyed to Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge near Olympia. Here is another location where historical farmlands have been converted to estuary by breaching dikes. Upon arriving, the first thing that struck us was the large number of Cliff Swallows near the visitor center. In fact, they are nesting in the structures covering the walkways that stretch from the parking lot to the visitor center itself. This was an exciting close-up glimpse into Cliff Swallow nests, where each tiny entry hole seemed to harbor a tiny Cliff Swallow face with a white forehead. Very cute!

On the far side of the visitor center is an observation deck, from which we could see a Wood Duck in beautiful breeding plumage. And, we got a close look at an American Goldfinch on a small tree nearby. After biologist Sue Miller gave a brief overview of the ecology of the Nisqually Region, we set off on the trail to the Nisqually Delta. The first part of the trail is a boardwalk through marshlands and forest, where we heard lots of birdsong. Wilson's Warblers, Yellow Warblers, Orange-crowned Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers were all singing from the trees – to the delight of our birders. Looking south across large ponds in the fields, we saw several types of waterfowl including Mallards, Northern Pintails and a gorgeous Cinnamon Teal. When the group heard a strange hooting sound, my co-leader, Jonathan Blubaugh, quickly identified it as a Sora, and played back the Sora call on his iPhone for verification. Sure enough, it was an exact match, and a lifer bird for your humble trip leader.



Short-billed Dowitcher, by Terry Nightingale

Near the twin barns, we observed nesting Tree Swallows by the dozen. Suddenly, they all swarmed together, and Sue spotted an American Kestrel among the flock. While she watched, the Kestrel swooped and grabbed a Tree Swallow in his talons! It was first for us – seeing a Kestrel take another bird as prey.

Wrapping up our walk at the boardwalk trail, we noticed a very large raptor flying directly overhead. It was certainly big enough to be a bald eagle, but had large white patches on the underside of its wings. Referencing our field guides, we went out on a limb and guessed that it was a juvenile Golden Eagle. Another bird group nearby saw the same bird and had come to the same conclusion. Another lifer!

After a quick lunch stop, we headed for the Mima Mounds, as a part of Prairie Appreciation Day. These mounds vary in size, are composed primarily of gravel, and occur in a repeating pattern across the Mima Prairie. There are several theories which attempt to explain how they formed (one of them involves pocket gophers), but in addition to a mystery, they offer an unusual habitat where one can observe butterflies, wildflowers like blue camas and a few prairie birds like Savannah Sparrows and raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks. Be sure to check out the nearby conifer forest for kinglets and the occasional warbler (I heard a black-throated gray warbler there last year).

Walkers enjoy confusing, delightful birds

By Jonathan Blubaugh

The Weekend Bird Walk for April took us to Fort Casey State Park on Whidbey Island. The weather was glorious – a nice change after last month’s rainout.

At the meeting point at Everett Mall, we saw a Mallard mom and her tiny duckling in the mitigation ponds before heading to Mukilteo to catch the ferry. Even though the crossing to Clinton is only 15 minutes, we managed to see 10 species of marine birds including a Pelagic Cormorant, Pigeon Guillemot and a couple of Barrow’s Goldeneyes. All the guillemots we saw that day were wearing their breeding plumage – black with large white patches and a bright red gape.

We noticed lots of interesting birds when we landed in Clinton, so we decided to hang out just a bit. From the park directly adjacent to the ferry terminal, we saw a number of Brants, as well as more guillemots and goldeneyes.

Here is where we goofed. We said, “Ooh, look at the pretty Common Goldeneyes.” But, when I got home, I realized we hadn’t ruled out Barrow’s Goldeneyes. We consulted Terry Nightingale’s photos and discovered they were, indeed, Barrow’s Goldeneyes.

We used Terry’s photos solve a female loon mystery, as well. We were fairly certain she was a Pacific Loon. We had already seen Common Loons in their stately breeding plumage. So, when we spotted this one in winter plumage, our initial conclusion was Pacific Loon. It would have been a lifer for me. But, I best not let that cloud my judgment. Terry’s photos showed she was, in fact, a Common Loon. So, on this day, we saw them in both winter and summer plumage. Confusing!

I was briefly stationed at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station in 1984. Upon returning from my long sojourn in California, I was pleased that Whidbey Island hadn’t really changed that much. Until this trip, I didn’t know why. It turns out that much of the central island in and around Coupeville was incorporated into the Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve. Although a unit of the National Park Service, it is not kept as wilderness. Rather, it simply allows the land and town to be preserved in the state they were in when the reserve was designed in the 1970s. It keeps the small town vibrant for residents and visitors. Farming, ranching, timbering and tourist industries are kept intact. The pleasing wide open vistas of forest, fields, pastures, farmhouses, barns and cafés remain. While we were there, a golden field of daffodils was in bloom.

Our plan was to walk around Crockett Lake by the Coupeville ferry terminal (formerly Keystone), then to nearby Fort Casey State Park. The lake is separated from the sea by a broad sandy strand upon which the road to the ferry terminal was built. In the vicinity of the lake, the ferry terminal and the nearby Keystone Café, we saw Northern Pintails, nesting swallows, a Bald Eagle and a couple of agitated Killdeer.

Next stop: Fort Casey. The fort was once a coastal artillery site. The emplacements can be explored and a couple of the huge



Barrow's Goldeneye, by Audy Loharungsikul

guns remain. Terry and I walked the gun emplacements and counted a few birds.

Here’s a list of most of what we saw or heard: 2 Canada Geese, at least 120 Brant, 6 Mallards, 3 Gadwalls, 7 Green-winged Teal, 21 Northern Pintails, 12 Harlequin Ducks, 4 Ring-necked Ducks, about 5 Barrow’s Goldeneyes, at least 5 Buffleheads, 37 Surf Scoters, a female Long-tailed Ducks, about 4 Common Loons, 2 Eared Grebes, a Western Grebe, 26 Double-crested Cormorants, the Pelagic Cormorant, at least one Great Blue Heron, at least two

Bald Eagles, a male Northern Harrier, the Killdeers, a Greater Yellowlegs, 31 Glaucous-winged Gulls, 22 “Olympic” Gulls, 2 Bonaparte’s Gulls in breeding plumage, 3 Ring-billed Gulls, at least 25 Pigeon Guillemots, 8 Rock Pigeons, a hummingbird, heard a Steller’s Jay, 9 crows, 3 Tree Swallows, a Violet-green Swallow, 4 Barn Swallows visiting probable nest sites, a Black-capped Chickadee, a Pacific Wren, 6 American Robins, 15 European Starlings, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, a Spotted Towhee, 2 Song Sparrows, 6 Savannah Sparrows, 7 White-crowned Sparrows, 4 Golden-crowned Sparrows, 6 Red-winged Blackbirds, 4 House Finches, 3 House Sparrows and a California Sea Lion.

Nothing stops the Tuesday field trippers



Our brave birders faced the squirrel threat at Nisqually and lived to tell the tale. Photo by Reg Reisenbichler.

You can observe a lot by watching

By Mike Blackbird, President Emeritus, Pilchuck Audubon Society

In March, Florence and I flew to southern California to visit our son and his family. On the last day of our visit, we took our granddaughter, Jillian, to River Walk Park in Riverside. The park is essentially a long storm water drainage ditch that's been converted to a grout sealed stream with boulders, ripples and ponds. At first glance, it's unimpressive for someone from the northwest where natural streams abound. It didn't take me long, though, to realize that in its effort to create a natural-looking stream in an urban setting, the city also, inadvertently I'm sure, created a migrant trap for migrating birds.

As birds migrate, they are often attracted to specific areas in larger than normal numbers. In such cases, the birds head for the nearest areas offering cover and food. These areas are often referred to as *migrant traps* because they attract so many birds. Tree Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows were swooping over a large pond, two Common Yellowthroats were scratching around under a bush. A pair of Audubon Warblers flew into a nearby tree. A Spotted Sandpiper bobbed by a motionless Green Heron patiently waiting for an unwary school of minnows to come within striking distance. Six Black-necked Stilts surrounded by bread stuffed, somnolent Mallards rested for the next leg of their journey.

There are many famous migrant traps around the country. Some of the better-known areas include High Island (Texas),



Snowy Egret, by Matt Knoth

Cape May (New Jersey) and Point Pelee (Ontario, Canada). However, migrant traps are not limited to nationally recognized locations. Local parks, refuges and even cemeteries can attract large numbers of migrating species.

Over the years, I've visited many migrant traps: the sky islands of Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains, California City's lake in the Mojave Desert, even Spain's Laguna de Furente de Piedra and the Isle of Capri. However, I didn't expect to visit a migrant trap in the middle of a southern California megapolis. Unexpected, perhaps, but a welcome discovery.

As we prepared to leave, Jillian was tossing pieces of bread to the Koi from a small bridge. Ten feet away, a Snowy Egret watched with decided interest. The egret took flight, swooping in an apparent attempt to snatch the water soaked bread. His first attempt was unsuccessful. But, determined, he attempted two more times without a positive result. On his fourth pass, the egret dived head first into the water. Instead of coming up with bread, he came up with a small fish that had been nibbling on the bread – unseen to human eyes, but not egret eyes. Shaking the water from his wings as he landed with his prize, the egret's fishing technique was more Osprey-like than egret-like, a behavior I'd never seen before. I guess you could say the egret and I were simpatico when it comes to Yogi Berra's dictum that you can observe a lot by watching.

Swifts chirping in Monroe

By Susie Schaefer, Vice President, Pilchuck Audubon Society

May has been interesting for swift watching. It started late, due the cold, wet spring and lack of insects. As the weather improved, the pace has picked up. Every night, Larry Schwitters' army of counters along the flyway – from Mexico and San Diego, through California, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Washington and BC – have been out, carefully counting and recording the data on a new form. Those of us on the committee and counting teams receive updates each evening. We heard from Carl in San Diego when his wintering residents (using an old chimney in downtown San Diego) finally headed north, joined by their Mexican cousins. We saw them stop in Los Angeles, and then San Rafael, with Rusty and his gang. Then the amazing little flyers were counted at the big redwood tree in Northern California and into Oregon and Washington.

The weather and insect availability have both affected this spring's northern migration. I am totally hooked on the swifts and spend time each night following them. What could be more fun?!

In other news, Larry successfully replaced the camera in Monroe. So, once again, we all have a front-row seat!

To track the swifts as they move north and south along the flyway or to follow the numbers in Monroe, visit www.monroeswifts.org or Larry Schwitters' web site: www.vauxhappening.org.

Good news for birds in Port Susan

In May, the greater Skagit/Sillaguamish Delta was recognized as a site of regional importance for shorebirds by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). Port Susan plays a key role for more than 20,000 shorebirds each year. This designation came through the efforts of many people – landowners, county officials, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and volunteer surveyors, many of whom were Pilchuck Audubon members.

Participation in WHSRN is voluntary. It promotes sustainable management of its sites by collaborating with stakeholders in order to maintain the environmental health of wetlands and other key habitats.

Congratulations to everyone involved – especially those who learned to identify shorebirds, rose in the early morning, headed out in all kinds of weather and became citizen scientists in the effort to earn this designation. You rock!

Birding highlights

By Mara Price, Sightings Coordinator

March 26, 2012–April 25, 2012

Karen Kermell reported two American Tree Sparrows in the Lynnwood area. These beauties are rarely seen in our area. They spend winters as close as Eastern Washington, but migrate to Alaska to breed. They have a distinctive dark spot – or “stick-pin” – on the breast and a red-brown cap.

Well, the Pine Siskins and Dark-eyed Juncos might be leaving us, but they’ll be replaced by Black-headed Grosbeaks, Warblers, American Goldfinches, Western Tanagers and more of our late spring and summer bird species.

Carole and Larry Beason’s report from Lake Bosworth listed 3 Barn Swallows, 10 Tree Swallows, 5 Violet-green Swallows, 2 American Goldfinches, a Belted Kingfisher, a Bufflehead on the lake, 2 Common Loons, 8 Double-crested Cormorants, 18 Evening Grosbeaks, a Flammulated Owl (heard in the woods), 2 Lesser Scaup, 2 Red-breasted Sapsuckers, a Townsend’s Warbler, a Turkey Vulture flying over and a Varied Thrush for a total species count of 48.

John Davis reported a total of 42 species from his walks in Forest Park. He listed 2 Bewick’s Wrens, 2 Brown Creepers, 3 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 3 Golden-crowned Sparrows, a Hermit Thrush, 3 Orange-crowned Warblers, 7 Pacific Wrens, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, 4 Savannah Sparrows, a Townsend’s Solitaire, 5 Varied Thrushes, 2 Violet-green Swallows, 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Hutton’s Viero.

Red Crossbills made a stop at Gail Dibernardo’s feeders. She also reported a nesting pair of Bald Eagles in Brierwood Park. Her total species count of 24 from Brier included 7 Red Crossbills, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Townsend’s Warbler, 5 Band-tailed Pigeons, a Bewick’s Wren, 8 Dark-eyed Juncos, 5 American Goldfinches, 3 Varied Thrushes, 6 Pine Siskins, a Cooper’s Hawk, a Yellow-rumped Warbler and a



American Tree Sparrow, by Paul Kusmin



Black-headed Grosbeak, by Patty Bruno



Red Crossbill, by Audy Loharungsikul

Red-breasted Sapsucker.

Reporting from Mukilteo, Hilka Egtvedt listed a total of 32 species. Her report included 3 American Goldfinches, 4 California Quail, 2 Common Ravens flying over, 13 Dark-eyed Juncos, an Eurasian Collared-dove, 8 Evening Grosbeaks, 2 Fox Sparrows, 30 Pine Siskins, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Rufous Hummingbird, a Townsend’s Warbler, 8 White-crowned Sparrows and a Violet-green Swallow.

Kriss Erickson still had Wood Ducks in her yard in Everett. She listed 2 Wood Ducks along with 4 Mallards, a Bewick’s Wren, 6 Black-capped Chickadees, a Northern Flicker, 17 Bushtits, 3 American Robins, 2 Steller’s Jays, 2 Song Sparrows, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, an American Crow and 6 Western Gulls for a total species count of 12.

Julie O’Donald’s species count of 27 from her home in Brier included 2 Anna’s Hummingbirds, 5 American Robins, a Barred Owl, 2 Bewick’s Wrens, a Cooper’s Hawk in the trees, a Great Blue Heron flying low, 2 Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Killdeer in the fields, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Pacific Wrens, 2 White-crowned Sparrows and a Varied Thrush.

The hummingbirds are coming back to the feeders and the American Robins are everywhere around my home in Marysville. My total species count of 21 included 8 American Robins, 7 Dark-eyed Juncos, 4 Evening Grosbeaks, 4 Purple Finches, a Pileated Woodpecker, 3 Mallards on the pond, 2 Spotted Towhees, 3 Steller’s Jays, a Rufous Hummingbird, an Anna’s Hummingbird, a Merlin on the wires and a Bald Eagle that flew low over my car.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please e-mail me at pricemara@clearwire.net

or leave a message at 425-750-8125. If you are interested in participating in our monthly bird counts, please let me know.

Smart Growth report

By Kristin Kelly, Smart Growth Director

Again this month, more information on the Transportation for Washington campaign, led by Pilchuck Audubon's partners, Futurewise and Transportation Choices Coalition.

Save lives and money: fix existing infrastructure

Transportation affects everyone. Whether working, going on vacation, or taking a walk in a neighborhood, we all depend on a safe, reliable transportation system. Good connections between different types of transport are important to the efficient movement of people, goods and services throughout the state. Transportation systems enhance both the social and economic prosperity of communities.

Unfortunately, decades of deferred maintenance and declining gas tax revenue means many of Washington's bridges and streets are in poor condition. And, the cost of pushing back repairs is growing at an alarming rate each year.

The problem

As of 2008, 44 percent of Washington's major roads weren't in good condition. As maintenance is pushed back, repairs become more costly. In the same year, 56 percent of Washington's roads were in good condition. Between 2004 and 2008, Washington spent \$181 million annually on repair.

Washington would need to spend \$426 million annually for the next 20 years to transform the current poor-condition major roads to good condition and to maintain all roads in good condition. Delaying repairs will make the price increase even more. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, every dollar spent to keep a road in good condition avoids \$6 to \$14 needed later to rebuild the same road once it has deteriorated significantly.

Funding the safety and maintenance backlog is further exacerbated when one considers that the gas tax – the primary revenue stream for funding roadway investments – is losing purchasing power, leaving bridges and roadways in a state of disrepair. When adjusted for inflation, the purchasing power of our fuel tax has decreased 49 percent since 2001.

This crisis is not unique to our state owned transportation infrastructure – cities and counties are faced with bridges and streets in a state of disrepair without adequate funding options. Cities and counties rely on unrestricted general fund revenue to fund transportation costs.

These same general fund dollars compete with other services, such as police and fire protection. Consequently, local transportation budgets vary from year to year based on the current priorities.

Counties operate and maintain a comprehensive transportation network, but are also struggling to maintain it. Counties operate and maintain nearly 40,000 miles of roads that

generate an annual maintenance cost of \$650 million per year. More than 3,300 bridges are owned and maintained by counties. And, due to insufficient funding, 20 percent are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

We know this to be true for one of Snohomish County's most important east-west connections, the Hewitt Avenue Trestle. Last year, counties invested \$965 million in transportation projects and faced an annual funding gap of nearly \$409 million.

City streets are more than pavement that facilitates the movement of people and goods. The system includes sidewalks, street lighting, bicycle lanes, water lines, sewer lines, electric cables and telecommunications. Citizens expect cities to invest in complete streets that include important features: transit facilities, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, street lighting, utilities, landscaping and street furniture. In a typical urban or suburban city, building just one mile of city "street" as described here can easily cost \$16 million.

Most cities have under-invested in transportation because of decreased dedicated resources available for maintaining and improving their transportation system. For most cities, this has resulted in a large maintenance backlog. Maintenance delays lead to greater lifecycle costs due to accelerated deterioration – and economic inflation.

The solutions

Revenue from gas tax increases should be prioritized and allocated to address critical state, county and city safety and maintenance needs. Also, more money is needed for sustainable communities to promote affordable housing, economic development, residential growth and safe bicycle and pedestrian access.

Also, local transit authorities need more options for funding critical services for all citizens, from workers and students to seniors and people with disabilities. We can fund the transit we need with a greater state investment and a menu of local funding options for voters to choose from.

Spending too little on repair and allowing roads to fall apart exposes cities, counties and the state to huge financial liabilities. The cost of repair rises as roads age.

First, we need to fix the crumbling bridges and roads we have, and then ensure the new investments will create jobs, spur economic growth and improve the safety and health of our communities. We should prioritize our state transportation dollars to fix bridges and roads and make streets accessible and safe for all users.

Although the automobile will remain the primary source of transportation for many Washingtonians, more complete and connected streets can better improve mobility in core urban areas without necessitating additional street capacity in a built environment.

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.

<p>Local PAS membership</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New member \$28</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Renewal \$28</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime PAS member \$1000</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> 10 monthly payments of \$100</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4 quarterly payments of \$250</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1 payment of \$1000</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Donation \$ _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Make check payable to: <i>Pilchuck Audubon Society</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mail your check and this form to: <i>PAS Membership Chair</i> <i>1429 Avenue D, PMB 198</i> <i>Snohomish, WA 98290</i></p>

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

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