



Pilchuck Audubon Profile

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Make Birdathon memories this month

By Susie Schaefer, Vice President, Pilchuck Audubon Society

It's time to ask my friends and supporters of Pilchuck Audubon for pledges for our annual Birdathon. I remember my first Birdathon – in the early 1980s. I was just learning and remember thinking I could easily recognize at least 10 species in the backyard and around Edmonds. And, if at least 10 people pledged 10 cents per species, I could get \$10 in donations.

Back then, Birdathon was a one-day, marathon event – not the month-long extravaganza it is now. I remember another year – later in the 1980s – when a small group of us birded the Skagit Flats. We'd hoped to get a long list of birds. But, it was the rainiest day of floods I've ever encountered. We were thrilled to have a final list of 23 birds for the day – and a good list of places to stop, warm up and have a cup of coffee.

See "Birdathon basics, at right

During one Birdathon in the 1990s, we got super competitive. We challenged one another to find the most species in a week. I lost out to David Brock (professional wildlife biologist) for the most species, but did manage to raise the most money. That year, we got up at 5 a.m. one day for a birding-by-ear fieldtrip along the Mountain Loop Highway. I can still remember the symphony of warblers at the top of a trail.

Within the past few years, I remember telling a few supporters who'd pledged a dollar per species that I'd probably only see 60-70 species. I ended up with a whopping 125 species that year! The only bad part of that was one friend dropped his pledge to 50 cents per species the following year. And, another capped his pledge at \$100. Still great pledges!

Two years ago, I led a fieldtrip to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge during May. I had to carefully sort my list, as only birds seen in Washington can be counted for Birdathon. I think we finally decided we'd seen that Horned Lark in both Washington and Oregon, so I did put him on my final list.

I am ready to start counting again on May 1 – in my backyard and in Edmonds. By the time Memorial Day rolls around, I hope to have a good long list of birds. The Tuesday birders will probably beat me, but I will try to keep up by joining them at least one Tuesday during May.

A former colleague has sponsored me every year I've participated. But, he has always refused to pay anything for the European Starling on my list. I have a couple other friends who send me \$10 every year – no matter how many birds are on my list. Most supporters are not PAS members or even big-

(See "Birdathon" on page 8)

May program meeting
Friday, May 13, 7 p.m.

**Feathered architects:
the fascinating world
of bird nests**

From eagles to hummingbirds, Idie Ulsh will explore how and where birds make nests and relate interesting facts about their construction. She has photographed the nests of more than 30 species, with an emphasis on song birds.

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.**

Birdathon basics

- Get form from www.pilchuckaudubon.org or contact Hilka Egtvedt at 425.347.4944 or chegtvedt@comcast.net.
- Get pledges (per species or flat amount).
- Count and record the bird species in Washington in May.
- Report results to sponsors.
- Collect pledges; feel good knowing you're helping PAS protect birds and habitat.
- Pat yourself on the back (very important).

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President's message

By Mike Blackbird, President, Pilchuck Audubon Society



In the middle of the night, on April 26, 1986, Reactor 4 in the huge Chernobyl power station blew up. When it was over, officials estimated the radioactive release was 10 times that of Hiroshima. In the following weeks, the

Soviet government designated a 1,100-square-mile exclusion zone – about the size of Yosemite – which was ultimately expanded to 1,660 square miles.

Russia is a vast land and Chernobyl slipped quietly from the world's consciousness as trees that had been pushed back for agriculture and villages gained a new foothold, rapidly expanding their dominion to a point that man's footprint is rapidly disappearing.

Ironically, the necessity to abandon a large swath of land created an ideal laboratory to study the long-term effects of radiation. Radioecologists from around the world converged on Chernobyl to study the effects of radiation on plants and animals living amid a post-apocalyptic amount of radioactive strontium and cesium.

In doing research for this column, I found a glowing report from 2006 (pun intended) in *National Geographic News* declaring the radioactive cloud may have a silver lining. Recent studies suggested the 19-mile "exclusion zone" around the reactor had become a wildlife haven.

Plants and trees have sprung back to life, and rare species, such as lynx, Przewalski's horses and eagle owls were thriving where most humans fear to tread.

But, while wildlife seems to be proliferating in the Chernobyl exclusion zone, not everyone is convinced these plants and

animals are healthy. The question scientists are trying to answer is what's on the inside, in their DNA? Wildlife has eaten a lot of food contaminated with cesium and strontium.

We know birds are particularly sensitive to habitat change and are ideally suited to study the long-term effects of radiation. Recent studies reveal that there is an elevated frequency of partial albinism in Barn Swallows, meaning they have tufts of white feathers. They also have 20 percent elevated levels of asymmetry in their feathers and greater cancer rates.

The reproductive rates and annual survival rates are much lower in the Chernobyl birds than in control populations. In Italy, around 40 percent of Barn Swallows return each year, whereas the annual survival rate is 15 percent or less for Chernobyl.

There are indications that migratory species, such as the Barn Swallow, are particularly vulnerable to radioactive contaminants because – due to their arduous migratory journey – they arrive in the area exhausted and with depleted reserves of protective antioxidants. Scientists are also concerned the mutated birds will pass abnormal genes to the global population. In the worst case scenario, the genetic mutations will spread out, and the species as a whole may experience enhanced levels of mutation.

In one study, an extensive sample of 550 birds belonging to 48 species tested the prediction that even in the absence of post-traumatic stress, there is a definite correlation between brain size and the level of background radiation. Reduction

(See "Blackbird" on page 10)

About Pilchuck Audubon Society

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

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

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

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

in efforts to protect the habitat this wildlife depends upon for survival.

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

Newsletter submissions

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

To contact Pilchuck Audubon Society, call 425.252.0926.

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



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Trip calendar

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

May 3 Snoqualmie Valley, Monroe to Carnation
Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Monroe Park and Ride on Highway 2, a half-mile west of the fairgrounds. Expect a fun time and exciting birds. This trip will mostly cover the area between the Carnation Golf Course and Monroe area. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

Tuesday, May 10 Cle Elum Area
Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Monroe Park and Ride on Highway 2, a half-mile west of the fairgrounds. An all-day trip. Different birds: Red-naped Sapsucker, Northern Goshawk, Calliope Hummingbird, Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Magpie, Vesper Sparrow and Cassin's Finch possible. Experience Cle Elum. Pack a lunch to augment the bakery stop.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750

Sunday, May 15 Spencer Island Loop
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. We'll carpool to Spencer Island and walk the 3.5-mile dike trail, or take the shorter path on the Cross-island Dike Trail depending on the weather and the will of the group. Birding habitats include forest, marsh, and tidally-influenced wetlands. Elevation gain is negligible. This is a half-day hike, so pack a lunch or plan to join us for a hot lunch in Everett or Marysville.

Leader: Terry Nightingale, 206.619.2383, tnight@pobox.com

Tuesday, May 17 Smith and Spencer islands
Meet at 8 a.m. at Langus Riverfront Park, Everett. Go north on SR 529 (Broadway) over the Snohomish River; turn right onto 28th Place NE. Follow signs to Langus Waterfront Park. Continue by the park to a lot past the left curve in the road (under I-5 and just beyond the shell house and Everett Animal Shelter). Should see lots of waterfowl and raptors. Walk the Langus Riverfront Trail, maybe try the Everett Sewage Ponds. Lots of walking. Pack a lunch.

Leaders: Ed Cushing, 425.438.4146
Art Wait, 360.563.0181

May 20-22 Kittitas County
We'll leave early Friday morning and bird the drive to Goldendale, where we'll overnight. On Saturday, we'll bird along the Klickitat River and canyon, as well as the Conboy Wildlife Refuge. We'll stay in Glenwood on Saturday night. On Sunday, we'll head back to Goldendale and take a side trip to Bickelton (Bluebird Capital of the World). The final leg of the trip will take us to Yakima and then home.

The trip will be limited to three cars (no more than 12 people). We will share gas and picnic lunch costs. If you're interested, please contact Susie Schaefer: 425.771.8165 or susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org. This trip is almost full!

Tuesday, May 24 JB Lewis-McChord (Fort Lewis)
Meet at 8 a.m. at the Lynnwood Walmart lot at 1400 164th Street SW (I-5, exit 183). Park at the edge of the lot, away from the store, to the west. This will be a 90-minute road trip. Advance registration is required (please call trip leaders). We will carpool - four or five cars maximum.

Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) is a controlled access installation. Vehicles entering JBLM are required to have either a valid DOD decal or an authorized visitor pass obtained from the visitor center outside the main gate.

To obtain the one-day pass, the vehicle operator must present the following: valid vehicle registration, proof of current vehicle insurance and valid driver's license.

ALL vehicle occupants, aged 16 or older, are required to present photo ID for entry to JBLM (drivers license, government ID, or passport).

After entry to JBLM, everyone will need a range pass (valid for a year and a day, requiring photo ID).

This area regularly contains many native species not often seen in western Washington. Garry Oak and Ponderosa Pine are prevalent as are prairie wildflowers such as Common Camas and White-topped Aster. Western Bluebirds, Western Meadowlark, Lazuli Bunting, Northern Bobwhite, House Wren, Chipping and Vesper Sparrows and Surprise Me! may be expected. Pack a lunch.

Leaders: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750
Tom Eble, 206.979.5884

Tuesday, May 31 Leavenworth area
Meet at 6:30 a.m. at Monroe Park and Ride on Highway 2, a half-mile west of the fairgrounds. Expect many species rarely seen around home. We will go up Icicle Creek and certainly try for the Calliope Hummingbird and Lazuli Bunting in Camas Meadows. Pack a lunch.

Leader: Virginia Clark, 360.435.3750
Art Wait, 360.563.0181

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(See "Trips" on page 10)

Have fun, be entertained and get smarter

Native Plant Week at the Demo Garden

May 1-5

Demo Garden in Edmonds

Visit the Native Plant Demo Garden in Edmonds on Sunday, May 1, from 1-4 p.m., and help celebrate Native Plant Week – and the garden's first anniversary. There'll be activities for all ages – including a native plant sale. Visit the garden, learn about native plants and how to attract and support birds, bats, butterflies, bees and other wildlife in your yard and community.

Come back to the Demo Garden on Monday, May 2, at 7 p.m., for a talk by Kevin Zorbrist of WSU about native trees. Kevin will discuss identifying native trees, their uses in history and their role in our local ecosystems. This is a free event, but space is limited and advanced registration is required. To reserve a spot, please contact Laura Spehar at 425.672.2150 or edmondsbwh@gmail.com.

On Thursday, May 5, at 7 p.m., learn about gardening with native plants from Nancy Moore, Washington Native Plant Society Steward, and PAS's own Laura Spehar. This is a free event, but space is limited and advanced registration is required. To reserve a spot, please contact Laura Spehar at 425.672.2150 or edmondsbwh@gmail.com.

The Demo Garden is located at the Willow Creek Hatchery at 95 Pine Street, Edmonds.

Zen Birding

May 5

Seward Park Audubon Center

Discover how birding offers a deep connection to nature and our own lives as writer Susan Guyette presents from the new book, *Zen Birding*, on Thursday, May 5, at the Seward Park Audubon Center. This free event, co-presented by the center and the Great Washington State Birding Trail, features a reception with the author from 6 to 7 p.m., with reading, discussion and book signing from 7 to 8:30.

This is a free event, but RSVPs are required. Please contact Joey Manson at jmanson@audubon.org or 206.652-2444. Seating is first-come, first-served.

The Seward Park Audubon Center is located at 5902 Lake Washington Blvd. South, in Seattle.

Dog days, raven nights

Thursday, May 5

NW Stream Center, Everett

Twenty years ago, John and Colleen Marzluff left Arizona for a small cabin in the mountains of western Maine. Their mission: to conduct the first-ever extensive study of the winter ecology of the Common Raven. They chronicled their experience in a terrific new book: *Dog days, raven nights*.

The Northwest Stream Center is pleased to welcome the Marzluffs to Everett on Thursday, May 5, at 7 p.m., when they'll vividly and eloquently describe their adventure to research a mysterious and often misunderstood bird.

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

Native Plant Garden Tour

May 14-15

Seattle, Eastside, Edmonds, Mukilteo

Join the Central Puget Sound Chapter of the Native Plant Society for an informative and enjoyable backyard garden tour May 14-15. On this self-guided tour, you'll visit gardens in Seattle, Edmonds, Mukilteo and on the Eastside.

Native plants thrive because they've adapted to the area's climate, soil and rainfall. And, they generally require less maintenance and are welcomed by wildlife. Learn how to use them in your own yard – and see the beautiful gardens created by local residents.

For more information, contact Rita Moore at wpsngardentour@yahoo.com. She'll send you a tour map, driving directions, garden descriptions and garden tour hours.

Freedom, the eagle

Saturday, May 28

NW Stream Center, Everett

Meet Freedom, a magnificent Bald Eagle, and her keeper, Jeff Guidry, from Sarvey Wildlife Center, at the Northwest Stream Center on Saturday, May 28, beginning at 11 a.m. Together, they will share their inspiring personal story and intriguing facts about eagles and their habitat requirements.

Jeff is not one of Streamkeeper Academy's adjunct professors who comes from a scientific background. Instead, he is a rock and rhythm-and-blues guitarist who has played with artists like Brian Wilson (of Beach Boys fame) and guitarist Roy Buchanan. But, he's spent many years as a volunteer at Sarvey and is now president of that wonderful organization.

Cost is \$5 for PAS members. Advance purchase is 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.

Transit-oriented communities: a blueprint

Thursday, June 9

Everett Station

Explore a vision for compact urban areas and the protection of farms, forests and green space at a workshop on Thursday, June 9, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Everett Transit Center. Afterwards, enjoy a reception and peruse a visual exhibit – sponsored by Futurewise, GGLO and the Transportation Choices Coalition – which will be on display throughout June.

The Blueprint program is anchored by a comprehensive publication, *Blueprint for transit-oriented communities*. It's an action plan for promoting neighborhoods that give people greater access to housing, jobs, shopping and recreation without relying on a personal vehicle. The purpose of the Blueprint is to provide guidance and inspiration for the community at large, and also to serve as an advocacy manual for new legislation to promote exemplary transit-oriented communities in cities throughout Washington.

The workshop, reception and exhibit will take place in first floor meeting room at the Everett Transit Center, 3201 Smith Avenue.

For more information about transit-oriented communities, visit www.futurewise.org/priorities.toc.

(See "Events" on page 11)

Virginia Clark, Art Wait honored by PAS

By Kathleen Snyder, Secretary, Pilchuck Audubon Society

Virginia Clark and Art Wait were recognized as the 2010 Volunteers of the Year by Pilchuck Audubon at the April program meeting. Art and Virginia were commended for years of service to our organization in a variety of capacities. It's fitting that these two outstanding people be recognized together, as their service to PAS has often paired them in joint ventures – none as long lived nor as influential as their co-leadership of our Tuesday fieldtrips.

"We are joined at the binoculars," states Art. "Virginia is a better birder, but she doesn't have a computer. So, that's where I come in." As anyone who's been birding with them can attest, their "friendly" discussions of bird IDs are quite entertaining and illuminating. Both Virginia and Art can take pride in introducing new birders (author included) to the fascinating hobby of birding in the Pacific Northwest.

Virginia joined Audubon in the late 1960s. In 1970, she moved to Arlington and a Mourning Dove showed up and seemed hungry. She started feeding it and then the rest of her backyard birds. She joined PAS' fieldtrips, and eventually learned enough to lead them.

Virginia's fieldtrips are well-known for her delicious homemade cookies that keep us fueled up for the demands of the day. Virginia's cookies are always a big hit at program meetings and other events and have more than earned her the role of Hospitality Chair. She has worked on the Membership Committee, the Classroom Conservation Awards Committee, the Christmas Bird Count, the Snow Goose Festival, the Festival of the River and the Bald Eagle Fest in Arlington, where she's staffed our booth for three years by herself.

Some may remember when PAS worked the I-5 rest stop fundraiser, which required us to staff the place for 72 hours straight. Virginia coordinated that, as well, and covered the middle-of-the-night shifts nobody wanted.

When Pilchuck Audubon had an office in downtown Everett,



Mike Blackburn, Pilchuck Audubon president, congratulates 2010 Volunteers of the Year, Virginia Clark and Art Wait.

Virginia was a regular staffer there and has presented birding slideshows when requested by other organizations. When asked if she had a favorite Pilchuck memory, Virginia remembers with much happiness the fieldtrip in 2007 when, after stomach surgery, she was able to walk out with the group instead of waiting in the car.

She is thankful for the honor PAS has bestowed on her and looks forward to many happy birding adventures to come.

Art joined National Audubon in the early 1980s and was accidentally assigned to the Seattle Chapter. He finally hooked up with our chapter in 1990 and

started going on our fieldtrips.

Art is a truly great "behind-the-scenes" volunteer. Many of our essential functions happen because Art is there to do them. Currently, he's our Fieldtrip Chair and in-house postman, picking up and distributing the mail. He coordinated our birdseed sales for years, beginning when we had an office in Everett. He also staffed the office regularly, answered the PAS phone line, worked on the rest stop fundraisers, became an unofficial aide for former president Darryl Thompson when Darryl was ill, helped on numerous bird counts (including hosting the potluck dinners for the Christmas Bird Count) and was in charge of merchandise sales. For years, Art used his van to haul PAS equipment and promotional items to events all over the county.

Virginia says Art is "always willing to help anyone who asks." And, Art is famous for his stories which liven up the coldest and wettest fieldtrips. Art has fond memories of past fieldtrips to Winthrop as a highlight of his time with PAS. He really wishes he could hear bird songs and calls like he used to.

Pilchuck Audubon extends a collective thank you to Art and Virginia for their years of unselfish contributions to our organization. We are proud to recognize both of these wonderful people as the 2010 Volunteers of the Year and look forward to their continued help for many years to come.

Vaux's Swifts trickling into Monroe

The first northbound Vaux's Swifts arrived at Frank Wagner Elementary in Monroe on April 19. There were only six – and they were later than usual – but we expect the numbers to grow as the weather warms.

Thanks to the Together Green Grant, we have a special web site just for the Monroe Swifts. Be sure to check it out: www.monroeswifts.org. We will update it with daily counts once the spring migration gathers steam. And, if you haven't seen the new kiosk outside Frank Wagner Elementary, make sure you have a look next time you're in Monroe.

Many thanks to Curt Young and Larry Schwitters, who sorted

through thousands of hours of swift action caught by the chimney cams last fall. They've edited it down to about an hour's worth of highlights.

A DVD of the footage has been given to all the faithful counting teams along the migration route from California to British Columbia. We hope to have live, streaming video later this year. Keep an eye out for it.

And, be sure to mark your calendar for Swifts Night Out on Sept 10, 2011!

Improvisation pays off for weekend hikers

By Jonathan Blubaugh

The Weekend Bird Hikers on March 20 lucked out. No rain. No snow. How did we manage that?!

Our hike took us to Redmond's West Sammamish River Trail and, on the opposite bank, the Sammamish River Trail. We were surprised by the size and beauty of the rural Sammamish valley between the north end of Redmond and the more suburban Bothell and Woodinville.

We began our walk at Sixty Acres Park. Just before arriving there, we spotted a large flock of Canada Geese. Not only are the numbers of non-migratory Canada Geese growing, but it sure seems like the individual flocks are growing, too. We estimated this flock at about 500 birds.

We headed upstream on foot. As advertised, the east bank trail is paved and wheelchair accessible.

We were amused by a Canada Goose perched on a fence post. Nearby, we found a flock of wigeons. We also found a pair of Green-winged Teal. Soon, another or the same huge flock of geese took flight nearby, turning, wheeling and honking.

At intervals, there were several bridges over the river. We took the first bridge and reversed course back to the Sixty Acres Park. As we strolled along the opposite bank, we noticed a golf course with water hazards full of ducks and



Cackling Goose, by Donald Metzner

geese. So, we trespassed. We saw geese, a coot, wigeons and a gorgeous male shoveler.

In my opinion, we had turned back early. So, the day was still young when we got back to the cars. Terry suggested we head for the locks. So, we wrapped up our rain-free day of birding with an unscheduled visit to the Hiram Chittenden Locks and Carl English Botanical Gardens.

Friends, you've got to know that botanical gardens and arboreta are great places for us to practice our sport. Here's a partial list of what we saw: a Great Blue Heron, a Double-crested Cormorant,

500-1000 Canada Geese, a Cackling Goose, 14 Mallards, 136 American Wigeons, a pair of Northern Shovelers, the pair of Green-winged Teal, 8 Buffleheads, 5 Common Goldeneyes, 50 Barrow's Goldeneyes, a pair of Common Mergansers, an immature Bald Eagle, the American Coot, 13 Glaucous-winged Gulls, a couple of Anna's Hummingbirds, two Belted Kingfishers, heard 3 Northern Flickers, 3 Steller's Jays, 36 crows, 3 Black-capped Chickadees, 6 Bushtits, a Bewick's Wren, 3 Marsh Wrens, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, a couple of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 5 American Robins, 8 European Starlings, a Spotted Towhee, heard a Savannah Sparrow, 6 Song Sparrows, 3 Golden-crowned Sparrows, a Dark-eyed Junco and 7 Red-winged Blackbirds.

PAS members, chickadees part of local study

PAS members and the chickadees in their backyards are now new volunteers in a research study. In the January issue of *The Profile* was an article about training for people interested in participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Along with messages from people signing up for this class was a message from Doug Bonham of Hawk-Owl Systems. Doug asked if people attending the class might be interested in testing a new technology for gathering feeding rates and environmental data of cavity nesting birds.

Hawk-Owl Nest Monitors record the timing of all activity into and out of the nest with one-second accuracy and plot it against daylight and temperature. Data from the activity sensor can include nest selection, nest building, feeding,



High-tech chickadee nesting box from Hawk-Owl Systems and Covey Woodworks, ready to collect data in PAS member Alan Mearns' yard. Photo courtesy Alan Mearns.

fledging, roosting, predation and nest parasitism.

Doug's partner, Ken, of Covey Woodworks – who designed the nest boxes equipped with this data tracking system – came to the GBBC training and recruited six PAS volunteers. In March, the volunteers picked up the beautifully equipped nest boxes to take home and install.

It will be interesting to see how many chickadees choose these nest boxes and thereby volunteer for the study. Hopefully, Doug, Ken and their crew of volunteers will provide a report of this unique project!

For more information, visit www.hawkowl.com and www.coveywoodworks.com.

Birding highlights

By Mara Price, Sightings Coordinator

February 26, 2011-March 25, 2011

Well, spring has arrived ... sort of. At least the **American Robins** are out in large numbers and **Rufous Hummingbirds** and **American Goldfinches** are returning.

There are still questions regarding the name of the **Winter Wren**. I am not sure when the name was changed to the **Pacific Wren**. But, moving forward, I will list it as it is reported.

Carol and Larry Beason reported 8 **American Robins** in the yard of their Lake Bosworth home. They also listed 24 **Pine Siskins** (which are on decline in some parts of the country), a **Hermit Thrush**, 2 **Brewer's Blackbirds**, 8 **Buffleheads** near the shore, 30 **Evening Grosbeaks**, 2 **Fox Sparrows**, 4 **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, a **Merlin** under the feeder, 4 **Purple Finches**, 15 **Red-winged Blackbirds**, 4 **Rufous Hummingbirds**, a **Varied Thrush** and a **Common Raven** for a total species count of 39.

John Davis walks frequently through Forest Park and reports his findings from there. It seems like a good place for birding. His species count of 37 included 40 **American Crows**, 27 **American Robins**, 3 **Bald Eagles**, 2 **Brown Creepers**, a **Common Raven**, 12 **Glaucous-winged Gulls** on a large lawn after a heavy rain, 2 **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, a **Hermit Thrush**, 9 **Winter Wrens**, a **Red-breasted Sapsucker**, 12 **Red Crossbills** feeding on Hemlock cones, an **American Goldfinch**, a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and a **Turkey Vulture**.

The highlight of Gail Debarcardo's report must be 2 **Evening Grosbeaks** because she put an exclamation point by them. I probably would also. I really like seeing them. Her total species count of 27 from Brier also included a **Cooper's Hawk**, 4 **American Wigeons**, 2 **Varied Thrushes**, 26 **Pine Siskins**, 2 **Hairy Woodpeckers**, 2 **Downy Woodpeckers**, 6 **California Quail**, a **Brown Creeper**, 2 **Golden-crowned Sparrows** and 2 **White-crowned Sparrows**.

Hilkka Egtvedt only reported 5 **American Crows** this month, but she did report 50 **Dark-eyed Juncos** in her yard in Mukilteo. She also listed 25 **Band-tailed Pigeons** along with 4 **California Quail**, a **Fox Sparrow**, 4 **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, 5 **House Finches**, a **Pileated Woodpecker**, 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, 2 **Townsend's Warblers**, a **Bald Eagle** and 3 **Varied Thrushes** for a total species count of 28.

Black-capped Chickadees must really like Kriss Erickson's place in Everett. She reported 13 at the feeders. She also listed 2 **Mallards**, 4 **Wood Ducks** in her yard, 2 **Lincoln's Sparrows**, a **Mourning Dove**, a **Winter Wren**, 32 **European Starlings**, a **Great Blue Heron** near the waterway,



Red Crossbill, by Donald Metzner



Dark-eyed Junco, by Donald Metzner

3 **Northern Flickers**, 16 **Bushtits** and 3 **House Finches** for a total species count of 18.

Four more **Red Crossbills** were reported by Adeline Gildow. In addition, she spotted the **Yellow-rumped Warbler** several times in her yard and at the feeder. Her total species count of 34 also included 8 **Bald Eagles** along Norman Road, 30 **Bushtits**, 11 **Canada Geese** in the fields in Conway, 4 **Great Blue Herons** along Juniper Beach, 4 **Eurasian-collared Doves**, a **Ring-necked Pheasant**, a **Red-tailed Hawk**, 15 **Snow Geese** near Conway, 2 **Winter Wrens** and 6 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**.

It was an eventful month for backyard bird sightings at Julie O'Donald's Brier home. It began on February 28 with a **Townsend's Solitaire** at the stream. The next week, they spotted a mostly white bird, possibly a **Dark-eyed Junco** along the stream. A **Killdeer** also arrived on March 21. Her total species count of 27 also included 2 **Anna's Hummingbirds**, an **American Goldfinch**, 3 **Bewick's Wrens**, 4 **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, 3 **Varied Thrushes**, 2 **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, a **Hermit Thrush** and a **Cooper's Hawk** that captured a **European Starling** near her deck.

Mary Sinker had a yard full of **Dark-eyed Juncos** – 50 reported this period. She also had 20 **Evening Grosbeaks** at the feeders of her Stanwood home. Her total species count of 31 also included 30 **American Robins**, 10 **Black-capped Chickadees**, 17 **Mourning Doves**, a **Great Blue Heron** at the creek, 2 **White-crowned Sparrows**, 10 **House Finches**, 2 **Bewick's Wrens**, 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and finally, a **Snowy Owl** at the Pilchuck Tree Farm.

Dick Vanderhoff's total species count of 9 included a wave of **Dunlin** over the bay, 5 **American Robins**, 6 **Black-capped Chickadees**, 10 **Steller's Jays**, 2 **Northern Flickers**, a **Hairy Woodpecker**, 2 **Mourning Doves**, 2 **Band-tailed Pigeons** and a **Rufous Hummingbird**.

We had a pretty busy month in our area of Marysville, especially when the fields flooded. My total species count of 25 included 10 **American Robins**, 5 **American Wigeons**, 2 **Pin-tailed Ducks** and 4 **Mallards** in the field, 2 **Ring-necked Ducks** at the pond, 15 **Dark-eyed Juncos**, a **Mourning Dove**, a **Pileated Woodpecker**, 2 **Steller's Jays**, 3 **Purple Finches**, a lone **Pine Siskin** and a **Rufous Hummingbird**.

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

Smart Growth report

By Kristin Kelly, Smart Growth Director

In 1995, Snohomish County worked on its first Growth Management land use comprehensive plan. There was controversy over which land should be protected as commercial farmland, forest land and mineral land, and which land should remain rural, as well as how large urban growth areas should be around cities.

I wasn't involved in land use issues then. But, Pilchuck Audubon Society's Smart Growth director was and worked to save as much resource land as possible.

Still, it was decided that most of the county's upland farmland would be converted to rural land use and zoning. And, only the best soils around the two major water basins, the Snohomish and Stillaguamish rivers, would be protected. It remains as such today.

Over the last 20 years of the Growth Management Act (GMA), there've been constant attempts (some successful) to convert commercial farmlands to other uses. One example is the 15-year battle to protect 216 acres at Island Crossing – a fight that ended with the land changing to commercial land use and zoning. It is now annexed into the City of Arlington.

During these years, there wasn't much resistance from the farming community about the loss of agricultural land. That changed in recent years. With the change in County Executive from Bob Drewel to Aaron Reardon, farming issues moved to center stage. With a newly appointed Snohomish County Agricultural Board, issues about disappearing farmland also moved to center stage.

While pressure continues to develop farmland into other than crop or seed production, many farmers have elected to convert some property (legally, mind you) to habitat restoration. In most cases, farmers make money selling the property for such uses to agencies including Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). This has upset some of Snohomish County farmers. And, over the last several years, they've set themselves up to appeal several habitat restoration projects in the estuaries of both rivers.

County Executive Aaron Reardon and Council Member Dave Somers formed the Sustainable Lands Strategy (SLS) in an effort to appease the conflicting interests of farmers and habitat restoration proponents (including the Tulalip and Stillaguamish tribes). The primary charge of the SLS is to evaluate problems and opportunities for both "fish and farms" and to design a framework to reconcile differences and meet the resource needs of both interests.

Birdathon ...

(continued from page 1)

time environmentalists. They just like to support me and the work of our chapter.

This year, I hope all PAS members will participate in Birdathon – even if it's just counting your favorite backyard birds and getting pledges from a few relatives and neighbors. Everyone can enjoy the fun of birding and contributing to PAS.

If you're not birding in May (I don't know why you wouldn't go birding in May – it's the best month for birding), then send

The initial steps of the initiative were to form a project work group to develop a plan, and convene stakeholders to help accomplish the SLS mission. The mission is "to generate net gains in agricultural, tribal culture and ecological productivity and health in Snohomish County by developing, within six months, a broadly supported framework of tools, strategies and policies, including Comprehensive Plan amendments, that will drive harmonized, sustainable land-use and resource management decisions."

I represented Pilchuck Audubon Society and Futurewise on the Executive Committee. After eight months, we came to an agreement for the first phase and presented it to the executive and council. This is a big deal! Folks across the state are watching. Competing interests in watersheds and on lands for farming exist everywhere. If we're successful in Snohomish County, we'll lead the way for others to find common ground and solutions.

Our Phase 1 goal is complete. It will ensure a holistic approach to salmon recovery projects and farming sustainability, while also being non-regulatory. It will include a balanced committee to oversee all projects and reconcile differences. It will engage interested parties early on in the process, and provide a forum for ongoing dialog on topics of interest to agriculture and habitat restoration groups. It will foster a culture of collaboration.

Soon, we'll embark on Phase 2, which will be even more difficult. We'll work on policies and codes to guide the SLS process to completion. I'm looking forward to working with both the farmers and the tribes, as well as the county staff and agencies, to ensure Snohomish County has both local farming and salmon in its future.

Please plan to attend

On Thursday, May 12, the Department of Ecology will conduct an open house and public hearing on the Snohomish County Shoreline Master Program update. The county council adopted the update in December, and it has been reviewed by the DOE. The DOE wants to hear from the public, as well. I will submit comments and testify at this hearing on several outstanding concerns.

The open house begins at 6 p.m. The public hearing begins at 7 p.m. Both will take place in the public conference room on the first floor of the Bob Drewel Building at 3000 Rockefeller, Everett.

me an email or give me a call. I will gladly take your pledge! Or, you can support the Tuesday group, Mike Blackbird or a number of others who are looking for pledges.

For more info, contact our ever-faithful Birdathon coordinator, Hilka Egvedt, at 425.347.4944 or download the pledge sheet under "programs" at www.pilchuckaudubon.org.

Let's have fun and see who gets the longest list of Washington birds!

Backyard bird count yields gold mine of data

When tens of thousands of people watch birds and report what they see online, they create a snapshot showing the whereabouts of many hundreds of bird species across the United States and Canada. This annual gold mine of information about birds comes from participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a joint project of the National Audubon Society, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

This year, an estimated 60,000 bird watchers of all ages took part in the free, four-day event February 18-21. Participants identified 596 species and filed 11.4 million individual bird observations. Their reports provide useful information to scientists tracking changes in the numbers and movements of birds from year to year, just as winter is about to melt into spring.

Two new species never reported to the count before included a Brown Shrike in McKinleyville, California, and a Common Chaffinch recorded in Placentia, Newfoundland and Labrador – both species well out of their normal ranges. In Alaska, a GBBC participant observed a Brambling visiting her feeder – the only one reported for all of North America.

GBBC participants also reported a surprising increase in the number of Evening Grosbeaks this year – the largest number of observations ever for this species during the count and an

increase that isn't simply attributable to greater GBBC participation. A closer look finds this upturn especially marked in the northwestern US and in Canada. This uptick is also supported by data entered so far this season from Project FeederWatch, a winter-long, citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab and Bird Studies Canada. FeederWatch data has shown sharp declines in Evening Grosbeaks over the past two decades for unknown reasons. Future counts may reveal if this year's increase in GBBC grosbeak reports is a one-time fluctuation or part of a long-term trend.



Chestnut-backed Chickadee, by Minette Layne

The bird mentioned on more checklists than any other was the Northern Cardinal. Rounding out the top 10 were the Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco, Downy

Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Finch and Tufted Titmouse.

In Washington, the Dark-eyed Junco appeared on more checklists than any other bird, followed by the Black-capped Chickadee, Spotted Towhee, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Song Sparrow, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Steller's Jay and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

To find out more about these and other trends from the 2011 count, visit www.birdcount.org and click on "Highlights of 2011 GBBC."

Wisdom, chick survive tsunami on Midway

Several hours after the devastating March 11 earthquake and tsunami struck northern Japan, towering waves raced west across the Pacific Ocean, engulfing the three tiny islands of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

Three days earlier, Midway Atoll celebrated the latest wildlife celebrity to woo human audiences: Wisdom, the oldest known wild bird in the United States. She was first banded by a US Geological Survey scientist in 1956 as she incubated an egg. Since then, she has raised at least 30 youngsters – and worn out five bird bands.

By the early hours of March 12, four waves had overrun the low-lying refuge, nesting ground for nearly the entire world's population of Laysan Albatrosses. In the aftermath, biologists and volunteers dug out more than 300 birds trapped in the debris. Thousands more are thought to have been buried alive in their underground nests. Officials estimate that more than 20 percent of this year's albatross population perished – including 110,000 Laysan and Black-footed Albatross chicks and 2,000 adults – as a result of the tsunami and two severe winter storms that preceded it.

In a time when the scope of tragedy and suffering in north-



Wisdom was spotted caring for her chick only days after the tsunami hit.

ern Japan is both heartbreaking and unfathomable, small stories of survival and perseverance have brought some measure of hope and comfort. And here, Wisdom stepped in again.

Missing since the tsunami left Midway Atoll strewn with waterlogged chicks and widespread debris, Wisdom finally resurfaced, tending to her young, as she has done for decades.

Barry Stieglitz, Project Leader for the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, said:

"Although wildlife biologists generally manage at the level of populations,

we, too, become entwined in the fates of individual animals. Wisdom is one such special creature."

Although the losses at Midway Atoll were heavy, biologists are confident that, absent any other stressors, the albatross population could rebound from this event, Stieglitz said. But, "we remain concerned about the compounding effect of this tsunami on the existing stresses of invasive species, global climate change, incidental mortality from long-line fishing and other threats to albatross and other wildlife populations."

Blackbird ...

(continued from page 2)

in brain size in relation to background radiation amounted to 5 percent. If low-dose radiation can have significant effects on normal brain development (as reflected by brain size) and, therefore, potentially cognitive ability, doesn't it follow that this would be an evolutionary dead-end?

The important work scientists have been doing on the long-term effects of radiation on plant and animal life in the Chernobyl exclusion zone will now be broadened to study the effects of radiation on sea life as radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant spills into the Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately, radiologic contamination of sea water won't

Trips ...

(continued from page 3)

June 2-6

Ferry County

This year's trip will go in a different, "loony" direction. Susie Schaefer plans to take the group to nearby lakes with a history of nesting Common Loons. We'll depart Thursday morning, June 2, and return Monday night, June 6. We'll use Curlew as a base. If you're interested in extending your visit beyond June 6, bring your passport and we'll visit a loon lake accessible from the Canadian side.

Expenses for food and gas will be shared. This trip requires a lot of planning, so signups and confirmations are needed as soon as possible. If you're interested or would like more info, please contact Susie Schaefer: 425.771.8165 or susie.schaefer@pilchuckaudubon.org.

Sunday, June 12 Christmas and Rattlesnake lakes

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. We'll carpool to the Cedar River Watershed near Snoqualmie Pass on I-90, and hike to Christmas Lake and Rattlesnake Lake. Elevation gain is gradual and less than 100 feet. This is a full-day hike so pack a lunch. We may also grab dinner in Snoqualmie or North Bend.

Leader: Terry Nightingale, 206.619.2383, tnight@pobox.com

Sun., June 26 Elger Bay Preserve, Camano Island

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. We'll hike the 3.3 mile East Loop Trail through the forest with a viewing platform over a beaver marsh. Pack a snack, although we may stop on the way home for a late lunch.

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

Pilchuck Audubon board meetings are open to all

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

be relegated to an exclusion zone. Ocean currents fail to recognize human boundaries. Radioactive plankton entering the food chain could have far-reaching ramifications on the world economy.

It's fascinating to listen to talking heads try to explain away why a nuclear disaster every generation or so is an acceptable risk if the US is to gain energy independence. It's too much to contemplate. I'm going to put on my Walkman and listen to the Mariners game while I aerate my yard. Go Mariners!

Sunday, July 17

Ross Lake NRA

(Diablo Lake), Thunder Knob Trail

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. This hike is 3.6 miles round trip and is not a loop. There's a 425-foot elevation gain. Described as "moderately easy." Sounds perfect for kids. Great views of the reservoirs and surrounding peaks. Visits forest clearings and a pond. Goes over creek beds and terrain recently rearranged by Mother Nature during massive floods from 2003-06. Free. Pack a lunch. We may also stop on the way home for dinner.

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

Sunday, August 21

Mt. Rainier NP (Ohanapecosh), Silver Falls Loop Trail

Meet at 8 a.m. at Everett Mall – in the back, near the transit facility by LA Fitness. Six-mile loop along the Ohanapecosh River near the park's Stevens Canyon Entrance. The falls are 75-feet high. National Park entrance fee \$15 or Golden Eagle Pass. Pack a lunch. We may also stop on the way home for dinner. I'm still looking for more details on this one.

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.

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

Events ...

(continued from page 4)

Cascades bird banding camp for adults

August 6-12 McDaniel Field Station

The Puget Sound Bird Observatory invites you to learn bird-banding 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. This training follows NABC guidelines, includes six mornings of banding at various locations and six nights of camping at a semi-remote campground in the Naches Ranger District of the Wenatchee National Forest.

Cost is \$750 per person, plus a \$50 materials fee. The fee covers training, materials, text book, meals and group camping equipment.

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

Stilly Festival of the River and Pow Wow

August 12-14 River Meadows Park, Arlington

The Stillaguamish Festival of the River is a fun way to celebrate summer – and the environment of the Pacific Northwest. Enjoy great music, food, crafts, wild bird presentations, kids' activities and much, much more.

This year's event will feature a giant storytelling tent, interpretive salmon habitat tours and a salmon barbeque.

For more information, visit www.festivaloftheriver.com.

Feast with Friends

Thurs., September 1 AngelArmsWorks, Snohomish

The fifth annual Feast with Friends fundraiser is scheduled for Thursday, September 1, 6-9 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 information, visit www.futurewise.org or contact Kristin Kelly at Kristin@futurewise.org.

Livable Snohomish County Summit and candidate forum

Saturday, October 29 PUD building, Everett

Plans are in the works. Watch future issues of the *Profile* for more information about this free event.

To volunteer at the event, contact Kristy Kelly at kristin@futurewise.org.

Bird of the month: Spotted Towhee



Rex Guichard photo

Quick facts

- Large sparrow (7-8" long)
- Thick, pointed bill, short neck, chunky body, long tail
- Red eyes, deep rufous sides, black upper parts, white belly, white spots on wings
- You might hear them before you see them!

Towhees kick both feet backward at the same time to locate food under leaves and other forest litter. This movement is often quite loud and is one of the best ways to locate them.

Your best chance for an unobstructed look at a Spotted Towhee may be in the spring, when males climb into the shrub tops to sing their buzzy songs.

Cool fact: Though shy, spotted towhees will visit backyards that offer suitable low cover such as dense brush, brush piles or overgrown edges. Birders can also offer seeds on the ground or shredded suet to attract these birds, and leaving old leaves and other debris intact will give the birds a natural food source.

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 also 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="padding-left: 20px;">Make check payable to: <i>National Audubon Society</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">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="padding-left: 20px;">Make check payable to: <i>National Audubon Society</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Mail your check and this form to: <i>NAS, Membership Data Center</i> <i>POB 52529</i> <i>Boulder, CO 80322-2529</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: _____