



Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society
May 2018

Whidbey Audubon Society is dedicated to the understanding, appreciation and conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats on Whidbey Island and in surrounding waters.

Whidbey Audubon Meets Thursday, May 10 in Coupeville

Keeping Land Wild for Wildlife



Jessica Larson, land steward for the Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT), will be the guest presenter at our meeting on May 10. She will begin with an overview of what the WCLT does and then focus on several habitat restoration projects that have been completed or are currently being conducted.

Jessica will explore forest, prairie, wetland and shoreline restoration and how the work of the Land Trust has helped to improve these habitats and how that impacts the wildlife in the area.

Jessica Larson joined the Land Trust in October 2008. She is responsible for coordinating the monitoring and stewardship of all conservation easements and protected lands owned by the Land Trust. Using her background in forest management, volunteer coordination and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), she develops land management plans, trains stewardship volunteers and creates property maps.

Prior to joining the Land Trust, Jessica worked with Mount Rainier National Park and Longview Timber. She received her bachelor's of science in Environmental Science and Resource Management from the University of Washington and certificate in GIS from Green River Community College. She lives in Coupeville with her Gordon Setter, Angus.

Note: Check for any program changes on the [Whidbey Audubon website](#) by 4 p.m. on the event day,



Photo by Ron Newberry

A native planting project being done by a Washington Conservation Corps crew at the WCLT Crockett Lake Preserve, part of a larger wetland restoration project.

Join Us!

Thursday evening
May 10

Coupeville
Recreation Hall
901 NW Alexander Street

7:00 socializing
(donations for snacks welcome)

7:15 brief meeting and
board elections

7:30 program begins

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, May 12: EARTH SANCTUARY. The Earth Sanctuary is a wonderful area at any time of year, but it's especially lovely in the spring when the birds are singing. We will look and listen for spring migrants and our resident birds. The Earth Sanctuary parking lot is very small, so we'll meet at 8 a.m. at the Bayview Park & Ride lot to carpool there. Please be prepared to pay a \$7 entry fee. For more information on Earth Sanctuary, see www.earthsanctuary.org. The trip is limited to 12 participants so please email trip leader Linda Bainbridge to reserve your space, LKGBirder@gmail.com (red text is a hot link).

Field Trip Checklist

- ✓ Field trips are free and open to anyone interested in birding or conservation. Bring your friends!
- ✓ Beginners are very welcome.
- ✓ Carpooling is encouraged and even required for some sites with limited parking.
- ✓ Dress for the weather and in layers.
- ✓ Very bad weather cancels a trip. Check with the trip leader.
- ✓ If you have them, bring binoculars, scope and field guides.
- ✓ If you might need them, bring a drink and snack.

We are always looking for new trip leaders and assistants. If you are interested, please contact Ann Casey at cspcoach@aol.com.

Getting to Know Your Board: Patty Cheek

Patty Cheek is one of Whidbey Audubon Society's Members-at-Large. Here is some background information:

Patty Ball Cheek learned to drive in her dad's Triumph TR-3 roadster while growing up in Houston, which was a good beginning for a life in the outdoors — in a Triumph, one gets rained on and windblown whether or not the top is up. Later, living in Tucson with her husband, Larry, she found she loved hiking the Southwest's mountains and canyons. After 25 years of water deprivation in Arizona, she took up sea kayaking almost immediately after moving to the Seattle area in 1996. Ten years later she added sailing, receiving US Sailing's bareboat charter certification after two years of classes. She began birding seriously in 2015 and this year is joining birding expeditions

on the Texas coast, southern Arizona, and eastern Washington. While indoors, Patty earned a music degree in organ performance and taught piano and pipe organ for many years, also working as a church organist and choir director. She then made a mid-life switch in careers, earning a bachelor of science degree in nursing and worked as an oncology nurse in Tucson and Seattle for 30 years.

She retired, finally, in March of this year to enjoy birding, sailing and gardening full-time. She still misses that TR-3.



Patty Cheek at the wheel.

Whidbey Audubon Society Board Candidates

Voting for the following Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) Board positions will take place at the general meeting on May 10. All members in good standing will be eligible to vote. Here are brief biographies submitted by the candidates:

Candidate for President: Sharon Gauthier

Sharon Gauthier, the current Whidbey Audubon president, has served on the program committee, hospitality committee, bird specimen library committee and bird-in-hand committee. Sharon is a retired educator and is also a volunteer driver with Senior Services Medical Transportation Program giving people rides to medical appointments on and off island. She sees the

president's role as facilitating WAS programs so our expert birders can concentrate on sharing their knowledge.

Candidate for Vice-president: Dave Allen

David Allen lives on Bush Point with his wife, Kathy Stetz. One daughter lives in Portland and one in Tucson. In July he retired from the University of Washington-Bothell where he was Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Studies. Most of his career as a nurse was in academia with a focus on mental health services in prisons and jails. His current volunteer work is serving on the board of Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett where he chairs the Quality Committee. He and Kathy are trail stewards for one of the South Whidbey State Park trails through their participation in Friends of Whidbey State Parks. This summer he will begin participating in the Guillemot monitoring project. Over the years he and Kathy have spent much of their free time hiking in the Cascades. Another passion is woodworking. Although currently enrolled in the Thursday WAS Birds of Whidbey class series, he reports he is an extreme novice but is committed to Audubon's focus on environmental preservation and restoration.

Conservation Futures Update

One application was made for Conservation Futures funds this year. Island County, with advice from the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, asks to purchase an additional 40 acres bordering Barnum Point Park on Camano Island. The lot contains over 170 mature holly trees, which the County would remove and reforest with natives, as a start to the eradication of invasive holly throughout the park. Another section, currently covered with blackberry brambles, would replace the parking lot with a larger one (19 vehicles instead of 8). The remaining acreage is forest and a little pond and stream draining into Triangle Cove.

The Conservation Futures Citizens Advisory Board recommends this project enthusiastically in its report due April 17. When the *County Commissioners* schedule a hearing, the date will show on their website. [Click red text for hot link to the website.]

— Susan Bennett, *Conservation Futures Citizens Advisory Board Member*

Candidate for Secretary: Cathy Queeno-Wall

Cathy has been a member of Whidbey Audubon since 2002 and took the birding class in one of those early years. Her first bird book was bought for her by her husband 20 years ago on their honeymoon after seeing a Tufted Puffin for the first time. Cathy took part in the Pigeon Guillemot project monitoring various and sometimes multiple beaches from Coupeville to Forbes Point for nine years. She has lived in Oak Harbor about 40 years, and she is still working full time which has hindered her ability to actively participate in several committees, but she is excited to jump in and help out the board as secretary. She adds, "I am forever grateful for all Whidbey Audubon has taught me about birds and habitat."

Conservation Column: Screen Time

There are a lot of public parks and recreation areas on Whidbey Island and many of them have vault toilets. These are often in or near forested lands. Those twelve-inch diameter vent stacks that rise above these comfort stations are sometimes mistaken by birds as caverns or safe refuges. And once a bird enters, there is no escape. Several cavity-nesting species of owls, woodpeckers and other birds have been found in the middens beneath these structures. We have these species on Whidbey. Preventing this fatal outcome is easy and the Teton Raptor Center in Wyoming has pioneered a project to offer powder-coated metal screens that attach easily to the tops of these vent stacks. So far, the Teton Raptor Center's inelegantly named, but very effective Poo-poo Project reports 11,500 screens installed in all 50 states, Canada and the U.S. Virgin Islands. More information can be found on the [Teton Raptor Center](#) website.

Whidbey Audubon is undertaking a project to purchase screens for all the public vault toilets on the island. We are still gathering information on how many are needed, but the state parks (not including Deception Pass) have ten structures, and the

County has about that many, too. The Central Whidbey State Parks are looking forward to working with us. Whidbey Audubon will partner with various organizations to get them installed. We are offering a unique opportunity for our members to sponsor a screen for \$35. You can honor (well, maybe, if they have a sense of humor) a friend or a loved one or just have the satisfaction of doing something concrete to protect birds.

Send your check for \$35 to Whidbey Audubon Society at Post Office Box 1012, Oak Harbor, Washington 98277 and please note what it is for, such as vent screen, poo-poo project or some indication so our treasurer knows how to credit your donation. We will acknowledge your gift in a future issue of *Shorelines*.

— Kim Shepard, Conservation Chair



Vent screen for outdoor vault toilets prevent birds from entering vent stacks.

Pressure Increases as Pledges Grow for the Birdathon

Excitement mounts as May approaches with both Global Big Day of Birding and our annual Birdathon competition.

Participating teams will record all species they observe on Whidbey Island over a 24-hour period, with the team sighting the most species winning the prestigious Golden Binoculars Award. *You may contact a team member to contribute* an amount per species observed or simply pledge a lump sum. We will have a table at the May 10 Audubon meeting if you would like to make a pledge at that time. Any and all pledges help, whether it be eagle- or hummingbird-sized. Designate where you want the money to go: Whidbey Audubon's General Fund or the Scholarship Fund, which supports graduating high school seniors going on to a four-year college and majoring in a conservation field — our future bird stewards!

Remember to let teams know if you are a Microsoft employee or Boeing employee or retiree, as these businesses will match

your donation. All business sponsors will be honored in the newsletter, *Shorelines*, and on our website.

This year's Birdathon teams are:

- **All-for-Knot:** Joe Sheldon, jksheldon43@gmail.com
- **The Coupevillains:** Steve and Martha Ellis sremse@comcast.net
- **The Fledglings:** Jenny Brown, jennywahere@gmail.com
- **Wild Women of Whidbey:** Phyllis Kind, phizhawk@whidbey.com and Ann Casey
- **Winging It:** Sarah Schmidt, 4bats@ixoreus.com and Janet Hall
- **Shore Thing:** Cathi Bower, whidbird@whidbey.com and Kathy Obersinner

For additional information, contact Kathy Obersinner at 503-964-0873 or obergage@gmail.com.

Pigeon Guillemot Research Group Request for Services

Whidbey Audubon Society's Guillemot Research Group (GRG) is seeking the services of a contractor for its annual Pigeon Guillemot Survey. This year, 2018, is the 14th year of this annual survey, which is conducted on the beaches surrounding Whidbey Island. The survey has over 50 local volunteers monitoring 25 sites weekly from early June through the end of August.

The GRG contractor works in conjunction with the GRG team under the leadership of Frances Wood. The contractor will be paid a fee not to exceed \$4,000 through the Whidbey Audubon Society.

The majority of the contractor's work is conducted in the field in the early morning weekday hours, 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. on local beaches around Whidbey Island from June 10 through September 15, 2018. The contractor is responsible for recording data related to the behavior of the Pigeon Guillemots and adding to a body of research data previously collected over years of surveys. The main tasks include data collection, data input, data analysis, annual report submittal and communication with

Guillemot Contract, see page 6

Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

March 29: **Townsend's Warbler** seen in my yard, seems early. On Soundview Drive, on the bluff above Deer Lagoon. — *Darwin Wile*

March 29: Stunning, large (may have appeared large and round due to the fluffed feathers as it was a cool morning) very white (almost no gray tint) **Northern Strike** perched on the top of a wild scrubby tree at the corner of our backyard on Deer Lagoon. I do not recall ever seeing one before, so I had to do a lot of research to identify this bird. Very white with a beautiful, narrow, very black band across its eyes. It sat facing me for at least 10 minutes (probably 50 feet away), but too far to take a good picture. I did watch it through binoculars as I wanted to memorize what this bird looked like. One of the most beautiful birds I have seen.

— *Cathy Donckers*



Photo by William Fritsch

Short-eared Owl

April 1: We spotted a beautiful **Short-eared Owl** at Crockett Lake this afternoon. (Easter Sunday.) It is rare at this time of year.

— *William Fritsch*

April 1: First **Hutton's Vireo** of the season and a **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** building a nest in a tiny excavated hole in the crook of a dying (or dead) madrona tree. It was collect-

ing moss from the ground and lichens from branches... stuffing its little beak full! Seen on Broadway Street in Coupeville. — *Traci York*

April 1: Partial leucistic **Dark-eyed Junco**. The left cheek had a smudge of white feathers while the right cheek showed a very large white patch. Otherwise, typical junco coloration. Seen at feeder off Saratoga Road in Langley. — *Dave Parent*

April 6: **Violet-green Swallow** pair courting on the house gutter in front of their (now customary) eave nest. Seen at Lagoon Point.

— *Mary Hollen*

April 10: A single **White Pelican**. Will it be another big year for them? Seen near the Keystone Spit side shore of Crockett Lake. — *Dave Parent*

April 12: Lone **White Pelican** on west end of Deer Lagoon.

— *Cathy Donckers*

April 15: Seven **Mountain Bluebirds** at Pacific Rim Institute foraging in recently disked field. One male, six females. — *Joe Sheldon*

April 17: **Leucistic Bald Eagle**, just hanging out in a tree at Windjammer Park in Oak Harbor early in the morning.

— *Mary Morgan*

April 18: I also spotted what I believe to be a **leucistic Bald Eagle**. I'm new to birding but have lived in Snohomish and Island counties most of my life, so I know Bald Eagles. This one looked odd, but I was taking a photo somewhat toward the sun and had to overexpose, which I thought was making the black feathers look lighter. Spotted at Deer Lagoon. — *Peter West Carey*

April 19: Three fully adult



Photo by Peter West Carey

Leucistic Bald Eagle

Western Purple Martins flying and perching near where they nested last year. Not very vocal but interested in the appearance of a human installing a mailbox nest on a piling in the Lagoon Point neighborhood. — *Mary Hollen*

April 20: Pair of **Band-tailed Pigeons** landed at our bird feeders this morning. Perched on top of the feeders for a while and then landed on the ground to feed. We've see them very occasionally at our feeders over the years on Log Cabin Road in Clinton.

— *Lynne and George Jensen*

April 21: I may not have this right as I am a new birder; put up a wooden swallow box about 25 feet up a Doug fir; on top of the box appeared what I think was a **Rough-winged Swallow**. Location is three miles north of Greenbank Farm, overlooking Admiralty Inlet and next to ravine creek.

— *Patrick Hussey*

April 22: Two **Evening Grosbeaks** at my feeder this morning. First time I've seen them on our property off Honey-moon Bay Road.

— *Phyllis Kind*

April 24: Flock of 11 **White Pelicans** on the west end of Deer Lagoon. I have been watching only one for a little

over a week as it was hanging out with a flock of geese, but now it has been joined by other White Pelicans.

— *Cathy Donckers*

April 24: Five **American White Pelicans** in Deer Lagoon near Double Bluff Road. They swam slowly south and now are about mid Lagoon west of the west dike trail. My first sighting of multiple pelicans this year; saw the lone pelican same place on April 14. — *Libby Hayward*

PLEASE POST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS to the *Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) website*.

Sightings should be on Whidbey Island or relate in some way to Whidbey Audubon. Reports should refer to birds or other wildlife that are not commonly seen here. Alternatively, they may refer to migratory birds that arrive outside their normal seasons.

Reports of especially interesting sightings in nearby areas are welcome. Greater selectivity is needed to keep the email volume reasonable so editors will exercise judgment on whether the rarity, proximity and significance of sightings merit inclusion.

These guidelines reflect the interests of local birders. Please respect the essentially scientific nature of the Sightings feature. Thanks for your cooperation.

There are designated spaces to submit your information, such as what you saw, where you saw it and the date and approximate time. Although we are asking those who post to leave a phone number or email address with your sighting, they will not be included on the actual "Sightings" page. Thank you!

Keep up with "Sightings" on the was website, on your mobile device at www.m.whidbeyaudubon.org or on the *Whidbey Audubon Society Facebook page*.

Beyond Whidbey: A Rare and Wonderful Bird Sighting

Editor's Note: Whidbey Audubon member Janet Stein happened to be in the right place at the right time to witness a major event in the birding world. So we have made an exception to the "Whidbey and environs only" rule to sightings. Here is her personal telling of the experience:

I love heading to Arizona in the spring to look for birds. This is the time of year when I've grown tired of the Pacific Northwest grey and rain and want to wander around in the warmth and look for beautiful colorful birds. This year sure wasn't a disappointment. After visiting the Madera Canyon and Patagonia Lake areas I was already pretty happy having seen a multitude of lovely birds including the **Elegant Trogon**, **Hepatic and Summer Tanagers**, **Scott's** and **Bullock's Orioles**, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** and many **Vermillion Flycatchers** to name just a few.

However, I had never been to the higher elevation forested areas of the Santa Catalina Mountains and I wanted to see some of the warblers known to occur there such as the Red-faced, Olive and Grace's. So I contacted a birding friend from Tucson and we headed up the Mount Lemmon Road to Rose Canyon Lake Campground where my friend had seen these species in the past. It was pretty quiet warbler-wise and we thought it might be a bit early in the season to catch these species. We were walking along a small stream area with budding willows when all of a sudden, I saw a flash of red. My initial thought was "that sure seems like an awful lot of red for a Red-faced Warbler."

Within seconds though we knew we were staring at a bird that didn't occur in any of our North American field guides. We were looking at a beautiful all **Red Warbler** with two brilliant white cheek (auricular) patches. The bird gave us beautiful views, flying between the low willows landing within 30 feet from us at times. We knew we were experiencing something very special, but because there was no cell coverage where we were, we had no way to positively identify the bird at the time — and we had no camera! After spending about 15 to 20 minutes with the bird we decided it was time for my friend to get back to her Tucson home, identify the bird and contact her birding acquaintances to get back up there and get some photos.

It didn't take long to identify the bird as a Red Warbler and some great photos of the bird were taken later that afternoon. What came as a total shock was that our sighting on April 9,

2018 was the **first recorded of the species in the United States**. This created quite a buzz in the birding community, particularly since the annual **American Ornithology Meeting** was occurring that week in



Photo by Dave Stejskal

The Red Warbler is a 5-inch-long Mexican bird that flew hundreds of miles before coming to rest near Rose Canyon Lake.

Tucson. We understand that 75 to 100 birders visited the area the following day, but the bird was not found again. Looking at birds is therapy for me. I find them so incredibly beautiful and interesting. They fill my soul with an appreciation of our natural world and how connected all life is. They are like gifts to me. This particular bird was a very special gift indeed.

— Janet Stein

For a local article on the event, see "Red warbler makes debut in US at Mount Lemmon;" *Arizona Daily Star*, April 13, 2018; arizonadailystar.az.newsmemory.com/publink.php?shareid=2cfa969ec.

Dates to Remember

MAY

5 or 6: Birdathon

8: Pigeon Guillemot Training, Freeland

10: Whidbey Audubon Program: Whidbey Camano Land Trust with Jessica Larson, Coupeville

12: Field Trip: Earth Sanctuary

17: Deadline for June Shorelines

24: Whidbey Audubon Society Board Meeting, Greenbank Fire Station on Day Road, 7 p.m. Members welcome

26 to 28: Wenas Audubon Campout, www.wenasaudubon.org/index.html

JUNE

2 and 9: Songbirds of Your Backyard and Beyond,

Padilla Bay; www.eventbrite.com/elaadultprogram-songbirds-of-your-backyard-and-beyond-part-iii-tickets-42363883516

14: Whidbey Audubon Program: Nature Conservancy, Coupeville, 7 p.m.

JULY

8: Deadline for Whidbey Camano Land Trust calendar photo contest

Whidbey Native Plants for Birds

Whidbey Audubon now has a link on their website to the National Audubon native plants database. You can type in your zip code and receive a list of native plants that attract birds for your area.

Go to the [Whidbey Audubon](http://WhidbeyAudubon) website. Select "Stewardship," then "Plants for Birds." Check it out!

Field Trip Reports: Birding Edmonds Hot Spots

On March 31, eleven of us enjoyed a marvelous day visiting diverse birding hotspots in Edmonds, guided by Edmonds resident and bird photographer Bev Bowe. First was Pine Ridge Park, a 60-acre gem hidden in a residential neighborhood. It offered a mix of mature conifer forest bisected by creek, ponds and riparian shrubs. Highlights included a **Hermit Thrush** singing a whisper song; four woodpeckers: **Downy, Hairy, Flicker** and **Pileated**; and a pair of **Northern Shovelers** rotating in a tight circle, showing us their distinct style of foraging in which these ducks "work together to bring food to the surface by swimming rapidly in a circle while swinging their bills side to side". A special treat was spotting a **Hutton's Vireo** with its freshly completed nest.

On to Yost Park, walking along a deep ravine among mixed stands of cedar, alder, big-leaf maple and western hemlock, where we watched three different **Anna's Hummingbirds** on their tiny lichen-decorated nests. After a morning of birding in woodland

habitats, we moved to the Fishing Pier for water species including **Pied-billed Grebe, Surf and Black Scoters** and **cormorants** in their breeding finery: **Double-crested** sporting white crest-plumes and **Pelagics** with red faces and white rump patches. At Brackett's Landing, a protected marine reserve north of the ferry landing, we picnicked in the sun while watching the flock of **Brant's** geese that winters along that shoreline, so accustomed to people that they loaf on the beach and allow close-up viewing. One wore leg bands (see Cathi Bower's article on page 7).

After lunch we continued to Edmonds Marsh, where we watched a **Spotted Towhee** lying flat on a railing in sunning posture and found the intricately woven sock-like structure of a **Bushtit nest. Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **Violet-green Swallows** were welcome reminders that spring is here, and the migrants are returning.

A final stop at the Fish Hatchery and it was time to return to Whidbey. We were delighted to discover the rich birding to be found near downtown Edmonds. Before day's end we tallied 60 species.

— Sarah Schmidt, Trip Leader

Guillemot contract, from page 3

the GRG team on their findings.

For more information regarding the Pigeon Guillemot Survey and the contractor position visit the website www.pigeonguillemot.org, follow the link "How can I get involved" for a more details regarding this position.

Please submit a letter of interest and your statement of qualifications by May 8, 2018 to Frances Wood at wood@whidbey.com. Any questions may also be sent to Frances Wood.

Bird in the Hand Bird Festival

September 22 ~ 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Bayview Farm and Garden Nursery and Bayview Hall

Volunteers Needed

contact Robin Llewellyn, soaringridge@broadstripe.net

Cheryl Bradkin, bradkin@whidbey.net

Field Trip to Protection Island April 21

We woke to a very windy morning with winds to 46 miles per hour on the west side of Whidbey and the ferries delayed by 45 minutes. Yet our band of intrepid birders headed out to sea in the hopes of spotting auklets and whichever other birds were on the far side of Protection Island. Fortunately, the wind began to quiet and although it was a "stay seated" ride out, once we stopped we were able to go on deck and do some serious birding. The tour guides were excellent and provided information about the geology of Protection Island as well as about the species that frequent the island. Our birding continued after we disembarked, walked through Port Townsend and took the ferry home. The following birds and mammals were reported by the members of our group:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. American Wigeon | 7. American/Northwest Crow |
| 2. White-winged Scoter | 8. Brant Goose |
| 3. Western Grebe | 9. Canada Goose |
| 4. Common Murre | 10. Harlequin Duck |
| 5. Marbled Murrelet | 11. Surf Scorer |
| 6. Common Loon | |

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 12. Long-tailed Duck | 28. Belted Kingfisher |
| 13. Bufflehead | 29. Rock Pigeon |
| 14. Red-breasted Merganser | 30. Barn Swallow |
| 15. Horned Grebe | 31. American Robin |
| 16. Red-necked Grebe | 32. European Starling |
| 17. Black Oystercatcher | 33. House Sparrow |
| 18. Pigeon Guillemot | 34. Savannah Sparrow |
| 19. Rhinoceros Auklet | 35. Song Sparrow |
| 20. Glaucous-winged Gull | 36. White-crowned Sparrow |
| 21. Hybrid Gull | 37. Golden-crowned Sparrow |
| 22. Brandt's Cormorant | 38. Black-bellied Plovers |
| 23. Double-crested Cormorant | Mammals |
| 24. Pelagic Cormorant | 1. Harbor Seal |
| 25. Great Blue Heron | 2. Elephant Seal |
| 26. Bald Eagle | 3. Northern Sea Lion |
| 27. Northern Harrier | 4. River Otter |

— Sharon Gauthier, Trip Leader

Meet Mr. Band Number 3617-33641

Recently observed beach bumming with his buddies at Edmonds waterfront, this **Brant** was first encountered (by humans) as a one-year-old in July 2007, near Bethel, Alaska, way up above Bristol Bay. This information is available through the North American Bird Banding Program and, while it is intriguing to us to find that #3617-33641 is over 12 years old and that he's hundreds of miles from his nest of record, what does it mean to him?

The banding program in North America has been collecting reports since the system was first developed in 1899 and all the while compiling data regarding millions of birds over hundreds of thousands of miles all around the globe.

J.J. Audubon was the first in North America to perform a simple banding experiment, when he tied tiny silver cords around the legs of Phoebe nestlings and observed that two of them returned to the same neighborhood in Pennsylvania where they started out the previous year. In Europe, where it is called Bird Ringing, around 1595 the first documented banding was on Henry IV's Peregrine Falcon, when it took off after a bustard, and wound up just 24 hours later 1,350 miles away in Malta, averaging 56 miles per hour!

As we're immersed in the height of the most active season of a most significant year, National Audubon's *The Year of the Bird*, and celebrate the knowledge we've acquired and the curiosity with which we sustain its continuation, we can smile to ourselves a little to know we contribute to larger efforts, which cross boundaries that blur in the face of migration.

When Sarah Schmidt of Whidbey Audubon Society encoun-

tered #3617-33641, she was able to make a photo of his band, which she sent to the Bird Banding Program's central site. She then received a Certificate of Appreciation with all of his documentation. Cooperation of observers like Sarah, amateur and professional ornithologists, universities, Audubon, Ducks Unlimited

and others, contribute to understanding the movement, survival and behavior of birds, with the hopeful result of a more harmonious existence between us — birds and otherwise.

All banded bird reports are now submitted online at www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/bblretrv. To learn a lot about #3617-33641, the banding process and why, delve into the [U.S. Geological Survey](http://www.usgs.gov) website [click the red text for a hot link to the site].

— Cathi Bower

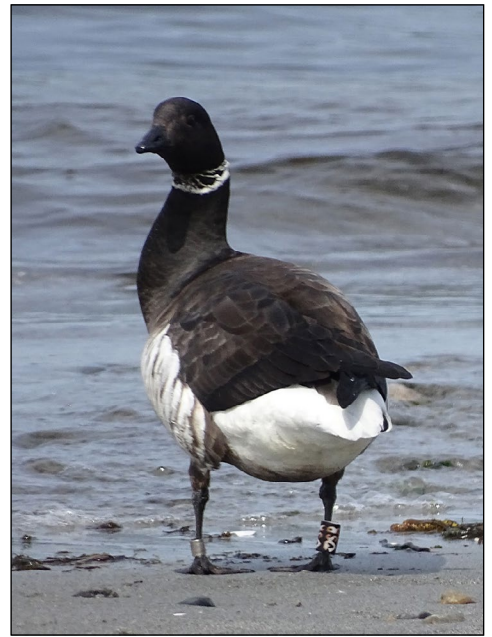


Photo by Cathi Bower

Banded Brant seen on the March 31 field trip to Edmonds.

Field Trip to Boundary Bay and Reifel April 18

First, it didn't rain. Second, we got through the construction on Fidalgo Island with no delays. Third, we crossed the border with no wait. Fourth, the sun came out.



Photo by Cathi Bower

Kim Shepard feeding Red-winged Blackbirds at Reifel Wildlife Refuge.

So already it was a stellar trip to Boundary Bay and Reifel Wildlife Refuge. The day got better as the nine of us saw more **Bald Eagles** than we could count at the Boundary Bay dike trail, stood next

to **Fox, White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows** at our feet in the parking lot, watched a **Rough-legged Hawk** hunt near **Northern Harriers** and **Red-tailed Hawks** and enjoyed close looks at **Common Yellowthroats, Goldfinches** and **Tree Swallows**.

Then we continued on to Reifel. Though the black-crowned night heron and saw-whet owls were missing, we enjoyed close encounters with dozens of **Wood Ducks**. Acclimated to people and unafraid of contact in this special island sanctuary, the **Wood Ducks, Canada Geese, chickadees** and **Red-winged Blackbirds** ate from our hands (feeding is allowed; the Sanctuary sells special seed). A lone **Sandhill Crane** strolled around and took handouts as well.

A quick border crossing and a fifteen-minute construction delay got us home about eleven hours after we left, with a species count of 61 for the day.

— Kim Shepard, Trip Leader

Dan's Blog: *When the Birds Come Home*

by Dan Pedersen with Craig and Joy Johnson,

Editor's note: *Dan's Blog is published every Saturday morning. From time to time he partners with Craig and Joy Johnson to write about birds. For more, including additional photography, click on this link: www.pedersenwrites.blogspot.com. If you'd like to be added to Dan's email list to receive the link to the latest post each week, write to Dan Pedersen at dogwood@whidbey.com.*

As I re-hung a favorite nest box on the side of our house the other day, I was pretty sure who would use it this spring. This particular box is slathered with pitch and sap around the opening. Red-breasted Nuthatches deposited the sap last April when they moved into the box and raised a brood.

"Red-breasted Nuthatches typically use existing holes in decaying trees, so your nest box experience with this species is considered rare," said my blog partner Craig Johnson. "But they may come back. Once birds are successful with a box and raise a brood in it, they show a lot of site-fidelity."

Spring is nesting season around here, a time of new life in the yard. Sue and I are lucky to have lots of natural habitat to attract nesting birds, and also a few well-placed nest boxes to bring them closer.

Chestnut-backed Chickadees used the "nuthatch box" for several seasons before the nuthatches remodeled it, but the chickadees won't touch it now. Sap is a defensive precaution nuthatches take to keep other birds and predators from attempting to enter. Most birds (such as chickadees and swallows) land on the opening of a nest box and crawl inside. Nuthatches dive through it like bullets, never touching it.

The placement of this box is genius on my part. It's on the east wall of the house, protected from the hot sun by the dappled shade of a Katsura tree 10 feet away, and equally close to a bird bath. The adults use the tree as a staging area before making a quick dive to the box. They forage for bugs and grubs in the

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Bird Interactions with Birding in Neighborhoods South

March 28: Deer Lagoon is always a good remedy for a dreary day. We cheery band of birders saw and/or heard at least 41 species, the most entertaining of which may have been **Bushtits** checking out last year's nest. It's still hanging in there, but we imagined too much of a fixer-upper for their taste.

Also, the "transitioning" male (first summer) **Red-winged Blackbird** was the subject of much discussion — many of us had never observed this female-like coloring, but with orange wing patches. We also had to be aware along the trail for territorial RWBB dogfights.

This weekend, keep an eye open for any long-eared furry mammals messing around with eggs for some reason. (Just foolin'.)

April 12: Just when you're sure you're about to have a ho-hum day at Lone Lake, the first **Common Yellowthroat** of the year and a **Peregrine Falcon** show up! As the Peregrine had an "in-

teraction" with a male **Harrier**, it first appeared to be a female Harrier. It did perch on a tree long enough for everyone to get a good look at the distinct markings, but the browner color was throwing us — perhaps an immature. (Either most of us were sure on the Peregrine, or all of us were mostly sure).

Every time we tried to leave, someone new came along, for a very satisfying morning. We saw and/or heard at least 44 species.

Of the dozens of **swallows** swooping over Lone Lake, the **Barn Swallows** were only at the south end, perched around on cattails. A **Tree Swallow** peeking out of its nest was entertaining, as well as a **Snipe** who flew up near us.

---Cathi Bower ... Bird early – bird often

BIRDING IN NEIGHBORHOODS (BIN) SOUTH meets every other Thursday. Time varies with the season. Contact Cathi Bower at whidbird@whidbey.com.

BIN North's Windy Wednesday at Swan Lake

April 11: Expectations were not particularly high for our morning as scouting the day before had yielded a pretty low species count. There was also a brisk wind which often can cut down on the amount of time we weather wimps can stay out. Surprisingly, neither wind nor absent birds proved to be an issue.

On the beach walk at Joseph Whidbey State Park a lucky **Red-breasted Merganser** floated by with six females by his side. We saw several **Common Loons** in breeding plumage as well as a dozen or so **Pigeon Guillemots**, also in breeding plumage, in the air and on the water.

On the lake side **Red-winged Blackbirds** and a **Northern Harrier** soared over the cattails and several **American Crows**

were mobbing a **Raven** who must have been a threat to a nest. On the lake were **Mallards**, **Gadwalls**, **American Wigeons**, **Canada Geese**, **Great Blue Herons** and **Double-crested Cormorants**. On the way home, we drove down Dike Road and spotted **Northern Pintails**, **Tree** and **Barn Swallows** and a lone **Trumpeter Swan**. With the aid of a scope set up by a birder not with our group, we saw a pair of **Bald Eagles** in their nest and a **Merlin**. We saw a total of 31 species on this windy Wednesday.

—Marcia Lazoff

BIN NORTH meets the second Wednesday of the month. If you would like to be on the email list, contact Marcia Lazoff at mlazoff@comcast.net.

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tree, and do their bathing in the birdbath....

Nuthatches are cavity-nesters, like the Chestnut-backed Chickadees... They typically raise their young in holes in decaying trees. But when the right spot isn't available, a nest box is the nest best thing....

Like nuthatches, sapsuckers also make use of tree sap, but in a different way — to trap food. They tattoo small holes in the bark and excavate rectangular sapwells to catch insects they can eat....

Butterflies, squirrels, bees and hummingbirds also are attracted to these sapwells, so competition can get intense at times....

Here's a reason to go easy on clearing the underbrush in the yard — *ground-nesters*. Dark-eyed Juncos actually nest on the ground, in depressions in the brush. Nobody wants to be a baby-killer by being overzealous with yardwork.

The takeaway from all of Craig's videos is that to live in harmony with nature, it's best not to eradicate the conditions for wildlife by compulsive over-grooming. By leaving some decayed trees, brush, native plants and leaf litter on the ground we can fill our spring and summer days with the miracle of new life.

Read the complete blog, published March 31, 2018, "#291—When the birds come home," at pedersenwrites.blogspot.com/2018/03/291-when-birds-come-home.html. It includes links to Craig Johnson's videos about the nesting behavior of many local birds.

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— Linda Bainbridge, Membership Chair

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