

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

www.skagitaudubon.org

Vol. 36 No. 2

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS

By Libby Mills

About the field trips

Beginning birders and friends are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips. Membership in Skagit Audubon is encouraged but not required for participation. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing, and bring field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Carpool whenever possible and contribute to the driver's expense. Watch the email reminders for the latest information, including any changes and/or additions to the field trip schedule. To be added to the email distribution list contact Libby Mills:

libbymills@gmail.com

If you plan to join a field trip some place other than the described starting point, call the trip leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Trip plans may change.

Saturday, Feb. 4
Port Susan Bay Preserve
8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

This weekend we have a special opportunity to go out on the dike at Port Susan Bay on the Nature Conservancy property at the end of Boe Road just south

Field Trips continue on page 7

FEBRUARY MEETING AND PROGRAM

This Could Be the Salish Sea by Melanie Driscoll

Tuesday, February 14, 2017
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center
10441 Bayview-Edison Road
Mt. Vernon, Washington



DEEP SEA OIL DISASTER

Melanie Driscoll is Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon's Gulf Coast and Mississippi Flyway regions. When the Deepwater Horizon well blew, Melanie played a pivotal role in Audubon's response to the Gulf disaster. She initiated wildlife survey and rescue efforts. She provided biological interpretation and served as an informed interface between the relief effort and other Audubon staff, the news media, the public, and the larger environmental community.

And Melanie adds, "As for people, the Deepwater disaster impacted Native Americans, Creole and Cajun folk the most." Her talk will focus on what happened, oil spill prevention and the particular risks facing Native Americans living by the Salish Sea.



SKAGIT AUDUBON

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Snow Geese

2 of the 31,995 counted in the local Christmas Bird Count

Photo by Joe Halton

MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTIONS

General membership meetings of the Skagit Audubon Society are held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 1043 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon, WA—7:00 PM Social/ 7:30 PM Program—on the second Tuesday of each month, September through June. The board of directors meets at the same location at 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of each month.

Skagit Audubon Society (SAS) membership provides a local chapter affiliation and newsletter, **The Flyer**, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. Newsletters from additional chapters can be sought by contacting their websites and membership chairs from links at <http://wa.audubon.org/audubon-locations/>. **To join Skagit Audubon Society** use the **1st** form below.

National Audubon Society (NAS) membership is separate from SAS membership and includes Audubon magazine. National Audubon membership does not provide Skagit Audubon membership; however, NAS will assign you an affiliation with a local chapter. To change your chapter assignment call 800-274-4201. **To join National Audubon Society** use the **2nd** form below.

Skagit Audubon Society is a Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Skagit Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual membership in the Skagit Audubon Society includes 10 issues of our newsletter, *The Skagit Flyer*, available at: <http://www.skagitaudubon.org/newsletter>. Membership includes all members of your household.

Check one: \$20.00 one (1) year \$40.00 two (2) years

Additionally, I wish to donate to Skagit Audubon Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, in the amount of \$ _____
Donations of \$100.00 or more receive a personal field trip by a Skagit Audubon field trip leader.

Check one: New Membership Renewing Membership

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

SAS does not share your contact information.

Clip form/Mail to/Payable to: Skagit Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1101
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-1101

Use the form below to initially join the **National Audubon Society**.

National Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual membership to the National Audubon Society includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine. Membership includes all members of your household.

\$20 for one-year introductory membership with one chapter affiliation

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Please mail chapter-created new membership forms to address below: (Payable to same)

National Audubon Society Y21
P.O. Box 97194
Washington, DC 20090-7194
Attn: Chance Mueleck

For membership related questions and address:
Email: customerservice@audubon.org
Phone: (844) 428-3826

For members receiving a paper copy of The Skagit Flyer, the mailing label includes your membership expiration date in the upper right corner. If that date is highlighted in orange it is a reminder that your membership is about to or has expired. All other members will receive an email notice when their membership is about to expire. The Skagit Flyer is published monthly from September through June. Unsolicited material for the next month's Flyer should be sent to the editor by the third Saturday of the current month. For questions or problems about your Skagit Flyer subscription, contact membership chair:

Pam Pritzl membership@skagitaudubon.org



Fabulous February

Find your favorite winter weather gear and grab your binoculars for some of the best birding of the year in Skagit County. February is a great time to see our feathered friends flocking to the flats. But let's not forget the loons, grebes and sea ducks visiting our shorelines too.

Some of the best birding can be found on the Samish and Skagit Flats. For raptors, spend your day visiting Samish between Padilla Bay and Alice Bay. Drive near the open fields and look for Northern Harriers flying low hunting. High in the trees there are Bald Eagles pairing up as they start courtship and nesting. American Kestrel, the smallest of five falcons found on the flats, is plentiful this winter and easily viewed. A winter favorite is the Rough-legged Hawk, which is sure to be found in the trees near the West 90 parking area. For the awe inspiring spectacle of thousands of snow geese and hundreds of beautiful swans, head over to the Skagit Flats. One of the best locations to view these birds is the Fir Island Farms Reserve. Snow Geese and Swans can be seen in Skagit Bay and in the surrounding fields. Hunting on the Samish and Skagit Flats ends January 30.

Take a day in February to visit a Skagit shoreline. Red-throated Loons are plentiful near Deception Pass. Plan a visit during ebb tide to view their feeding behavior. Near Green Point in Washington Park, look for Red-necked and Horned Grebes. This is a good location to look for Long-tailed Ducks too. For Brant, head over to Samish Island to the Beach Access where they are commonly seen along with a variety of seabirds to add to your list. Find directions to these locations and other birding sights under Birding on our website skagitaudubon.org.

February is also the time for bird festivals. Two local festivals where you can find Skagit Audubon volunteers are the Arlington Eagle Festival, 2/4 and the Port Susan Snow Goose and Birding Festival, 2/25-26. In addition, there is a Samish Flats field trip scheduled for 2/18. Look for more information under Activities on our website.

There are so many birds to see in February. Take a moment to enjoy the beautiful snow-capped mountains that provide a pristine back-drop. Join us for one of the above activities or get out on your own to take in the views of Skagit.

**SKAGIT AUDUBON FEBRUARY CONSERVATION REPORT
BY TIM MANNIS**

Washington State's legislative session is well underway in Olympia and will continue at least through April 23. For an overview of prospects for the session and a summary of the Environmental Priorities Coalition's focal issues, see the January newsletter's Conservation Report (<http://skagitaudubon.org/newsletter>). Audubon participates in this coalition of 20 environmental groups. Sign up for the coalition's weekly update on proposed state legislation related to the environment at <https://wecprotects.org/environmental-priorities-coalition/>. Audubon Washington has other issues on which its staff and many of Washington's 25

Conservation Report continued on page 4



Audubon chapters will also focus this session:

- Continued funding of forage fish spawning surveys (which relates to the importance of forage fish, such as herring, sand lance, and smelt to seabirds and other marine creatures)
- Promoting a sustainable, local renewable energy industry (specifically solar energy)
- Enacting a price on carbon pollution

We were hopeful that Representative Kristine Lytton (D – 40th) would introduce a bill to close a loophole in the Forest Practices Act that brushes aside cities' required critical areas ordinances to allow logging that degrades and destroys wetlands. The present session is so occupied with meeting education, mental health, and other very compelling needs that legislators lack time for dealing with arguably smaller matters. We'll pursue the possibility of an administrative solution through the Department of Natural Resources, which administers the Forest Practices Act. Conservationists have high hopes for new Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz.

Showing up at your legislators' offices in Olympia makes an impact. As busy as they are, most legislators will take time to listen to constituents. Audubon Washington is making it easy to show up by planning an Advocacy Day. Besides providing good advice on talking with your elected officials on the issues mentioned above, Audubon will make the meeting appointments for you. Please register now for Audubon Advocacy Day (February 21).

<http://wa.audubon.org/events/audubon-advocacy-day-2017>. Please sign up too for legislative alerts and updates with Audubon Washington:

<http://wa.audubon.org/conservation/legislative-session-2017>. Our state government has a good website for tracking bills, commenting on them, and contacting your legislators:

<http://leg.wa.gov/>. **National Audubon sends out alerts on national issues:**

<http://www.audubon.org/takeaction>.

Right now there are several lengthy Draft Environmental Impact Statements open for comment on matters relevant to the Audubon mission. Through March 9 you can comment on the long-awaited EIS addressing the Department of Natural Resources' management of state trust lands for the threatened Marbled Murrelet. The draft EIS is at

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/marbledmurrelet>. Seattle Audubon's website

<http://www.seattleaudubon.org/sas/> explains how to comment and suggests what you might say.

The grizzly bear was federally listed as a threatened species 42 years ago. The Greater North Cascades is one of 6 ecosystems long designated as recovery zones for the bear. The goal, in accord with the Endangered Species Act, is to restore a small but self-sustaining population of grizzlies to the North Cascades to help this once very widespread animal survive. The National Park Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have issued a draft EIS for restoring the bear to the North Cascades over a period of many years. The comment period ends March 14, 2017.

For information, go to **<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=44414>**.

The comment period for the EIS on adding more Growlers to those based at Whidbey Naval Air Station has been extended to Feb. 24. See **<http://www.whidbeyeis.com/>**. The jet noise can be a problem for humans and has potential effects on Marbled Murrelets, Spotted Owls, and other wildlife, particularly on the Olympic Peninsula where the Navy would do electronic warfare training. ~~These are interesting times with no lack of opportunities to get involved.



Winter hiking continues in February with 4 hikes scheduled. Unexpected circumstances such as weather, logging, wash-outs, construction, or road conditions may cause cancellations or changes in the following hikes. A hike will be canceled if there are high wind warnings, predictions of heavy rain, flooding conditions, or snowy or icy road conditions. For information on or questions about the hikes, call **JOAN MELCHER, 360-424-0407** or e-mail at jdmelcher@comcast.net. All the hikes are on a Wednesday.

Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes. If dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times.

WED. – FEB. 1 – WHATCOM FALLS & CREEK, BIG ROCK LOOP, AND THE STIMPSON FAMILY NATURE PRESERVE

---a number of options

I. Whatcom Falls & Creek: Hike along Whatcom Creek from Whatcom Falls Park to the I-5 Freeway bridge and back. It is 4.4 miles round trip. There is a slight elevation gain.

II. Big Rock Loop: Instead of or in addition to the Whatcom Falls & Creek hike, you can do this hike. It is a 6 mile loop that begins and ends at Whatcom Falls Park. This loop takes the hiker north. There are some ups and downs; a few short, steep sections, but mostly the trail has some sidewalk and road walking.

III. Stimpson Family Nature Preserve: If you wish to do this hike after **I, II, or both above**, then drive to the Stimpson Family Nature Preserve and hike up to 4 miles there. It has about a 400 ft elevation gain.

For all of the above, meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the I-5 Chuckanut Drive Park-n-Ride near exit 231 **OR** meet at **9 a.m.** at the Whatcom Falls Park parking lot on Arbor Street off Electric Avenue. Ride with those who plan to do the hike(s) you wish to do. When all return to your car, you may leave.

WED. – FEB. 8 – LUMMI ISLAND

Walk a 7 mile loop on the north end of Lummi Island. Enjoy the island, sea, and mountain views. A \$7 foot-passenger ferry fare is required. The walk is mostly level. Walking shoes are recommended. Meet at **8:15 a.m.** at the Chuckanut Drive Park-n-Ride, exit 231 from I-5 on the east side of I-5. There is no specified return time although most will take the 1 p.m. ferry back.

WED. – FEB. 15 – CAMANO ISLAND

Friends of Camano Island Parks (FOCIP) will lead us on hikes on Camano Island. The hikes are up to 11.9 miles, with shorter options available. Lunch is provided with a suggested donation of \$2. Meet at **7:45 a.m.** in the S.E.

corner of the Mount Vernon Safeway parking lot or at **8:30 a.m.** at the Blue Camano Center Building on East Camano Drive. There will be a brief orientation there; hike options will be discussed; maps will be given out; restrooms will be available.

WED.– FEB. 22– CONWAY-AREA DIKE WALK

The dike on the east side of the Skagit River north of Conway is now open to public use. Hike 3.3 miles one-way and then back. Meet at **9 a.m.** in the parking area described below. You may leave when you return to your vehicle or lunch at the Conway Pub & Eatery. If the weather is clear, there will be great views. Birds should be plentiful.

From I-5 take exit 221 (Conway, Lake McMurray exit) and drive west. Go halfway around the roundabout. Continue west on Fir Island Rd. Go over the RR tracks and in 100 yards turn right on Dike Rd. just before the bridge. Do not go over the South Fork of the Skagit River Bridge onto Fir Island! Parking is available on the left in 200 yards north of the unsigned dike district building.

WED. – MARCH 1 – LILY LIZARD LAKES

LOOP (The LLLL)

This Loop will be done in a clock-wise order. On Blanchard Mountain hike the Lily Lake, Larry Reed, and Max's Shortcut Trails to Lily Lake and then on to Lizard Lake by way of a connector trail from the North Butte Trail. Return to trail head via the Lizard and Lily Lake Trails. It is a 8.6 mile loop with a 1,600 ft. total elevation gain. There is an opportunity to go to the Oyster Dome and the North Butte as well. We will divide into a faster and slower group. Car pool accordingly. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the Chuckanut Drive Park-n-Ride, exit 231 from I-5 on the east side of I-5. At 2:00 p.m. return to the trailhead for the faster group; 3:00 p.m. for the slower group. **A Discover Pass required to park at the trailhead.**

**THANK-YOU ORGANIZERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND COMPILERS
for PADILLA BAY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Thanks to the 60 volunteers who participated in the 2016 Christmas Bird Count. Special thanks to Tim Manns and Alice Turner who organized the count, and Bob Kuntz who compiled the data. 130 species were sighted on the last day of 2016. The total number of birds counted was 111,287.



Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count ~ Saturday, December 31

by Bob Kuntz

These data are the results of Skagit Audubon Society's 39th Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to all 60 participants. **Bold** represents unusual species (species recorded less than 20% of the time). "All-time" high counts for particular species are indicated with **dark backgrounds**.

Red-throated Loon	534	buteo (sp.)	1	Common Raven	127
Pacific Loon	4	American Kestrel	5	Black-capped Chickadee	224
Common Loon	72	Merlin	3	Mountain Chickadee	1
Pied-billed Grebe	17	Peregrine Falcon	6	Chestnut-bkcd Chickadee	363
Horned Grebe	186	Prairie Falcon	1	Bushtit	65
Red-necked Grebe	47	falcon (sp.)	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	130
Eared Grebe	1	Ring-necked Pheasant	3	Brown Creeper	33
Western Grebe	120	California Quail	31	Bewick's Wren	39
Double-crested Cormorant	222	Virginia Rail	5	Pacific Wren	220
Brandt's Cormorant	27	American Coot	67	Marsh Wren	8
Pelagic Cormorant	187	Killdeer	18	G-crowned Kinglet	671
cormorant (sp.)	27	Black Oystercatcher	151	R-crowned Kinglet	67
Great Blue Heron	159	Greater Yellowlegs	4	Townsend's Solitaire	2
Tundra Swan	108	Black Turnstone	115	Hermit Thrush	4
Trumpeter Swan	1726	Sanderling	5	American Robin	1304
Gr. White-fronted Goose	8	Least Sandpiper	37	Varied Thrush	156
Snow Goose	31995	Dunlin	10141	American Pipit	65
Ross's Goose	1	sandpiper (sp.)	73	Cedar Waxwing	2
Brant	913	Wilson's Snipe	12	Northern Shrike	1
Canada Goose	412	Mew Gull	402	European Starling	3345
Amer. Green-winged Teal	1547	Ring-billed Gull	99	Hutton's Vireo	2
Mallard	17450	California Gull	3	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Northern Pintail	7779	Herring Gull	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Northern Shoveler	18	Thayer's Gull	4	Townsend's Warbler	1
Gadwall	14	Western Gull	1	Spotted Towhee	232
Eurasian Wigeon	26	W. x Glauc.-winged Gull	158	Savannah Sparrow	24
American Wigeon	15892	Glaucous-winged Gull	1162	Fox Sparrow	84
Ringed-necked Duck	167	gull (sp.)	379	Song Sparrow	337
Greater Scaup	333	Common Murre	233	Lincoln's Sparrow	4
Lesser Scaup	133	Pigeon Guillemot	123	Golden-crowned Sparrow	263
scaup (sp.)	56	Marbled Murrelet	26	White-crowned Sparrow	130
Harlequin Duck	10	Ancient Murrelet	20	Harris's Sparrow	1
Long-tailed Duck	39	Rock Pigeon	391	Dark-eyed 'Oregon' Junco	1635
Surf Scoter	312	Eurasian Collared Dove	106	D-e 'Slate-colored' Junco	1
White-winged Scoter	127	Mourning Dove	144	Red-winged Blackbird	822
Common Goldeneye	344	Barn Owl	3	Western Meadowlark	29
ComxBarrow's Goldeneye	1	Great Horned Owl	17	Brewer's Blackbird	545
Bufflehead	984	Short-eared Owl	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	30
Hooded Merganser	52	Northern Saw-whet Owl	3	Purple Finch	4
Common Merganser	219	Anna's Hummingbird	54	House Finch	265
Red-breasted Merganser	376	Belted Kingfisher	27	Red Crossbill	52
merganser (sp.)	2	Red-breasted Sapsucker	11	Pine Siskin	803
Ruddy Duck	232	Downy Woodpecker	17	American Goldfinch	25
duck (sp.)	154	Hairy Woodpecker	33	House Sparrow	354
Bald Eagle	264	Northern Flicker	93		
Northern Harrier	19	N. 'Red-shafted' Flicker	32	Total species observed	130
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	N. 'Yellow-shafted' Flicker	2	Total # of individual birds	111,287
Cooper's Hawk	4	Yellow x Red-sh. Flicker	1	# of parties	21-23
accipiter (sp.)	2	Pileated Woodpecker	4	# of field observers	60
Red-tailed Hawk	83	Steller's Jay	16	Total party-hours	138.50
Rough-legged Hawk	15	American/NW Crow	811		



Field Trips (Port Susan Bay) continued from page 1

of Stanwood and west of Marine Drive. The site is closed except with special permission which can be obtained at the Mount Vernon office of the Nature Conservancy, (410 N. 4th street, Mount Vernon WA 98273, 360-419-0817.) **Sat., Feb. 4 is the Arlington Eagle Festival, and with it Skagit Audubon has offered to put a few volunteers out on the dike to help non-birders find eagles and other birds.** It's always a fun place to visit, and the odds are, that's where our snow geese are!

Please join us for a walk on the dike at 8:30 a.m., before the public arrives about 10 a.m. **At 10 a.m., plan to turn your hat around and be a volunteer for a couple hours helping newcomers to birding or to the area see and enjoy the birds.** Dress for coastal winter birding. If you can make it, even for

just the 10-12 volunteering, bring a scope if you have one. **PLEASE CONTACT Libby Mills, our trip coordinator and leader, to let her know she will have a few supporters to help out.**

Leader: Libby Mills, libbymills@gmail.com

Saturday, Feb. 18

**Samish Flats, Raptors, Waterfowl & More
8:00 a.m. until as long as birding is good**

Meet at the Breazeale-Padilla Bay Interpretive Center at 8:00 am to join Bob Kuntz for a day of birding around the winter bird magnets of Samish Flats and Padilla Bay. We'll use scopes and binoculars to find birds around the area, and stay out as long as the birding is good, so bring a thermos of hot drinks and lunch as well as your **Discover Pass** and plenty of layered clothing.

Leaders: Bob Kuntz, annebobkuntz@gmail.co



10th Annual Arlington-Stillaguamish Eagle Festival

Bald Eagles

Photo by Joe Halton

Saturday, February 4

Speakers, Field Trips, Classes

To Volunteer with the Field Trip: Email Libby Mills at libbymills@gmail.com

Welcome to Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival

Festival Dates:

Sat. & Sun. Feb. 25 & 26

Festival Headquarters

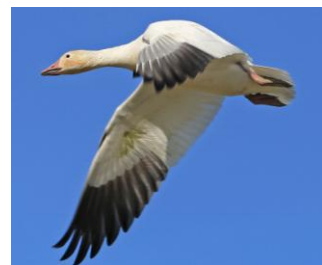
27130 102nd Ave NW

Stanwood, WA 98292

Speakers, Field Trips, Classes

More information at:

www.snowgoosefest.org



Snow Goose

Photo by Ron Holmes

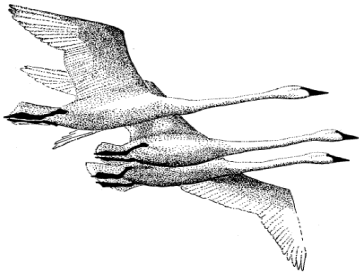
To Volunteer contact Pam Pritzl: birdsightings@skagitaudubon.org

The next Great Backyard Bird Count is February 17-20

We invited you to participate for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count!

See <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/about/> for more information!





RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Field Trip: Port Susan Bay Preserve
!!! Volunteer !!! ~ Saturday, February 4
See pages 1 & 7

10th Annual
Arlington-Stillaguamish Eagle Festival
Saturday, February 4

See page 7

12th Annual
Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival
!!! Volunteer !!! ~ February 25 & 26
See page 7

February 2017 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Nov. 31	Fri	Sat
Jan. 29	Jan. 30	Jan. 31	1 Hike: Whatcom Falls & Creek, Big Rock Loop, Stimpson Fam.Nat.Pres.	2	3	4 Field Trip: Port Susan Bay Preserve-Volunteer Arlington-Stillaguamish Eagle Festival
5	6	7 Skagit Audubon Board Meeting: 7:00 PM	8 Hike: Lummi Island	9	10	11
12	13	14 Skagit Audubon General Meeting: Social 7:00 PM Meeting 7:30 PM	15 Hike: Camano Island	16	17 Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 17 -20	18 Field Trip: Samish Flats, Raptors, Waterfowl & More
19 Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 17 -20	20 Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 17 -20	21	22 Hike: Conway-Area Dike Walk	23	24	25 Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival -Volunteer-
25 Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival -Volunteer-	27	28	Mar. 1 Hike: Lily Lizard Lakes Loop	Mar. 2	Mar. 3	Mar. 4

Visit the Skagit Audubon Society Website at www.skagitaudubon.org The Skagit Flyer is printed on recycled paper

