Healthy intact ecosystems perform many critical services on which we as humans are dependent for our continued well-being and existence. About 95% of the land in the continental U.S. has been converted to cities and towns, and to some form of agricultural or recreational use. With only 5% of the land in its natural state, habitat loss and species decline are interfering with the ability of ecosystems to successfully purify our air and water, produce oxygen, sequester carbon, cycle nutrients, pollinate plants, and to perform so many other vital functions.

Residential landscapes that are structurally complex and species rich provide an opportunity to reverse the trend of habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation that are the primary reasons for the decline of so many species. The choices we make on our own little piece of earth matter. Living “in” a natural oasis filled with the sights and sounds of birds, butterflies, and other beneficial insects is the perfect counterbalance to the stresses of our busy lives. Join us to learn how to transform your landscape into an environmental asset – one small step at a time.

Sue Taylor is a visionary gardener, teacher and native plant landscaper who teaches classes on sustainable landscaping at WSU’s Whatcom Extension.

Always on the 4th Tuesday of the month:

February 25, 7pm at the Whatcom Museum **
(in the Rotunda Room of the Old City Hall building)
free & open to the public!
Mission Statement
The purpose of this society is to promote the study and conservation of birds and other wildlife, their habitat, and the environment; to increase public appreciation of the values of wildlife, plants, and the natural environment; and to stimulate action to protect and preserve them for the future.

Avalanche Staff
Designer/editor: Kelley Palmer-McCarty
Writer/editor: Lynne Givler

If you are interested in contributing, the deadline for the March 2014 issue is...

February 15.
Send materials to Kelley Palmer-McCarty at:
content@northcascadesaudubon.org

NCAS Board Members

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Vice Pres. Paul Woodcock 380-3356
Secretary Judy Krieger 733-0086
Treasurer Steven Harper 650-9065

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Field Trips Ken Salzman 756-0347
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Publicity Twink Coffman
Newsletter Kelley Palmer-McCarty 466-8601
Conservation Steve Irving 384-1618

Associated Persons
Scholarship Don Burgess
Mailing Alan and Susan Rhodes

NCAS Program Chair Wanted

Our chapter's meeting programs are a central part of our educational efforts. Choosing pertinent topics, finding qualified presenters, arranging for the venue and seeing to all the necessary details required to facilitate a successful meeting is no small task. Nevertheless, the chapter has been functioning without a Program Chair for over four years and these tasks are being performed by other board members. Finding an energetic volunteer to fill this role would greatly enhance the functioning of our board and allow NCAS to better serve our community. Currently NCAS presents educational programs at eight monthly meetings annually, September through May. Those meetings, plus the Holiday Potluck in December, are the extent of our programming efforts and the responsibilities of the Program Chair. This is the status quo and not a limitation if someone out there wants to do more. Your board members are enjoying themselves doing Audubon work. There is always more that could be done. If you are interested in joining the NCAS team as Program Chair or in another capacity please contact Pam Borso at:

president@northcascadesaudubon.org
North Cascades Audubon Society’s
2013 Accomplishments and 2014 Goals

The NCAS Board met on January 4 to review the accomplishments and challenges of 2013 and to set goals for 2014. If you ever wondered what the board does (along with our active and supportive membership) to keep our chapter running, check out the summary below.

2013 Accomplishments

1. Sponsored approximately 36 field trips
2. Increased Facebook activity from 52 to 177 “Likes”
3. Held eight membership meetings and a holiday potluck
4. Hosted a three-day campout in Eastern Washington
5. Participated in the Backyard Habitat & Native Flora Fair
6. Sponsored neighborhood backyard habitat presentations and distributed nest boxes
7. Partnered with an Eagle Scout to place nest boxes for large cavity-nesting birds
8. Partnered with the Whatcom Land Trust for Festival of the Lady of the Lakes
9. Partnered with the Whatcom Museum establishing a new location for membership meetings
10. Offered two bird identification workshops to volunteers participating in ongoing bird surveys of Cherry Point
11. Sponsored and coordinated Bellingham Christmas Bird Count
12. Completed archive screening of all Audubon documents

Goals for 2014

1. Increase number of field trips and leaders including partnering with Skagit Audubon
2. Increase membership through more public outreach, e.g., publicity in local newspapers, in other organizations’ newsletters, on Facebook, and perhaps in mailed postcards
3. Partner with more local organizations to provide more activities, e.g. Wild Whatcom Walks
4. Sponsor more neighborhood backyard habitat presentations and place more nest boxes in the community
5. Partner with the Whatcom Museum to develop and offer new programs
6. Provide programs for membership meetings
7. Participate in the Backyard Habitat & Native Flora Fair
8. Participate in Arbor Day programs and projects
9. Participate in Sustainable Fair in September - a fair that explores sustainable alternatives in our community
10. Offer a beginning bird identification class
11. Offer a bird photography class
12. Increase volunteer participation in NCAS programs and activities
13. Fill vacant board positions
14. Research what is needed to transfer Scudder Pond and Plover Island properties to appropriate organizations and complete the transfer process
15. Publish website and train administrators to keep the website updated and functioning smoothly
16. Host three-day Eastern Washington campout
17. Sponsor Christmas Bird Count with an emphasis on including as many people to participate as possible
18. Archive all Audubon related documents at WWU archives
February Field Trips  
Ken Salzman, Field Trip Chair

The mild winter has made birding more comfortable and the birding in the Pacific Northwest has been as good as ever. This month’s field trips include Reifel Bird Sanctuary in British Columbia, an encore trip to Skagit Flats and our regular trips to Semiahmoo and Whatcom Creek. All of these venues have produced great birds in the past including peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, tropical kingbird and king eider. The rule is …anything can show up! So join us for a great day of birding.

Our field trips are open to everyone regardless of membership in NCAS. Our goal is to provide quality field trips that provide enjoyment and education for all levels of birders. Our field trip leaders, and many of the participants, are enthusiastic about answering questions and helping everyone to focus in on all of the fascinating species we’re sure to encounter.

For all of these trips, please remember to dress warmly and wear appropriate footwear. There’s nothing like being cold and uncomfortable to ruin an otherwise great day of birding.

Saturday, February 1, Semiahmoo Spit
Time: 9 AM at Semiahmoo Park - 3 hours
Trip Leaders: Paul Woodcock and Lynne Givler
No registration required

This trip is great any time of the year but the birds can be very special in the winter. Co-sponsored by NCAS and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation, the trip covers all of the spit. This is a great trip for beginning birders as water birds are relatively easy to observe.

Sunday, February 9, Whatcom Creek Walk
Time: 10 AM in front of City Hall; - 2 hours
Trip Leader: Joe Meche
Trip limit: 12
To register contact Joe Meche, 360-739-5383 or mechejmch@aol.com

Whatcom Creek is an enjoyable and leisurely walk any time of the year, and can produce some exciting vagrants. This is a great trip for beginners and experts of all ages.

Sunday, February 16, George Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, B.C.
Time: 8 AM - full day (half day option possible)
Trip Leaders: Dave Schmalz and Diane Birsner
Trip limit: 12
To register and for trip details contact Dave Schmalz: 360-671-1537

Located approximately 45 minutes north of Bellingham near Ladner, B.C., Reifel Sanctuary is one of the premier birding spots in our area. Expect to see a number of different species of shorebirds, raptors, passerines and waterfowl. Passport/enhanced driver’s license required.

Thursday, February 20, Samish Flats
Time: 8:30 AM - half day trip
Trip Leader: Steven Harper
To register and for more details contact Steven Harper at 360-650-9065 or stevenharper2@msn.com

Explore the Samish Flats for raptors, short-eared owls, waterfowl and resident year-round birds.
HELP WANTED

Field trip leaders are needed and we'd love to have you on board if you have:

1. A love of and enthusiasm for birding
2. A reasonable knowledge of and ability to identify birds in our area
3. A willingness to share your knowledge and skill related to birding

If you would like to volunteer to become a trip leader please contact:
Ken Salzman,
360-756-0347 or kpsalzman@comcast.net

February Field Trips continued...

Saturday, March 1, Semiahmoo Spit
Time: 9 AM at Semiahmoo Park - 3 hours
Trip Leader: Paul Woodcock
No registration required

This trip offers a wide range of bird species any time of year but the birds can be very special in winter. Spring isn't far away so there could be some surprises. Co-sponsored by NCAS and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation, the trip covers all of the spit and is great for beginning birders.
Olympic BirdFest 2014
April 4-6, Sequim, WA

Visit the rain shadow of the Olympic Peninsula to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest—marbled murrelets, rhinoceros auklets, harlequin ducks, American dippers, black oystercatchers, long-tailed ducks, and more. Activities include guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, a silent auction, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker is Noah Strycker: “Bird World: the fascinating parallels between bird and human behavior”. Come enjoy this festival with the most spectacular setting!

Program information & registration can be found at:
www.olympicbirdfest.org
opas.birdfest.info@gmail.com
Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society phone: 360-681-4076

San Juan Islands Birding / Sightseeing Cruise
April 6-8

Immediately following Olympic BirdFest, stay around the area for a three-day, two-night birding cruise of the San Juan Islands.

Register separately at
www.pugetsoundexpress.com/audubon

Swan Watch and Presentation
Saturday, February 15

Meet at 7 AM at the Observation Tower at Tennant Lake

The Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park are sponsoring a swan watch and presentation by Paul DeBruyn, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife Officer assigned to retrieve sick swans. The watch will last until most of the swans have lifted off of Tennant Lake. We’ll then move to the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center for a presentation about swans. In previous swan watch programs we have been treated to observing a live swan brought to the site by the Northwest Wildlife Rehabilitation Center for banding and release. We’ve also watched a lead-poisoned dead swan being processed by Fish & Wildlife. We’re not sure what this year will bring, but the presentation is always interesting.

Winter Wings Festival 2014
February 13 – 17
Klamath Falls, Oregon

The annual Winter Wings Festival in Klamath Falls, Oregon, is one of the oldest birding festivals in the country. The area is a premier birding hot spot, with 132 species recorded at the 2013 festival. Enjoy a wide range of activities including birding and wildlife refuge field trips, owl prowls, photography workshops, museum visits, speakers, and a keynote banquet.

Information and registration can be found at:
www.winterwingsfest.org
Seeking Writers, Artists, and Talkers

The Avalanche needs your help to stay fresh and interesting. If you have a newsworthy story, a pertinent topic, or an intriguing image you’d like to share please don’t hesitate to contact us. If you’re uncomfortable seeing your words in print, we can work with you on editing your piece or could interview you and put your words onto the page. For all the artists, photographers and designers out there, keep in mind that the printed newsletter will remain in black and white, so any color images need to translate well into that medium. Readers will be able to fully appreciate all of the visuals by going to the on-line newsletter which will be in color.

Contact Kelley below to discuss the space available and the publication deadlines so we can make sure your article or image is printed in a timely manner. All contributors to the newsletter will be credited, so don’t miss this chance to get your work before the public eye! To start the ball rolling and help make The Avalanche a success……

Contact content@northcascadesaudubon.org

Call for Volunteers Interested in Amphibians!

Want to know more about amphibians and help with their conservation? Come learn to identify local amphibian species and their egg masses, and assist in counting egg masses to determine where our amphibians are and what habitats are important to them.

Two free training workshops are being offered to volunteers willing to commit to 15 hours of amphibian surveys in Whatcom County during this breeding season (March-June). Trainings will be held on:

Saturday, March 1
9 AM – 3 PM in the Birch Bay Area.

Sunday, March 2
9 AM – 3 PM in the Bellingham Area.

For more information go to the Events tab at: www.whatfrogs.org

Sign up soon! Space is limited.

Contact Vikki Jackson at vikki@nwecological.com if you are interested in volunteering.
The Avalanche is the newsletter of the North Cascades Audubon Society, PO Box 5805, Bellingham, WA 98227. It is published 8 times a year; subscriptions start at $20 per year. The editors welcome articles, artwork, photographs, and letters. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of this organization. Original material may be reprinted if appropriate credit is given. The North Cascades Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

North Cascades Audubon Society Membership

We hope you will support North Cascades Audubon by joining the chapter locally. Your commitment to Audubon is important to us. We will continue to provide you with information regarding local chapter activities through our website and all activities will remain FREE and open to the public. If you are interested in receiving a paper copy of the newsletter, you can join the local chapter for one year at any of the levels to your right. The newsletter is published monthly between September and May, including a double issue for November/December. All issues are also available online. If you do not wish to receive a paper copy, email membership@northcascadesaudubon.org.

Please check your mailing labels for accuracy, including the expiration date. To make any necessary changes, please send an email to membership@northcascadesaudubon.org.

Join or Renew (circle one)

Please make checks payable to North Cascades Audubon. Each membership applies to one household.

- $20 Kestrel
- $35 Merlin
- $50 Prairie Falcon
- $75 Peregrine Falcon
- $100 Gyrfalcon

- I’d like to go paperless. (include email below)

Name: ______________________________

Address: ___________________________

Email: ______________________________