Shorebirds are a conspicuous feature in the coastal estuaries of northern Puget Sound. These long-distance travelers rely on both estuarine and terrestrial habitat as refueling sites during migration and for overwintering. Understanding how shorebirds navigate this highly altered landscape is critical for crafting conservation strategies aimed at reversing long-term population declines. Join us as Gary Slater presents information on shorebird ecology and life history, shares results from research in the Skagit-Stillaguamish River Delta, and describes how citizen scientists can participate in a new Puget Sound-wide monitoring effort. Gary Slater is the founder and Executive Director of Ecostudies Institute, a non-profit organization committed to conserving birds and their habitats. He received a B.S. in Wildlife Science from Purdue University (1989) and a M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida (1997). Gary oversees a diverse program that uses science, restoration, and outreach to advance bird conservation. Some of his current research focuses on the wintering and stopover ecology of shorebirds in Puget Sound and the reintroduction and population dynamics of cavity-nesting birds in Washington State and south Florida.

Always on the 4th Tuesday of the month:
May 27, 7pm at the Whatcom Museum
(in the Rotunda Room of the Old City Hall building)
free & open to the public!

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Next board meeting: May 5

Please email the President if you would like to attend:
president@northcascadesaudubon.org
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 September 2014 issue is...
August 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
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Conservation Steve Irving  384-1618

Associated Persons
Scholarship   Don Burgess
Mailing       Alan and Susan Rhodes

Annual NCAS Campout at Pearrygin Lake State Park

Friday, June 6 to Sunday, June 8

For the third year NCAS has reserved the group camp at Pearrygin Lake State Park, just north of Winthrop, for a weekend of outstanding birding under the warm, clear skies of Okanogan County. The birding was exciting last year so if you enjoyed it, please come again. If you missed it, here is another chance. Birds such as ruffed grouse, red-naped sapsucker, common poorwill and white-breasted nuthatch visited our campsite. Redhead, veery, MacGillivray’s warbler, Nashville warbler and lazuli bunting were seen within easy walking distance. Our Audubon group listed over a hundred species within the 48 hour period including field trips to Beaver Pond and Pipestone Canyon.

The group camp is separated from the main campground and situated in the midst of excellent habitat. The site is accessed by a narrow, gravel drive and is designated for tent camping only but smaller RVs can be parked in the adjacent lot. Cost for the two days is $20.00 per camping unit to cover the rental fees.

For more information please contact Pam Borso at president@northcascadesaudubon.org or (360) 319-9004.

NCAS Officer Nominations for 2014-2015

It is customary for NCAS to conduct its annual election of officers at the May Membership Meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the meeting if there are others interested in running. The slate of officers being presented by the Board of Directors are:

Pam Borso            President
Paul Woodcock       Vice President
Judy Krieger        Secretary
Steven Harper        Treasurer

Please be there to vote!
Crows, Ravens, and the Family Corvidae

**dry crows**

no rain but crows
dripping out of the putty-gray sky
into a chill and empty yard
it is the kind of weather
when shiny black bodies
need to stalk about stiff-legged
making too loud comments
punctuated with sudden wing beats
leaps and rushes
and dead still stares
because you know
something has to turn up here
sometime

Scott
2.15.95

**wet crows**

still more rain
crows way wet wait
not opting for society in the sodden skies
some against cedar trunks
some under leafless big leaf maples
seemingly sullen and aloof
until enough waterlogged worms surface
and suddenly urge an instinctive rush
into the next round of got here first
with all the appropriate squally protocols

Scott
2.15.95

**Ravens: The Corvus corax of the Corvidae**

The scientific name of the common raven is *Corvus corax*. The genus *Corvus* encompasses forty-one species worldwide, referred to as the “true crows.” The family Corvidae also includes jays, magpies, rooks, jackdaws, treepies, choughs, and nutcrackers. According to DNA sequencing and comparisons, the family Corvidae is most closely related to the birds of paradise instead of shrikes, which were previously believed to be their closest relatives. Within the genus *Corvus* there are several consistencies in appearance. Most birds are black or gray, and while males tend to be larger than females, there is no other distinct difference in their appearance. In other words, they lack sexual dimorphism.

Although the entirely black plumage of the common raven may seem drab to some, in the right light the feathers become iridescent greens, blues and purples. The black pigment melanin gives the raven its color and also has an important function. Dark pigments make feathers stronger and more wear resistant so they last longer. As the raven only molts (sheds and re-grows its feathers) once a year, this helps to maintain the quality of the feathers until they are replaced. Black pigment may also be useful for individuals that live in the northernmost extension of the raven’s range, where the freezing arctic temperatures can be brutal. In the weak sunlight that reaches that latitude, black feathers would be more efficient in warming the bird and therefore decreasing the amount of energy used to maintain body heat (although ravens are also found in hot deserts!). In some habitats the black plumage may also serve as camouflage. But there does not appear to be a consistent advantage to black plumage, except for the resistance to wear and tear.

Not all common ravens are born with black feathers. On rare occasions a raven will be born with a genetic mutation that prevents it from producing pigments. Those that cannot produce any pigments are albinos and are normally picked off quickly by predators. Partial albinism also occurs, and when a raven is injured it will often grow a few white feathers at the site of injury that molt back as black feathers in future years.

*Excerpt from “The Croaker” by Kelley Palmer-McCarty. Sources upon request.*
May and June Field Trips

Ken Salzman, Field Trip Chair

Spring is getting into full swing in the month of May and we are already starting to see summer birds in the area. Rufous hummingbirds have returned along with swallows, and bird songs fill the air. Birds are scoping out places to nest or, like bald eagles, have already begun nesting. Spring is indeed a great time to bird in the great Northwest, so come join in on the fun on one or all of our field trips.

NCAS field trips are open to everyone regardless of membership. Our goal is to provide quality field trips that provide enjoyment and education for all. Our field trip leaders, and many of the participants, are enthusiastic about answering questions and providing a worthwhile experience for beginning to expert birders.

While the weather is greatly improved, it is still important to dress appropriately and wear appropriate footwear. There’s nothing like being wet and uncomfortable to ruin an otherwise great day of birding. And depending on the venue, you may want to include insect repellent!

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

Spring is here and Semiahmoo Spit is a great place to go birding on (hopefully!) a nice sunny morning. The trip covers all of the spit and is co-sponsored by NCAS and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation. This popular trip is great for all levels of birders.

Sunday, May 4, May Meander
Time: 9 AM at the parking area for Scudder Pond, on Electric Avenue
Trip Leader: Joe Meche
Trip limit: 12
Registration: Contact Joe Meche, 739-5383 or mechejmch@aol.com.

Join us for the 4th Annual May Meander as we walk the entire length of Whatcom Creek from Scudder Pond to the waterfront and Maritime Heritage Park. This is a 5-6 hour walk on mostly level trails that follow the creek for 3 miles to downtown, with an elevation loss of 300’. The only point of concern is the 105-step stairway as the trail drops down to Woburn Avenue. We will plan to have ample vehicles at the end of the walk to shuttle folks back to the starting point.

Sunday, May 18, Whatcom Creek Walk
Time: 10 AM
Trip Leader: Joe Meche
Trip limit: 12
Registration: Contact Joe Meche, 739-5383 or mechejmch@aol.com.

Join us for the final downtown creek walk of the year, exploring lower Whatcom Creek as it flows into Bellingham Bay. Enjoy all the new spring greenery while seeking out spring birds.

continued on page 5...
June field trips continued...

Saturday, June 7, Semiahmoo Spit

Time: **9 AM** at Semiahmoo Park - 3 hours
Trip Leader: Paul Woodcock
No registration required

Join us for some late spring birding on Semiahmoo Spit. The trip covers all of the spit and is co-sponsored by NCAS and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation. This is a great trip for everyone from beginning birders to experts.

Beginning Birding Workshop

*(Free!)* May 31 - June 1

*Are you just getting started in birding?*
*Are you seeing birds but don’t know what they are?*
*Are you worried that you don’t know enough to go on field trips?*

If you’ve answered yes to any of the above questions and want to learn about birds and birding, then this in-depth workshop is just what you need. We will cover topics ranging from how to choose and effectively use a pair of binoculars to how to find and identify birds. The workshop will concentrate on birds found in our local area, but will also provide knowledge and skills that will allow you to bird anywhere. The goal is to increase your enjoyment of watching and learning about our fascinating feathered friends!

All ages welcome, but children 12 and under must participate with an adult.

For more information or to register contact Ken Salzman at: kpsalzman@comcast.net or 756-0347. **Registration is limited to 25 people, so register early!**
Backyard Habitat & Native Flora Fair

Fairhaven Village Green
Saturday, May 3rd
10 am to 4 pm

Native Plant Sale
Experts available to answer questions
Featuring common & unusual species native to Western Washington selected by the Washington Native Plant Society
Pre-orders or questions call Molly at 206-240-0337

Exhibits & Activities
- Native Plant Walk - 12 noon guided with Washington Native Plant Society
- Ethnobtoany & Edibles booth with Washington Native Plant Society
- Family Friendly interactive plant walk - 2 pm with Wild Whatcom
- Nesting Box & free wildlife posters North Cascades Audubon Society
- Activities for children
  Learn how to certify your garden as wildlife-friendly habitat!

Event sponsored by:

Questions call Bellingham Parks & Recreation 778-7105
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

Wenas Audubon Campout
Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26, 2014)
Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg)

You’re invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

The Wenas Audubon Campout is an annual event with a wide variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website (www.wenasaudubon.org) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information. Pre-registration is not required. The campout is open to all ages and is free, although donations are encouraged. Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass (http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov).

Contact: Doris Johnson, dellenj@comcast.net
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: ____________________________________________