

The Avalanche



North Cascades Audubon Society Newsletter

www.northcascadesaudubon.org

Volume 46, Issue 3

March 2015

General Membership Meeting with Martha Jordan *Swans of Winter*

Trumpeter swans, the largest waterfowl in the world, have been brought back from the brink of extinction and once again grace our skies and waterways. They trumpet the success of our conservation efforts and continue to call us to action to protect farmland and wetlands. Join Martha Jordan, well-known swan biologist, to learn about the life history and biology of Washington's native trumpeter and tundra swans. The program will include new information on the migration patterns of tundra swans and how the North Cascades serve as a link connecting the west and east sides of our state for both species of swans. Martha will shed some light on the problems and controversies these birds face on their wintering grounds and what is needed to ensure their future. Get updated on the swan lead poisoning die-off, habitat issues and more. Martha will share some excellent photos that help clarify the difficult identification of these swans and will provide free swan identification pamphlets at the meeting. Discover ways in which you can contribute to our understanding of swans in Washington just by doing what you already do outdoors.

Martha Jordan has a degree in Wildlife Science from Oregon State University. She began to look at swans in the late 1970s as an independent citizen, and by 1984 had contributed much information to state and federal agencies on the status of trumpeter swans in Washington State, including the first swan management plan. She was a long time board member of The Trumpeter Swan Society (TTSS) and currently chairs the Washington Swan Stewards, the local TTSS group.

Always on the 4th Tuesday of the month:
March 24, 7pm at the Whatcom Museum
(in the Rotunda Room of the Old City Hall building)
free & open to the public!

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Upcoming Board meeting: **March 2**

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 April 2015 issue is...

March 15.

Send materials to Kelley Palmer-McCarty at:

content@northcascadesaudubon.org

NCAS Board Members

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Associated Persons

Scholarship Don Burgess

June Elections: Secretary And Other Board Positions Are Available

Our annual elections will be taking place at our membership meeting in May. If you are interested in joining our Board, please contact Ken Salzman:

360-756-0347 or kpsalzman@comcast.net

Bellingham Christmas Bird Count *A Brief Summary*

The Christmas Bird Count of 2014 took place on Sunday, December 14, with the help of many volunteers who tackled the territories of the Whatcom County count circle. We thank Vice President Paul Woodcock for his time and dedication in organizing this annual event. We would also like to thank members of the North Cascades Audubon Society and the Bellingham birding community at large for their continued participation in this massive citizen science project.

For those of you who are interested in participating next year, please contact Paul Woodcock in November of 2015 to receive email updates and to be assigned a volunteer group.

Bird Survey Volunteers Needed

North Cascades Audubon Society and the Whatcom Land Trust (WLT) are cooperating in a project to survey birds on select WLT properties. Volunteer bird surveyors are needed to visit and survey these sites three to four times each year beginning May 2015. The purpose of the project is to develop a baseline understanding of the birds on these parcels and to provide data for potential grant opportunities. If you are interested please contact Steven Harper at stevenharper2@msn.com or 360-650-9065.

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Whatcom County 2014 Christmas Bird Count Results

White-fronted goose	1	Cooper's hawk	17	Chestnut-backed chickadee	301
Brant	2953	Red-tailed hawk	127	Bushtit	440
Snow goose *	32	- Harlan's hawk	1	Red-breasted nuthatch	63
Canada goose	1548	Rough-legged hawk	12	Brown creeper	37
Cackling goose *	31	American kestrel	5	Bewick's wren	40
Trumpeter swan	1358	Merlin	5	Pacific wren	85
Tundra swan	3	Peregrine falcon *	7	Marsh wren	10
Wood duck	70	Virginia rail	2	American dipper	CP
Gadwall	39	American coot	2648	Golden-crowned kinglet	381
Eurasian wigeon	13	Killdeer	30	Ruby-crowned kinglet	172
American wigeon	15084	Black oystercatcher	3	Townsend's solitaire	2
Mallard	9154	Black turnstone	62	Hermit thrush *1	
Northern shoveler	139	Marbled godwit	CP	Mountain bluebird *	2
Northern pintail	11811	Sanderling	42	American robin	760
Green-winged teal	789	Dowitcher *	3	Varied thrush	85
Canvasback *	3	Dunlin	431	American pipit	35
Redhead *	2	Wilson's snipe	11	Cedar waxwing +	45
Ring-necked duck	336	Bonaparte's gull *	3	Northern shrike	5
Greater scaup	1649	Mew gull	137	European starling	4170
Lesser scaup	163	Ring-billed gull	644	Orange-crowned warbler *	1
Harlequin duck	18	Thayer's gull	5	Yellow-rumped warbler	10
Surf scoter	1107	Western gull	6	Spotted towhee	293
White-winged scoter	538	Glaucous-winged gull	2540	Savannah sparrow	2
Black scoter	48	Common murre	9	Fox sparrow	108
Long-tailed duck	84	Pigeon guillemot	18	Song sparrow	594
Bufflehead	511	Marbled murrelet *	8	Lincoln's sparrow	6
Common goldeneye	202	Ancient murrelet	CP	White-throated sparrow	CP
Barrow's goldeneye	12	Rock pigeon	925	White-crowned sparrow	258
Hooded merganser	151	Mourning dove +	205	Golden-crowned sparrow	155
Common merganser	436	Eurasian collared dove	155	Dark-eyed junco	1819
Red-breasted merganser	44	Barn owl	6	Snow bunting *	24
Ruddy duck	40	Great horned owl	5	Red-winged blackbird	1522
Ring-necked pheasant *	9	Pygmy owl	2	Yellow-headed blackbird *	2
Red-throated loon	12	Barred owl	2	Western meadowlark	6
Pacific loon	123	Anna's hummingbird +	72	Brewer's blackbird	257
Common loon	28	Belted kingfisher	24	Brown-headed cowbird *	3
Pied-billed grebe	15	Red-breasted sapsucker	2	Purple finch	25
Horned grebe	94	Downy woodpecker	35	House finch	439
Red-necked grebe	40	Hairy woodpecker	12	Red crossbill +	23
Eared grebe *	2	Northern flicker	173	Pine siskin	1613
Western grebe	83	Pileated woodpecker	8	American goldfinch	49
Double-crested cormorant	511	Barn swallow *	1	Evening grosbeak	11
Pelagic cormorant	64	Steller's jay	178	House sparrow	433
Great blue heron	102	Western scrub jay +	4		
Bald eagle	94	Am/NW crow	1953	Total species	133
Northern harrier	34	Common raven	65	* = seen by only one party	
Sharp-shinned hawk	6	Black-capped chickadee	1143	+ = seen in unusually high numbers	
				CP = seen in count period	

March Field Trips

Ken Salzman, Field Trip Chair

Late winter/early spring provides great birding in our area. Waterfowl are still abundant and passerines are becoming more active. Birding activities will be quite varied in March as Wings Over Water will provide a number of birding activities both in the field and in the classroom.

NCAS field trips are open to everyone regardless of membership. Our goal is to provide quality field trips that offer enjoyment and education for beginning to advanced birders. Our field trip leaders, and many of the participants, are enthusiastic about answering questions and ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to really focus in on the birds we encounter. So join us for the fun!

For all of these trips remember to dress appropriately to maximize your enjoyment of the field experience.

Monday, March 2, Samish Flats and Vicinity

Time: 8:30 AM - 2 PM; Meet at Alger Park & Ride

Trip Leader: Steven Harper

Pre-registration required

To register contact Steven Harper at stevenharper2@msn.com or 360-650-9065.

This trip is limited to 11 participants.

This may be the last chance to see lots of raptors as they will be dispersing in mid-March. We will also search for snow geese, swans, other waterfowl and shorebirds in the Samish Flats.

Saturday, March 7, Semiahmoo Spit

Time: 9 AM at Semiahmoo Park, ~3 hours

Trip Leader: Paul Woodcock

No registration required

This trip is great any time of the year but the birds can be very special in the winter and early spring. Co-sponsored by NCAS and Whatcom County Parks & Recreation, the trip covers all of Semiahmoo Spit and is a great trip for novice birders as well as experts. Expect to see numerous waterfowl and sea birds as well as several species of shorebirds and raptors.

Friday thru Sunday, March 13-15, Wings Over Water: Northwest Birding Festival

Don't miss this very special annual event! See page 6 for festival details.

Saturday, March 21, Lake Terrell

Time: 8:30 AM - Noon

Trip Leader: Jim Easton

Pre-registration required

To register contact Jim Easton at jbeaston@comcast.net or 360-715-2029

This trip is limited to 12 participants.

This time of the year Lake Terrell is a great place for waterfowl as well as passerines and some raptors.

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*Koma Kulshan,
photo by Andrew Reding*



Female rufous hummingbird, photo by Andrew Reding

Help Wanted

Field trip leaders are needed!

We are looking for those of you with:

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

If you would like to volunteer or have any questions about becoming a Trip Leader please contact Ken Salzman at: 756-0347 or kpsalzman@comcast.net.

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Golden-crowned sparrow, photo by Andrew Reding

The Vancouver Avian Research Centre's 2015 Workshops

Join our neighbors just over the border for these informative workshops.

Bird Identification Workshop

Saturday and Sunday, May 16 - 17

This workshop is designed for beginner and intermediate birders who may wish to participate in citizen science projects such as the BC Breeding Bird Atlas or similar programs or who just want to take their bird knowledge and identification skills to the next level. This course covers groups, topography, field marks, song, habitat, molt, ageing and more and includes a guided field session to the Colony Farm banding station. Although developed for beginner and intermediate birders the ornithological aspects of the course benefit even the most experienced birders and the workshop is invaluable for birders traveling overseas.



Bird Monitoring and Banding Workshop

Friday-Sunday, April 24 - 26 AND June 5 - 7

This workshop is designed for people with little or no bird banding or bird in the hand experience and provides a fantastic opportunity to see birds up close and personal, to learn about their plumage, molt sequences and life habits. Most of all it's designed to be a fun and interesting experience and a way to take your interest in birds and the environment to the next level. See what people who have attended the workshops have to say and why the average rating from course participants is 9.5 out of 10!

Full details of course schedules, locations, content and registration information can be found online at: <http://www.birdvancouver.com/workshops.html>



2015 Wings Over Water Northwest Birding Festival: Eye on Wildlife Friday- Sunday, March 13-15; Blaine

The 13th Annual Wings Over Water Birding Festival celebrates the incredible variety of migratory birds that flock to the rich coastal waters of Drayton Harbor, Birch Bay and Semiahmoo Bay. Designated as an Important Birding Area (IBA) on the Pacific Flyway, this area is one of the country's premier bird viewing areas where you can observe a large variety of birds close at hand.

This year for the first time North Cascades Audubon is coordinating with San Juan Cruises for a two hour guided birding cruise aboard the 50-foot "Salish Sea" with the opportunity to view birds and other wildlife in the open water between Semiahmoo Spit and Point Roberts. The cost for the cruise is \$47.50 and reservations are available online at www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com. Other new offerings this year include a painting class by Uptown Art, a digiscoping class, and a free two hour children's workshop on Saturday from 10 am – noon.

Friday from 5 -7 pm is the festival opening and featured artist reception at Semiahmoo Resort with wine tasting, art by **Lorna Libert** and a presentation by eagle biologist **David Hancock**.

Saturday includes a daylong birding expo at Blaine Middle School with lots of activities for the whole family. There will be indoor and outdoor activities at a number of locations to mix and match according to interests and the weather including: live raptor presentations, field trips, onsite birding stations staffed by Audubon members, wildlife exhibits, craft vendors, and kids' activities including build your own bird house. There will also be expert speaker presentations throughout the day including **John Marzluff**, who will be speaking about his new book *Welcome to Subirdia* at 3 pm. Marzluff is a professor at the University of Washington and is featured in the PBS Nature documentary "A Murder of Crows". **Paul Bannick** will be speaking about woodpeckers of North America at 5 pm. Bannick is a well known naturalist, author and wildlife photographer who wrote the best-selling book *The Owl and the Woodpecker*.

On Sunday there will be a full day of activities at Birch Bay starting with a birding breakfast buffet and presentation at CJ's restaurant at 9 am, followed by opportunities to view birds at birding stations around the bay, photography and birding walks, an afternoon wildlife workshop, and a potential rehabilitated bird release in the afternoon to take place at the new BP Heron Center at Birch Bay State Park.

For a complete festival schedule go to: www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com or call 360-332-4544.

Please note that fees and registration are required for some festival activities.



Photo by Debbie Harger

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2015 Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Projects (WCAMP) Amphibian ID Trainings and Survey Season

WCAMP is hunting for enthusiastic volunteers to learn about and collect data on amphibians in the lowlands of Whatcom County. The first part of each training will be in the classroom and the second part in the field, with a focus on identifying the egg masses and adult forms of various amphibian species. In return for these free trainings WCAMP asks volunteers to commit to a minimum of 12 hours of survey time between March 1 and May 1, 2015.

Saturday, February 28

10 AM-3 PM

BP Lands in Ferndale

This training is sponsored by BP and will provide volunteers a great way to see and survey areas that are not open to the public.

Sunday, March 1

10 AM-3 PM

Lummi Island Heritage Trust (LIHT)

This training will be held on Lummi Island at the Otto Preserve. Survey work will be focused on LIHT lands or other Lummi Island habitat. Preference will be given to Lummi Island residents.

Saturday, March 7

10 AM-3 PM

Maritime Heritage Park, Bellingham

This training is for our County-wide program with survey work occurring throughout the County.

To sign up please provide the following to Vikki Jackson at vikki@whatfrogs.org : name, email, phone, and date of training you prefer.

You can learn more about this program at:
www.whatfrogs.org



Photo by Stephen Nyman

Avian Influenza in Washington and Idaho

Thanks to the Palouse Audubon Society for sharing the following article from the most recent issue of their newsletter *The Prairie Owl*.

Both the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game have issued public announcements concerning a highly contagious strain of avian flu. The current out-break, which killed tens of thousands of chickens and domestic turkeys in British Columbia in early December, began showing up in western Washington and Oregon in mid-December. In eastern Washington, a domestic poultry flock in Benton County was recently euthanized after 1/3 of the flock died within one week. In southern Idaho, wild ducks, three captive falcons which had recently been fed wild duck, and backyard chickens in Canyon County all tested positive.

Domestic birds become infected by contact with wild birds. Some studies have shown that up to 10% of wild waterfowl may be carriers of the virus, even though they show no symptoms. The current strain of avian flu has not caused any human illnesses to date, and the virus is not transferred to eggs or meat products.

Birdwatchers, hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts are encouraged to report sightings of sick or dead wild birds to their state's wildlife agency, which are particularly interested in waterfowl and birds such as eagles, hawks, falcons, ravens, and gulls that prey on them or scavenge their carcasses. In Washington call Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-606-8768. Sick or dead domestic poultry can be reported to the Washington State Department of Agriculture at 1-800-606-3056.

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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.

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