

# The Avalanche



North Cascades Audubon Society Newsletter

[www.northcascadesaudubon.org](http://www.northcascadesaudubon.org)

Volume 47, Issue 3

March 2016

## **General Membership Meeting with Tim Boyer *Understanding Shorebirds, the Miracle of Migration***

Join award-winning nature photographer Tim Boyer in exploring the epic trans-ocean migration of some of our shorebirds. Eight of the 42 common shorebirds found in Washington will be discussed, including bar-tailed godwits, Pacific golden-plovers, sanderlings and other birds that cross the majority of the Pacific Ocean. We'll look at where they migrate, why they migrate and how they are able to travel so far. These global migrants require global conservation and climate change solutions. In an effort to understand their remarkable journeys we need to look beyond the North American borders and see where shorebirds spend most of their lives.

Tim Boyer is a full-time photographer and a graduate of Seattle Audubon's Master Birder Program. His images have been published in many bird and nature magazines, and his fine art prints are sold at art festivals around the Pacific Northwest. He enjoys sharing his knowledge of photography and birds through workshops and presentations. Shorebirds are his favorite grouping of birds, and he spends many weekends on the Washington Coast catching their images. His photography can be found at [www.TimBoyerPhotography.com](http://www.TimBoyerPhotography.com).

*Always on the 4th Tuesday of the month:*  
**March 22, 7pm at the Whatcom Museum**  
**(in the Rotunda Room of the Old City Hall building)**  
*free & open to the public!*



*Left: Pacific golden-plover, right: western sandpiper, photos by Tim Boyer*

## 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 2016 issue is...

**March 15.**

Send materials to Kelley Palmer-McCarty at:

**[content@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:content@northcascadesaudubon.org)**

## NCAS Board Members

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### Associated Persons

Scholarship Don Burgess

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## Upcoming Board meeting: March 7

Please email the President if you would like to attend:  
[president@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:president@northcascadesaudubon.org)

## New NCAS Initiative: Birds and Climate Change You can still join us!

***"You are what hope looks like to a bird."***

*David Yarnold, CEO and President,  
National Audubon Society*

In response to the recently released Audubon Birds and Climate Change report, NCAS is looking for volunteers to participate in a new work group. The goal of this work group is to develop Audubon sponsored initiatives that will help safeguard Whatcom County birds in a changing climate, and help slow the rate, or mitigate the effects, of climate change.

Initiatives developed by the work group will:

- identify achievable and measurable actions by citizen that slow or mitigate the effects of climate change, and protect habitat and survival of Whatcom County birds
- have a local focus
- be cost effective
- be manageable by NCAS Audubon volunteers

The work group has recently held its first meeting, but it is not too late to join us! If you would like to be part of this new work group, please contact Pam Borso at [borsope@aol.com](mailto:borsope@aol.com)

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## Get Nest Boxes Ready for New Occupants

*The following is excerpted from the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's website. You can pick up a nest box at NCAS's monthly meetings for a suggested donation of \$20.*

Spring may officially be several weeks off, but now is the time to get your bird nest boxes cleaned out and ready for new, incoming occupants. If you don't already have nest boxes up, this is the time to build or buy and then place them. You can follow the specs at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/projects/nestboxes/index.html>.

Many backyard birding enthusiasts who use nest boxes leave them up year-round and leave nesting materials in them through the winter, when some birds will use them as nighttime roost sites. But migrating birds that use cavities for nesting, like bluebirds, swallows and wrens, will be returning soon and they prefer clean quarters to follow their instincts to build their own nests.

All nest boxes can attract mites, lice, fleas, flies, hornets, spiders and more. In small numbers they are relatively harmless to birds, but in larger numbers they can cause injuries and even fatalities to young birds. Inspect all nest boxes and clean out potential pests, old nesting material and any dead nestlings or infertile eggs. Although some diligent and industrious birds will remove this material before building their own particular nest, many more will just build on top of an old nest. That kind of layering can raise the nest dangerously close to the entrance hole where predators might reach eggs or young.

When cleaning your nest boxes be sure to use protective gloves, maybe even a dust mask, and dispose of everything away from the site to avoid smells that can attract predators.

Nest box maintenance includes tightening screws, loosening lag bolts, unblocking drainage holes, and generally making sure everything is secure and working right. If you find a nest box in your collection that year after year goes unused, consider relocating it. It might not be in the appropriate habitat or suitable height location for the species its built for, or perhaps it's in the right place but is not built correctly. Check the entrance hole size, overall size dimensions, and other factors that are important to, and different for, various species of nest-box-using birds.

*Above: brown creeper, right: red-winged blackbird  
Photos by Andrew Reding*

## February Board Minutes are Online

February's Board Meeting minutes are posted on our website under "About Us" and "Board Minutes." Our goal is to keep the community informed of everything our members are doing for conservation of birds and other wildlife.



## Hope Mountain Centre's 6th Annual Skagit Valley Bird Blitz

Friday-Sunday, May 6-8

Ross Lake Group Campground, British Columbia

The Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning is inviting members and friends of the North Cascades Audubon Society to the 6th Annual Skagit Valley Bird Blitz on the "other side of the border." The event is held each year in a beautiful area at the north end of Ross Lake on the international border, only a two-hour drive from the border crossing at Sumas! Event details and registration are available at <http://hopemountain.org/programs/skagit-valley-bird-blitz-may-6-8-2016/>.



## 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 opportunities will be quite varied in March with Wings Over Water providing a number of birding activities both in the field and in the classroom.

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 providing a worthwhile experience. So join us for the fun, and don't forget to dress for the weather!

### Friday, March 4, Samish Flats and Vicinity

**Time: 8:15 AM - 1:30 PM**

**Trip Leader:** Steven Harper

Pre-registration required, Trip limit: 11

To register contact: Steven Harper, [stevenharper2@msn.com](mailto:stevenharper2@msn.com) or 360-650-9065.

This is your last chance on a NCAS field trip to see all of the incredible raptors, swans and geese on the Samish Flats, as they will be leaving soon. The trip will begin at the Alger Park & Ride, I5 Exit 240. We'll then scour the Samish Flats searching for all of the raptors commonly found during the winter as well as waterfowl and shorebirds feeding in the fields. Bring water and snacks or lunch to eat on the run. Dress warmly and bring a spotting scope if you happen to have one. We're bound to see bald eagles, rough-legged hawks, norther harriers, and red-tailed hawks and we'll search for the elusive gyrfalcon haunting the flats.

### Saturday, March 5, 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 beginning birders as well as experts. Expect to see numerous waterfowl and sea birds as well as several species of shorebirds and raptors.

### Friday - Sunday, March 11-13, Wings Over Water: Northwest Birding Festival

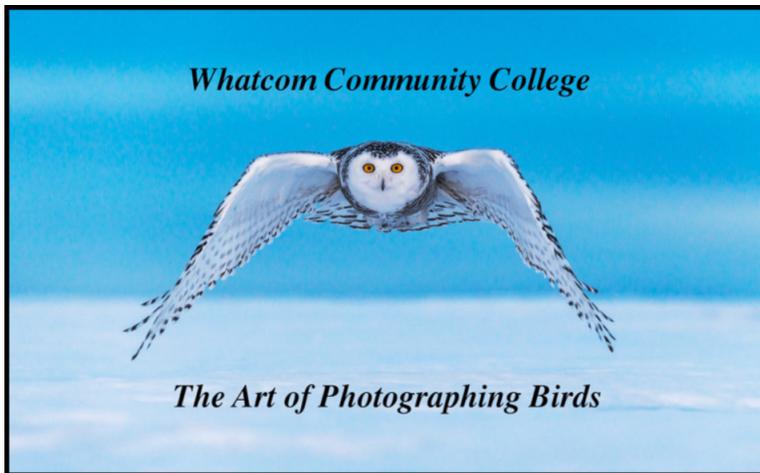
This annual birding festival, co-sponsored by North Cascades Audubon Society, features a number of birding opportunities including NCAS-staffed viewing stations, field trips and an open water round-trip cruise from Semiahmoo to Point Roberts with naturalists on board to help with spotting birds. There will also be a field trip to the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary. For information on the festival go to: <http://www.wingsoverwater-birdingfestival.com/>. And for more details see the article on page 7.



*Female rufous hummingbird,  
photo by Andrew Reding*

© Andrew A Reding

 <p><b>VILLAGE BOOKS &amp; PAPER DREAMS</b></p> <p>1200-1206 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Bellingham's Historic Fairhaven &amp; 430 Front Street in the Waples Mercantile Building, Lynden <b>671-2626 • 800-392-BOOK</b> <a href="http://www.villagebooks.com">www.villagebooks.com</a></p>	<p>Every time you click through from Audubon's website to Village Books' website and buy books, Audubon gets 5.5% of the purchase!</p> <p><i>Building Community in Whatcom County since 1980</i></p>
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North Cascades Audubon Society Board member Ken Salzman will be teaching a class on bird photography at Whatcom Community College, titled The Art of Photographing Birds. The class will be held on Tuesday, March 15 and Thursday, March 17, and will conclude with a field trip on Saturday, March 19.

*For more information contact Ken at [kpsalzman@comcast.net](mailto:kpsalzman@comcast.net).*

To register go online to Whatcom Community College (<http://whatcom.ctc.edu>) or call (360) 383-3200.

## **Help NCAS Fund a Gift to the Whatcom Museum in Memory of Lois and George Garlick**

Since Lois Garlick passed away last June, North Cascades Audubon has been seeking a fitting way to honor Lois and her husband George, who preceded her in death in 2005. George and Lois were members of a small group of dedicated conservationists who founded NCAS in 1970. This memorable pair of individuals dedicated their lives to the protection of wildlife and the environment of Whatcom County.

One of the many projects that Lois spearheaded in the late 1970s was the cleaning and refurbishment of the museum's historic bird collection which had been put in storage after a fire destroyed the clock tower of the Old City Hall building a decade earlier. When we realized that the museum's collection did not include a trumpeter swan it occurred to us that here was a chance to preserve one of these majestic birds, many of which overwinter in our County. Unfortunately a number of these magnificent birds also die here, which provides us with a specimen that can be "brought back to life" by a taxidermist. Our intent is to honor George and Lois while supporting the Whatcom Museum's efforts to educate our community about the wildlife that shares our environment. The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife is cooperating in this effort.

Our goal is to raise about \$800 from the public and our members to cover the costs of taxidermy and a plaque dedicating the gift in the memory of the Garlicks. Whether you knew or remember George and Lois or not, please consider a tax deductible donation to the NCAS Lois and George Garlick Memorial Fund. Donations can be sent to North Cascades Audubon Society, P.O. Box 5805, Bellingham, WA 98227-5805 designated for the Lois and George Garlick Memorial. We appreciate your support!

## **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: 360-756-0347 or [kpsalzman@comcast.net](mailto:kpsalzman@comcast.net).

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## Sunrise Swan Watch and Release

*By Annie Prevost*

A weak sunrise peaked under the clouds as about two dozen swan enthusiasts climbed the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center viewing tower. We had come to see the dramatic departure of more than 250 swans that had spent the night on the lake. As the light increased more swans became visible and they began to take off in family groups, some flying toward the tower. For the next half-hour binoculars, scopes and cameras tracked their departure.

This event took place on February 13 and was sponsored by the Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park. Once the swans departed, cold birders were welcomed inside with hot drinks, refreshments and a program on swans and swan rescue. The latest mid-winter swan survey for Whatcom, Skagit and northern Snohomish County recorded 15,838 swans. That is lower than the 2015 count, but up from the 2014 count of 14,421 swans. The majority are trumpeter swans and the rest tundra swans, with the occasional oddball, such as a mute swan, seen among them.

Nick Trejo, swan technician with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, talked about our local swans describing how they are monitored and rescued. The presence of old lead shot in our lakes continues to be life-threatening. To date this winter there have been 322 recorded swan mortalities. Those captured alive were taken to the Whatcom Humane Society (WHS) Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to be tested for lead to determine if they could be saved.

“This was a very bad year for lead”, said Alysha Elsby, manager of the center. Usually the center sees 13-15 swans a season; this year that number jumped to 95. Elsby explained how they measure the lead levels and treat the swans to get the lead out of their systems. A few swans had botulism, wing fractures, or were orphans.

The event concluded happily with the release of four swans that have successfully rehabilitated at Lake Terrell. First the swans were banded and collared. One of the swans to be released was orphaned last summer by wildfire near Soldotna, Alaska. The youngster needed to be with other swans, so Martha Jordan, Executive Director, Northwest Swan Conservation Association, arranged her transport to WHS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center where she could be with swans that came in for rehab. Everyone was elated, when Soldotna, now K01, flew for the first time shortly after being released. The other birds released are K00, K02 and K03.



*Martha Jordan carries Soldotna, the orphan from Alaska, to her release, photo by Annie Prevost*

## 2016 Wings Over Water Northwest Birding Festival

**Friday through Sunday, March 11-13 in Blaine, WA**

Detailed Festival Information: [wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com](http://wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com)

The 14th Annual Wings Over Water (WOW) Festival celebrates the incredible variety of migratory birds that flock to the 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. Be sure to check the festival website for details on the many activities occurring over the weekend. Below are listed some of the activities led or co-sponsored by North Cascades Audubon Society:

### Reifel Bird Sanctuary Field Trip via Bus

**Friday, 8AM – 4PM;** Departing from Birch Bay Square Mall

\$35-\$40; Register in advance on-line at [wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com](http://wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com)

Travel with other bird enthusiasts to The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Delta, BC. It is one of 92 federal Migratory Bird Sanctuaries in Canada. Public use is managed by the British Columbia Waterfowl Society under a long-term agreement with Environment Canada. This is a trip not to be missed! Fee includes bus transportation, entrance fee and a bag of bird seed. All participants will need a passport, Nexus or enhanced driver's license.

### Viewing Stations

**Saturday, 10AM – 4PM**

Come be amazed at the variety and number of birds that can be viewed from two locations at Marine Park in Blaine and two on Semiahmoo Spit. NCAS volunteers will be on hand with spotting scopes and field guides to help participants focus in on this avian spectacle.

**Volunteer birders are needed to staff viewing stations:** If you are comfortable identifying the marine birds of Drayton Harbor and Semiahmoo Bay please consider volunteering for a 2.5-hour shift.

Contact Paul Woodcock at: 360-380-3356 or [vp@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:vp@northcascadesaudubon.org)

### Salish Sea Wildlife Cruise

**Saturday, 10AM- Noon AND 12:30-2:30PM**

\$50; Register in advance on-line at [wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com](http://wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com)

Join other wildlife enthusiasts for a two-hour roundtrip cruise from Semiahmoo Spit to Point Roberts aboard the 50' Salish Sea. View a wide variety of seabirds, and possibly some marine mammals, in the rich waters of Boundary Bay and the Strait of Georgia. Professional naturalists will be aboard to help spot the wildlife you'll see along the way. Dress for inclement weather, bring binoculars, and a camera. The Salish Sea has plenty of indoor seating, as well as ample outdoor viewing areas on two levels of the boat. Seating is limited. If the cruise has to be cancelled due to rough sea conditions, prepaid registration fees will be refunded.



*Dunlin, photo by Andrew Reding*

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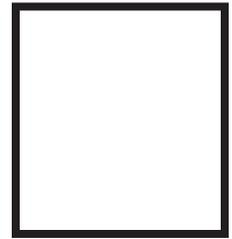
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[WildBirdChalet.com](http://WildBirdChalet.com)



**North Cascades Audubon Society**  
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*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.

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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](mailto: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](mailto:membership@northcascadesaudubon.org).

## **Join or Renew (circle one)**

*Please make checks payable to North Cascades Audubon.*

***Each membership applies to one household.***

*Does your company match donations? Let them know you  
donated to North Cascades Audubon Society.*

- \$20 Kestrel
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