May 9, 2019, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. - Poulsbo Library

Bird-Friendly Gardens

Time to think about spring gardening: what to plant, who will benefit from it and other considerations for creating and maintaining backyard habitats. Janine Schutt works as a paraeducator for the Central Kitsap School District and as a part-time chaplain for the Department of Corrections. She is a past president of Kitsap Audubon Society and the bird columnist for West Sound Home and Garden magazine.

In addition to being an avid birder and photographer, Janine is also an experienced gardener. She plants her gardens with two things in mind: birds and beauty.

In this presentation, Janine will teach us about the importance of creating backyard habitats. She will explore the necessity of planting native vegetation and suggest plant species that attract the most birds. She will also discuss the value of providing natural cover from predators, access to water, nesting cavities, and other ways to make our yards more wildlife friendly. An expert on hummingbird gardens, Janine will share her knowledge of perennials that serve as easy to maintain hummingbird magnets. She specializes in hardy fuchsias and will share which varieties are most appealing to our nectar loving friends.

Father and son Pileated Woodpeckers, by Janine Schutt.

The Kingfisher is printed on recycled paper by Blue Sky Printing and mailed by Olympic Presort, both family-owned local businesses.

❄️ New Officers elected

❄️ No meetings in June, July or August
The Purple Martins have returned so it must be Spring! Purple Martins are the largest North American swallow and nest in colonies in open areas especially over water and exclusively in nest boxes or martin houses (gourds) and in the western US, sometimes in natural crevices. Kitsap Audubon has donated nesting gourds in Brownsville, Seabeck, Silverdale and Poulsbo which are maintained by a number of very dedicated volunteers. The community of Keyport has recently become interested in putting up some gourds, which KAS will donate. For more information about our Purple Martin Program, please contact Sandy Pavey at s4sandy55@gmail.com. For information about the location of these sites check out the KAS web page. It is located in the menu on the upper right hand side under Birding Info and scroll down to Purple Martins. 

The following officers were elected at our April meeting: Gene Bullock-President, Lynn Willmott-Vice President, Jennifer Standish-Treasurer, and Connie Bickerton-Secretary. Their terms will begin July 1, 2019. Congratulations and much appreciation to them for their willingness to volunteer for KAS.

KAS will be co-sponsoring an event at Eagle Harbor Books on Bainbridge Island on May 8 at 6:30 pm. Author Tim Dee will be discussing his book Landfill-Notes on Gull Watching and Trash Picking in the Anthropocene. The event is free and open to the public. The scholarship committee has reviewed the applications for our three high school scholarships and one college scholarship. The applicants for both categories were impressive and it was a difficult job to narrow the field and select the winners. Certificates will be presented to the students at our May meeting.

The KAS board has been busy with a number of other projects. We voted to help support the Pigeon Guillemot Project which will be surveying nesting sites on Bainbridge Island. This is already being done by Audubon chapters on Whidbey Island and Vashon Island. The board also donated a backpack with binoculars and a field guide to the Kitsap Regional Library as a prize for their summer reading program. The library then purchased an additional eight backpacks with field guides and binoculars for all their branches for prizes. Hope that this will inspire many young people to become birders.

There will be no June general membership meeting.

I hope that you are all able to get out and enjoy the lovely weather and see some of our returning birds.
2019 Kingfisher Award to Diane Bachen

The 2019 Kingfisher Award will be presented to Diane Bachen at the May 9th general membership meeting. It is Kitsap Audubon’s highest award, and is given annually to an individual or couple in recognition of outstanding service to Kitsap Audubon over a period of five or more years.

Diane has served on the Kitsap Audubon Board since September 2013, including two terms as President, one term as Vice President, and two terms as Secretary.

Under Diane’s gentle, persistent leadership, the Board has completed a major revision and updating of the chapter’s bylaws and policies. In addition, she has represented Kitsap Audubon on the Marbled Murrelet Working Group, part of a coalition that is working with the Washington Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to develop a long-term conservation strategy for the survival and recovery of this endangered bird.

Diane also works with Sharron Ham to collect donated yarn, which KAS member Kathy Swartz delivers to the women’s prison in Purdy. Volunteers there knit the yarn into items of clothing, which they donate for our Holiday Mitten Tree. Diane and Sharron then distribute Mitten Tree donations of food and clothing to Kitsap community groups that serve those in need.

Diane is known for her self-effacing warmth and thoughtfulness, notes one Board member. She is often one of the first to volunteer her time; and she is someone who is intensely diligent and committed when it comes to following things through to completion.

The 2019 awardee was selected by the three previous recipients: Al Westphal, Michael Szerlog, and Janine Schutt.

New officers elected for coming year

The slate of 2019-20 Kitsap Audubon officers recommended by the Nominating Committee was elected by unanimous voice vote at the April 11th general membership meeting. The following were elected to one-year terms beginning July 1, 2019: President - Gene Bullock; Vice President - Lynn Wilmott; Treasurer - Jennifer Standish; Secretary - Connie Bickerton.

The 2019 Nominating Committee members are Lynn Wilmott, Sharron Ham and Judy Willott.

Beginning Birder Backpack donated to KRL

Kitsap Audubon offered to fund a loan program for Kitsap Regional Libraries (KRL) that would consist of beginning birder backpacks, each containing two sets of binoculars and a field guide to the birds of the Puget Sound area. KRL management decided the loan program would be too difficult to administer; but liked the idea so much, KRL not only accepted our donation of a prototype backpack; but decided to purchase eight additional sets of backpacks, binoculars and field guides. They will give one to each of their nine regional branch libraries. But instead of loaning them to beginning birders, they will be given as achievement prizes during KRL’s Summer Learning Program.

Duplicating Kitsap Audubon’s donated model, each KRL backpack will include a pair of top-rated Celestron Nature DX 8 x 42 binoculars and a copy of Birds of the Puget Sound Region.
Field Trips & Festivals - Al and Andrew Westphal

Birding Festivals: A summary of events statewide may be found at the Washington State Audubon site: http://wa.audubon.org/bird-festivals-0

eBird Global “Big Day”: May 4. Will you join more than 30,000 others and become a part of Global Big Day? You don’t have to commit to birding for 24 hours. An hour or even 10 minutes of watching birds makes you part of the team. For info: https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-4-may-2019

Theler Wetlands (Belfair): Saturday, May 11 (half-day). Al & Andrew Westphal, leaders: westphalac@aol.com to register. An annual favorite. Lots of spring arrivals should be present, especially big numbers and a nice variety of swallows. Maybe a few good warblers too. We encourage families to bring children, 3rd grade and above. Meet 8:30 a.m. at the Theler Wetlands Nature Center. It is on Highway 3 at the 2nd red light, just south of Belfair in Mason County.

Billy Frank – Nisqually NWR (near Olympia): Saturday, June 8 (long half-day). Al & Andrew Westphal, leaders, westphalac@aol.com to register. A long half-day trip, but there are few places in the region better for observing a great variety of nesting bird species, and they should all be here by mid-June. We will walk the forest and barn trails and as far out on the boardwalk as we care to go. Meet at the parking lot by the visitor center at 8:30 a.m.

Protection Island Sunset Cruise: Saturday, June 22, 5:15 – 8:30 p.m. From the City Dock in Port Townsend led by noted naturalist George Gerdts. Protection Island is a 400-acre National Wildlife Refuge at the entrance to Discovery Bay. Expected birds include Glaucous-winged Gulls, Rhinoceros Auklets, Pigeon Guillemots, Double-crested and Pelagic Cormorants and sometimes, Brandt’s Cormorants. A main attraction is the nesting colony of TUFTED PUFFINS. To sign up: Call Bainbridge Island Parks and Recreation at 206-842-2306 ext. 118 and ask for “Protection Island Sunset Cruise” #131851-01. Cost is $90.00/participant plus additional $5.00 charge for non-Bainbridge Island residents. KAS members will have 20% ($18.00) of the fare DONATED to Kitsap Audubon Society by informing BI Parks that they are KAS members when they sign up. The “Glacier Spirit” is a comfortable, diesel-powered yacht with excellent viewing from inside the craft and ample viewing space outside on the front deck. The Glacier Spirit leaves from Port Townsend at 5:30 p.m. sharp and returns between 8:30 and 9:00 p.m. Boarding will start at 5:15 p.m.

Field Trip Report

Point No Point, March 23. Ten of us gathered on a very pleasant morning to get a last look at some of the many wintering water birds of Puget Sound before their northward migrations. We put together a terrific list of 50 species with a number of highlights including lots of Rhinoceros Auklets, grebes, and loons in their breeding plumage. Also many dozens of Brant geese, hundreds of Bonaparte’s Gulls, and a handful of shorebirds including a Wilson’s Snipe. The people were great too, with a group of enthusiastic participants who all pitched in with the spotting and IDs. Many thanks to Ray Schreiber for entering some of his terrific photos in the eBird list.

Photos of Bewick’s Wren and Red-breasted Merganser by Ray Schreiber.
Send me your interesting sightings at jeschutt@hotmail.com. Please put “Wildlife Sightings” in the subject line.

Notable Kitsap Bird Sightings from www.eBird.org:
March 15 near Mission Lake: 4 mountain quails, 2 western bluebirds
March 20 on Dyes Inlet near Tracyton: 19 trumpeter swans
March 23 at Foulweather Bluff (near Hansville): 2 black oystercatchers
March 23 on Bainbridge Island: 1 hermit thrush
April 3 near Hansville: 1 peregrine falcon, 1 Townsend’s solitaire
April 4 on south Bainbridge Island: 2 evening grosbeaks
April 4 at Chico Creek (near Bremerton): 1 swamp sparrow
April 4 at Lions Park in Bremerton: 9 black scoters
April 4 at Shel-chelb Estuary (Bainbridge Island): 1 herring gull
April 4 at Point No Point (Hansville): 5 eared grebes
April 5 on Bainbridge Island: 1 chipping sparrow
April 6 at Point Julia (near Port Gamble): 1 western gull, 2 Lincoln’s sparrows
April 6 near Keyport: 3 snow geese
April 7 on Bainbridge Island: 2 white-throated sparrows
April 8 near Kingston: 1 northern shrike
April 9 on Green Mountain: 2 northern pygmy owls, 2 Canada jays
April 9 at Point No Point: 1 whimbrel
April 9 near Silverdale: 1 northern saw-whet owl heard calling
April 11 on Bainbridge Island: 1 barn owl
April 13 at Point No Point: 8 American pipits

Wildlife Sightings - Janine Schutt

Bird of Month: Common Yellowthroat - Janine Schutt

A common, yet often overlooked spring and summer resident of Kitsap is the common yellowthroat. This widespread wetland warbler is often hiding in cattails. Its “witchety-witchety-witchety” call reveals its presence. Both sexes are olive green and yellow. Males have a striking black eye mask with a white stripe across the top and sides of the head.

Here are some fascinating facts about the common yellowthroat:
• Common breeder throughout the United States
• Winters in Mexico and South America
• Inhabits wetland edges and brushy areas
• Feeds on insects and grubs it finds on plant foliage
• Males attract females by performing a flight display in which they fly up to 100 feet in the air before landing on a low perch to sing
• Only North American warbler to nest in open marshes
• Nests and forages in low, dense vegetation

Photos of male and female Common Yellowthroats by Janine Schutt
Purple Martins are among the early birds returning from their winter sojourn in Mexico and Central America. Owing to a growing scarcity of natural nest cavities and competition from introduced species like the European Starling and House Sparrow, Purple Martins might have become extinct in North America if human friends hadn’t come to their rescue. Today most Purple Martins depend on man-made colonies maintained by volunteers.

Kitsap Audubon volunteers, using equipment donated by Kitsap Audubon, maintain Purple Martin colonies in Poulsbo’s Oyster Plant Park and marinas in Brownsville, Seabeck and Eagle Harbor on Bainbridge Island.

Purple Martin chair, Sandy Pavey, is also helping homeowners in the Keyport area start new colonies. She also maintains one in her own waterfront yard.

Once Purple Martins adopt a location, they faithfully return, year after year, to raise their families.

Native Americans were the first to place hollowed out gourds along their village perimeters to attract nesting Martins. The birds repaid them by devouring many of the biting insects that torment the villagers each season.

Purple Martin welcoming crew

Top photos, left to right:

Bill and Diane Fitzpatrick installing Purple Martin gourds at Poulsbo’s Oyster Plant Park. Photo by Sandy Pavey.

Long-time Kitsap Audubon member and Purple Martin steward John McDonald installs gourds by Seabeck Marina general store. Photo by Janine Schutt.

Barry and Kathy Loveless with their new colony, installed with the help of Sandy Pavey and equipment donated by Kitsap Audubon and the Paveys at Virginia Point Road near Keyport. Photo by Sandy Pavey.

Photo left by Jay Wiggs shows Purple Martins in Poulsbo’s Oyster Plant Park.

Photo lower left by Jay Wiggs shows Purple Martin chicks peeking out of nest.
Volunteers from Whidbey Island Audubon have been monitoring about a thousand Pigeon Guillemots in 24 breeding colonies in bluff burrows around Whidbey Island since 2004. They are also partnering with other Audubon chapters and wildlife organizations in this ongoing research, including chapters in Sequim and Vashon Island. An associated research project was recently launched on Bainbridge Island by Cyndy Holtz, in partnership with Kitsap Audubon. Cyndy is currently recruiting volunteers and identifying nest locations. Experts from the Whidbey Island Audubon chapter will conduct the initial training of volunteers at Cyndy’s home on May 11.

Pigeon Guillemots, with their fiery red feet and dramatic white wing blazes, are a familiar sight on Kitsap coastal waters. These endearing birds nest in burrows along the cliffs of Kitsap, and are one of the few marine birds that nest locally. They spend most of their lives on the water; but come ashore to breed, from April to August. Volunteers monitor their nests each week during that period to record which nests are active and what kinds of small fish they are delivering to the young. The health and breeding success of these birds are an important indicator of the health of the marine environment.

For more information, contact Cyndy Holtz at cyndy. holtz@gmail.com; 206-595-6752; or visit www.pigeonguillemot.org

Official Kitsap Bird Checklist now online

Thanks to long-time member and noted bird authority George Gerds, an updated checklist of Kitsap County birds is now available on our website at www.kitsapaudubon.org/where-to-bird-in-Kitsap-County/

The Official Kitsap County Bird List includes 329 species, based on documented sightings for Kitsap County.

Those in boldface are rare species seen every two years or so; and those in boldface Italics are vagrant species, with fewer than 10 recorded sightings. Other birds listed occur regularly during some seasons of the year.

The list is in Adobe Acrobat PDF format so it can be easily downloaded from the Kitsap Audubon website.

George Gerds has agreed to update the list whenever there are changes in the official taxonomic order or species names.

The official taxonomic order is determined by the American Ornithological Society based on DNA, field research and other considerations. It is based on the evolutionary order of families, from the oldest species to the most recent.

Audubon Regional Meeting

Members of the Kitsap Audubon Board took part in a regional Audubon chapter meeting at the Audubon Dungeness River Center in Sequim. The Kitsap Audubon Board meets annually with Washington Audubon staff and board members from Olympic Peninsula Audubon and Admiralty Audubon. The three chapters take turns hosting these meetings. At the March meeting, the three chapters shared their conservation priorities and related programs. Gail Gatton, Executive Director of Washington Audubon, leads similar regional meetings involving all 25 Audubon chapters in Washington State.

Our Supporting Business Partners

The Wild Bird Center of Silverdale (360-613-4481; email: silverdale@wildbird.com) and Wild Birds Unlimited in Gig Harbor (253-851-2575; wbugigharbor@gmail.com) both donate to Kitsap Audubon 5% of their sales to Kitsap Audubon members. Be sure to let them know you are member of Kitsap Audubon at the time of your purchase.
The mission of the Kitsap Audubon Society is to preserve the natural world through education, environmental study and habitat protection, and to promote awareness and enjoyment of local and regional natural areas.

Visit our website at www.kitsapaudubon.org