NCAS Changes Due to COVID-19

Based on our current knowledge of the risks associated with COVID-19 and the recommendations from the Whatcom County Health Department, we will be cancelling all field trips and education programs from May through August.

We are pleased, however, to offer our May membership meeting program as a Zoom presentation. Registered participants will be able to view the presentation live and ask questions via the chat function offered by the Zoom program. Details can be found in the article: “Fire in Washington’s Forests: A Tale of Two Sides of the Mountains.”

There is also a possibility the Pearrygin Campout will occur, but we won’t know for sure until after this newsletter is published. Please check out the information in this newsletter for all of the details.

In this issue of the newsletter we offer ideas for field trips and birding activities you can enjoy, while still minimizing COVID-19 risks to yourself and others.

We sincerely hope we’ll be able to resume field trips, membership meetings and educational programs in September. However, the uncertainty associated with COVID-19 prevents us from making a firm commitment and we will not jeopardize our members’ health. The NCAS Board is working diligently to find ways other than in-person meetings to stay connected with you, our members.

General Membership Meeting with Dr. Brian Harvey

Fire in Washington’s Forests: A Tale of Two Sides of the Mountains

Fire has played a foundational role in the forests across the State of Washington historically, currently, and will continue to do so in the future. However, the natural role of fire, effects of past forest management, and effects of a warming climate are drastically different between the east and west sides of the Cascade Mountains. In this talk Dr. Brian Harvey will discuss some current research frontiers regarding forest fire ecology in Washington, and what forests of the future may look like in a warm and more fire-prone future.

Tuesday, May 26; 7 - 8:30pm
Zoom Presentation
The Zoom log-in will be sent by email to registered attendees. To register please click the following link:
free & open to the public!

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Dr. Brian J. Harvey is an Assistant Professor in the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences in the College of the Environment at the University of Washington. His research focuses on understanding the nature of forest disturbances (e.g., fires and insect outbreaks) and how forest structure and function is shaped by disturbances, interactions among disturbances, and climate.

Photo: Dr. Brian J. Harvey
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: Kirsten Anderson
Writer/editor: Lynne Givler
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If you are interested in contributing, the deadline for the September 2020 issue is...
August 15.

Send materials to:
kanderson@northcascadesaudubon.org

NCAS Board Members

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President            Steven Harper
Vice President           Jamie Huson
Secretary            Deborah Kaye
Treasurer            Sue Parrott

Board Members
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Education            Kristen Murray
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Programs            Steven Harper
Scholarships            Nicole Huson
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Advisory Board
Member at Large            Rae Edwards
Scholarships            Don Burgess

Get Your Nest Boxes!
NCAS has nest boxes available, vertical for chickadees and horizontal for swallows. Wrens, nuthatches and downy woodpeckers also love them. We deliver! If you need one or more, contact Pam Borso at pborso@northcascadesaudubon.org or 360-319-9004. We ask for a suggested donation of $20.00. Happy spring!

Summary of March 9, 2020
NCAS Board Meeting
The Board met at the Whatcom Land Trust office on March 9th from 7:00 to 9:00 pm and took the following actions and/or discussed the following issues:

• With regard to our organization’s community outreach activities, the Board agreed to follow suggested guidelines from the Whatcom County Health Department and the CDC regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We will send an email notification to members and post information to our website and social media if any membership meetings, field trips or library presentations are cancelled.

• Audubon Council of Washington 2020 is tentatively scheduled for either the first or second week of October. Steven, Robert and Kirsten are participating in regular planning sessions with other chapter leaders of NW Region 1 and staff from State Audubon to help plan this year’s event.

• The Board agreed to have Sue reserve the YWCA on December 8th for our holiday party and December 20th for our Christmas Bird Count potluck.

• The Board considered having a summer volunteer picnic again this year. Pam and Deborah will work together to plan this event and share details with Board members at our next meeting.

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If you are interested in volunteering with our Audubon chapter, please contact the President at president@northcascadesaudubon.org
Let Birds Help a Little This Month
April 2020 Cornell Lab E-News

We’re guessing that you, like the folks at the Cornell Lab, have already spent a few weeks self-quarantining and are facing a difficult month ahead. While they don’t suggest that birds can make those problems disappear—they do bring us joy, solace, fascination, and a few welcome moments of diversion. Whether you’re birding in your yard or listening to songs filter in through your windows, Cornell Lab hopes you’ll enjoy some of these free resources and let birds bring you comfort.

- Bring sights and sounds of birds into your home with Bird Cams from all over the world
- Get a weekly email of ideas for cooped-up kids, created by our K-12 Education professionals
- Use Merlin and Merlin Photo ID to narrow down any spring arrivals you don’t recognize
- Quiz yourself on bird photos or sounds from anywhere in the world
- Optimize your eBird yard lists with a few quick tips
- Play with imaginative, fun, and educational features from Bird Academy: Bird Song Hero, Wall of Birds, Flap to the Future, BeastBox, and more

See the full set of ideas and activities here—and join Cornell Lab on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for more #BetterWithBirds ideas or to share your own with them!

Subscribing or Re-subscribing to WhatcomBirds Listserv

WhatcomBirds is a listserv that provides a place for people with an interest in local birds to inform each other of bird sightings and to discuss issues relevant to local birds. NCAS is now hosting the website and listserv, and Professor John Bower, the originator of WhatcomBirds, will continue to moderate the listserv content.

John Bower and NCAS are in the process of inviting members of the old WhatcomBirds Listserv to subscribe to the new WhatcomBirds Listserv. If you’re no longer receiving postings, or you’re new to the listserv, there are two ways you can subscribe.

1) Go to https://groups.google.com/a/northcascadesaudubon.org/forum/#!forum/whatcom-birds and click “Join group to post”. Please read the FAQs for all of the information about using WhatcomBirds.

2) Go to the North Cascades Audubon Society website and click the menu “WhatcomBirds”. Instructions on how to join and use WhatcomBirds can be found there as well as at this link https://www.northcascadesaudubon.org/whatcom-birds

If you have any questions or concerns about the website please contact John Bower at jbower@wwu.edu.

CAUTION: Bird feeding makes you happy!

Mon-Fri 10-5:30
Sat 10-4
108 Ohio Street
Bellingham
360-734-0969
WildBirdChalet.com
Do It Yourself Field Trips to Parks and Whatcom Land Trust Properties

By Steven Harper, President

NCAS will not be hosting any field trips during the months of May through August because of the risk of COVID-19. However, you don't need to give up on the joys of birding and the inspiration the outdoors and nature provides. We encourage you to get out by yourself socially distancing in a way that is responsible, protecting yourself and others. Please keep in mind that you may need to move to a different site if you find your first choice is already too heavily visited. It’s difficult to avoid close encounters on narrow trails.

Among the great places to bird in Whatcom County are Whatcom Land Trust (WLT) owned properties and County and City parks with WLT conservation easements. These parks have a wide variety of different habitats and bird species. Most of the sites have trails while others require some off trail exploring. Lorraine Wilde, writing on behalf of WLT, has kindly described many of these properties in the NCAS newsletters beginning in January 2019. If you go to the NCAS website under the newsletter section (https://www.northcascadesaudubon.org/newsletter/archives) and click on Past Issues, you will find these properties and how to access them. Here is a list of sites featured:

Chuckanut Ridge Wetland – May 2020 (Current Issue)
Jensen Family Forest Park – April 2020
Maple Creek Park – March 2020
Lake Whatcom Park – February 2020
Deming Homestead Eagle Park – January 2020
Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve– Nov./December 2019
Teddy Bear Cove – October 2019
Edfro Creek Reserve – September 2019
Stimpson Family Nature Reserve – May 2019
Ladies of the Lake Preserve – April 2019
Squires Lake Park – March 2019

Additionally, you may want to explore the Riverstead and Catalyst properties located on both sides of Rothenbuhler Road just south of Acme.

May and June are the perfect times of year to visit these sites. They are among the birdiest places in Whatcom County during the spring migration and nesting season. Visits to these properties allow you to “stay local” and will provide you with inspiration, pleasure and a sense of solace during this time when we are socially distancing.

Pearrygin Lake Campout and Field Trips: Thursday, May 28 through Sunday, May 31
(subject to cancellation)

By Steven Harper, President

Our thirteenth annual NCAS Campout will be held at Pearrygin Lake State Park group camp this year assuming it’s permitted by State Parks. Even if the campout is allowed we may need to restrict the number of people attending and practice some sort of social distancing. That being said, there are usually great people, great weather and of course great birding. There is lots of room for people with tents. Vans or small pickup toppers are allowed in the parking area. RVs and trailers are not allowed, however reservations can be made in the Pearrygin Lake State Park Campground. Picnic tables and grates are available for cooking (bring your own food) and water and a toilet are on site. A swimming area is also on site to enjoy after a warm day of birding. Showers and full-service bathrooms can be accessed 1 ½ miles away in the main campground. Reservations can also be made at motels in the Winthrop area for those not wanting to camp. Of course the primary focus of the campout is birds. Field trips will be scheduled for Saturday and Sunday. Campers are free to roam on their own on Thursday and Friday or set up impromptu field trips. There will be time for lounging and enjoying the sunny and clear weather and for visiting. In past years people have brought their musical instruments and we've had a sing-along on one of the evenings. Other entertainment is also appreciated! Cost is $10/night for each party. Reservations are absolutely required and if the event is cancelled everyone will be notified.

To make a reservation or if you have any questions please email or call Steven Harper at sharper@northcascadesaudubon.org or 360-650-9065.
**Audubon for Kids and Kids at Heart**  
*By Sue Parrott*

Are your kids, grandkids or neighbor’s kids looking for something to do? Are you looking for something to do? How about an activity that is fun, educational, creative, involves the outdoors and teaches about birds?

Well, in response to COVID-19 and shelter in place orders, National Audubon created an outstanding on-line resource for kids, and kids at heart. (That means you!)

This is how National Audubon introduces their new resource: **Audubon for Kids!** “We can and will get through this together. And it’s in that spirit that we’re sharing our new Audubon for Kids! program with you. This resource aims to bring together activities from across Audubon’s national network of environmental educators, including the classroom curriculum Audubon Adventures, plus related DIY (do it yourself) activities and content from Audubon’s editors. These activities can be done at home or in a yard or park, sometimes with the help of a computer. The goal isn’t to teach a child how to name and identify bird species, but rather to give them space to explore and feel connected to the natural world. If you’re a parent or caretaker, that means you don’t need to worry about your own knowledge of birds or plants. All you need to be is a companion to your child’s curiosity.”

I spent a little time checking it out. So far, activities for 5 weeks have been developed. I explored Week 4: Plants Are for Birds. Some of the activities include:

- Crossword puzzles
- Outdoor games that involve finding plants and animals
- Drawing a bird with David Sibley
- An on-line game on Who Lives Where – bird names can often tell you where it lives
- A quiz on what certain birds eat
- DIY craft – growing plants that can become bird food
- Creating your own bird guide

So, check it out for yourself and/or for those special kids in your life. We hope it will help you and your loved ones find awe and inspiration in the natural world around us.

Here is the link: [https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/activities/audubon-for-kids](https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/activities/audubon-for-kids)

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**Election of Officers and Vote on Bylaw Amendments Postponed until September 2020 Membership Meeting**

The bylaws of North Cascades Audubon state in Article III, Section 2: “The annual meeting of the chapter shall be held in May, at which time new officers will be elected.” Due to COVID-19, NCAS will not be holding its May annual membership meeting. The election of officers will be postponed until the September membership meeting and the current officers will continue in their positions until that time. For further information on the Nominating Committee, please see the April 2020 NCAS newsletter.

In addition, as published in the April 2020 newsletter, the NCAS Board of Directors proposed a bylaw amendment and had planned to vote on it at the May membership meeting. The vote on this bylaw amendment will be postponed until the September 2020 membership meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact NCAS President Steven Harper at sharper@northcascadesaudubon.org.
Chu**ckanut Ridge Wetland**  
*By Lorraine Wilde (writing on behalf of the Whatcom Land Trust)*

If you’ve walked the Interurban Trail between Fairhaven Parkway and Arroyo Park, you’ve likely walked right by Chuckanut Ridge Wetland without even knowing it. The 16.5-acre property in the foothills of the Chuckanut Mountains is surrounded by protected open space land, making it excellent habitat for birds and other wildlife, yet accessible via public trails.

**A Complex History**

In 1996, the property was donated to Whatcom Land Trust by Sahlin, Sahlin, Smith and Hemingway to ensure that a portion of the 100-acre proposed multi-family residential Chuckanut Ridge Development would be protected as open space land.

In 2001, the Trust donated the property to the City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, retaining a conservation easement, under the Greenways program.

For more than a decade, development of the surrounding Chuckanut Ridge Development property—which became known as the Hundred Acre Wood or Fairhaven Highlands—was controversial, with multiple owners unable to develop the land due to regulatory and financial hurdles and public protest. By 2011, the Hundred Acre Wood was purchased by the City through a Greenway levy and other funds, and was permanently protected as a public park and recreation area.

Located in Bellingham’s South Neighborhood along the Interurban Trail, Chuckanut Ridge Wetland and the Hundred Acre Wood now get a great deal of community and neighborhood recreational use, including hiking, biking, horseback riding and dog walking, especially recently during Washington’s Stay Home Stay Healthy order.

**Two Distinct Habitat Types**

Interestingly, the northwest portion of the Chuckanut Ridge Wetland is a topographic divide between the Chuckanut Creek and Padden Creek drainages, resulting in two distinct ecosystems.

Over seven acres of the property bordering the Interurban are wetlands formed by a beaver dam. The open water wetland with drowned forest snags (and the surrounding buffer) are excellent habitat for waterfowl, amphibians and wetland-dependent mammals. At different times of the year, among the willows, sedges, rushes, cattails, skunk cabbage and invasive plants, you’ll likely spot mallard, American wigeon, wood and ring-necked ducks, hooded merganser, gadwall, bufflehead and great blue heron.

Watch for cavity-nesting and insect-mining birds in the dead snags including red-breasted sapsucker, red-breasted nuthatch, tree and violet-green swallows, northern flicker, and downy, hairy and pileated woodpeckers.

In the fall and winter months, in shrubby buffer areas watch for large groups of dark-eyed junco, golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets, and bushtit foraging for insects and seeds.

The other ecosystem that occupies the upland portion of the property is 80-year-old second-growth forest of Douglas fir, western red cedar, big leaf maple, Sitka spruce, western hemlock, red alder, paper birch, black cottonwood and willow with an understory of sword fern, salmonberry, snowberry, and Indian plum.

From April through June you’ll likely spot pine siskin, western tanager, black-headed grosbeak and a variety of warblers including orange-crowned, yellow, yellow-rumped, black-throated gray, Townsend’s and Wilson’s.

Also look for evidence of beaver, deer, coyote and raccoon. Bobcat and cougar have been sighted stealthily passing through the area over the last couple of years.

**Getting There**

Turn south off Fairhaven Parkway onto 24th Street. Park legally on the street across from the veterinary office or in the few designated off-road spots at trailheads further south as the road narrows. When you pass the Hoag’s Pond trail marker, you’ve gone far enough. Walk south on the Interurban Trail that runs adjacent to 24th and 25th Streets, and the Chuckanut Ridge Wetland will be on your right (west). Due to its sensitive habitat, the Wetland can be appreciated from the Interurban but should not be entered.

Be sure to bring a map, compass or phone for orienteering the occasionally muddy trails of this area. If you have more time, checkout nearby Hoag’s Pond or walk a mile further south on the Interurban to explore Arroyo Park.

Photos follow on next page.
Birding in the Time of Coronavirus

By Paul Woodcock

All birders should already know the importance of exercising restraint and caution while birding. But now, under the present circumstances, we need to also remember to extend that respectful distance to our fellow humans, not just in the field but even in the grocery store. With all that is going on, I find myself missing field trips and sharing the birding experience with others. We look hopefully ahead to fall and the possibility of returning to regularly scheduled trips.

As staying close to home is the order of the day, it seems that the natural thing to do is bird at home. Even as a child I maintained bird feeders at my home and continued to do so whenever I could. Properly done, feeding birds provides opportunities for bird and birder alike. Being at home at this dynamic season for bird movement provides the time to pay attention to the comings and goings at our feeders. Dark-eyed juncos, our most plentiful yardbird this winter, have practically disappeared over the past few weeks. The same is true of the flock of house finches that frequented our Ferndale yard. Just a few appear to be staying around for the breeding season. Three or four purple finches who wintered have also departed as have a pair of red-breasted nuthatches. Likewise, the dozen or so white-crowned sparrows, here all winter, have thinned out to one or two breeding pairs. The slightly smaller number of golden-crowned sparrows, who visited daily all winter, had already departed several weeks ago but one bright migrant GCSP stopped by this morning. Though I do not see them as often, a pair of downy woodpeckers still visit the suet feeder. Northern flickers can still be heard in the neighborhood but are avoiding the feeder they frequented in the cold weather. As in winter, a pair of American goldfinches still stop by occasionally and lately a pair of pine siskins has also occasionally appeared. Newly arrived in the neighborhood is a pair of red-winged blackbirds who have visited the feeder regularly for the past few weeks. Like Steller’s jays, they swoop into the trees overhead loudly announcing their arrival and clearing other birds from the feeders. The smaller birds give them space but usually sneak back in to feed. And I almost forgot to mention the Bewick’s wren who sings most mornings all year except when it’s darkest and bleakest. There must be a mate around but I usually see only one.

Living in town, our feeders are visited by a few house sparrows and European starlings. Surprisingly, these two species are more shy than most other species. If they become aware of any human presence in the area, they depart. By contrast, chickadees and juncos often continue feeding even when one of us is in the yard. Also very skittish are
our resident pair of Eurasian collared-doves. They even notice when they see movement through our windows and take flight. They have reason to be nervous as our wintering, juvenile Cooper’s hawk took two of them in our yard this winter. It is interesting to observe the ecosystem function.

Our location does provide the opportunity to gain a greater appreciation of other common species. Last summer a pair of American crows nested in a neighbor’s tree and patrolled our front yard as a regular part of their daily routine. I became attracted to their posturing, personality and particularly to the complexity and variety of their almost continuous communication. This spring a pair of Steller’s jays have been visiting our feeder and hanging out in neighboring trees. Again, the pair of corvids kept up a flow of intercommunication, quietly chortling, rattling and even singing more melodiously to each other. There is a lot that goes on in our yards that we miss when we are not at home.

Though I am spending much of my time at home, I am occasionally getting out to walk and bird at some of my favorite nearby locations. Here is a list of suggested local places to visit, either on your own, with your partner or a birding buddy or two, keeping proper social distancing as necessary. Please note that Washington State lands (Washington State Parks, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife sites, etc.) are closed in support of Governor Inslee’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” directive.

- **Hovander Homestead County Park/Tennant Lake Interpretive Center** - Tennant Lake boardwalk and Hovander Trail are open. Look for cinnamon teal during spring migration on the slough and lake, and common yellowthroats in the marsh.
- **Semiahmoo Spit** - County park, beaches and trails are open. Ducks, loons, shorebirds, gulls and songbirds and more can be found.
- **Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve** - Access to the beach has been closed due to storm damage. Expect to find woodpeckers, resident birds and early migrants along the forested trail.
- **Lake Padden City Park** - Miles of trails with ducks on the lake and resident and migrant songbirds along the trails.
- **Woodstock Farm City Park** - Park at the North Chuckanut Mountain Trailhead lot and walk the Interurban Trail to access Woodstock via Spokane Street. Great park with varied habitat on Chuckanut Bay. Find ducks, resident birds and early migrants.
- **Connelly Creek Nature Area** - Surprisingly good birding in Happy Valley. Trail parallels 32nd St. between Donovan Ave. and Ferry St. Wooded wetland along the creek good for spring migrants.
- **Whatcom Falls Park/Scudder Pond** - An extensive City of Bellingham park and trail system. Look for American dippers from the bridge at the falls and maybe find barred owls in the park along Whatcom Creek. Trails connect into downtown or past Scudder Pond to Electric Ave.
- **Stimpson Family Nature Reserve** - This County park is a short drive out of Bellingham via Lakeway and Cable St. to Lake Louise Rd., then 1.6 miles south. Mature forest habitats great for Pacific wrens, brown creepers and maybe some Townsend’s warblers in the treetops.
- **Berthusen Park** - A City of Lynden park on Berthusen Rd. just south of Badger Rd. A varied forest park with a grove of old growth trees. Seven miles of trails and Bertrand Creek with great potential for woodland birding.
- **Interurban Trail** - Hike the old railroad grade south from Old Fairhaven Parkway to Arroyo Park and beyond, birding along the way.

Wherever you do your birding, be safe and stay well, maintain proper physical distance and we will see you in the fall.
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. Our chapter is locally funded, and we do not receive any portion of donations you make to National Audubon. 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.

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
____ $35 Merlin
____ $50 Prairie Falcon
____ $75 Peregrine Falcon
____ $100 Gyrfalcon
____ $____ Other

Name: __________________________
Address: ________________________
Email: __________________________

Find us at www.northcascadesaudubon.org or through social media:
Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at @NCascadeAudubon

We’re Going Paperless!

Starting September 2020 the newsletter will be more environmentally friendly and solely distributed digitally!

The newsletter will be e-published monthly between September and May, including a double issue for November/December.

Please help us ensure you will continue to receive our newsletter by verifying we have the correct email address on file. To make any changes to your contact information please email: membership@northcascadesaudubon.org.