

Rainshadow Pippings

Birding November & December 2024

Birding at Fort Flagler State Park
Saturday, November 9, 2024
9:00 AM - 11:30 AM

November birding is often good on our local trails, particularly at Fort Flagler (<https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Fort%20Flagler%20Overview%20Map%204-4-24%20Approved%20Web.pdf>). Meet at the first parking lot on the left as you enter Fort Flagler State Park at 9:00 AM. You will need a Discover Pass to park. We will walk the East Searchlight Trail and the Lagoon Trail. These trails pass through coniferous forests and alder where we will learn birding by ear, which is Jackie's specialty. We will then walk Wansboro Road to the beach and look for seabirds, followed by the nearby grasslands for shorebirds. Expect to walk about 3 miles and 2.5 hours total. Bring binoculars and be prepared for weather. Trip Leader Jackie Canterbury: [RSVP Text 307-763-1953](tel:307-763-1953).

Third Saturday Bird Walk
at Anderson Lake State Park
Saturday, November 16, 2024
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Meet at 9:00 AM at the parking area straight down the dirt road just beyond the meadows. Discover Pass required for parking. You must contact leader Beverly McNeil to register: bevybirds53@gmail.com. The group size is limited to 5. If the weather is bad we may cancel. Bring binoculars and water, if desired. Distance is 1.5 miles and time of outing is usually 3 to 4 hours. We normally go around the whole lake on Trail B, Anderson Lake State Park (https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/anderson_lake_state_park_overview_map_pdf_1.5mb.pdf). Wear sturdy shoes and layered clothing for changeable weather. Please avoid wearing bright clothing.



© Wendy Feltham

Sooty Grouse keeps an eye on offspring, Elwha area, August 2024.

Winter Solstice Waterfowl Walk
at Kah Tai Lagoon
Saturday December 21, 2024
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Welcome in the start of the winter season with a walk to check for seasonal waterfowl with trip leader Miranda Maxwell and co-leader Betty Renkor. Meet at the main/central parking area near the caretaker and restroom facility at Kah Tai Lagoon Park. Expected species may include wigeons, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Gadwalls, mergansers, Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teals, Mallards, Ruddy Ducks and scaups. We also may see geese and the possible swan flyover/stopover. Too, we'll be sure to keep an eye and ear open for wintering songbirds along our path and in the adjacent trees stands. Bring binoculars, a scope if you have one, and dress warmly/appropriately for December weather. Steady/heavy rain (snow) or winds cancel. Please help keep our birding community healthy and look to join us on a future bird walk if you have COVID or COVID-like symptoms/illness or have had similar exposure. Group size limited to 12. Questions and sign-up: betty.renkor@gmail.com

We look forward to birding together on this first of winter day!

Third Saturday Bird Walk
at Anderson Lake State Park
Saturday, December 21, 2024
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Meet at 9:00 AM at the parking area straight down the dirt road just beyond the meadows. Discover Pass required for parking. You must contact leader Beverly McNeil to register: bevybirds53@gmail.com. The group size is limited to 5. If the weather is bad we may cancel. Bring binoculars and water, if desired. Distance is 1.5 miles and time of outing is usually 3 to 4 hours. We normally go around the whole lake on Trail B, Anderson Lake State Park (https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/anderson_lake_state_park_overview_map_pdf_1.5mb.pdf). Wear sturdy shoes and layered clothing for changeable weather. Please avoid wearing bright clothing.

Betty Renkor
 Rainshadow Bird Alliance Field Trips Chair

Port Townsend Christmas Bird Count 2024

Please join us for the Port Townsend Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Saturday, December 14.

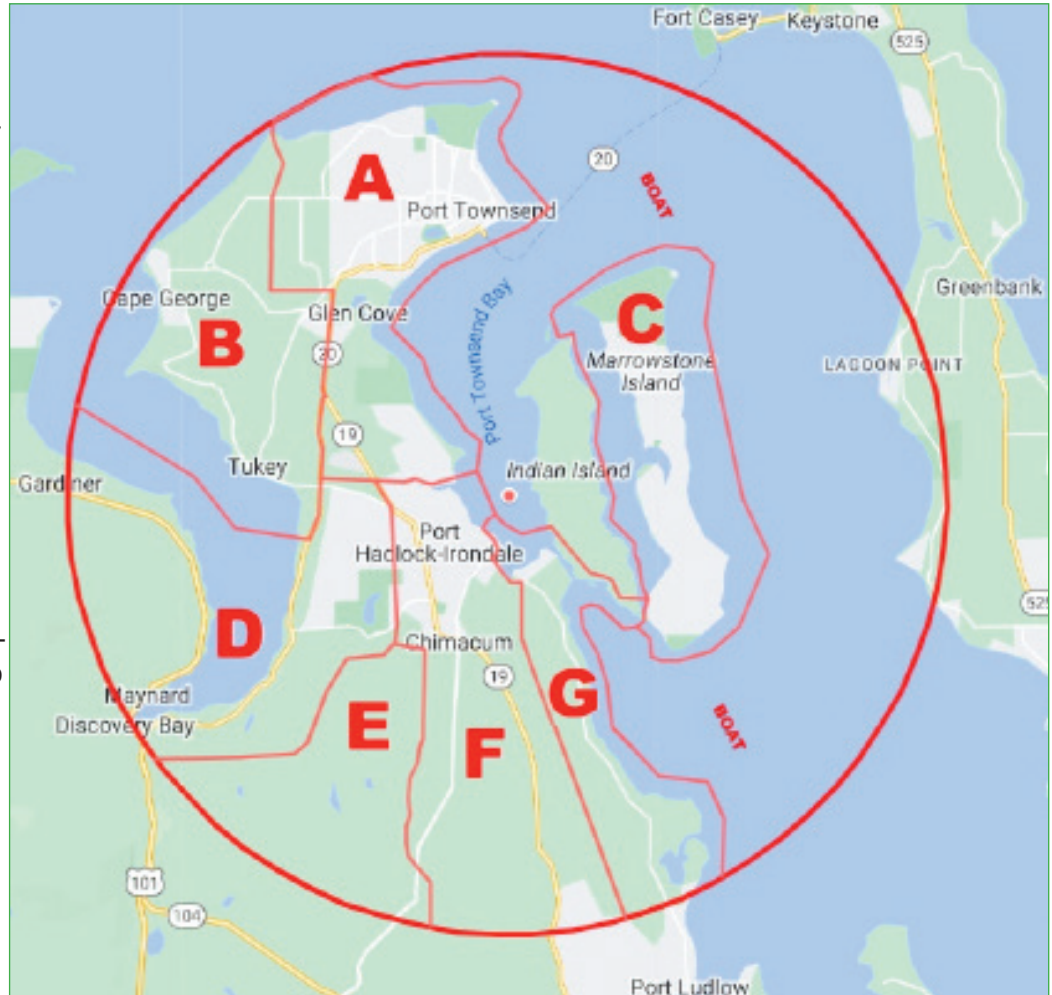
The Port Townsend CBC, managed by Rainshadow Bird Alliance, began in 1977. One of thousands of count circles nationwide, it is part of one of the largest field data collection efforts by volunteers. The first counts began in 1900. The data are used to track increasing and decreasing populations, to list and de-list species as threatened or endangered, and to track recent changes due to climate change.

Here's how it works. Each count is a circle, 15 miles in diameter, which means 177 square miles. Our goal is to count every bird! In reality, we divide the circle into areas – each with an Area Leader and one or more teams – and walk, drive, bike, or boat certain routes to cover as much ground or water as we can on the designated day – no matter what the weather. Some teams are out all day, some less so. We also encourage at-home feeder-watchers who simply report on the birds in their yard during a 30-minute window.

Our circle encompasses the Quimper Peninsula all the way down south of Egg & I Road, Marrowstone Island, parts of Discovery Bay, all of Port Townsend Bay, and portions of Admiralty Inlet and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The habitats range from residential areas to forest, grasslands, lakes, coastlines, and open water. We average about 115 species.

We are looking for experienced birders and beginners. If interested, please come to our regular meeting on Wednesday, December 4, 7pm, at the Port Townsend Community Center. We will focus on the count, the birds we expect, and what we are learning from the data. (Did you know that, in 2004, there were no hummingbirds on our count? Now we tally over a hundred.) If you can't make that, but are interested in participating in the count, contact the count compiler, Steve Hampton, at stevehampton@gmail.com.

The count will be followed by the Compilation Potluck at the Rosewind Common House at 5:30pm. Even if you didn't participate in the count, you are welcome to join us for tall tales and a preliminary tally of the numbers.



Steve Hampton

Rainshadow Bird Alliance Conservation Chair

What Do Tropical Honduras and Port Townsend Have in Common?

This past summer, after my sophomore year at Port Townsend High School, I went on a two-week expedition to Honduras, through an organization called Operation Wallacea. This organization specializes in getting students ages 16 and older into the natural world to help scientists collect data at various field sites around the globe. Every day, students accompany several different scientists, perhaps mist-netting birds at 5:00 am, then catching frogs and venomous snakes at night. I enjoyed it all, but I was especially drawn to the ornithologists, asking them questions and falling in love with the over 270 species of birds in the region. At the same time, the trip opened my eyes to topics, questions, and problems I had not considered before.



That leads me to this year's World Migratory Bird Day that was on October 12th. Many birds travel thousands of miles from South and Central America to the United States and Canada for the summer. Over fifty percent of all the birds native to the US rely on winter nesting grounds in South and Central America, and even more rely indirectly on the rainforests and mountains of Mesoamerica. These habitats are under even more threat now than in the past as vast areas of forest have been clearcut for plantations of coffee, palm oil, and sugar. This drastic change in habitat and the steep drop in the regions' biodiversity not only harm the animals in these places but also have a large impact on the birds that migrate through Port Townsend every year. Three out of the four major



photos: top - Hilina birding in the the rainforest; lower left - White-breasted Mountain Gem (female) hummingbird caught during a 5:30 a.m. mist-netting, after being processed, right before flying off from a student's hand; lower right - close-up of a Common Chloros Pingus that was caught in a 5:30 a.m. mist-net.

Western Hemisphere migration routes pass through Mesoamerica, bringing more than 225 different species through each year. As habitats change, many birds are forced to fly much farther in search of places to rest. Deforestation also removes many of the landmarks that migratory birds use to stay on course, not to mention problems caused by light pollution from major cities.

If nothing is done about the loss of Mesoamerican habitat, a large portion of the birds we are used to seeing fly by in Port Townsend every year will simply disappear. All is not lost, however. Many organizations, including Operation Wallacea, are working not only to conserve remaining forests but also to work with regional cultures, offering local peoples more sustainable options for securing their livelihoods. Donating to one of these organizations would be extremely helpful to the conservation of important habitat. One can help in other ways as well, such as by buying only shade-grown coffee or sustainably farmed sugar and avoiding foods that contain palm oil. World Migratory Bird Day is the perfect time to learn more about the birds that migrate through Port Townsend, where they come from, and where they are going. Let's help make sure these migrating birds have a place to return to.

Hilina Taylor-Lenz

Rainshadow Bird Alliance Member

Waterfowl Conservation:

How “Duck Fever” Preserves Birdlife as Climate Change Heats Up

It's that time of year. When daylight begins to fade quickly, the air temperature sharpens to a crisp and the greenery of summertime morphs into a kaleidoscope of colors. Entering the peak of the fall season, something else is also underway that I like to term “Duck Fever”. I feel it each year, the build up in anticipation of returning waterfowl. First to arrive are the American Wigeons by the hundreds to thousands. Soon thereafter, Northern Pintail, teals and mergansers join the water. Overhead, a cacophony of honks, yelps and bugles can be heard, as geese and swans fly in and eventually settle onto open fields. Then there are the scaups, goldeneyes and beloved Buffleheads that fulfill this seasonal roundup, as we crest the height of fall and descend into an eventual winter.



Northern Pintail, Kah Tai © Miranda Maxwell

As a birder, I've become increasingly intrigued and impassioned about waterfowl. Within this context I've grown to feel much resonance with the varied species themselves, as well as with their wetland habitats. There exists a certain serenity in the still of an early fall morning, often obscured in foggy mist, as waterfowl emerge from the reeds at the water's edge. Given my own affinities, I've often considered how such “Duck Fever” pertains to the waterfowl hunter. Much like an astute birder, the keen waterfowl hunter is an expert at plumage variation, vocalizations and behavior. In fact, some might contest they are even more so, since these observational skills are a legality so to speak, given the waterfowler must correctly differentiate between species and gender in order to comply with hunting regulations.

It's within this contemplation that I've gained insight and appreciation of how hunting plays an integral role in the conservation of our Nation's 43 species of waterfowl and their associated wetland habitats. In particular, two of the most impressive conservation

entities aimed at waterfowl protection, the U.S. Federal Duck Stamp Program and the Ducks Unlimited Organization, have historical foundations in hunting yet may prove preeminent, as climate change continues to threaten viable biodiversity and habitats.

U.S. Federal Duck Stamp Program: Originated in 1934 and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Federal Duck Stamp Program has served to conserve over 6 million acres of critical waterfowl habitat within the National Wildlife Refuge System and has generated over \$1.3 billion in conservation funding from associated stamp sales. The “Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp” otherwise known as the Federal Duck Stamp, is the longest running single themed stamp in the world, with 98% of stamp purchase pricing going directly to the acquisition and protection of critical wetland habitat in North America. In order to hunt legally in the U.S., all hunters over 16yrs of age are required to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp annually, along with proper state hunting licensures and permits. Therein, each year hunters contribute directly to meaningful conservation of our waterfowl and wetlands.



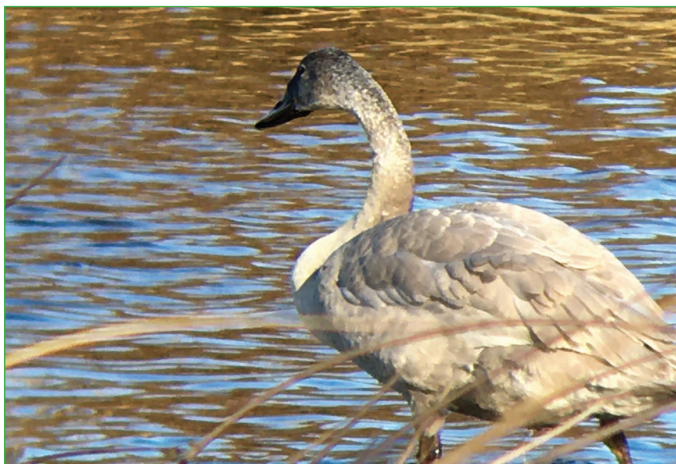
Gadwall hen, Kah Tai © Miranda Maxwell

The Federal Duck Stamp Program is one of the most successful conservation tools ever created to protect vital waterfowl and their associated wetland habitats. It largely encompasses the use of the hunting sector as its basis to contribute necessary conservation funding, but can also have widespread appeal to artists, wildlife enthusiasts, birders, conservationists and stamp collectors. Thus, the Federal Duck Stamp garners vast support of its conservation aims and proves to be a longstanding and critical conservation entity in times of increasing climate change and habitat loss.

continued on p.5

Waterfowl Conservation *continued from p.4*

Ducks Unlimited Organization: Founded in 1937 by a small group of hunters during the North American Dust Bowl Era, it was an historical time where widespread drought plagued waterfowl numbers and left habitats barren. The Ducks Unlimited (DU) Organization formed with the aim to conserve, restore and manage critical wetlands and associated waterfowl habitats across the continent to ensure waterfowl numbers remained sustainable. Since then, the organization has grown to include over 644,000 members, incorporates over 39,000 volunteers and employs a range of scientific personnel to best achieve its conservation goals. Though its roots are historically and strongly based in the hunting sector, DU incorporates a collaborative conservation approach, forging partnerships between hunters, private landowners, government sectors, farmers, conservationists, volunteers and donors/members.



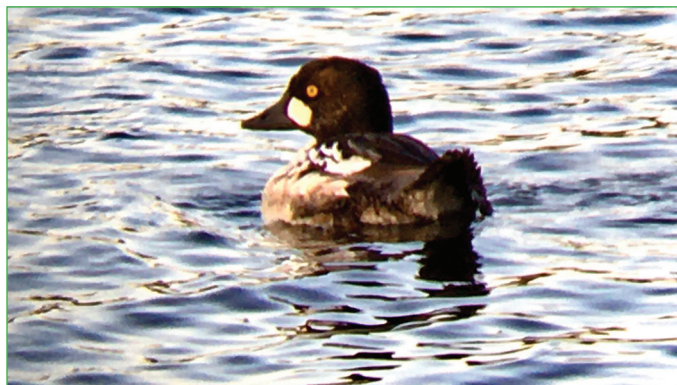
Trumpeter Swan, Kah Tai © Miranda Maxwell

Collectively, DU works “on the ground” to procure critical waterfowl habitat, restore wetland areas, develop public policy for advocacy and generate fundraising through events and outreach. Therein, finding ways to mitigate the effects of climate change, redirect agricultural practices and protect lands from rampant urban development are all some of the ways DU works to enhance wetlands and prioritize waterfowl populations. To date, DU’s projects have encompassed the restoration and protection of over 18 million acres across North America in all 50 states, as well as projects within its sister organizations Ducks Canada and Ducks Mexico. Recently, DU set new conservation precedent in fiscal year 2024, whereby it delivered 1 million in conservation acres in a single year. During that same year, DU also generated \$230 million in funding towards wetland habitat and waterfowl conservation.

As birders, we might not readily associate with waterfowl hunters, given they seemingly take away that

which we admire most in terms of birdlife. Upon closer consideration however, it becomes apparent that waterfowlers share many similarities with birders, ranging from astute observational skills, a love of nature and a predisposition towards conservation. Two prolific conservation entities, Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Federal Duck Stamp Program, prove that the hunting sector has played a pivotal role in North American waterfowl conservation over the past 90 years and continuing.

Our North American wetlands are a vital resource that provides critical breeding, nesting and foraging habitats for waterfowl and a plethora of other migrating bird species across the continent. Additionally, they ensure needed habitat to over 40% of the world’s endangered/threatened wildlife and plant species. Moreover, wetlands aid humans as a habitat that reduces flooding, protects coastlines, serves as a carbon sink and provides recreational opportunities. With over half of our North American wetland habitats now lost or degraded, it’s a sobering reminder that, going forward, our best allies in the plight against global climate change and biodiversity loss may well be hunters, those presumed to be exacerbating losses. In truth, “Duck Fever” is extensive all across our ponds, lakes and waterways each fall/winter where birder and hunter coexist, therein sharing a fervent enthusiasm for waterfowl.



Common Goldeneye, Kah Tai © Miranda Maxwell

****Postscript:** As a relevant notation, an interesting book that speaks to the hunting sectors’ role in waterfowl conservation: “Duck Walk: A Birder’s Improbable Path to Hunting as Conservation”, published by Texas A&M University Press in 2023, details how Margie Crisp, a lifelong birder/naturalist/artist became a waterfowler. The book encompasses Margie’s personal path from observational birder to full fledged hunter and chronicles lessons learned about the intertwining of hunting and environmental conservation.

Miranda Maxwell
Rainshadow Bird Alliance Member

Pigeon Guillemot Breeding Surveys in East Jefferson County

Every spring, in what seems a whirlwind of activity, hundreds of Pigeon Guillemots return to our local bluffs and beaches from their wintering habitat on open water. If you are beach-walking here in March-May, you will likely be aware of a flurry of black seabirds flying wide arcs, or congregating or splashing on the water near shore, or displaying their white wing patches and red feet on boulders at the edge of the water as the tide recedes.

However, it's the abundance of naturally-eroding "feeder" bluffs in our area that attracts them and provides the guillemots what they need: a dark protected cavity for nesting.

As a year-round resident of the Salish Sea, this species has been selected by the Puget Sound Partnership recovery program to be a population-level indicator of regional ecosystem health. Specifically, guillemot populations may serve as benchmarks for measuring the effects of environmental stressors such as oil spills, shoreline degradation, and climate change. However, for such effects to be detected, indicator populations must be monitored over both time and space.

Under the umbrella of the 20-year-old Salish Sea Guillemot Network, we began to monitor Pigeon Guillemots in East Jefferson County in 2021. Our mission is to survey Pigeon Guillemot colonies using standardized protocols throughout the breeding season in June-August, to assess population size, reproductive success, prey species, and disturbance at colonies.

This year, 19 volunteer citizen scientists monitored 243 guillemots returning to breed at six colonies in East Jefferson. Hundreds more volunteers surveyed more than 1,600 guillemots in seven other regions of the Salish Sea, and we are planning to expand into additional geographic areas in future years. We hope our monitoring increases public awareness of coastal bluff processes and fosters stewardship of nearshore ecosystems. Please find more information and become a volunteer at pigeonguillemot.org.

Dr. Brenda Johnson
Regional Coordinator
East Jefferson Pigeon Guillemot Surveys



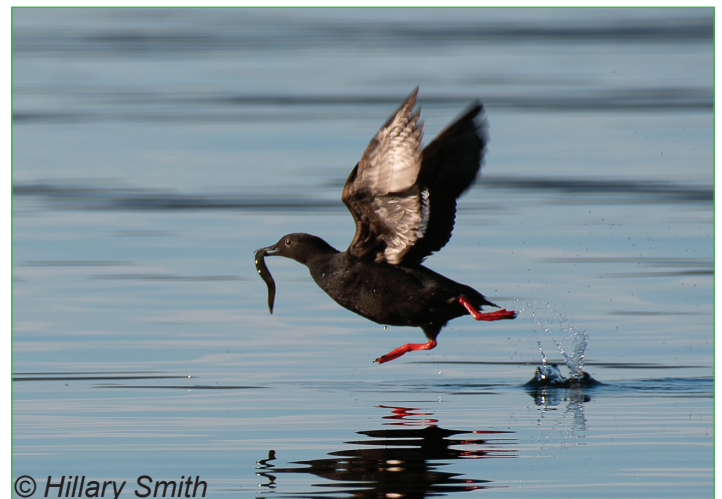
© Hillary Smith

Pigeon Guillemot social interactions centered around an intertidal boulder during the breeding season.



© Hillary Smith

Guillemot pair at their nest site.



© Hillary Smith

Adult Pigeon Guillemot bringing fish to chicks.

Kah Tai Workparties, November & December 2024

Sundays, November 10, 2024 and December 1, 2024, 9AM-noon: We will have workparties at Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park, planting some low mahonia and evergreen huckleberry as well as pulling invasives and picking up trash. Please join us! For more information, *contact Rosemary Sikes at (360)-385-0307 or ptrose53@gmail.com.*

Rosemary Sikes

Rainshadow Bird Alliance Programs Chair

Birding 101

Learn the Basics to Get Started in Birding!

- binoculars
- field guides
- on-line resources
- how to identify birds
- where to go see birds

No Charge! No Fee!

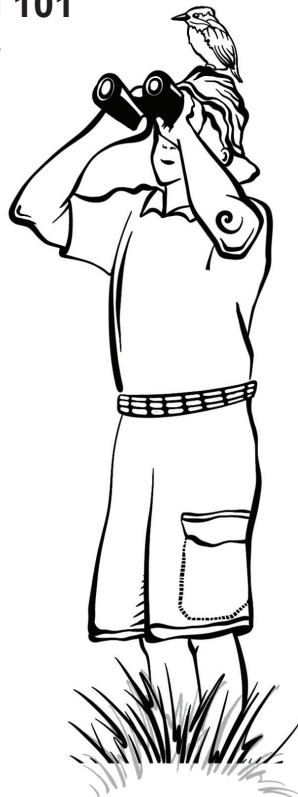
Registration Required!

Contact:

*barrymckenzie52@
icloud.com*

Classes January 7 & 9,
2025

Field Trip January 11,
2025



We Are Rainshadow Bird Alliance!

At our last meeting, the members voted unanimously to change the chapter's name to 'Rainshadow Bird Alliance'. I thank all who have voted and sent supportive emails and facebook comments. I am hopeful that this new name will broaden the community from which we recruit and the chapter can continue to support birding and conservation efforts for many years to come. Changes will occur at government speed - so I ask for everyone's patience during the transition.

It is especially meaningful to note that Dr. David Engle attended the meeting. His late mother, Helen Engle, served on the National Board (including Chair) for many years and the Audubon Washington Helen Engle Award is named for her. A tribute to her role in establishing Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park is in our May 2019 newsletter. David told me that he had a conversation with his mother before she died (2019) and that she thought Audubon needed to change its name even back then, so he came to this meeting specifically to vote in memory of his mother's wishes.

Rick Jahnke

Rainshadow Bird Alliance President



Heerman's Gulls, PTMSC pier © Steve Hampton

Rainshadow Bird Alliance Membership Form 2025

<https://admiraltyaudubon.org>

name _____ date _____

mailing address _____

city, state, zipcode _____

email address _____ phone number _____

Would you prefer your newsletter by email? ☐ paper copy? ☐ amount enclosed \$ _____

Send \$20 annual membership to: **Admiralty Audubon, PO Box 666, Port Townsend WA 98368**
or pay online at the 'Join' link via PayPal or credit card

*Membership includes 6 issues of our newsletter per year and the right to vote in chapter elections.
Chapter programs and field trips are free to the public. We always welcome donations! Dues and donations are
tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Admiralty Audubon is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.*



Rainshadow Bird Alliance

East Jefferson County
PO Box 666
Port Townsend WA 98368

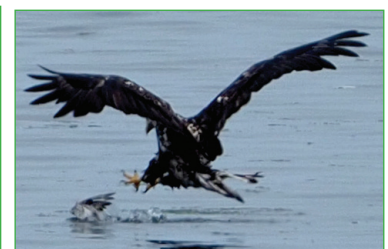
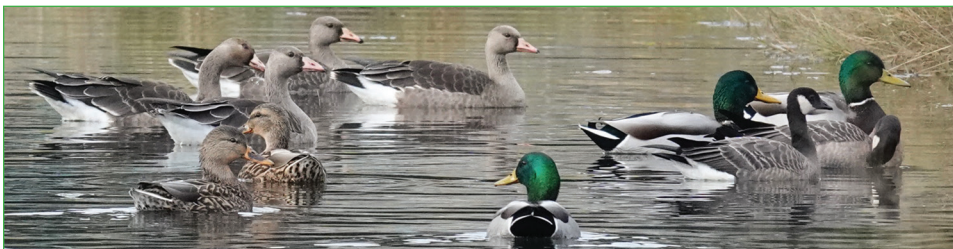


©Wendy Feltham

American Goldfinch eating Creeping Thistle seeds near Chinese Gardens, August 2024.

Rainshadow Bird Alliance Officers and Board

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Webmaster: Andrew Reding	--	admiraltyaudubon@gmail.com
Website: https://admiraltyaudubon.org		Facebook: https://facebook.com/admiraltyaudubon



left: Greater White-fronted Geese, Cackling Geese & Mallards, Gardiner Beach © Steve Hampton; right: a Black-bellied Plover, tormented earlier by a Peregrine Falcon, is finally snatched up by a juvenile Bald Eagle, Three Crabs © Wendy Feltham.