

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

November 2018

Rainier Audubon Membership Meeting

“Wood-warblers of North America”

By Robert Howson

7:00 P.M. November 19, 2018

The wood-warblers of North America present a challenge to the birders across our country. Even though they are a colorful group, identification can be a challenge. Not only do certain members of the group make themselves difficult to see as they flit among the highest branches of our tallest trees, but especially in fall, their plumages can be confusing. They make up one of our largest families, outnumbering plovers and sandpipers combined. The same is true if you combine gulls and terns into a single unit. Warbler species even outnumber the total number of sparrow species found on our continent.

We invite you to attend a photographic presentation which deals with this delightful family. Bring your identification skill along with you and see how many of these you can identify. You may find you come away with a better understanding and appreciation of this challenging confederation of species.

Our presenter, Robert Howson, developed an early interest in birds while still in grade school. This interest continued throughout high school and into college where he graduated with a triple major in biology, history, and religion. He went on to get a Masters in history and worked on a Doctorate in religious education. He has taught on various levels including elementary, secondary, and college ranks. Most recently he was the chairman of the history department at Cedar Park Christian School in Bothell, Washington.

He has photographed over 500 species of North American species as well as some in tropical America and Europe. He uses Nikon equipment and employs the use of a blind when needed. He and his wife, Carolyn, currently reside in Kirkland, Washington where they have lived for the past 40 years.

Robert is a member of the Eastside Audubon Photo Group that Jay and I attend each month. Be prepared for a quiz at the end of the presentation. - Dan Streiffert

Join us at 6:30 for conversation and refreshments.

RAS Mission Statement:

To conserve and restore natural ecosystems and protect birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and biological diversity in South King County and the world we live in.



Rainier Audubon programs are held at 7:00 P.M. at the

Federal Way United Methodist Church
29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001
(in unincorporated Auburn)

Rainier Audubon Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/rainieraudubonsociety/>

New Rainier Audubon Google Group / email list

We are combining the old Rainier Leaders email list with the ras-activities list into a new RainierAudubon google group.

The [ras-activities] group has been renamed to [RainierAudubon]. So if you were previously a member of this list, then you are still a member of the renamed group. The only difference being that when you send an email to this group, the address is RainierAudubon@googlegroups.com

If you did not get an invitation, you may request to join the group by going to groups.google.com and searching for "Rainier Audubon". You can then request to join the group. Alternatively, you can sign up on the RainierAudubon.org website.

BECOME OUR NEXT RAINIER AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Rainier Audubon is initiating its search for a new membership chair. Please consider volunteering for this very important and vital job.

The membership chair keeps our monthly membership totals up-to-date, invites members of national to join our chapter and is an essential link in insuring that our members receive their much-loved Heron Heralds.

Duties include:

- Receiving data each month from national and adding potential members to the data base
- Inviting these potential members via snail-mail or e-mail to join our local chapter
- Keeping membership data up-to-date monthly – adding new members, renewing members
- Sending the address list to the printers each month for the mailing of the Heron Herald
- Assisting, if needed, with readying Heron Heralds for mailing
- Reporting membership totals to the board each month
- Keyboarding and basic computer skills in Excel a plus.

Current membership chair will train and assist you. If interested, please contact Pat Toth, h2opat@msn.com or 206-767-4944

Heron Herald is Available Online

The current issue of the Heron Herald is always available to download from www.RainierAudubon.org. I will try to send an email on our mailing list as soon as it is posted. The October issue was delayed due to mailing problems.

Rainier Audubon Society Directory

Position	Name	Board Member	Phone	email
President	Heather Gibson	Yes	206-226-2050	hedder_swedder@yahoo.com
Vice President	Jay Galvin	Yes	253-939-3094	gjgalvin@comcast.net
Secretary	Open			
Treasurer	Laura Lavington	Yes	253-941-7372	laura.lavington@gmail.com
Membership Chair	Pat Toth	Yes	206-767-4944	h2opat@msn.com
Education Chair	Cindy Flanagan	Yes	253-941-3933	camcalcin@hotmail.com
Program Chair	Dale Meland	No	253-946-1637	dmeland@hotmail.com
Field Trip Chair	Barbara Petersen	Yes	253 389 3204	bpbatfan@aol.com
Publicity Chair	Jay Galvin	Yes	253-939-3094	gjgalvin@comcast.net
Backyard Habitat Chair	Marie West-Johnson	Yes	206-817-8754	crgrie123@yahoo.com
Conservation Chair	Dan Streiffert	No	253-796-2203	dan_streiffert@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Dan Streiffert	No	253-796-2203	dan_streiffert@hotmail.com
Webmaster	Treesa Hertzell	No	253-255-1808	Autumn207@comcast.net
Member at Large	Stephen Feldman	Yes	360-802-5211	stephanfeldman@gmail.com
Hospitality	Sandra Embrey	No	253-517-3633	sandra.embrey@gmail.com
Mailing	Debra Russell	No	425 829 4008	debrarussell@comcast.net
Lifetime Members	Max Prinsen	Yes	425-432-9965	

Field Trips - Barbara Petersen



Weekly Birdwalks at Nisqually

Wednesdays 8 am to 11 am

Leader: Phil Kelley

Join Phil Kelley on his weekly bird walks as he counts the birds at Nisqually NWR. The group walks over to an area near the visitors' center to view the entry road estuary, and then takes the boardwalk/trail loop out to the Twin Barns, and the Nisqually overlook area. From there, the group walks the dike, and back to the Riparian Forest.

Bring: Good walking shoes or boots, rain gear, water, snacks, and \$3 for entry fee unless you have a pass. Scopes are welcome.

Meet: At the Visitor's Center Pond Overlook.

Directions: Take I-5 south from Tacoma and exit to Nisqually NWR at exit 114. Take a right at the light.

Sign-up is not necessary. Call or email Phil Kelley if you have questions.

Phil Kelley, Lacey, (360) 459 1499, scrubjay323@aol.com

Weyco Property and Lake Geneva

Leader: Barbara Petersen

Sat, November, 11th, 2018

8:15 AM to Noon

Join Barbara for a morning outing in (perhaps) crisp fall weather and finish up by noon. We'll visit the Weyerhaeuser Property and nearby Lake Geneva, checking the lakes for returning waterfowl - a good opportunity to practice duck species ID skills. We'll also walk up to a quarter mile on different trails to see what birds we can find in the woods.

Dress in layers for the weather, bring beverages, snacks and optics.

Meet at Marlene's Market and Deli in Federal Way, 2565 S Gateway Center Plaza, Federal Way, 98003. It's a good place to get snacks and beverages before the trip and lunch after. Please park in the center of the parking lot or closer to S 317th St, away from the Market.

Marlene's is just west of I-5 and north of S. 320th on the back (north) side of Gateway Center. From I-5 take the S. 320th St exit and go west on S 320th. You'll need the right lane. Turn north (right) on Gateway Center Blvd. Follow it around to the right past the Ram and around to the left past the hotel. Turn left onto Gateway Central Plaza, then turn right just beyond Marlene's to access the parking area.

To sign up call or text Barbara at 253 389 3204, or by email at BPbatfan@aol.com.

Saltwater State Park Family Birding Walk

Leader: Calen Randall

Saturday, November 17, 2018

9am-11am

November is an excellent time to look for seabirds and who better to go on a seabird search with than youth birder Calen Randall. Our family walk will begin at the waterfront looking for birds including Surf Scoters, Harlequin Ducks, grebes, cormorants and more. From there we will take a walk in the forested trail and look for woodpeckers, kinglets, Spotted Towhees, and even Varied Thrush.

What to Bring: Binoculars if you have, a camera if you would like, layered clothes and a warm jacket (the wind from the water can be chilly), good walking shoes, a snack and your curiosity.

Meeting Place: Saltwater State Park - We will meet in the parking lot by the beach.

Address: 25205 8 th Place, Des Moines, WA 98918

NOTE:

- Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times
- Discover Pass required

To register contact Cindy Flanagan

Deadline: Friday, November 16th

Email: camcalcin@hotmail.com

Phone: 253-315-0799

Upcoming Programs

- 12/17/2018 - Brown Bag Auction with shared photos from members. Bring 5 - 10 jpeg files on a usb drive.
- 1/21/2019 - "Great Salt Lake Birding" - Jay Galvin
- 2/18/2019 - Malheur NWR - Dan Streiffert
- 3/18/2019 - "Wildlife of Brazil's Cerrado and Pantanal" - Sally Vogel
- 4/15/2019 - "The Falconer" - John Prucich
- 5/20/2019 - Open

Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

Every second week of October, members from all 25 Audubon chapters from the state of Washington congregate for the annual Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW). Facilitated by Audubon Washington and a host region's chapter, the conference offers superb networking opportunities among the many chapters and levels of Audubon. Numerous great presentations are given with topics ranging from projecting future bird populations due to climate change to incorporating conservation into public policy within the state.

My favorite part of the event comes on the Sunday, when the hosting Audubon chapters lead a field trip to an area of local environmental importance. In the past two years I've attended some outstanding field trips; Chelan Ridge Hawk Watch in Okanogan County, the best place to see migrating hawks, and the revitalized Elwah River Estuary outside of Port Angeles. While spotting birds at these locations is fun, what struck me most was the important role these places play in their community. Two years ago, I stood at Chelan Ridge enchanted by the grandeur of the peaks, valleys, and plateaus as Kent spoke of how important compiling Hawkwatch data was for learning about continental migration patterns. A year later, I again stood entranced, this time at the Elwah River mouth on an expansive beach that, up until 2015--when two dams were unprecedently decommissioned and removed--had not existed. This year with the ACOW hosted by King County chapters in Woodinville, Washington, our own Rainier Audubon Society had a chance to show off our community treasure, the former Weyerhaeuser campus.

Thankfully, on the day of the fieldtrip, mother nature could not have cooperated more. Clear skies and not a drop of rain greeted the participants and the birds appeared to be on their own tour of the campus as they were out in droves. A mixed flock of song birds greeted us along the shores of North Lake, we got great views of four species of woodpeckers, and a Cooper's Hawk even buzzed what might have been Band-tailed Pigeons in a tree. Though the birds on the trip were entertaining, the true highlight of the trip was our behind-the-scenes tour of the Rhododendron

Species Botanical Garden with Executive Director & Curator Steve Hootman.

Whether you were a regular or a first time visitor to the Rhododendron Garden the tour captivated us all. Steve is a wealth of knowledge and I was deeply impressed not only by his years of expertise with plants, but also his passion for the birds that inhabit the gardens. As we rounded a bend, Steve proudly pointed out a grove of fruit-laden Madrone trees. "The Band-tailed Pigeons love those berries. We always see them in a big flock." We walked further up a hill and stopped in front of a tree with tantalizing bright red berries "I see a Pileated Woodpecker visit this tree every day," Steve laughed, "they love to hang upside-down and gobble the berries one by one." We stood for awhile, gazing at the gorgeous foliage and, sure enough, a pair of large shadowy figures flapped onto the trunk of a nearby Douglas Fir; not one, but two Pileated Woodpeckers!



Steve's intricate relationship with the garden and the creatures that inhabit it is something that, as birders, we should not only admire but strive to emulate. He may not spend his time crisscrossing the state searching for birds or chase after rarities; he has no need. He has his green thumb set firmly on the pulse of his local ecosystem.

If you're looking to for a gorgeous outing or a fun walk to take your family on, look no further than the



Photo by Jay Galvin

Perhaps my favorite moment of the tour was when Steve stopped, pointed at yet another fruit bearing tree and said to me "The Cedar Waxwings devour these, but they're smart too. They know exactly when the berries are ripe. Sometimes you see them on one tree eating away, but they'll leave another tree next to it so that the berries ripen a couple weeks more so that they are perfect." I think

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. It isn't everyone who has an internationally acclaimed Botanical Garden just in their own backyard. Each month, there is something new in bloom. Come in April or May and you might catch a warbler flitting by the Blue Poppies. A visit in the summer may yield the "quick three beers" call of an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Visit in November and a Varied Thrush *(Continued on [page 5](#))*

Calen is a 19-year-old birder entering his eighth year writing the Seen and Heard. Currently attending the University of Washington, Calen enjoys exploring new birding areas in Washington and familiar regions in South King County.

might be scratching in the leaf litter. As always, there is something great to see.

Recent Sightings

September 1st Oahu, Hawaii

In the beginning week of September, Katerina Grishina took a trip out to Honolulu, Hawaii. Like most oceanic islands, Oahu offers a unique blend of indigenous and imported bird species. Birds like the Oahu Amakihi have bred on the island for hundreds of years, while Northern Cardinal and Common Myna were introduced within the last two hundred years. Additionally, numerous shorebird migrants visit the Hawaiian islands during Fall. When Katerina reached Oahu she was surprised to see **Pacific Golden Plover** roving around the island, as common as killdeer at home, even in the grassy parks of the downtown. In the marshes on the North Shore she spotted **Ruddy Turnstone** and **Black-necked Stilt**. While hiking at the Lyon Arboretum in the mountains north of Honolulu, Katerina heard the noisy calls of **Rose-ringed Parakeets** and **Salmon-crested Cockatoo**. According to the arboretum employees, the cockatoos have resided at the arboretum for well over a decade; however, the clever birds know the

arboretum's schedule as they often disappear to the canopy during the peak hours of the day. The birding highlight of Katerina's trip came by the Waimea Valley Audubon Center. After a deluge of tropical rain poured upon the trail, she noticed a trio of white birds with long tails flying above the forested hills. Quickly, she snapped a photo and to her surprise, she realized the birds were **White-tailed Tropicbirds**! Why would the birds be inland and not out over water where they are usually spotted? Likely the tropicbirds were visiting nesting sites, which are usually found in holes in cliffs or under thick vegetation. A coastal mountainous rainforest sounds like the perfect place for them to nest.

October 6th Calen's Puget Sound Seabird Survey (PSSS)

Our second year of the PSSS got off to a hot start in early October. We set out to Brown's Point with fellow second-year PSSS participant Pat and new member Whitney, a master birder from Seattle. While sea lions playing at the point drew crowds, we spotted some fun seabirds on the water. Three **Rhinoceros Auklets** were early highlights of the day until a **Brown Pelican** flapped overhead, my first in the Puget Sound! After the excitement at Brown's Point we drove

northeast into King County to Dash Point State Park. It didn't take long for us to find another terrific bird when Whitney called out "**Eared Grebe**"! To our surprise a quartet of Eared Grebes were floating past a couple of **Horned Grebes**. The views offered great contrast and we got good looks at their crested heads. To round out our grebe count a couple **Red-necked Grebes** drifted to the east while we glimpsed a **Western Grebe** towards Tacoma, on the west horizon, go figure. Our final destination, Dumas Bay, yielded no Puget Sound firsts (or Parasitic Jaegers) but we did see a good quantity of birds including a gargantuan flock of at least 400 **American Wigeon**. A **Pigeon Guillemot** sighting rounded out a very successful day of seabird surveying. Next month we will welcome back our diving ducks like Buffleheads and Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes, continue searching for an elusive Common Murre, and keep our eyes peeled for an alcid treat like a Marbled or Ancient Murrelet.

If you have an interesting sighting or story you want to share send your reports to me at calenbrids@hotmail.com.

Rainier Audubon 38th Christmas Bird Count Sunday December 30th, 2018

The Rainier Audubon 38th Christmas Bird Count will be on Sunday, December 30th, 2018. Come out and be part of our chapter's thirty-eight years of citizen science.

Sign up to go out with a team and count birds in our Audubon circle. Teams will bird by car and by foot from 8 AM to 4 PM. Can't go out with a team, but want to count birds in the comforts of your own home? Sign up to participate in our CBC Backyard Bird Count. Join us afterwards to enjoy our Rainier Audubon Dinner and to hear the day's species tally.

Contact: Ken Schroeder at kenschroeder@msn.com
253-939-7470

Dinner

Our CBC Dinner is a great way to celebrate our Christmas Bird Count. Dinner will begin at 5 PM, with doors opening at 4 PM. Dinner will be provided. Come listen to our CBC species count tally and our teams' interesting finds of the day!

Address of Dinner:

Federal Way United Methodist Church
29645 51st Ave, Auburn, WA 98001

What Happens to Our Count Data?

Along with hundreds of Audubon chapters nationwide, we send our tallies to National Audubon for compilation. Throughout the year, scientists use the results to

study bird distribution and population trends and identify conservation priorities. Recently, our CBC records were used in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a proposed siting of a King County Solid Waste Transfer Station at a location in the Green River Valley. Our birding records helped to prove that the site was not environmentally suitable for a solid waste transfer station and in October 2015 King County eliminated the site from the process.

We report the key findings from the Rainier Audubon count in our newsletter, *The Heron Herald*, and post the highlights on our website.



Mewsings from Millie

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

William John Swainson was an ornithologist, author and self-taught naturalist. He made a name for himself as a zoological illustrator. He was born in England on October 8, 1789 and everyone in his family shared an interest in nature and science. Swainson traveled over a good part of the world learning about the flora and fauna of many different areas. After one trip to Brazil, he returned with 20,000 insects, 1,200 species of plants, 760 bird skins and drawings of 120 species of fish! There are birds all around the globe that are named in his honor such as the Swainson's Toucan and the Swainson's Anteater. Three such birds, a warbler, a thrush and a hawk, are found in North America.



Swainson's Warbler

Swainson's Warbler is one of the most secretive and least observed of all North American birds. A fairly plain little warbler, it is brown above and gray below with a pale eyebrow. It is a skulking warbler found in southern thickets of rhododendron and cane. Most likely it would go largely undetected except for its loud, ringing song. The Swainson's Warbler eats insects and spiders. It builds its nest of dried leaves, sticks and vines in the thick undergrowth. The nest is lined with pine needles, hair, grass, spanish moss and fern stems. Two to five plain white eggs will be produced. Swainson's Warbler winters in tropical scrub.



Swainson's Thrush

Swainson's Thrush is a medium-sized brown bird with pale underparts, a spotted chest and large, buffy eyerings. Their

upward-spiraling flute-like song can be heard throughout the summer in the mornings and evenings. The Swainson's Thrush eats insects and arthropods such as arachnids and crustaceans. It will also eat ants which is unusual for a songbird. The nest is an open cup made of twigs, stems, grass, moss, bark shreds and decayed leaves. It is lined with leaves, rootlets, lichens and moss.



Eggs are blue or greenish-blue speckled with red or brown. The Pacific population of Swainson's Thrush winters in Central America.



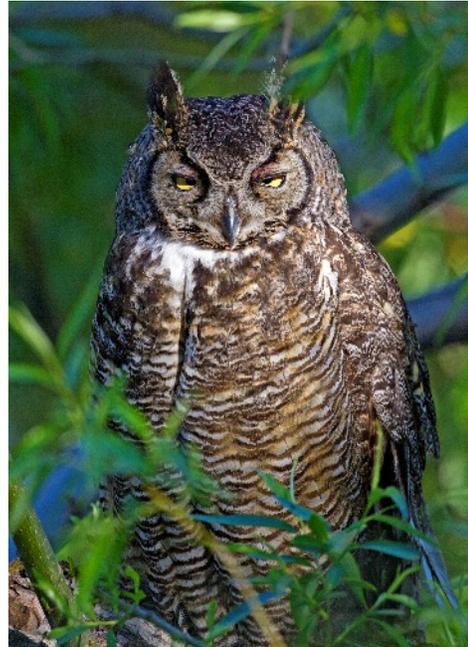
Swainson's Hawk

Swainson's Hawks are *buteos* which mean they are large with broad wings and short tails. However, they are slimmer and longer-winged than most other *buteos*. The Swainson's Hawk is light-bellied with a dark or red/brown chest and brown and gray upperparts. Most males have gray heads, Females have brown heads. They have distinctive underwings with white wing linings contrasting strongly with black flight feathers. This bird spends its summers in wide-open spaces of the west. It can be spotted over grasslands, sage flats and agricultural fields. Groups of soaring or migrating hawks are called "kettles" and Swainson's Hawks are masters at forming them. They form flocks numbering in the tens of thousands often mixing in with Turkey Vultures, Broadwinged Hawks and Mississippi Kites to create a virtual river of migratory birds. During breeding season, Hawks eat rodents, rabbits and reptiles. When not breeding, their diet is almost exclusively insects especially crickets, grasshoppers and dragonflies. They will also eat butterflies, moths and beetles. The nest is a loose bundle of sticks, twigs and debris like rope or wire. It is lined with fresh, leafy twigs, grass, hay, weed stalks and bark. The nest will be built in the top of a solitary tree or in a small grove of trees along a stream. Eggs are off-white often blotched with red/brown. The Swainson's Hawk winters in Argentina making one of the longest migrations of any American raptor.

Until next time,
Millie, the Muse of Mews

Fun Facts About Owls

- The adaptive Great Horned Owl can be found virtually anywhere in North America. Its habitat ranges from forest, and field, to tundra and desert and includes highly developed suburban areas as well.
- The feathers of all owls are especially soft and muffle wind noise. Many owls also have special comb-like fringes on the leading edge of their wings to help channel air over the wing, thereby reducing noise. These adaptations for silent flight allow the owl to make a soundless approach towards its prey.
- Great Horned Owls weigh from two to four pounds with birds in the north weighing up to two pounds more than their southern counterparts.
- An old southern legend states that if you hear a Great Horned Owl's call coming from your left side it is forecasting bad luck for you.
- Many owls can turn their heads around over 270° F, allowing them to look almost directly behind themselves. This adaptation has developed to compensate for the fact that their eyes are fixed into a bony socket in the skull and are virtually unable to move.
- Owls' eyes are unique among birds as they are located on the front of the head, instead of on the side. This not only gives them a very human appearance but also enables them to match our level of depth perception that is created by the overlapping vision from each eye.
- Owls can fly and hunt during the daytime as well as at night. However most of them are best adapted for nocturnal hunting.
- Most owls rely as much or more on their hearing as they do their sight to locate, track and capture prey.
- The ears of most owls are located asymmetrically on their head, with the right ear being higher than the left ear. Each ear hears the same sound with a slight difference, thus creating a form of audible "depth perception" which can be used to track the location and movements of their prey.
- When fully spread out, the talons of a Great Horned Owl can span up to eight inches wide.
- Great Horned Owls will prey on both skunks and porcupines.
- After digesting their most recent meal, owls will form a pellet of the undigested remains of their prey and regurgitate it. Made up primarily of fur, feathers and bones, it is egested approximately 13-16 hours after eating.
- The Great Horned Owl nests earlier than any other bird of prey in North America.
- When listening to the calls of Great Horned Owls you can distinguish the male from the female by his lower pitch and slightly slower call.
- Mortality rates for first year Great Horned Owls can range from 30-60% depending on local food conditions.
- The Great Horned Owl is probably the longest-lived owl in North America. Banding records confirm numerous owls living into their twenties, with the record lifespan being more than 27 years.





"The future will either be green or not at all."
- Bob Brown



Rainier Audubon Membership Subscription or Renewal Form

One-year Membership in Rainier Audubon
\$25—Individual Membership / \$30—Family Membership

Circle one New / Renewal

For new members:

How did you hear about Rainier Audubon Society?

To join or renew, mail this application with your payment to:

Rainier Audubon Society - Membership

PO Box 778

Auburn, WA 98071



Are you interested in:

- Volunteering?
- Field Trips?
- Classes?

(Please circle)

Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____