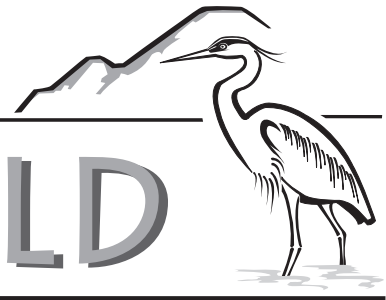


THE HERON HERALD



Rainier Audubon Society

February 2010

Monday February 15 at 7:00 PM
Federal Way United Methodist Church

DR. CHARLES WURSTER
SEABIRDS OF THE ARCTIC AND ANTARCTIC



Black-browed Albatross

Ocean, and the Antarctic Peninsula. As an added bonus, Charles may show some slides of East Africa at the end for those who might consider a wildlife safari to Kenya in May.

Charlie's fascination with the natural world began with early interests in snakes and weather, but science class trips to Florida 50 years ago convinced him that birds were more varied, abundant, and exciting. He has been an ardent environmentalist and ornithologist ever since. The study of birds has taken him to all continents, where he has identified 1/3 of the world's 10,000 avian species, and his curiosity and enthusiasm are contagious. East Africa has become one of his specialties after eight wildlife safaris to Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. He calls East Africa "the greatest wildlife show on Earth."

Dr. Wurster earned a doctorate in chemistry from Stanford University in 1957. In the 1960s, he studied the environmental effects of DDT, Aldrin, and Dieldrin, and in 1967, he became one of the founders of Environmental Defense (formerly Environmental Defense Fund), and remains an active member of the Board of Trustees. For 30 years, he was a professor of environmental sciences and now pursues eco-tourism and environmental protection projects.

Please join us for an evening of polar seabirds and scenery as we welcome Charles to Rainier Audubon.

This month, Charles Wurster will take us on an adventure to the Arctic and the Antarctic to investigate the seabirds of these polar regions. This investigation will include the comparison and convergent evolution of seabirds from both poles; similarities of their evolution will be demonstrated in photos. In addition to our bird studies, we will also see a fair collection of scenery from the Antarctic and from Svalbard, Norway. Most of the photos were taken on a cruise up the coast of Norway past Bear Island and around both sides of Spitsbergen. In the Antarctic, we will cruise from Cape Horn to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, the Southern



Spectacled Eider

2009 Kent/Auburn
Christmas Bird Count Results
by Charlie Wright

Rainier Audubon's Kent/Auburn CBC was held December 27, 2009, in gloriously sunny, cold, calm weather. Waterfowl numbers were somewhat low, likely due to lack of open water in the valley. Wigeon numbers were particularly low. Many birders enjoyed the day and had some good birds to show for it. The tentative species total at the tally dinner was 115.

Highlights:

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - 1 near Maple Valley.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK - 1 adult, presumably the same bird found in August 2006 and seen sporadically ever since, at Kent Ponds. 2nd count record.

(Continued on page 3)



RAINIER AUDUBON PROGRAMS ARE HELD AT
FEDERAL WAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001
(in unincorporated Auburn)

Directions:

In Federal Way, take 320th St. EAST past The Commons, crossing over I-5 and Military Rd. At 321st St, turn left. Stay on 321st as it becomes 51st Ave. So. Follow 51st Ave. to 296th. Church will be on your left.

President's Message — by Nancy Streiffert

Perhaps by the time you open this newsletter, the monsoons will have abated in our area! Although we live at the top of a small hill, our yard is under 6" of water in places and very squishy throughout! Spring bulb foliage is swaying in the puddles! There is no lack of water for the birds frequenting the yard and the mild temperatures must be easier on the wildlife than the bitter cold of December. Yesterday (January 15), as I was planting a tree, two Pileated Woodpeckers flew over, squawking loudly, and landed high in our backyard firs. Looking for a nest spot? We have enjoyed having a pair in our yard for many years and even had juveniles in the past. Finding their nest tree is an ongoing quest!

I've mentioned my passion for native plants and was rewarded last fall when a juvenile Pileated was

eating red twig dogwood berries in our native plant garden while its parent fretted nearby! I would encourage you to plant a few natives for their ease of care and wildlife value. While birds will eat all kinds of berries, including the ones we prefer for ourselves, many non-native berry plants cause problems for the environment. Local

nurseries and catalogs often tout the "bird-attracting berries" of their ornamental offerings without pointing out that the seeds, when excreted by the birds, may germinate.



Pacific
Dogwood

These ornamentals can take over wild areas, crowding out a more diverse community of natives which generally sustain wildlife

over a longer period of time. This is the case with cotoneaster, holly, and worst of all, ivy even though most people don't think of ivy even having flowers and berries! Watch for the spring Washington Native Plant Sale for the largest variety of natives or check out some of our links.

I look forward to this year's wide array of speakers, field trips, conservation and community events and hope you will join us for many of them.

RAINIER AUDUBON OFFICERS

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BOARD MEMBER-----	ERIN WOJEWODSKI-PRINSEN-----	(425) 432-9965

*Also serves as Board member

RAINIER AUDUBON SOCIETY
 PO Box 778. Auburn WA 98071. (253) 796-2203
 website: www.RainierAudubon.org
 email: info@RainierAudubon.org

Christmas Bird Count

(continued from page 1)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER - 1 flying over Boeing Ponds. 2nd count record.

SORA - 1 heard at Clay Street Marsh. 3rd count record.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE - count week in Pacific. 1st count record.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW - 1 along Frager Road 1/3 mile south of OP Fishing Hole.

SAVANNAH SPARROW - over 50 near Smith Brothers. All-time high count.

Count week species included Pelagic Cormorant, Least Sandpiper, Western Gull, American Pipit (200+), Townsend's Warbler (first time missed on count day since '90), and a reported Rufous Hummingbird. Among the unusual misses were Orange-crowned Warbler, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Black Scoter, and Thayer's and Herring gulls.

Thanks to everyone who helped!

The Results

Greater Wht-fronted Goose.....	1
Cackling Goose.....	450
Canada Goose.....	1006
Trumpeter Swan.....	78
Wood Duck.....	8
Gadwall.....	98
Eurasian Wigeon.....	29
American Wigeon.....	1185
Mallard.....	2220
Green-winged Teal.....	122
No. Shoveler.....	254
No. Pintail.....	401
Canvasback.....	5
Redhead.....	5
Ring-necked Duck.....	460
Greater Scaup.....	38
Lesser Scaup.....	80
Harlequin Duck.....	4
Surf Scoter.....	26
White-winged Scoter.....	11
Bufflehead.....	293
Common Goldeneye.....	41
Barrow's Goldeneye.....	13
Hooded Merganser.....	115
Common Merganser.....	157
Red-breasted Merganser.....	13
Ruddy Duck.....	151
Ring-necked Pheasant.....	1

California Quail.....	40
Common Loon.....	2
Pied-billed Grebe.....	42
Horned Grebe.....	57
Red-necked Grebe.....	9
Western Grebe.....	1
Dbl-crested Cormorant.....	112
Great Blue Heron.....	48
Bald Eagle.....	23
Adult.....	[16]
Immature.....	[3]
No. Harrier.....	7
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	5
Cooper's Hawk.....	13
Red-tailed Hawk.....	77
Amer. Kestrel.....	3
Merlin.....	4
Peregrine Falcon.....	2
Virginia Rail.....	9
Sora.....	1
Amer. Coot.....	464
Black-bellied Plover.....	1
Killdeer.....	94
Spotted Sandpiper.....	1
Dunlin.....	41
Long-billed Dowitcher.....	3
Wilson's Snipe.....	8
Mew Gull.....	7
Ring-billed Gull.....	12
California Gull.....	2
Glaucous-winged Gull.....	293
Western X Glc-winged Gull....	[65]
Gull <i>sp.</i>	[22]
Pigeon Guillemot.....	2
Rock Pigeon.....	547
Band-tailed Pigeon.....	93
Barn Owl.....	2
Western Screech-Owl.....	2
Great Horned Owl.....	5
No. Pygmy-Owl.....	1
No. Saw-whet Owl.....	1
Anna's Hummingbird.....	53
Belted Kingfisher.....	15
Red-breasted Sapsucker.....	7
Downy Woodpecker.....	34
Hairy Woodpecker.....	7
No. Flicker.....	113
Yellow-shafted.....	[1]
Pileated Woodpecker.....	10
No. Shrike.....	1
Hutton's Vireo.....	1
Steller's Jay.....	107
Western Scrub Jay.....	6
Amer. Crow.....	1193
Common Raven.....	2
Black-capped Chickadee.....	458
Chestnut-backed Chickadee.....	144
Bushtit.....	252
Red-breasted Nuthatch	51
Brown Creeper.....	17
Bewick's Wren.....	62
Winter Wren.....	38
Marsh Wren.....	37
Amer. Dipper.....	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	203
Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	74
Hermit Thrush.....	1
Amer. Robin.....	823
Varied Thrush.....	10
European Starling.....	1199
Amer. Pipit.....	<75>
Cedar Waxwing.....	12
Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	79
Myrtle.....	[11]
Townsend's Warbler.....	3
Spotted Towhee.....	174
Savannah Sparrow.....	62
Fox Sparrow.....	69
Song Sparrow.....	432
Lincoln's Sparrow.....	22
White-throated Sparrow.....	2
White-crowned Sparrow.....	61
Golden-crowned Sparrow.....	159
Dark-eyed Junco.....	625
Slate-colored Junco.....	[8]
Red-winged Blackbird.....	180
Western Meadowlark.....	37
Brewer's Blackbird.....	195
Brown-headed Cowbird.....	2
Purple Finch.....	13
House Finch.....	276
Red Crossbill.....	4
Pine Siskin.....	266
Amer. Goldfinch.....	248
Evening Grosbeak.....	19
House Sparrow.....	176
Red-shouldered Hawk	1
Eurasian Collared Dove	<5>
Total individuals	9935
Total Species	120

<n> means "seen during count week"

[n] means "not countable as species"

Results compiled, checked, and
submitted by
Charlie Wright
and
Mark Freeland.

Participants Listed on Page 6

Field Trips — by Carol Schulz

Alki and West Seattle
Saturday, February 13
8:00 AM to about 2:00 PM
Leader: Amy Schillinger

Come with Amy to visit West Seattle parks and the Alki shoreline. This should be a great time of year to look for seaducks, shorebirds, grebes, Brant Geese, Harlequin Ducks, winter birds, and resident Bald Eagles. We may stop at the Alki Bakery.

BRING: Lunch, snacks, and drinks, and clothing for possible rain or wind. Bring a scope if you have one.

MEET: At the Uwajimaya store in the Renton Village Shopping Center.

DIRECTIONS: Hwy. 167 ends at Grady Way. (From 405, turn north to Renton on Rainier Ave.) At the first light (Grady Way), take a right. Uwajimaya will be two lights down the road on the right-hand side. Meet at the picnic tables at the front of the store.

SIGN UP: Contact Amy by email at amyschillinger@comcast.net or by phone at (206) 992-8699.

Soos Creek Owl Prowl
Saturday Night, February 27
10:30 PM to 1:30 AM
Leaders: Joe and Liz Miles

Join Friends of Soos Creek Park volunteers Joe and Liz Miles for this late-night program and walk exploring the world of owls. We'll start indoors for the first hour learning calls, ID, and info about our local owls, then venture outdoors to prowl for owls. There is limited space for this program. Reservations are required. Best for adults and children over 13 years. Group size is limited to 15. The owls program is sponsored by Kent City Recreation Dept.

MEET: Soos Creek Park Maintenance Shop. Soos Creek Park/Trail. 24810 - 148th Ave. SE. DIRECTIONS: Take James St. east from Kent. To reach James, exit I-167 at Willis, turn east to Central, and north to James. Go east on James as it becomes SE 240th St. In about 4 miles, 240th dips and turns downhill. Turn right (south) on 148th Ave. near the bottom of the hill. The Soos Creek maintenance yard will be down the road about 1/4 mile on the left at a barn and chainlink-fenced parking lot.

SIGN-UP: Call Kent Commons at (253) 856-5000. This trip FILLS EARLY — register in advance! For further info, email or call Joe Miles; he can answer your questions but cannot arrange sign-ups. Contact Joe by phone at (253) 639-0123 or by email at joe.miles@att.net.

Nisqually Wildlife Refuge
Saturday, March 6
8:00 AM to Approximately Noon
Leader: Shep Thorp

Check out the changes on the NEW DIKE and get reacquainted with this local jewel. We will be looking for raptors, bittern/heron, waterfowl, owls, shrike, shorebirds, gulls, passerines, and migrants. We will meet at the Visitor Center Pond Overlook at 8:00 AM. The walk is approximately two miles. Please wear warm clothing and be prepared for rain. It can become breezy and cold on the dike.

MEET: Visitor Center Pond Overlook

BRING: Drinks and snacks. Scopes are encouraged.

DIRECTIONS: www.fws.gov/nisqually

SIGN UP: Contact Shep Thorp by email at sthorp@theaec.com or by phone at (253) 370-3742.



Field Trips — by Carol Schulz

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival
Friday through Sunday
March 26-28
Othello WA
Reported by Carol Schulz

The Othello Sandhill Crane Festival is a wonderful birding festival in eastern Washington. The FIELD TRIPS and lectures are excellent. Quite a few participants and speakers come from out-of-state. The field trips leave in school buses, vans, and cars from the high school. The banquet program is exciting and fun and the food is good. Registration and tour information is available online at www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org or by calling 1-866-726-3445 toll free (after 4 PM). The most popular trips and accommodations fill early, so register ASAP. For more information about the festival, call or email Carol Schulz at carol.schulz50@gmail.com or (206) 824-7618.

Weekly Bird Walks at Nisqually
Wednesdays 8:00 AM — 11:30 AM
Leader: Phil Kelley

Join Phil on his weekly bird walk at Nisqually NWR, taking the boardwalk/trail loop out to the Twin Barns, the Nisqually overlook area, and the riparian area, totaling about two miles.

BRING: Good walking shoes or boots, raingear, water, snacks, and \$3 for entry fee unless you have a pass.

MEET: At the Visitor's Center.

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

SIGN-UP: Call or email Phil to confirm details. (360) 459-1499, or scrubjay323@aol.com.



Spring ACOW

Rainier Audubon is hosting this year's Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) conference. Our theme is: YOUR BACKYARD - IT'S HABITAT! The ACOW conference will be March 19-21 based at Hawthorn Suites in Kent. Saturday's events include a banquet dinner and keynote speech by Russell Link, author of *Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest* and *Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest*. His presentation will focus on backyard habitat.

We will start the day with a field trip to the Green River Natural Resource Area (aka Kent Ponds), a great birding area in the Kent valley, where Rainier participates in monthly bird surveys. Workshops during the day include speakers on bats, native plants, the Puget Sound loop of the Great Washington State Birding Trail, and a Highline School District environmental project. We will also be brainstorming on the future of Audubon at the state level and how chapters can coordinate their efforts.

A tasty lunch and delicious banquet dinner will be catered by Renton Technical College's Culinary Arts program. Come meet, mingle, and share with Auduboners from throughout the state! You can find the registration form on our website (www.RainierAudubon.org). Questions? Nancy Streiffert (253) 796-2203 or nancy_streiffert@hotmail.com. Friday evening's keynote speech by Lyanda Lynn Haupt from 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM is free to Rainier members and will replace our regular March 21 meeting.

Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are needed to help with short-term jobs at the Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW) meeting in March. Most will be needed on Saturday, March 20. Hosts/hostesses for our guest speakers, tech savvy folks to keep audio/video working, greeters, packet hander-outers, general go-fers, and cleaner-uppers (light stuff, we're not mopping floors!) Please call Nancy Streiffert at (253) 796-2203 or email at nancy_streiffert@hotmail.com

Thank you!

Minimum Number of 40 Needed for ACOW

We require that at least 40 people be registered and paid for the Spring ACOW by February 15 or we will cancel the conference and refund all monies. If you are considering attending, you can see how many people have registered and paid by checking our website at www.RainierAudubon.org. The numbers are updated daily.

2009 Kent/Auburn Christmas Bird Count Participants

Feeder Watchers

Thais Bock
Eldon Davis
Heather and Marilyn Hobbs-Gibson
Reilly Hannigan
Ray and Janet Korpi
Jean Lotter
Elaine and Henry Maros
Barbara and Tom Nylund
Len and Blythe Peyton
Amy Randall-Vradenburg
Meiling Sproger
Cathea Stanley
Laura Stiles
Annette Tabor



In-the-Field Birders

Sharon Aagaard
Caren Adams
Kathy Andrich
Linda Bartlett
Merri Berg
Tom Bowden
Tim Brennan
Ken Brunner
Mary and Bill Bush
Jeff Cohen
Lucia Faithful
Cindy and Calen Flanagan
Jim Flynn
Geoff Jackson
Steve and Jean Johnson
Mary Kun
Nancy Martin
Guy McWethy
Alex and Brien Meilleur
Joe Miles
Roger Orness
Barbara Petersen
Ted Ripley
Carlyn Roedell
Penny Rose
Amy Schillinger
Carol Schulz
Bonnie Scott
Donna Seegmueller

Tom Sernka
Bob Stallcop
Dan Streiffert
Ross Tabor
Joe and Ruth Terlouw
Terry Thurber
Michelle Tirhi
Brenda Tom
Ron Toonen
Mike Weatherby
Cheryl White
Charlie Wright



Thank You from Rainier's President

Thank you to the many people who participated in the 2009 Christmas Bird Count. The weather was friendlier than it has been in some years, but it is still an act of true dedication to the birds and our environment to get up in the dark and spend a cold, wettish day during the winter holidays counting birds. We all appreciate your efforts and skill. It was fun to see so many people at the potluck and hear about your day and what was seen!

For new people, I hope you will join us again next year, and for our dedicated area leaders, heartfelt thanks for your expertise and enthusiasm! Two people who make this CBC work from behind the scenes are Charlie Wright, who tallies the species at the potluck (and is also an area leader), and Mark Freeland, who crunches the numbers and submits them to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where the info goes into a 110-year old database for use by researchers and others to gather data on climate, disease, habitat loss or gain, predation, and many other fields of study. Your contribution is valuable!

Spring is all things to all men.
It is the yellow of dandelion
and the green of new grass.
It is cumulus clouds and the
smell of new-turned soil, and
miles on miles of fruit trees in
bloom. This time of shortening
shadows, these months with
music in them, form an event in
everyone's life, an
event in the life
of every animal
and tree and
flowering plant
in the northern
hemisphere.



— Edwin Way Teale, 1957

Mewsings from Millie

Millie is the big, beautiful cat who hangs out at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Burien. Millie is very observant and has decided to write this monthly column to pass on to us what she sees and overhears while supposedly sleeping.

Hello again and welcome to my world! Here are some things I have heard and learned about over the last few weeks.

Juncos practice a very interesting foraging method. It's called "riding." They fly up to the top of a seed cluster on a stem and "ride" it to the ground, where they pick off the seeds.

One of my people visited the zoo recently and learned why flamingos stand on one leg. It's to keep the other leg warm!

Speaking of staying warm, you may have wondered, as I have, what birds do during these long, cold winter nights. On KPLU's "Birdnote," I learned, to my surprise, that they are not hunkered down in cozy little nests. The only time of the year when birds sleep in nests is when they are sitting on eggs or keeping their young warm. During the rest of the year, birds select a roosting spot. Songbirds find a protected place to perch that is out of the rain and safe from nocturnal predators. Small forest birds may spend the night huddled together in tree cavities. Ducks float in protected bays, woodpeckers cling to vertical tree trunks, and crows roost communally.

Birds fluff up their feathers for insulation and often crouch down over their legs and feet to keep them warm. Counter to what most of us believe, birds cannot tuck their heads under their wings to sleep. But they can turn their heads and poke their beaks under their shoulder feathers to keep their beaks warm.



I also learned why birds' little feet don't freeze and stick to metal perches and ducks' feet don't freeze and stick to the ice. Birds' feet are not much more than bone, sinew, and scale with very few nerves. A fine pattern of arteries called "rete mirabile" carries warm blood from the bird's heart and is interwoven with the veins carrying cold blood from the feet and legs. This interweaving warms the cold blood before it reaches the bird's heart and keeps the legs and feet warm. Also, birds' feet don't have sweat glands, so they stay dry. That is why they don't freeze and stick to things.

Chickadees beat their wings 27 times a second compared to a hummingbird's 80 times a second.

The "cedar" part of the Cedar Waxwing's name comes from the bird's fondness for cedar berries. The "waxwing" portion comes from the tips of their secondary flight feathers looking like they were dipped in red wax.

And now for this month's collective nouns describing groups of birds:

A CONGRESS of eagles

A SCREECH of gulls

A BEVY of quail

A DESCENT of woodpeckers

Until next time,

— Millie, the Muse of Mews

Bringing Nature Home
by Douglas Tallamy
(2007, Timber Press)

A book about the importance of native plants, hungry native insects, the biological consequences of the historic American quest for suburban tranquility, and the over-use of alien ornamentals couldn't be

about birds, could it? Wrong. Tallamy's main message about the plant/insect connection is intimately related to the survival of birds, their reproductive success, their food, and their ultimate future.

Tallamy graphically illustrates the mantra of how everything in nature is connected to everything else, beginning in our very own backyards. The book is well illustrated and accompanied

by superb captions. Indeed, Tallamy brings to the reader, in plain yet well-crafted American English, an essential defense of native plants as crucial to our biological balance and the future of "reconciliation ecology."

From
The National Wildlife Refuge Assoc.
Birding Community eBulletin
January 2010



Rainier Audubon Society
PO Box 778
Auburn, WA 98071

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Auburn, WA 98071

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