

# THE HERON HERALD



Rainier Audubon Society ~ December 2007/January 2008

Vol 26 No 10

Check us out on the web: [www.rainieraudubon.org](http://www.rainieraudubon.org)

Rainier Audubon Presents:

## Peregrine Falcons

Monday, December 17th, 7:00 PM



PEREGRINE FALCON ©JOSEPH HIGBEE

Now that we are in the midst of another busy holiday season, we can't think of anything better than taking an evening off to relax and watch a great presentation on the Peregrine Falcon! Roger Orness and Jim Flynn will present the program and show a video produced by the Falcon Research Group (FRG). The Falcon Research Group is headed by Bud Anderson, a local birding authority who specializes in raptors. The FRG has been doing fascinating research on seven particular peregrines, known as The Southern Cross Peregrine Project. These falcons were tagged in Chile

last winter and their migration and nesting travels north have been closely followed; at the present time, FRG is monitoring the progress of their southern migration. In addition, we will learn about Peregrine Falcons in general and get some tips on identification.

Rainier Audubon invites everyone to celebrate the season with us, members and non-members alike, at this great holiday program, completely free and open to the public. And as if that weren't enough, at our December meeting, we also have our annual cookie exchange. You are invited to bring a few of your favorite cookies or bars to share with others before, during, and after the program. We look forward to a wonderful evening and hope to see you there.

## Kirtland's Warblers Extend Their Range



©WHATBIRD.COM

This summer, scientists confirmed a pair of Kirtland's Warblers breeding in Ontario. The pair nested at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa in eastern Ontario. This is the first time since 1945 that this critically endangered species has been detected breeding in Canada, and the first time ever that an actual nest has been located in Canada. The family group was carefully trapped and colour banded.

To protect the breeding birds from potential disturbance, their existence and location remained a closely guarded secret until recently, when the birds migrated to the Bahamas for the winter. The nest and two unviable eggs that were left behind have been donated to the Royal Ontario Museum, with the permission of Environment Canada.

The Kirtland's Warbler does not normally breed outside of Michigan, but this year in addition to the Petawawa nest, others were found in Wisconsin. The population has been slowly recovering from an all-time low of about 200 birds in the 1970s, and with confirmed nesting in these new locations in 2007, we hope to see the population continue to expand in the years to come.

SOURCE: BIRD STUDIES CANADA, NOVEMBER 2007.

Free  
and open to the public

**December Program**

**Monday, December 17, 2007**

**7:00 PM**

(doors open at 6:30)

**Federal Way  
United Methodist Church**

directions on page 2

**Field Trips on Page 4**

# RAS Calendar

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9

**RAS Field Trip: Kittitas County in Winter**

See page 4 for details

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12

**RAS Board Meeting**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15

**Tahoma Audubon CBC Field Trip**

See page 4 for details

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17

**RAS Program: Peregrine Falcons**

See page 1 for details

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30

**Kent/Auburn Christmas Bird Count**

See page 3 for details

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30

**RAS CBC Field Trip**

See page 4 for details

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2008

**RAS Board Meeting**

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 2008

**RAS Field Trip: Point No Point**

See page 4 for details

MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 2008

**RAS Program**

Check RAS website for upcoming details

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2008

**RAS Field Trip: Nisqually NWR**

See page 4 for details

SATURDAY NIGHT, FEBRUARY 23, 2008

**RAS Field Trip: Soos Creek Owl Prowl**

See page 4 for details

<http://www.rainieraudubon.org/>

**Federal Way United Methodist Church  
29645 - 51st Ave. So., Auburn, 98001**

### DIRECTIONS TO THE CHURCH:

**COMING FROM THE WEST:** Take 320th St. heading east, past SeaTac Mall (now called The Commons). Cross I-5 and keep going east down towards Peasley Canyon Rd. At the first light after Military Rd. (321st St.), turn left. Stay on 321st St. as it winds up and around and becomes 51st Ave. So. The church will be on your left at 296th.

**COMING FROM THE EAST:** Take Peasley Canyon Rd. going west towards Federal Way. At the light at 321st St, take a right. Stay on 321st St. as it winds up and around and becomes 51st Ave. So. The church will be on your left at 296th.

# President's Message

By Carol Stoner

We're heading into that gift-y time of year. Like many people, my extended family has struggled with how to manage holiday gift-giving. Our oldest generation has said they don't want anything that needs to be dusted, watered, worn, eaten, or put away. The middle generation doesn't want to feed the beast of needless consumption. Our youngest generation is only three months old, so her needs are few. But we all want to show our love for our family in a significant way. After experimenting a bit, we finally decided that we would ask each person to name a favorite cause or charity, and we would donate in his or her name. A variation on this theme is the idea of giving an experience or a few hours of help to a

family member. Tickets to the zoo, the aquarium, the Science Center, a movie or play can be a wonderful thing to enjoy together during the dark days of January. Another family I know draws names and competes to give the most creative gift for a small fixed amount of money. Some of these gifts have become the stuff of family legend.

Every family cherishes different traditions. The heart of our celebration is our Christmas brunch. It used to include exchanging presents, but for now, our gifts go to the causes we care about.

Whatever your winter celebration, I wish you the joys of family and friends.



**2008 Entertainment Books are now available**

This year's Entertainment Book is loaded with hundreds of two-fers, and up to 50% savings on dining, shopping, travel, movies, sports and more. And to make it even better, a portion of the purchase price stays right here in our chapter, funding important programs. Both "Greater Seattle" and "South Sound" books are **only \$20 each!** Books can be picked-up or requested by contacting:

Bruce Harpham, Ph: (253) 874-9792,  
email: brucelaura@msn.com  
or  
Pick-Up at the December RAS  
Membership Meeting

**The Entertainment book makes a great gift!  
DON'T MISS OUT –  
GET YOUR BOOKS TODAY!  
Immediate opportunities exist  
for buyers and sellers!**

Rainier Audubon Society is the  
Washington State  
South King County Chapter  
of the National Audubon Society.

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Please note new  
submission  
deadline

Readers are invited to send in articles, photos or artwork for possible inclusion. Final deadline for material submission is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

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Email materials to:  
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## Christmas Bird Count is Coming!

By Nancy Streiffert  
(with apologies to Joyce Kilmer)

*I think that I will never see  
An event as great as the CBC!*

*From early morn to daylight's fade,  
We wander far; from woods to glade.*

*Or cozy warm at home we stay  
Our eyes on feeders throughout the day.*

*Listening and watching,  
the birds we count.  
Scopes are focused, numbers mount.*

*December 30th is the day  
Whether it's sunny or raining or grey.*

*Whatever the weather,  
we'll do our best,  
Then potluck at church  
for food and rest.*

*There Charlie Wright,  
the lists will add.  
We hope the totals will make us glad.*

*Mark Freeland's our computer guru  
Who sends it all to Cornell U(ru)!*

*We'll do our part to observe the trend  
To preserve and protect  
our feathered friends.*

Please join us! Contact Nancy at  
(253) 852-8394 or by email at  
nancy\_streiffert@hotmail.com.

## We Need You!

Rainier Audubon has an opening for a **Volunteer Coordinator/ Publicity Chair**. This person would research and gather environmentally-oriented volunteer opportunities in the south King County area for our members, and also promote our monthly programs with local newspapers and other media. If interested, please contact Carol at: stonefam@gte.net.

## An Eco-Friendly Choice: Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs

By Dan Streiffert, Rainier Audubon Conservation Chair

The other day, I needed to replace a light fixture in our bedroom. I had put a circular fluorescent bulb in there several years ago and the ballast gave out on it. It turns out that you can no longer purchase these, so the best option seemed to be to replace the whole fixture with one that had a plug-in Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL). I went to Home Depot and found one for \$21.95. Then I noticed that Puget Sound Energy was giving an instant \$20 rebate on CFL fixtures—so the whole deal ended up costing me \$1.95 plus tax. This makes me wonder why ANYONE still uses tungsten light bulbs. The Nov-Dec 2007 issue of Audubon Magazine states that 95% of Americans still use incandescent bulbs. CFLs use about one-fourth the energy to produce the same amount of light. They also last about 10 times as long. When they first came on the market, they were selling for around \$20 apiece, but even at that price, could pay for themselves in a year. Now you typically find them for about \$5 - \$7 and they are often on sale for 99 cents. This is probably the most profitable investment you can make today. A single incandescent bulb, over its lifespan, requires burning 82 pounds of coal, about 100 times the amount needed to power a CFL. So CFLs offer us all a wonderful opportunity to help solve global warming and save money at the same time.



## 100 Years of Christmas Bird Count Data Available Online

Just go to [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html) and you can see it all.

Volunteers have been counting birds on the CBC for over 100 years, and their contributions represent a tremendously valuable resource for learning more about bird behavior and bird conservation. These output tools are designed to give you access to the data collected by the tens of thousands of CBC volunteers. A lot has happened to early winter bird populations and distributions in the last 100+ years, and the Christmas Bird Count is an invaluable resource to discover those changes. These web tools allow you to ask just about any question you want of the entire CBC database. Take a look!

You can make maps of bird distribution, construct graphs of species trends over time, or see the raw count data. See what's happened on your own count over time; look up your favorite species; many more discoveries await! Please be aware that the common names of many bird species have changed over time. In order to view all of the data for certain species, you will need to query for each "historical" name individually.

Currently the CBC historical database is undergoing another round of proofing of the data. A large dataset such as this requires continual proofing, and Audubon welcomes any reports of apparent irregularities.

# Field Trips

By Carol Schulz

## *Weekly Bird Walks at Nisqually*

**Thursdays 8:15 AM to 12:30 PM**

**Leader: Phil Kelley**

Join Phil on his weekly bird walks as he counts the birds at Nisqually NWR. The group walks out to MacAllister Creek and back to the Visitors Center; then takes the boardwalk/trail loop out past the Twin Barns to the Ring Dike, coming back along the Nisqually River Trail, totaling about four miles.

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

**MEET:** At the Visitors Center.

**SIGN-UP:** Call or email Phil Kelley to confirm details at (360) 459-1499, or scrub-jay323@aol.com

## *Kittitas County Birding in Winter*

**Sunday, December 9, 2007**

**6:30 AM to Evening**

**Leader: Charlie Wright**

**Co-leader: Roger Orness**

Come enjoy a day of winter-season birding in central Washington. We will venture over Snoqualmie Pass to areas including Swauk Prairie and South Cle Elum. Large numbers of raptors such as Rough-legged Hawks and Prairie Falcons can be seen wintering in the open, snow-covered fields of Kittitas. Proceeding east, we will reach the Columbia River at Vantage, where waterfowl are sometimes present in vast numbers. Some target species will include unusual loons, ducks, American White Pelicans, and possibly rare gulls. Chukar are occasionally seen in the basalt outcroppings here. Sign up early; space is limited.

**BRING:** Many layers of clothing for cold weather conditions, a lunch, and snacks. Scopes are welcome.

**MEET:** At 6:30 AM at Auburn Safeway at Auburn Way and Main St. Take Hwy. 18 to Auburn and exit at Auburn Way (Hwy 164). Turn north (right) on Auburn Way and drive three blocks north. Safeway sign and gas station will be on the left. Park in the Safeway lot just beyond the gas station. We will meet and carpool (promptly) from there.

**SIGN-UP:** Contact Charlie at (253) 468-4146 or c.wright7@comcast.net. Email is preferred..

## *Christmas Bird Count Opportunities*

**Saturday, December 15** (for Tahoma Audubon)

**Sunday, December 30** (for Rainier)

The first trip is for Tahoma Audubon, but is in our area. Call Carol Schulz, (206) 824-7618 to sign up. The second one is for Rainier Audubon. Call Nancy Streiffert, (253) 852-8394 to sign up. (See CBC article on page 3.) On both of these trips you will learn a LOT about birds, as you travel with an experienced birder. You don't have to know all the birds, but you will be asked to help the leader. This is your opportunity to help a good cause, and go on a birding trip too!

## *Point No Point*

**Saturday, January 19, 2008**

**7:00 AM to Late Afternoon**

**Leader: Carol Schulz**

**Assistant Leader: Guy McWethy**

Point No Point at the north end of the Kitsap Peninsula is known to attract rare seabirds. On this trip to a number of parks and beaches, we could see many species of alcids, including Marbled Murrelet, Ancient Murrelet, and maybe Thick-billed Murre, several loon species, waterfowl, forest birds, and much more. Guy has done a number of trips to this area and knows where to find the birds. This could be an exciting trip and a highlight for the winter season.

**BRING:** Warm clothes, lunch, snacks, and drinks. We may walk up to two miles on trails. Scopes are very welcome.

**MEET:** McDonald's Restaurant in Fife at 7:00 AM.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take I-5 to exit 137. Turn right, and get in the left lane. Turn left onto Hwy. 99 and drive to the second light. Turn left and drive back to McDonald's parking lot.

**SIGN-UP:** Call or email Carol Schulz, (206) 824-7618, linusq@att.net. Email is preferred.

## *Soos Creek, cont'd*

**SIGN-UP:** Call Kent Commons, Kent City Parks and Recreation, (253) 856-5000. This trip FILLS EARLY, so please register in advance. For further information, email or call Joe Miles, joe.miles@att.net or (253) 639-0123. Joe can answer your questions, but cannot arrange the sign-ups.

## *Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge*

**Saturday, January 26, 2008**

**7:30 AM to Early/Mid-Afternoon**

**Leader: Kathy Andrich**

Join Kathy for a trip to Nisqually where we will walk out to McAllister Creek and then to the Twin Barns and Nisqually overlook. We will look for wintering waterfowl, raptors, sparrows, and hopefully a bittern or an owl. If we have time, we will go to the Luhr Beach access. Dress for the weather, boots are a good idea, bring a scope if you have it. Bring lunch/snacks/beverages, and \$3. entry fee unless you have a pass.

**MEET:** 7:30 AM at the Hwy. 512 Park & Ride by McDonalds.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take I-5 south of Tacoma to exit 127 (Hwy 512). Turn right at the exit, and take an immediate left onto So. Tacoma Way. Travel half a block south, and turn left into the Park & Ride. Meet by McDonalds.

**SIGN-UP:** Call or email Kathy Andrich, chukarbird@yahoo.com or (206) 390-3159.

## *Soos Creek Owl Prowl*

**Saturday Night, February 23, 2008**

**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. This year the program is being sponsored by Kent City Recreation Dept.

**MEET:** At the Soos Creek Park Maintenance Shop. Soos Creek Park/Trail 24810 - 148th Ave. SE, Kent.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take James Street east from Kent. To reach James St, exit I-167 at Willis, turn east to Central, and north to James. Travel east on James as it becomes SE 240th St. After about four 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 a quarter-mile on the left at a barn and chainlink-fenced parking lot. (cont'd at left)



*While rain may or may not be your thing, birding in the Pacific Northwest can consistently be good throughout the year. Unlike some other northerly regions that*

*suffer a dearth of bird species for four or five months out of the year, it is possible to see well over 100 species in a day here, any day of the year. And it's shaping up to be a great winter in south King County! So even if the weather is dreary, don't forget to give yourself a chance to get out and see those good birds. One notable opportunity is our Christmas Bird Count, being held 30 December. See page 3 for details.*

A flock of around 15 swans (species uncertain) flew over Kent east hill 11/5 (LB). Seven **Trumpeter Swans** were at Smith Brothers 11/10 (KA/m.obs), with eight there 11/12 (CW). The flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Gene Coulon Park was tallied at 31 birds 11/4 (GH). A lone **Snow Goose** was with a flock of Cackling Geese at Boeing Ponds



SHORT-EARED OWL

11/5 (RO). That flock numbered at least 3,000 birds on 11/1 (CW). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was noted at Weyerhaeuser Pond 11/3 (GM). The elusive Kent Ponds (GRNRA) **Red-shouldered Hawk** (present since August 2006) was observed in bright adult plumage on 11/18 (RO/m.obs) and 11/20 in various snags on the site (MBr). A late migrant **Parasitic Jaeger** was seen from the Dash Point Pier 10/28 (SJ/m.obs). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was noted at Emerald Downs 10/21 (GH). A **Short-eared Owl** was seen on 11/10 at Boeing Ponds (GH/BM) and Kent Ponds (KA/CS/m.obs) .

Very unusual west of the Cascades, a **Black-billed Magpie** was spotted in Enumclaw 11/8 (TM). While magpies historically occurred on the west-side, this is the first report in around 10



BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE ©ENATURE.COM

years for King County. The first **Northern Shrike** of the year was observed near the old Longacres racetrack in Renton 11/5 (DS). Another shrike was at 287th St. 11/12 (CW). Two very misguided **Tropical Kingbirds** appeared along 287th St. in Kent/Auburn on 11/10 and at least one continued through 11/19 (m.obs). There were two other reports of Tropical Kingbirds in King County this fall, in Seattle and Redmond. A **Palm Warbler** was found at Boeing Ponds 10/21 (GH/BM). An **American Tree Sparrow** was found at Kent Ponds on 11/3 (Twtrs) and continued to be seen through at least 11/20 (MBr). A **White-throated Sparrow** was at Boeing Ponds 10/25 (GM) and one was on the Foothills Trail 11/10 (CW).

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OBSERVERS: KA-KATHY ANDRICH; TB-THAIS BOCK; MBA-MATT BARTELS; MBR-MARV BREECE; LB-LINDA BARTLETT; GH-GENE HUNN; SJ-STEVE JOHNSON; TM-TRISH MACLAREN; GM-GUY MCWETHY; BM-BRIEN MEILLEUR; CS-CAROL SCHULZ; DS-DAVID SLATER; CW-CHARLIE WRIGHT; TWTRS-TWEETERS; M.OBS.-MANY OBSERVERS.



## Going Birding?

Report your sightings to Charlie at (253) 862-0520 or email [c.wright7@comcast.net](mailto:c.wright7@comcast.net).



# The Quizzical Owl

by *Thais Bock*

1. What high-flying goose has been recorded at 29,000 ft?
2. Both Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes winter in Puget Sound; which species is less than one-fifth the breeding population of the other?
3. Name the only two predatory songbirds in North America.
4. What is North America's smallest goose?
5. The word "accipiter" translates to a \_\_\_\_\_ (two words)

ANSWERS ARE UPSIDE DOWN BELOW

## Emerald Downs is the Winter Home of Ursula the Falcon

By Roger Orness

Ursula was a young wandering fledgling when I first met her. I learned of her birthplace from an identification band she wore on her left leg. It was put there by a fellow falcon aficionado who, like me, is curious about what juvenile Peregrine Falcons do and where they go after leaving their nest. I named her Ursula for her band U/I.



PEREGRINE FALCON "URSULA"  
©ED DEAL

A Peregrine is larger than a crow and smaller than a Red-tailed Hawk. They fly very fast so they can catch birds in flight from starlings to ducks. Some migrate as far south as South America, while others prefer our winter climate and some remain in the Puget Sound area all year around to breed. Race track stables attract birds and that is the main reason Ursula is here. She is not fazed by a loud northbound train whistle, or from a low-flying airplane directly overhead, because this is her winter home and she has returned to the Emerald Downs race track every fall for the last nine years.

Her job while in town is to train the local prey birds how to fly faster and avoid her sharp talons. The

slower birds will learn the hard way. She will chase away the Red-tailed Hawks that try to move into her territory, and they pretty much give her a majority of the space, keeping to the south. She will likely stay until spring when she again migrates back to her nest site, which is unknown and remains her secret. The time may come when we learn more about her breeding grounds (presumed to be somewhere north of here) because of the latest electronics gadgetry now available.

With her cooperation, a solar powered transmitter could be attached, which would provide the Falcon Research Group a definitive window into her life cycle. Perhaps her mate could be displaying a similar I.D. band and if so, his leg band would reveal his birthplace and any history of his

sightings.

The Falcon Research Group (FRG) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support of field research, public education and the conservation of raptors. FRG is directed by raptor biologist Bud Anderson and is based in Bow, WA. You can learn much more about current field research online at [www.frg.org](http://www.frg.org). They are currently tracking other migrating peregrines from north of Canada to South America and the website also lists local projects.

Ursula's future welfare rests on her ability to adapt to the ever-changing environment around her and she appears to be doing quite well for now. Hopefully she will provide this observer many more years of enjoyment, filling journals with descriptions of her antics during her stay in Auburn.

*Roger Orness is a retired Boeing designer and will be co-presenter of Rainier's December program on Peregrine Falcons.*



## Bug of the Month: Earwig



Consider the earwig, that glossy brown insect that looks like it carries its own bottle opener. That bottle opener attachment is known to entomologists as cerci, and the cerci of female earwigs are straighter than the curved cerci that identify the males. Although we have several native species, our common garden variety is the European earwig that arrived in North America in 1912. In general, earwigs are nocturnal and feed on flowers, hunt other insects, survive as scavengers, or use all of these strategies. Birds love earwigs and eat them like candy. So, where did that name come from anyway? The commonly accepted explanation is that it came from the Old English name, *eare wicga*.

# Build a Rain Garden in Your Yard

By Nancy Hertzfel

In the natural world, rainfall is trapped in wetlands, depressions, potholes, etc. and seeps slowly into the earth; but in the developed world, our buildings and cities have been constructed in a way that treats rainwater as waste. Rain runs off our rooftops, sidewalks, and driveways, collecting pollution along the way, then drains into the street and down the sewer, a process which causes erosion, water pollution, and flooding, and reduces the supply of groundwater. Constructing a rain garden is a way for homeowners to interrupt this process and make a difference for the environment.

A rain garden imitates the natural world, capturing rain runoff in a depression in your yard, where it will slowly filter into the earth, rather than run off into a storm sewer. For roof runoff, a gutter extension can be added to the end of your gutter and buried in a trench in the yard, to carry the runoff to your rain garden. Each yard is unique and each homeowner can come up with his/her own design to carry the rain runoff to the little pond, as well as to landscape the pond itself. Your rain garden can be planted with water-loving native plants to make it attractive as well as functional, and you can add whatever you want to support birds and bugs, such as a bird bath. It is a wonderful, easy, almost maintenance-free way to reduce polluted runoff and recharge the groundwater supply at the same time.

The folks at Shadow Lake Bog, always on the leading edge of environmental preservation, have installed a rain garden at the bog (pictured, below) and encourage anyone wanting to see what one looks like, or to get information on constructing one, to come by. They had help with their rain garden from the folks in a UW Bothell Global Environmental Science Course.



## Rainier Audubon Society

*Rainier Audubon Society is the Washington State South King County Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, and to protect birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and biological diversity in South King County and the world we live in.*

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\* ALSO SERVES AS A BOARD MEMBER

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A one-year membership in Rainier Audubon Society includes nine issues of the Heron Herald newsletter; participation in all our field trips and activities; and fun monthly membership meetings. Plus, we'll add you to our email listserv, so you'll get all the latest information online. (Make checks payable to Rainier Audubon.)

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

RAINIER AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 778  
Auburn, WA 98071

To join National Audubon, please visit their website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

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