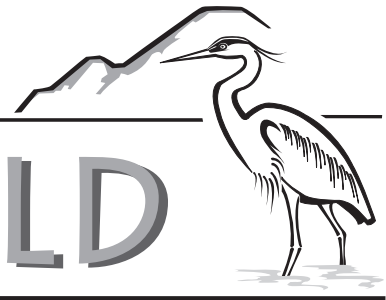


THE HERON HERALD



Rainier Audubon Society

January 2010

Monday, January 18, 2010, at 7:00 PM
Rainier Audubon Presents

Christi Norman — The Great Washington State Birding Trail

Question: String together every Washington birder's favorite birding place and what do you get? Answer: The Great Washington State Birding Trail.

Christi Norman runs Audubon's Great Washington State Birding Trail Program. She will be at our January meeting to give a presentation on the trail system. Along with the PUGET SOUND LOOP and the PALOUSE TO PINES LOOP, the other maps of the birding trail are the COULEE CORRIDOR, and the CASCADE, SOUTHWEST, OLYMPIC, and SUN AND SAGE LOOPS.

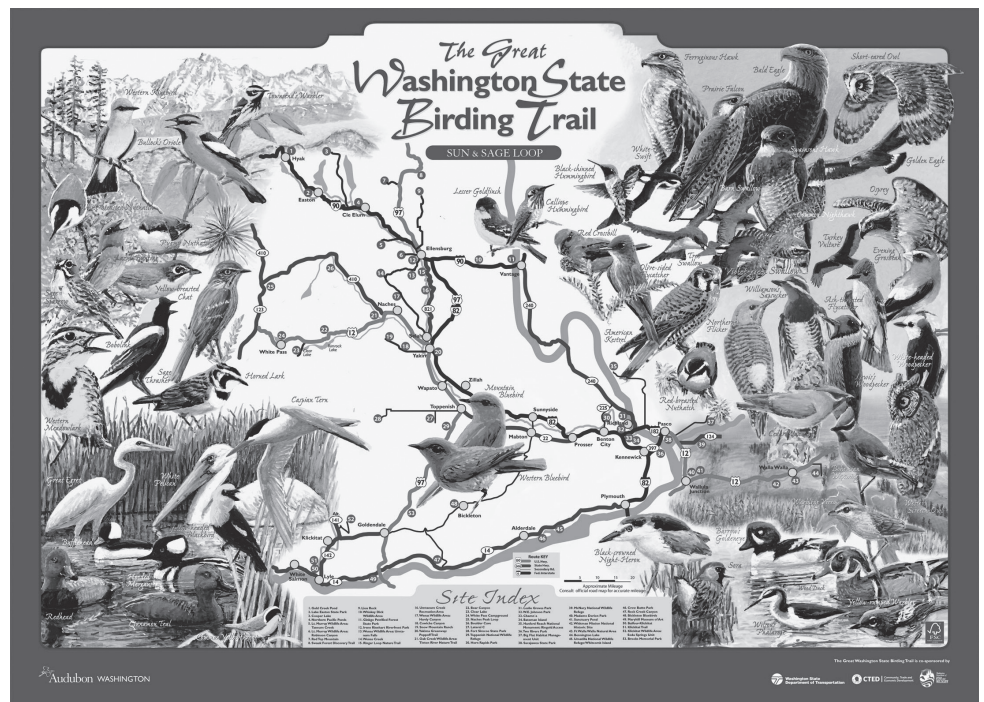
Why a birding trail in Washington? Because bird watching is our fastest-growing outdoor recreation; 46 million Americans watch birds. Birds are also good for business; America's birders spend \$30 billion a year including \$10 billion on travel. Research shows that every 100 new bird watchers create one new full-time job, generate \$2,500 in revenue, and return \$2,600 in taxes.

Christi will elaborate on the purpose

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.



and goals of the birding trails, as well as the benefits of having one, financial, environmental, and cultural.

“Each loop of the birding trail is a strand of nature’s gems,” said Christi. “Every site on each of our five – soon to be six – maps represents important habitat for our resident or migrating birds.”

After the eastern Washington map (PALOUSE TO PINES LOOP) is unveiled at the Capitol in late January, it’ll be time to begin the seventh route, the map that will complete the birding trail across Washington: the PUGET SOUND LOOP.

In 1995, Christi helped start Seattle Audubon’s Neighborhood Bird program, a citizen-science effort by

48 volunteers that conducts ongoing annual bird censuses. She directed the Wetnet program at Seattle Audubon for four years before joining Audubon Washington in 1997. She has also managed the production and publication of five books and guides.

This will be a terrific program for anyone who enjoys bird watching, wildlife viewing, and taking in the best natural sights of Washington. We invite everyone to join us as we welcome Christi with the new year and a new look at birding trails. As always, good conversation and refreshments available before, during, and following the program.

President's Message — by Nancy Streiffert

Happy New Year! While it is imperceptible to me yet, the days are actually getting longer! That is encouraging, as it is the dark that seems most difficult for me at this time of year, not the cold or rain. I hope everyone enjoyed whatever holiday festivities they indulged in and are now eager to put those New Year's resolutions into action. Maybe one of those resolutions is to attend more nature-centered events — like Rainier membership meetings to hear fascinating tales of the world's amazing birds and animals and see beautiful slides of far away places or those right in our own backyards! Or maybe to hone your bird ID skills by joining our experienced leaders on birding trips or taking a class. Or learning more about how our local, state, and federal governments affect birding by their actions concerning habitat, toxins, all kind of regulations, logging, etc. and how we can influence their decisions.

Whatever your plans for 2010, I hope you will continue to be a part of Rainier Audubon and to support our various programs.



Happy
New Year!

Thank You to All Our CBC Participants!

Thank you to all those who took part in the 2009/2010 Kent/Auburn Christmas Bird Count! A wonderful time was had by all, and we at Rainier Audubon appreciate everyone's involvement, whether you were out in the field or at home watching your feeders.

Information about the numbers and species seen, as well as the names of participants, will be published in the February *Heron Herald*.



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*Also serves as Board member

RAINIER AUDUBON SOCIETY
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website: www.RainierAudubon.org
email: info@RainierAudubon.org

Field Trips — by Carol Schulz

Local Hotspots

Saturday, January 23, 2010
8:30 AM to Early Afternoon
Leader: Carol Schulz

We'll go to wherever the birds are in local areas. We may walk up to one mile. We will be looking for hawks, ducks and geese, and more. We may explore some new areas.

BRING: Warm clothes, lunch and snacks, hot drinks, and water. Scopes are welcome.

MEET: 8:30 AM at the Kent-Des Moines P&R. (People who wish to leave early may bring their own cars.)
DIRECTIONS: Take I-5 to exit 149. Go east on Kent-Des Moines Rd approximately one block to Military Rd. Turn left (north) 1/2 block on Military Rd. The Park & Ride is on the left.
SIGN UP: Call or email Carol at (206) 824-7618, carol.schulz50@gmail.com (*This is Carol's NEW email address.*)

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.

Soos Creek Owl Prowl
Saturday Night, January 30, 2010
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. Travel 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; he can answer your questions but cannot arrange sign-ups. (253) 639-0123 or joe.miles@att.net.



Soos Creek Owl Prowl
Saturday Night, February 27, 2010
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.
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A Monumental Fraud

by Nancy Streiffert

You meet the nicest people while hosting a Rainier Audubon table! In September, I hosted a table at Thunder Mountain Nursery in Enumclaw. A woman stopped by and mentioned that her sister (sister-in-law?) was a famous writer who had solved an ornithological mystery! She referred me to an article in the *New Yorker* magazine of May 29, 2006, by John Seabrook. Intrigued, I found the magazine and read the article. This is a summary of the amazing story, and it's worth reading the article in full!

Pamela Rasmussen grew up near Portland, Oregon. When she was eight, her mother gave her Oliver Austin's *Birds of the World*, and an ornithologist was born. Pamela earned a master's degree in biology and went on to study for a PhD at the University of Kansas.

She began working as an assistant to S. Dillon Ripley, former secretary of the Smithsonian. Ripley had written a 10-volume tome on the birds of India, and now was writing the definitive field guide of the birds of India, making use of the tens of thousands of specimens in collections in the U.S, Great Britain, and India. When Ripley became too ill to continue, Rasmussen took over the project.

One of the most prominent collectors of birds at the time was Richard Meinertzhagen, who had been a British intelligence officer during World War I and later became something of a birding superhero. He had been to remote corners of the world and collected birds no one else

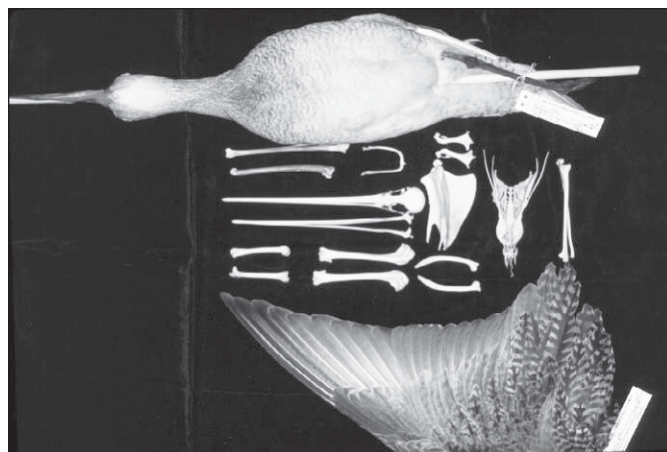
had seen before. So great was Meinertzhagen's reputation that he had become the sole authority for 14 species and subspecies of birds in India. He was tall, handsome, had a commanding presence, and was known and trusted by Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, David Ben Gurion, and a great many others. Three biographies were written about him and a square in Jerusalem was dedicated to his memory.

As Rasmussen studied bird skins, she encountered rumors that Meinertzhagen had possibly committed fraud with some of the bird skins he claimed to have collected and prepared. Alan Knox of the British Natural History Museum pointed out to her that each collector had his own technique in preparing skins, and that it was possible to tell who had prepared a skin simply by examining it and noting the technique.

Working with Robert Prys-Jones, also of the Natural History Museum, Rasmussen spent years in detailed work, examining skins, and was eventually able to prove that Meinertzhagen had indeed committed fraud. In fact, he was one of the most monumental scientific frauds of all time. He had stolen bird skins from museums that had trusted him and that had bowed to his reputation and allowed him

unsupervised access to their rare collections. He had relabeled the skins as his own and claimed to have taken them from different locations. With patience and perseverance, Rasmussen was able to track down the true collectors and locations. As Alan Knox said, "Meinertzhagen had stolen the best specimens of other people's collections and then proceeded to fabricate data to go with them." More recent research by Rasmussen and Prys-Jones indicates that the fraud was even more extensive than first thought.

Pamela Rasmussen is currently an assistant professor of zoology at Michigan State University.



References

New Yorker magazine, 29 May 2006.

Garfield, Brian. *The Meinertzhagen Mystery: The Life and Legend of a Colossal Fraud*

www.Wikipedia.com: Meinertzhagen.

Mewsings from Millie

Note: 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! Please read on to find out what I have overheard, seen, learned about or wondered about over the last few weeks.

Shortly after last month's elections, the housekeeper for Seattle's newly-elected city attorney, Pete Holmes, came into the store and purchased a squirrel coffee mug for him. I guess he's nutty about his squirrels!

I've mentioned before that my people leave the radio on for me when they are not in the store. I love listening to the relaxing music, but I also enjoy learning interesting things on KPLU's Birdnote.

Recently, I learned about small, diving ducks called Buffleheads. Buffleheads return from the boreal forests of Canada and Alaska every year to spend the winter in our waters. Buffleheads have many nicknames including little black and white duck, bumblebee duck, buffalo-headed duck, butterball and spirit duck. They nest almost exclusively in holes excavated by Northern Flickers and on occasion by Pileated Woodpeckers. Unlike most ducks, the Bufflehead is mostly monogamous, often remaining with the same mate for several years.

I also learned that the eyes of the Bald Eagle are one of the most sensitive of any animal and may weigh more than the eagle's brain! The secret to its exceptional vision is in the retina which may have five times the density of rods and cones compared to a human eye.

An eagle can spot the slightest movement of a rabbit from over a mile away!



Speaking of eyes, did you know that many birds sleep with one eye open so that predators cannot approach without being detected?

One of the store's customers who lives in Des Moines near the waters of beautiful Puget Sound came in and was chatting about the albino hummingbird that visited for about a month during

the summer. One of my people went online to find out about albino hummingbirds and sure enough, they have been seen! A few have even been banded. The Hummingbird Society wants to know if you are lucky enough to spot one of these rarest of birds. If you do, send your report and if possible, a photo, to rhawkins@hbs.org. Unfortunately, although she tried, the customer was not able to get a picture of the little white jewel.

And now it's time for this month's collective nouns that describe groups of birds: a RAFFLE of turkeys, a FLING of sandpipers, a SCOLD of jays, a LUTE of mallards and a KETTLE of hawks.

Finally, if an average man had a metabolism comparable to that of a hummingbird, he would need to eat 285 pounds of hamburger *every day* to maintain his weight!

Until next time,

— Millie, the Muse of Mews



Leucistic Anna's Hummingbird in Maple Valley. August 2009.
Photo by Dan Streiffert

Leucistic: Reduced pigmentation
Albinistic: Lack of pigmentation



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