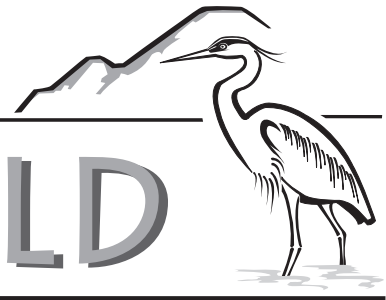


THE HERON HERALD



Rainier Audubon Society

March 2010

Monday, March 15, at 7:00 PM
Rainier Audubon Presents

Birds of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Presentation and Photos by Dan Streiffert

The premier wetlands and varied terrain of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge are a birder's paradise. The refuge is host to an incredible concentration of birds, including ibis, pelicans, cranes, shorebirds, herons, and waterfowl. Photographer Dan Streiffert has visited the refuge four times in the past three years.

In spring, the land birds are in full song in the surrounding foothills, pine forest, and deserts, including colorful Lazuli Buntings, Bullock's Orioles, and Western Tanagers. In May, most of the action takes place near Burns, Oregon, about 30 miles north of Malheur NWR. This time of year, the farmers flood their fields in hopes of getting a single early cutting of hay. This attracts Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, Sandhill Cranes, stilts, avocets, and much more. By June, the snowmelt from Steen's Mountain is flooding the refuge and the songbird migration is in full swing.

This is probably one of the best areas for bird photography in the Pacific Northwest, and Dan is one of the best bird photographers we know. Come enjoy the show!



Spring ACOW Canceled

The 2010 Spring ACOW has been canceled due to insufficient registrations. As of Feb. 15, our deadline, we had 29 registrations in hand, plus two that we knew were in the mail. We might have received a few more over the next week or so, but this was still far from the 40 minimum requirement. We get more turnout than this at our monthly meetings, so it is hard to justify a three day conference with multiple speakers and expensive facilities for this number of participants.

We will be returning the registration checks. Those of you who have made hotel reservations should cancel them ASAP to avoid any penalties.

It is clear to us that the idea of a biannual three-day conference during these tough economic times needs to be revisited. The decision about how to do this should rightfully be made by all of the interested parties. An alternative one-day meeting is currently being organized to discuss this.

(continued on page 3)



Ross's Geese at Malheur. Photo by Dan Streiffert

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.

Field Trips — by Carol Schulz

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.

Spring Birding at Local Parks
Saturday, March 20
8:00 AM to Early Afternoon
Leader: Carol Schulz

This should be an excellent time of year to observe bird activity and listen to bird song at local parks. We will start at Hylebos Wetlands Park in Federal Way, then travel to Dumas Bay, and visit other local parks and beaches. We may walk up to two miles.
BRING: Lunch, snacks, and drinks. Bring a scope if you have one.
MEET: 8:00 AM at South Federal Way Park & Ride. We will carpool, but those who wish to leave early may bring their own cars.
DIRECTIONS: Take I-5 to the Hwy. 18 exit. Turn west. Hwy. 18 becomes So. 348th St. The Park & Ride is at 901 So. 348th (three lights west on 348th).
SIGN-UP: Contact Carol by email at carol.schulz50@gmail.com or by phone at 206-824-7618.

Ellensburg to Yakima Canyon
Sunday, April 11
6:30 AM to Early Evening
Leader: Roger Orness
Assistant Leader: Carol Schulz

We will travel roads and visit trails near Ellensburg and Yakima Canyon that are featured in *A Birder's Guide to Washington*. We'll look for hawks, falcons, eagles, sparrows, bluebirds, and more. This is a chance to see beautiful country and lots of bird species. A hike up Umtanum Creek Trail from the suspension bridge in Yakima Canyon will be a special treat. We may walk up to one-and-a-half miles on a rocky trail. If you don't wish to hike, there are good birds and nice scenery at the Umtanum Recreation area by the suspension bridge.
BRING: Lunch, snacks, and drinks. Hiking boots or sturdy shoes are recommended. Scopes are welcome.
MEET: BEFORE 6:30 AM at the Auburn Safeway store at Auburn Way and Main St. We will leave at 6:35!
DIRECTIONS: Take Hwy. 18 to Auburn and exit at Auburn Way (Hwy 164). Turn north (right) on Auburn Way and drive three blocks. Safeway sign and gas station will be on the left. Park in the Safeway lot just beyond the gas station and straight out from the Safeway door. We will meet and carpool (promptly) from there.
SIGN UP: Contact Roger at r.orness@comcast.net or by phone at (253) 922-7516. Email is preferred.

Circumnavigate Bainbridge Island Boat Trip
Sunday, March 21, 10:00 AM
Winslow City Docks, Cost: \$65
Leader: George Gerdt

Join expert birder and naturalist George Gerdt aboard the 80-foot catamaran "Admiral Pete" as it travels the waters around Bainbridge Island. This boat is suited for wildlife viewing, with a P.A system and excellent viewing from outside decks or from comfortable inside seating. Expect great looks at cormorants, loons (including Pacific Loon), sea ducks (including Long-tailed Duck), shorebirds, and wonderful scenery. George leads tours for Kitsap Audubon, and has conducted this boat tour annually for several years. The trip leaves the Winslow City Dock at 10:00 AM and returns at 1:30 PM. Call or email George for a brochure and sign-up form. You will need to send a check for \$65 to reserve your spot. Call or email SOON!
SIGNUP: Call George at (206) 842-8138, or email geopandion@aol.com

Field Trips — by Carol Schulz

Spring ACOW

Canceled

(continued from page 1)

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.



Some observations from the current list of registrations:

√ Fewer than half of those registered signed up for Sunday field trips. It is clear that many find it hard to commit three days to a conference such as this, and several indicated they would only come for Friday or Saturday.

√ Nineteen signed up for the Friday Conservation meeting, six for the Education Meeting.

√ We never finalized anything with the Board of Stewards. It is very expensive to reserve a conference room for only 12 folks (assuming we were to have 12), so we suggested they meet on Friday afternoon, but we never got a response about this.

It is very important that we all continue discussions on how to keep this organization functioning.

It May Have Been a Cold Winter, but the Global Thermometer is Still Climbing

From Union of Concerned Scientists

The Earth's average temperature is continuing to rise, regardless of the fact that some parts of the United States have been experiencing an atypically cold winter.

The U.S. land area covers only about two percent of the Earth's surface, which means that even when much of the United States is cold, most of the rest of the world may be warmer. This winter, for example, many Americans are experiencing extreme cold, but the oceans and much of the rest of the world are much warmer than usual. Overall, the past ten years have been the warmest on record globally. Here at home, the continental United States record daily highs have exceeded record daily lows by a margin of two to one from 2000 to 2009.



Burning coal, oil, and gas, and destroying forests overloads the atmosphere with excess carbon dioxide, adding to heat-trapping gases that already are present in the atmosphere. Combined, these gases act like a blanket covering the earth. The human contribution to this effect is unmistakable. The part of the atmosphere where excess carbon dioxide accumulates has expanded and warmed dramatically in recent years, precisely during the period when emissions from human activity have increased.

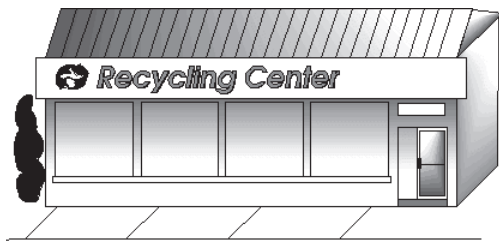
President's Message — by Nancy Streiffert

I hope the sun has come out by the time you read this! After 37 years here, I don't complain about rain — it makes me stay inside (at least when it is a real downpour) and get other things done! But I feel like it is teasing me this week — sunny while I'm at work, pouring when I am at home and ready to get outside!

Since the Washington state legislature is in session right now and my email is full of pleas and opportunities to influence our legislators by writing letters or emails, calling, or attending special sessions in Olympia, I want to take this opportunity to share a sort of parable with you, which was passed on to me by a good friend.

A river ran past a small village. One day the villagers noticed that there was a small child floating down the river, crying

for help. A brave villager jumped in the river and swam out and saved the child, bringing it to shore where it was adopted and cared for. The next day, there were three children floating past. Again, brave villagers jumped in, saved the children, and cared for them. As time passed, more and more children were floating down the



river, and the brave villagers did their best to rescue and care for them but were sometimes overwhelmed and could not help all of them. Things were becoming desperate in the village, so a meeting

was called. Many ideas were suggested, from erecting a huge net to catch all the children, to training dogs to help, and asking neighboring villagers to adopt some of the children.

Finally, a very old, wise woman who seldom spoke up, rose quietly. "Let

us travel up the river and find out how the children are falling into the river and prevent that happening." And so they did.

My friend used this parable to remind people that, although it may not be fun or glamorous or get instant results, sometimes "going up the river" to prevent problems is as important as working to clean up messes that have already been made. An example I can think of is outlawing the sale of invasive English ivy in Washington (as it is in Oregon), which could help prevent the continued use of ivy in landscaping where it eventually flowers and spreads to wild areas from which groups like ours spend endless years removing it! Decreasing our dependence on cars by improving mass transit may help diminish global climate change and will decrease congestion. There are many other examples!

Please consider writing to or calling your legislators to let them know what you think about energy, clean air, coal-fired power plants, endangered species, or any other issue you are interested in or passionate about!

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*Also serves as Board member

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

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 once again and welcome back to my musings! I've heard and learned some interesting things over the last few weeks and would love to share them with you.

For instance, one of the many wonderful places right here in our own backyard is West Hylebos Wetlands Park. Located in Federal Way, the 150-acre park boasts old growth forest and a marvelous boardwalk that winds through a variety of habitats. One hundred and fourteen bird species have been seen there and there are 62 different kinds of plants including swamp violet, bog orchid, and wild azalea. Visit the Friends of Hylebos website at <http://hylebos.org>.

One bird that never ceases to amaze me is the Great Blue Heron. These magnificent birds are very common to our region and can be found in marshes, ponds, estuaries, fields, rivers, lakes, the Puget Sound shoreline, and unfortunately, backyards with koi ponds! They forage by standing or walking slowly. A Great Blue can swallow fish many times wider than its own neck. They also eat frogs, salamanders, turtles, snakes, insects, rodents, and even small birds! Great Blues average four feet tall with a six-foot wingspan, yet only weigh five to six pounds. Their average flight speed is 25 miles per hour. Great Blue Herons will often re-use a nest. The male brings sticks to the female, who weaves them in. Older nests are generally larger, as they have been



repaired and added-to over the years. The Great Blue Heron is the official bird of the city of Seattle.

Many birds migrate in flocks, but some species migrate alone. A juvenile hummingbird that has never migrated before knows when to fly, where to fly, how far to fly, and when to stop all on its own!

Speaking of migration, the term does not always mean north in the spring and south in the winter. Some species, such as rosy finches and ptarmigans, migrate to higher elevations in the spring and down to lower elevations in the winter. If there is sufficient food on their breeding grounds, American Robins and a host of finches and owls won't migrate at all and will remain where they spent their summer.

We all know how important water is for drinking but for birds it is also very important for cleaning feathers. This helps keep birds healthy and allows for optimum flying ability. Birds are smart, too! They will drink from a heated bird bath, but if the temperature is below freezing, they know not to bathe in it and get their feathers wet.

And finally, I'll leave you with a few more words for describing groups of birds: a SIEGE of herons, a DRUM of goldfinches, a PARLIAMENT of owls and a COIL of wigeon.

Take care until next time and continue enjoying our feathered friends.

— Millie, the Muse of Mews

Upcoming King Conservation District Vote

King Conservation District (KCD) is holding an election on March 16th for a position on its Board of Supervisors. KCD is King County's primary agent of conservation programs and initiatives. KCD is funded through a \$10 annual tax of every property owner in King County, equating to about \$6.3 million a year. These funds are used to protect environmental quality

and public health through on-the-ground projects with landowners, businesses, and agencies. You can influence the conservation strategies adopted in King County by visiting your nearest polling station on the March 16th election day. For more information on the election and how to support conservation with your vote, visit the KCD website (www.kingcd.org).



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