

The

Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

October 2011

October General Membership Meeting
Monday October 17, 2011 7:00 p.m.
Federal Way United Methodist Church

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

A short history and the volunteer experience.

Jerry Broadus

Jerry Broadus is a member of the Tahoma Audubon Society and has been a volunteer at Nisqually NWR for seven years. He started volunteering at Malheur NWR in 2010.

The main project that he worked on is to be a participant in a weekly survey of a set route, from Diamond to highway 205 to Krumbo Reservoir, to count birds to establish a base line concerning possible impacts from a proposed power line across the refuge, which would be part of a proposed wind farm on Steens Mtn. The survey data, according to the refuge biologist, has now been sent in for the latest version of the EIS. He also



does fall migration surveys, and in September, 2011 is doing production counts (counting newly fledged birds).

He will present a slide show depicting the history of the Malheur NWR, from the ranching days to today's birding wonderland. Jerry will explain and show photos of the wildlife, the scenery of the area, and the volunteer experience. The photos will depict the spring and fall seasons, and will show what it is like to do bird surveys on the refuge. The slides will feature Jerry, and other volunteers including his wife, Clarice, and Susan Wineke and Shep Thorp; as well as the bird life.

Jerry has been birding for over 20 years, all over the world. He has been an active volunteer in various wildlife oriented activities, including banding at a MAPS station, banding raptors in Mexico, helping USGS with shorebird studies, and general volunteering at National Wildlife Refuges. His first refuge volunteer experience was at Midway Island. Since then he has been active with bird and vegetation surveys at Nisqually, and bird surveys at Malheur.

Join us at 6:30 for refreshments and conversation.

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.

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.

President's Message by ???

2011 Christmas Bird Count

Rainier Audubon Society's 2011 Christmas Bird Count will actually take place on January 1, 2012! What a great way to greet the New Year! If you are an all night party-goer, just head to your designated area and greet the new dawn with the birds! (You might have to change your clothes and grab your binoculars!)

Our Christmas Bird Count is just one of thousands around the U.S., Canada, Mexico and other areas that take place in late December/early January every year. Citizen scientists – that's you when you participate – contribute to the huge database at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that is used by researchers, wildlife and habitat managers and interested



citizens to improve the welfare of avian species.

Our expert birders will be leading small teams within our "count circle", an area that stretches from south Renton, west to Maple Valley, south to the Pierce County line and around to Puget Sound. Beginner and intermediate birders are welcome – it is a great way to learn more about birds, spotting and listening techniques and "hot spots" for winter birds. Everyone's input is welcome.

We will gather at the church after the day's count for a potluck dinner while we warm up, dry off, if necessary, and swap stories about our finds. Charlie Wright will highlight our species list and Mark Freeland will, later, collate all the data to send to Cornell.

A map of our count circle and more information will be available at our next meetings. Questions? Nancy Streiffert [253-796-2203](tel:253-796-2203) or nancy_streiffert@hotmail.com

RAINIER AUDUBON OFFICERS

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Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
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Board Member	Erin Wojewodski-Prinsen*	425-432-9965
Board Member	Alex Juchems*	253-529-8996

*Also serves as Board Member.

Board meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM in the church conference room and are open to all members.

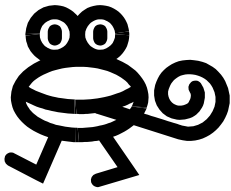
HELP WANTED!

Rainier Audubon's Christmas Bird Count coordinator, Nancy Streiffert, would like help coordinating this year's event with the purpose of having someone take over the position next year. Most of the job is done by email with some phoning. The coordination is finished by the day of the event so you can still participate in the count. Please call or email if you are interested. Nancy Streiffert [253-796-2203](tel:253-796-2203) nancy_streiffert@hotmail.com

Audubon Council of Washington (ACOW)

October 8, 2011—Moses Lake

15th Annual Frog Frolic



Thanks to over 40 outstanding volunteers and contributors at Shadow Lake Nature Preserve, the 15th Annual Frog Frolic treated over 200 guests to great music, food, drinks, family activities, guided tours, raffle & silent auction! Mark & Adele Freeland, representing Rainier Audubon Society with an educational display, were flanked by organizations such as Puget Sound Mycological Society, Cedar Grove Compost, Friends of Cedar River and Middle Green River Coalition.

Save Habitat And Diversity Of Wetlands (SHADOW) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the sustainability of Shadow Lake Bog and other unique habitats within Jenkins Creek Basin through education and preservation. Shadow Lake Nature Preserve offers almost 2 miles of easy nature trails, 90 acres of unique forest & wetland habitat, and educational programs year round.

We are seeking amateur birders and native plant enthusiasts to help provide their expertise on guided tours every 1st Saturday of the month, and fill volunteer positions at Outdoor Preschool Nov 2-4. For more volunteer opportunities and events, visit www.shadowhabitat.org.



Sign up for our new Google Group!

We have recently created a new group to serve as an email list server for Rainier Audubon. The intent of this site is to assist in publicizing our activities members and the general public relating to our club activities. Anyone may join or leave the group at any time. You may sign up on our website or at:

<http://groups.google.com/group/ras-activites?hl=en>

Open Volunteer Positions

- RAS Chairperson
 - Publicity Chair
 - Brown Bag Auction Coordinator—Nov. 21, 2011
 - December Cookie Exchange Coordinator—Dec. 19, 2011
 - Christmas Bird Count Coordinator
 - Seen & Heard Column Coordinator for Heron Herald
- Please contact a Board member if you are interested in any of these positions.



Field Trips by Carol Schulz

Weekly Birdwalks at Nisqually

Wednesdays 8:00 am to Noon
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 visitor's 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. Some may choose to continue on the new boardwalk extension which goes out toward the mouth of McAlister Creek. It has benches and covered viewing areas. The walk totals 2.0 miles roundtrip to the boardwalk extension. The extension adds an additional 2.0 miles total, so the whole walk including the boardwalk extension is now 4.0 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 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.

Beaches And Parks - Fall Color and Fall Birds

Saturday, October 15
8:00 AM to Early-afternoon
Leader: Steve Johnson.

Visit picturesque beaches and parks in King County and Pierce County during a great time of year to look for returning fall birds. We'll travel to Lake Fenwick, Weyerhaeuser Pond, and to local parks and beaches along Puget Sound, searching for many species of sea birds and forest birds. This a good time of year

to see scenic views and fall color. Expect to walk short distances from the cars.

People who wish to leave early may do so.

Bring: Lunch, a thermos and drinks, and warm clothes. A scope is very welcome.

Meet: 8:00 AM at the Star Lake P&R north of Federal Way.

Directions: Take I-5 to exit 147 north of Federal Way.

Exit onto S. 272nd St, and go west one block to the light. Turn right and go one block into the P&R on the right.

Sign-Up: Call or email Steve Johnson, (253) 941-9852, johnsonsi5@msn.com.



Fife and Commencement Bay

Mid-Week Field Trip
Tuesday, October 18
9:00 AM to Mid Afternoon
Leader: Shep Thorp

Join advanced birder Shep Thorp as he takes us to good birding areas in Fife and Tacoma. Some of these areas are new to our Audubon members. Shep is a great leader and will help us see and ID the birds.

We will visit Gog-Le-Hi-Te for Thayer's Gulls and shorebirds. From there we hope to visit Fife Ponds and Hylebos Creek areas. Depending on time, weather, and energy levels, we will check in on the Hylebos bridge area, and the new Memorial Park beach access on Commencement Bay. On the bay, we'll look for cormorants, gulls, Turnstones, and alcids. A nice end to the trip might be checking out Julia's Gulch for hawks and song birds. We may walk up to 1 1/2 miles.

Bring: Walking shoes or boots, warm clothes, water, and lunch. Scopes are welcome.

Meet: McDonald's in Fife at 9:00am to carpool. Those who wish to leave the trip early may do so.

Directions: Take I-5 to exit 137. Turn right & get into the left lane. Turn left (toward Tacoma), and go two blocks on hwy 99. Turn left at the light and drive about 1/2 block to McDonalds.

Sign-up: Email or call Shep Thorp, tanwaxlake@comcast.net, 253-370-3742.

Birding ID - Lakes and Beaches Near Federal Way

Saturday, October 29
8:30 AM to 1:00 PM
Leader: Carol Schulz

Join us on this special field trip open to all. This trip will be educational and fun for both beginning and intermediate birders. Special emphasis will be on birding ID.

Rainier is not teaching a class this year, but on this trip you will learn a lot of what we teach in the class. You will receive a handout called "Identifying Unknown Species in the Field". It will include the "secrets" to narrowing down your choices. Just what bird is it that you are seeing? Can you describe it to someone else? At the end of the field trip we will fill out a checklist of the birds we saw. It's a lot of fun, and helps you understand bird books, and bird families. You will also learn about good birding spots in our local areas. This is a great trip for experienced birders too.

Bring: Bird Book field guide, binoculars (if you have them), pencil and small note tablet. Dress warm for the weather. It is always cold on these trips because we are near water, and we stop for periods of time. Wear layers, and hiking boots or old shoes. Bring hot drinks or water, and lunch or snacks.

Meet: 8:30am at Marista's Coffee/ Qdoba Mexican Grill in Safeway lot on the SW corner of 320th and Highway 99 at 8:30am in Federal Way. Please arrive a little early.

Directions: From I-5, take S 320th St west past hwy 99 about 1 block. Turn left into Safeway parking lot. Marista's/ Qdoba is close to 320th.

Sign-up: Email or call Carol Schulz, carol.schulz50@gmail.com, 206-824-7618.

Fun Facts About Nuthatches

The name Nuthatch probably results from the corruption of the word "nuthack" which refers to its habit of hacking away at a seed with its beak until the seed opens.

- Brown-headed and Pygmy Nuthatches favor living among pine trees; Red-breasted Nuthatches specialize in spruce and fir trees, and White-breasted Nuthatches favor mature deciduous forests.

- White-breasted Nuthatches will often store seeds for retrieval later in the same day or as a quick source of food for the next morning.

- The White-breasted Nuthatch is a common bird of deciduous forests and wooded urban areas. Known as the "upside down" bird, it is often observed creeping headfirst down tree trunks while searching cracks and crevices for insect food.

- A nuthatch's foot has one big toe (the hallux) that faces backward, while its other three toes face forward. It is able to walk head first down the trunks of trees by moving only one foot at a time while the hallux toe on the other foot holds firmly to the bark.

- The White-breasted Nuthatch is a common visitor of bird feeders. It typically takes a single sunflower seed and flies to a nearby tree, wedges the seed into the bark and hacks it open with repeated blows from its bill.

- In a study of the White-breasted Nuthatch's seed caching behavior; it was found that they selected unshelled sunflower seeds approximately 25% more often than seeds still in the shell. It appears that this preference is driven by the fact that it takes the Nuthatch about half the time to transport and cache an unshelled seed than it does a shelled one.

- Nuthatches are monogamous and defend a territory throughout the year. The female White-breasted Nuthatch rarely strays far from her mate and stays



in constant vocal contact when they are more than a few yards apart.

- Male White-breasted Nuthatches are less wary of danger when foraging with their mates than when they are alone.

The female mate plays the dominant role as "watchdog" when they are together, leaving the male more time to concentrate on hunting for food.

- During the winter, White-breasted Nuthatches will often forage together with other birds such as titmice, chickadees, and Downy Woodpeckers in a group known as a foraging guild. Nuthatches are able to recognize the alarm calls of these species and can thus reduce their own level of alertness by relying on vigilance of these other species. This leaves them with more time to concentrate on finding food.

- White-breasted Nuthatches are bolder and braver when they forage together with chickadees and titmice than when they are foraging alone. A study determined that they are much more reluctant to come to exposed feeders when they were alone than when they are accompanied by titmice. The nuthatch apparently feels more secure when a vigilant titmouse is along to serve as a watchdog and scout.

- The Red-breasted Nuthatch will line the entrance to its nesting cavity with drops of sticky conifer resin. It is thought that this may be a tactic to discourage predators or nest competitors from entering the cavity. The nuthatches avoid the resin themselves by diving directly into the nesting cavity without ever touching the sides of the entry hole.

- The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a very

(Continued on page 6)

Trip Report: Cle Elum/ Ellensburg (6/24, 7-16)

Darrel DeNune



This report details two trips to the Cle Elum – Ellensburg area on 6/24/11 and 7/16/11 for predominantly passerines with Sandra DeNune, Lynn McGuire and I.

The first trip on 6/24/11 began with blustery winds, predicted up to 40 mph, making birding difficult at times, but we managed a good day with many target species sighted. We began the day arriving at the Northern Pacific pond's in Cle Elum around 9:30AM and immediately heard a house wren singing away on a snag. Action was fast for us as we spotted; mountain bluebirds, green-winged teal, ring-necked duck, river otter, western wood pewee, red breasted nuthatch, northern flicker, turkey vulture, osprey (on the nesting platform), Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Red breasted sapsucker, Swainson's thrush and tree swallow's all in the first hour, as well as many native flowers including Columbia lily, cornflower and native dandelion. We then moved on to the lower Teanaway bridge off Hwy 10, in search of gray catbird and American dipper, however the winds had reached peak gust's and we managed only a yellow warbler, warbling vireo and red-winged blackbird in about 20 minutes. We then headed up to Swauk Prairie by way of Seaton road, encountering; American kestrel, loggerhead shrike, osprey, western kingbird, California quail, killdeer,

rough legged hawk and a golden eagle on a brush pile along Hwy 970. Once on Swauk Prairie road we immediately encountered western bluebirds utilizing the nest boxes, every box seemed to have fledglings. I spotted a dark gray flycatcher sitting quietly in the pines that was new to me, smaller than a wood pewee, as well as several vesper sparrows. At the north end of Swauk Prairie Road a gentleman in another birding group spotted a juvenile great horned owl, which dove into cover. Horned lark were seemingly everywhere. We then finished the day off of Bettas Road, seeing more western kingbird, great close-ups of mountain bluebird, western meadowlark and many mule deer, as well as a Wilson's warbler and American dipper under the Teanaway River bridge heading south to Airport road on Red Bridge road.

In our return trip on 7/16 we planned on spending more time off the Ellensburg side of Hwy 970 and started the day at Swauk Prairie again, spotting; horned lark, white breasted nuthatch, chipping sparrows, western and mountain bluebirds, western meadowlark, pine siskin, western tanager, yellow-rumped warbler, California quail and Brewer's sparrow as well as a western wood nymph and a Biosduval's blue butterfly. We ran into a local farmer who was very friendly and invited us to look for birds on his property any time, we appreciated the conversation as he shared much about the local bird species. Continuing on down Bettas road, we summated Hayward Hill, seeing; mountain bluebird, gray partridge, black-headed grosbeak, western and eastern kingbird, mourning dove with the highlight being fleeting glimpses of a pair of American redstart in the sage. On the way back through Cle Elum we stopped by the tree farm ponds adjacent to Lake Easton and spotted; yellow-rumped, yellow, Wilson's and Nashville warbler's, as well as tree swallows, red-breasted merganser and another osprey to end the day, finishing out what was all in all our favorite trip of this summer.

Fun Facts About Nuthatches *(Continued from page 5)*

aggressive defender of its nesting cavity, especially during the building period. It chases away much larger birds such as the Downy Woodpecker and has been observed bullying the very aggressive House Wren.

- When natural food supplies are scarce in northern Canada, numerous species of birds will "irrupt" into a southern migration in search of food. Red-breasted Nuthatches are typically the earliest species to head south for the winter, leaving as early as mid-summer and settling into their new southern winter territories by the end of September.

- The Pygmy Nuthatch is the only songbird that uses three different survival techniques simultaneously in order to endure cold winter nights. It roosts inside a protected tree cavity where it huddles together in a communal group with other nuthatches and it conserves energy by lowering its metabolism and body temperature.

- Pygmy Nuthatches have never been observed to roost alone. They will always roost at night in a communal group which may contain up to 100 birds. This tightly packed mass of birds can warm the roosting cavity by 40° F or more over the outside temperature.

- A Pygmy Nuthatch's diet switches from eating mostly insects and spiders in the summer to primarily eating seeds in the winter. It visits feeders where its favorite foods are sunflower seeds and suet.

- Pygmy and Brown-headed Nuthatches are two of the few North America bird species known to breed cooperatively. A third of all breeding pairs of Pygmy Nuthatches have one to three male helpers, usually their own offspring or other relatives. Studies of the Brown-headed Nuthatch show that between 20 -60% of breeding pairs has at least one helper. These helpers assist in feeding

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Mewsings from Millie

Hello and welcome once again to my never-ending musings.

I have learned a lot about birds in the time I've been here at the store. You know, the more I learn the more I continue to be captivated by our feathered friends and not only because I am of the feline persuasion.

Did you know, for instance, that birds are divided into thirty groups? I had never really thought about it before but when you do think about it you realize there are perching birds, owls, woodpeckers, birds of prey, etc. and each group has its own unique characteristics.

I also hadn't realized that there are nine thousand eight hundred sixty-five species of birds alive today. Sadly, of these species, one thousand two hundred twenty-seven of them are considered threatened with extinction.

The earliest known bird had a very long name: *Archaeopteryx lithographica*. It lived about one hundred fifty million years ago during the Jurassic period. It had feathers and wings but instead of a bill, it had a reptilian snout. This bird did not have a keeled breastbone which is necessary for flight so scientists are not sure if it could glide or not. A total of ten fossils of *Archaeopteryx* have been found over the

years all near quarries in Solnhofen, Germany.

Research supports the view that birds evolved from a group of dinosaurs known as theropods as birds share some characteristics with the beasts such as hollow bones, a pelvis that points backward, a wishbone and a three-toed foot.

One characteristic that belongs to birds and birds alone is feathers. Feathers are a defining feature meaning if an animal has feathers then it is a bird. Feathers serve many purposes, most notably helping birds in their ability to fly. In addition, feathers provide protection from the elements, waterproofing, insulation and even act as sunscreen to block UV rays from reaching birds' skin.

I just realized something, though. Having feathers is unique to our bird friends but the ability to fly is not. Bats and insects are able to fly and I've heard of flying squirrels and flying fish although I've never seen the like of them.

Birds do not have teeth. Instead they have bills made of protein keratin. Bird bills come in a variety of shapes and sizes specifically adapted to the diet of a particular bird. Herons, for example, have sharp, pointed bills that enable them to capture fish. Many finches and songbirds have short, conical bills suitable for cracking open seeds.

All birds reproduce by laying eggs. Although there is a wide range of egg colors, only two pigments contribute to the color of the shell. One pigment is derived from hemoglobin and the other from bile. The largest egg is that of the ostrich. It is over two thousand times larger than the smallest egg produced by a hummingbird. The now extinct Elephant Bird from Madagascar produced an egg seven times larger than an ostrich egg! My good-

ness, that would have made one enormous omelet!

Yes, birds continue to fascinate me and I'm sure as time goes on I will learn even more intriguing facts about our bewitching avian friends.

Until next time,

Millie

The Muse of Mews

Reprint Courtesy Wild Birds Unlimited

Fun Facts About Nuthatches *(Continued from page 6)*

the incubating female, the nestlings and the young fledglings.

- Pygmy Nuthatches can stay in their roost cavity for as long as 40 hours without feeding, enabling them to survive short periods of very severe winter weather.

- Brown-headed Nuthatches prefer to reside in open, mature, old growth pine forests, especially in stands that have been recently burned.

- Found almost exclusively in the pine forests of the southeastern states, the completely non-migratory Brown-headed Nuthatch can only be found outside of the United States, in very small numbers, on an island in the Bahamas.

- The Brown-headed Nuthatch is one of the few birds known to use a "tool" to find food. It will take a loose flake of pine bark in its bill and use it to pry up other scales of bark in search of prey.

- The longevity records for nuthatches recaptured in the wild are:

- White-breasted – 9 years, 10 months
- Red-breasted – 7 ½ years
- Brown-headed – 5 years, 9 months
- Pygmy – 8 years, 2 months

Reprint Courtesy Wild Birds Unlimited



Rainier Audubon Society
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"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

— Mahatma Gandhi

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Auburn, WA 98071



Or go to <http://www.rainieraudubon.org/> to enroll online.

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RAS Chapter membership includes 9 issues of the Heron Herald annually but does not include AUDUBON magazine.