

The

# Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

April 2013

April General Membership Meeting  
Monday April 15, 2013 7:00 p.m.  
Federal Way United Methodist Church

## A Hiker's View of Washington State

Alan L. Bauer

**J**oin professional photographer Alan L. Bauer for an evening of sharing his favorite adventures, photographs, outdoors locations, and laughs experienced while working on his most recent five hiking guidebooks published by The Mountaineers



Books. Hiking thousands of miles in almost all corners of Washington State over the past eight years certainly offered Alan his share of magnificent bird, wildlife, and landscape photography opportunities in areas ranging from the shrub steppe of the Columbia Basin all the way up to the tundra-like alpine settings of the high Cascades. Maybe it is the images taken while waiting an hour for a Blue Grouse to waltz his way, or the Badger who played peek-a-boo with him, or perhaps a stellar sunset over a mountain lake; there is a special story waiting to entertain you and hopefully educate you to better enjoy your own outdoor experiences in the year ahead! Through his photograph-intensive presentation Alan will share his favorite hiking destinations, wildlife stories, birding photographic opportunities, and silly mishaps from areas covered in *Best Desert Hikes-Washington* as well as core regions of the Cascades easily reached in his latest titles *Day Hiking-Central Cascades*, *Day Hiking-Snoqualmie Region*, *Day Hiking-Mount Rainier*, and *Day Hiking-South Cascades*, all published as part of the new *Day Hiking* series by The Mountaineers Books. All book titles will be available from Alan at a discount at the presentation as well as plenty of time to talk afterwards!

Alan's love for the outdoors was developed during his youth growing up on a large farm in Oregon and he has called Washington State his home for the past 23 years. He has published six books with The Mountaineers Books during the last eight years as well as numerous photographic works being used in other titles. His work has appeared publications such as Backpacker, Outdoors Northwest, City Dog, Oregon Coast, and Northwest Travel magazines among many others. He frequently publishes work in educational textbooks, DVD/CD cover art, and corporate materials. Seattle Children's Hospital, Bicycle Adventures, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Historical Society, and the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge represent a sampling of

some of his recent projects. Feel free to visit his website at [www.alanbauer.com](http://www.alanbauer.com) for more information!

Join us at 6:30 for snacks 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.

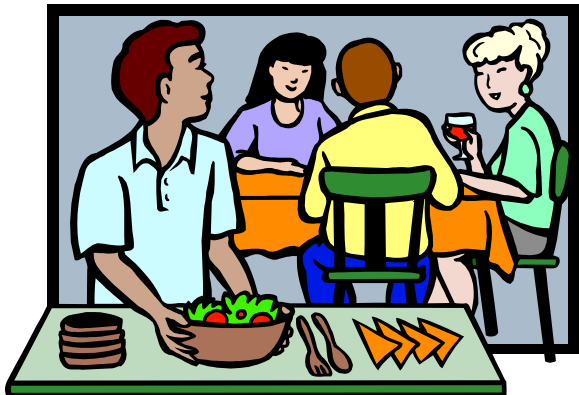
At 321st St, turn left. Stay on 321st as it becomes 51st Ave. So. Follow 51st Ave. to 296th. Church will be on your left.

### 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.

# Rainier Audubon Society Appreciation Dinner

MAY 20, 2013



**J**oin us for an end-of-season appreciation dinner on May 20 from 6 to 9. Enjoy an evening of good food, an engaging speaker and some big THANK YOUS to the folks who make our organization great! Renton Technical College will cater the dinner which will include appetizers, a choice of entrees, salad, bread, 2 sides, beverages and dessert.

The board has generously agreed to help defray the cost of the dinner so member cost will be \$10 per person. In order to reserve your space, **you MUST choose an entrée and PAY** on

or before the April meeting (April 15). ***If you cannot be at the April meeting, please send a check made out to Rainier Audubon to Nancy Streiffert; 10102 SE 270th Place; Kent, WA 98030-7635***

### Entrée choices:

- Herb roasted chicken – Roasted chicken with fresh Northwest herbs and a hint of garlic
- Baked lemon cod – Cod filet baked with lemon dill sauce
- Stuffed peppers – Fresh roasted pepper willed with vegetables and brown rice (Vegan)

**We will need volunteers** to set up and take down tables and chairs and to donate tablecloths for the evening. We also need a volunteer dishwasher to help with clean up – free dinner plus a generous tip – perhaps an older teen might like to do this. Call me with questions. Thanks. Nancy 253-796-2203

Looking forward to a special, festive spring event!

### RAINIER AUDUBON OFFICERS

President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
Treasurer	Jim Tooley*	253-854-3070
Secretary	Heather Gibson*	253-856-9812
Program Chair	Dale Meland*	253-946-1637
Field Trip Chair	Carol Schulz	206-824-7618
Membership Chair	Pat Toth*	206-767-4944
Backyard Habitat Chair	Open	253-854-3207
Conservation Chair	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Mailing Chair	Debra Russel	425-271-0682
Hospitality	Sandra Embry	
Newsletter Editor	Dan Streiffert	253-796-2203
Webmaster	Treesa Hertzal	253-255-1808
Ivy Eradication Coordinator	Bernedine Lund	253-839-3729
Education Chair	Annette Tabor*	253-927-3208
Christmas Bird Count Coordinator	Nancy Streiffert	253-796-2203
Board Member	Max Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Erin Wojewodski-Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Alex Juchems	253-529-8996
Board Member	Lisa Mesplay	
Board Member	Ed Stanton	206-870-3107
Board Member	Terry Thurber	206-450-5446
Publicity	Tom Sernka	253-529-8970

\*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.

### Upcoming Programs

- 5/20/2013—Elena Fox - Crows (West Sound Wildlife Center)

### Welcome to New Members!

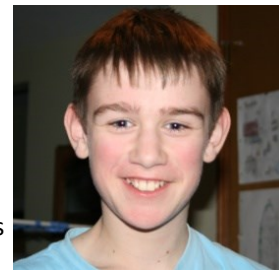
Lisa Johnson  
 Michael Campsmith  
 Myra Wisotzky,  
 Henry & Elaine Maros,  
 Charles Gibson, Peggy Meyer

### Volunteers Needed!

Please contact a Board Member

- Assistant Treasurer—need someone familiar with Quick Books to work with Jim Tooley.
- CBC Coordinator— Contact Nancy Streiffert
- Door Greeters for Membership Meetings
- Articles for Heron Herald—send to dan\_streiffert@hotmail.com

## Seen and Heard by Calen Randall



All things are ducky at Weyerhaeuser Pond. I've been enjoying watching the Redheads and the Ruddy Ducks from the various viewing points around the pond. I often wonder what it is that attracts the Redheads to Weyerhaeuser. Could it be the big flag? Watching all of the ducks at Weyerhaeuser reminded of another 'ducky day' I had a few months ago.

It was the end of a successful day of birding, and my Mom and I were driving home along a sopping wet West Valley Highway. As we passed a flooded field, we spotted a Trumpeter Swan and some ducks splashing around happily in the rain. Though my Mom and I were soaked to the bone, we decided to turn down a side road to get a better look at the birds. As we drove down the road, we were surprised to see another pond—a much better pond, which was overflowing with our quacky friends. Trumpeter Swan forgotten, we rolled our truck to a stop and peered through our foggy windows into the dim light. Several Northern Pintails were floating near the grass islands. A dozen Mallards stood in the reeds. Green-Winged Teal, American Widgeon, and some Canada Geese also swam around; the Canada's, as usual, were belting out chants back and forth. It was a duck lover's paradise. However, something didn't seem quite right about the pond. Everything moved at a sluggish pace.

While I fumbled for my binoculars, my Mom commented, "Look at how vibrant the pintails are! And the Mallards! Look at the bright blue on their tails." I studied

the Pintails sleek bodies and admired their elegance in the water. I could not help thinking that it was a stroke of luck that they were sitting so still so that we could get such a great look. It almost seemed like they were drifting forwards and backwards, as though they were on a string.

Farther back in the pond, I watched a Green-Winged Teal skim along the water—fighting the big gust of wind. Suddenly, it started spinning around and around in a circle, as though being sucked in a vortex. I wondered if the Teal was injured. Meanwhile, the Mallards in the reeds looked as though they were hydrophobic, for they still stood dead-still, contemplating whether or not one last swim was in order. That's odd, I thought, they seemed as though they had not even moved. Clearly something was odd about the pond. The Canada's seemed to agree. They quickly took off into the sky, flapping away, perhaps seeking a livelier pond.

What startled me the most, were the two mallards that were dabbling. Tails in the air, they had been under for over a minute and showed no signs of coming up for air. This was too eerie for me; was this some kind of a stuffed duck pond? I turned to my Mom. "Does something feel odd to you?" I asked.

"Look at the flashing green on the Teal, Calen!" my Mom answered.

"Mom", I said with a distressed note in my voice "The ducks aren't real."

"Of course they're real look at the...oh" Mom trailed off, she had spotted the forever dabbling Mallards.

Suddenly I let loose a laugh. The situation was no longer eerie, but silly. "Mom", I said with a grin "They're decoys". April Fool's came a little early this year.

I hope this April does not bring you too many birding jokes, but instead some wonderful birding surprises like soaring Turkey Vultures, wonderful Warblers, flocks of Greater White-Fronted Geese, and lovely songbird songs. Happy birding!

### Recent Bird Sightings:

Thanks to birders Barbara Peterson, Ralph and Sandra Embrey, Carol Schultz, Steve Johnson and Ken Brunner, and Heather Raeburn for their reports.

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>** Carol Schultz reported about a pair of **Trumpeter Swans** at Lake Fenwick! She said that Steve Johnson and several other good birders from Seattle had done a survey of Redondo Beach to Kent Ponds, and had notified her about the swans and several other birds they saw. Steve and his party of birders had also visited the heron rookery behind the animal shelter on 64<sup>th</sup> Ave in Kent and saw 35 **Great-Blue Herons!** It's great to hear that the herons have returned. Hopefully they will continue to use this rookery for years to come. Steve's insight, "Nothing amazing, but to see those huge things flying around high in the air and sort of doing some acrobatics right over you was kind of fun." Steve's group also saw **Wood Ducks** at Lake Fenwick.

Carol also got an email from Ken Brunner about a sighting at Saltwater State Park.

*(Continued on page 11)*

*Bio: Calen is a 13 year old birder. He enjoys birding around Lake Fenwick and Boeing Ponds—especially with Charlie Wright. Calen is thrilled to revive Charlie's 'Seen and Heard'. When not birding, Calen can be seen flying up and down the ice at Kent Valley Ice Center*

# 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](mailto:scrubjay323@aol.com)

## Birding at the Streiffert's

Saturday, May 4  
7:00 to Noon  
Birdathon Donation - \$15.

This is much more than a "Backyard" field trip. The Streiffert's yard on the hill in south Kent is very large, and their woods drops all the way down to the Green River. Their area is a migrant wonderland during May. Look for warblers and other birds in the bushes and feeders, in various habitats in the yard, and in the neighbor's pasture. Warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and more can be seen and heard down on the trails in the woods. Learn some spring bird song with us! Maybe get some new species for the year!

Cost is \$15. donation to Birdathon. Includes a light lunch.

Please RSVP and/or fill out a sponsor form so we know how many to plan for.

Call or email Dan and Nancy Streiffert, [dan\\_streiffert@hotmail.com](mailto:dan_streiffert@hotmail.com), 253-796-2203 to sign up and get directions.

## Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival and Bird Walk in the Park

Saturday, May 11, 2013

Bird walk 9:30am

Festival open 9am - 3pm

A bird walk in the park and along the river will be offered on Migratory Bird Day. Programs and activities will be presented by several groups at this festival. RAS, Seattle Audubon, retail stores, and nature groups will be there. This is a fun, local festival! Birdwalk starts near Audubon Booth at 9:30. More info and directions at <http://backyardwildlifefestival.org/>

## 2013 Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival

April 26 - 28

Many field trips long and short are offered at this festival in Hoquiam. More details at 360-289-5048 or [www.shorebirdfestival.com](http://www.shorebirdfestival.com). Sign up early for some of the most popular field trips. Migration picks up about March

21. Website includes best shorebird viewing times. [Viewing shorebirds is best from 2 hrs before to 2 hrs after high tide.]



(© Dan Streiffert)

## Bird of the Month: Hummingbirds

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien



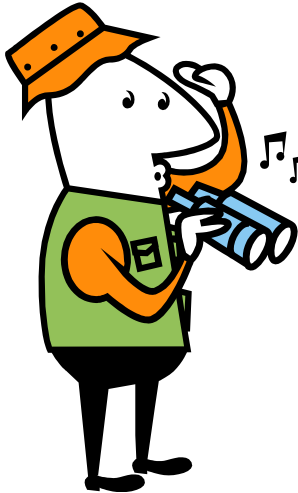
Dan Streiffert

- Hummingbirds are only found in North, Central and South America.
- There are over 325 species of hummingbirds, making them the second largest bird family in the world, second only to flycatchers.
- The Cuban bee hummingbird is the smallest warm-blooded animal in the world. The male weighs less than a dime.
- Hummingbirds weigh 1/10th of an ounce; about the weight of a penny.
- Hummingbirds have about 1,500 feathers.
- Hummingbirds' brains are about the size of a BB.
- Hummingbirds' hearts are larger proportionally to their body than any other bird or mammal.
- Even at rest, a hummingbird's heart rate is eight times faster than that of a human.
- While resting, a hummingbird takes 250 breaths per minute.
- Hummingbirds have such underdeveloped legs that they are unable to walk well.
- Hummingbirds' nests are about the size of a golf ball, around 1 1/2 - 2 inches in diameter.
- Hummingbird eggs are about the size of a coffee bean.
- Hummingbirds learn to associate flower colors, like red, with food. They do not have an innate preference for red.
- Hummingbirds can drink up to twice their body weight in nectar every day (most birds only eat 1/4 - 1/2 their body weight).
- Hummingbirds have large flight muscles that make up about 25% of their body weight.
- It would take 150 average-sized male hummingbirds to equal 1 pound.
- Hummingbirds can extend their tongue approximately a distance equal to the length of their bill.
- Hummingbirds have 40 to 60 taste buds. Humans have about 10,000.
- While lapping up nectar, Hummingbirds can move their tongues in and out of their bill at a rate of up to 12 times a second.
- Female Hummingbirds' tongues are longer than the males.
- A hummingbird's tongue has grooves on the sides to help it catch insects.
- Hummingbirds can't fly until their body temperature reaches 86 degrees.
- Hummingbirds can fly up to 60 miles per hour, but typically fly at 30-45 miles per hour.
- Hummingbirds can hover and are the only birds able to fly backwards and upside down because their wings move in a figure-eight pattern.
- Their wings beat 20-80 times per second.
- Hummingbirds do not migrate in flocks. They fly alone.
- During the night, hummingbirds can enter into a state of torpor to save energy. Similar to a type of short-term hibernation, torpor reduces their metabolic activity and drops their heart rate from 1,200 beats per minute to 50 beats per minute.
- The oldest hummingbird recorded was 14 years old.

### Northwest Native Plant Society Native Plant Sale

The Northwest Native Plant Society Native Plant Sale is Saturday, May 11, 2013 from 10-4. NEW LOCATION THIS YEAR: Mercedale Park, Mercer Island, 77th Avenue SE and SE 32nd Street; Mercer Island 98040 this is a great opportunity to buy native plants that enhance your landscape, are adapted to our climate and weather, are beautiful and provide food and habitat for our native wildlife. See information at our meeting about native plants especially popular with birds or contact Nancy Streiffert for ideas on what works (and what doesn't!) depending on your landscape. [nancy\\_streiffert@hotmail.com](mailto:nancy_streiffert@hotmail.com) Go to [wnps.org](http://wnps.org) to find a list of species on offer a few weeks before the sale. Go to [wnps.wordpress.com](http://wnps.wordpress.com) to find natives useful in the garden.

# The Month of May is **BIRDATHON**



W hat is it?

It's "birding for dollars!" Count as many bird species in one day as you can! Choose any day in May. **Get family, friends and co-workers to sponsor you**, then go birding! Afterwards, send them a list of what birds you saw, and they will donate X amount for each species you saw (i.e. 25 cents). Or they can just donate a flat fee. 100% of the proceeds support Rainier

Audubon activities in south King County.

You can also conduct your Birdathon birding on one of our field trips. Earn money for chapter activities while enjoying a great field trip led by an expert birder. Or just stay at home and count bird species at your

feeder. Or be creative and come up with your own Birdathon experience!

Sponsors are happy to support your efforts, and many look forward to being asked again the following year. They especially enjoy your list of bird species seen. We will provide helpful hints, examples of solicitation and report letters, prizes for birders, thank-you gifts for sponsors, and one-on-one help as needed.

Why do it? Rainier Audubon needs the money! The portion of your membership dues to Rainier Audubon covers only a portion of the costs associated with running a successful Audubon chapter. Birdathon is our largest fundraiser, and we depend on it to provide a stable funding base for our many activities and services such as: printing and mailing our chapter's newsletter, general administrative costs, programs (speaker fees), environmental education activities, conservation committee activities, etc., We wouldn't want to have to cut back on any of our activities due to lack of funds!

Our goal for Birdathon 2013 is \$5,000, which is attainable if everyone helps!

Stay tuned for prize announcements such as most money raised, first time birder, and most species seen.

Sponsor sheets are available at Rainier Audubon membership meetings or on-line at [www.RainierAudubon.org](http://www.RainierAudubon.org).

-Alex Juchems

## Backyard Birding at the Streifferts

Saturday May 4, 2012

7:00 AM—Noon

**H**ere is an easy way for you to participate in Rainier Audubon's May Birdathon. The Streifferts invite you to spend the morning setting a record species count for their backyard. Habitats include Nancy's herb garden, a rapidly expanding native garden, vegetable garden, chicken yard, in-progress marsh garden, small orchard, and a hiking trail through our woods. The neighbor's cow pasture offers further possibilities.

There are good chances for viewing Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers which frequent our suet feeders.

### Introduction to Bird Photography - Bring your camera!

Several folks have expressed an interest in a bird photography course. This year we will include a short introduction to this topic.

Cost is \$15 per person and includes a light brunch. Come for an hour or spend the whole morning.

All proceeds go to the RAS Birdathon.

Please RSVP and/or fill out a sponsor form so we know how many to plan for.

Dan & Nancy Streiffert

253-796-2203

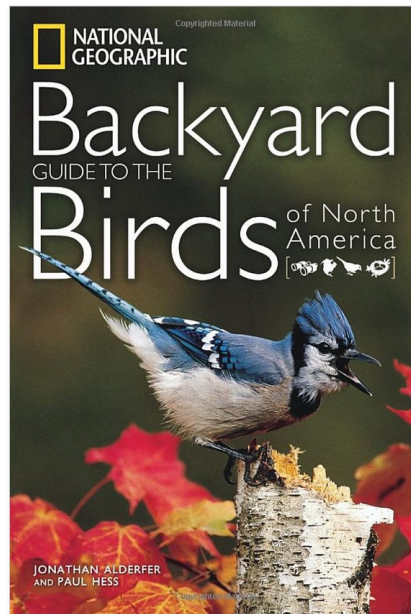




# National Geographic Guide to the Backyard Birds of North America

by Jonathan Alderfer and Paul Hess

I checked this book out from the library a year-and-a-half ago when I first got into bird-feeding, and ended up buying it. It combines an identification guide with backyard bird-watching information, and includes 150 species. Regular field identification guides feature more birds, but I have not seen another backyard bird guide that has so many species. Before the book's identification section begins, the authors discuss general information and tips about feeding and watching backyard birds. Typical to that type of book, there are a few pages on food, birdhouses, etc. The landscaping section is very limited and I would recommend one of the many books dealing specifically with that subject instead. Also, some backyard birding guides give instructions about building nest houses and birdfeeders, but that is not part of this guide. On the other hand, Alderfer and Hess's book is much more portable than most of these books that I have checked out from the library and has excellent drawings (of male, female, breeding, and even sometimes subspecies plumage). While this book is perfect for beginning birders, I am no longer a beginner and still enjoy flipping through it. Interspersed amongst the species descriptions are information pages



describing such topics as the lifespan of different birds and also bird sleeping posture and behavior. The longest documented lifespan of a wild American goldfinch is ten years five months!

While 150 birds may not include every species of warbler (although there are two pages showing excellent drawings of some more of the most common warblers), it is a lot of backyard birds. When I was first requesting birding books from the library, I got so frustrated when I would read a book that did not include some of my favorite birds – no Steller's jay? Awful. While admittedly *Guide to the Backyard*

*Birds of North America* gives two whole pages to blue jays and only *one* to Steller's jays, I am still able to find out that Steller's jays frequently mimic hawks (I did not remember that part) and fledge at thirty days old.

The species guide includes information typical to field identification guides – range, plumage, similar species, etc. – but also has information specific to backyard bird-watching: after listing a bird's native food, the book says what types of feeders and foods watchers can put out to attract that bird.

This is a good guide to grab when one wants to quickly find out what new bird is coming to one's feeder, or where some favorite bird has taken off to. After all, many of us do much of our bird-watching in our own yards. Alderfer and Hess's book is up to National Geographic standards (National Geographic makes several wonderful field identification guides). Again, I am not a beginning birder and I still like this book, but maybe if you are uncertain if it is worth the money check it out from the library first (the King County Library System has ten copies). It would perhaps be a good present for a grandchild or a new bird-watching friend.

Laura Lavington

## FREE DISCOVER PASSES FOR MEMBERS OF RAINIER AUDUBON SOCIETY

To support our state parks – and to boost membership - the local chapter of the Audubon Society, called the Rainier Audubon Society, is giving away free Discover Passes to any new member who joins Rainier Audubon during 2013.

All you have to do is come to a meeting, join up and get your free Discover Pass. The cost of joining is \$20.00/individual and \$25/family. The cost of a Discover Pass is normally \$35.00 dollars so you've just saved \$15.00 and you have a year's membership in the Audubon Society and a year's free access to all of the state parks in Washington.

Each Discover Pass can be used for any two vehicles you own. Just fill out two license plate numbers on the Pass, hang it from the rear view mirror of whichever car you're taking, and you're good to go for a full year of state park recreation.

The Rainier Audubon Society meets monthly at the United Methodist Church in Federal Way, and presents programs on all aspects of nature, birding, conservation, outdoor photography, and many other topics that adults and children who love the outdoors enjoy. For more information go to [www.RainierAudubon.org](http://www.RainierAudubon.org).



## Ragtag by Karl Wolf-Morgenlander

**R**agtag by Karl Wolf-Morgenlander is an exciting tale of conflict in the avian world suitable and interesting for children about 6 – 12. (A friend’s daughter’s teacher is reading it aloud to her 6th grade and the students are enjoying it!) The hero is an unlikely swallow named Ragtag who is a perpetually disobedient, doing-his-own-thing sort of juvenile. Except for the fact that the birds speak English and cooperate in ways that are unlikely in the natural world, the author is quite exacting in his description of the species involved and their types of personalities. Adults might see the story as allegory in part – the raptors are taking over the city of Boston because their native environments have been decimated by logging and other human activity – but the heavy message is



despicable villains, the unlikely hero, redemption, lessons learned, forgiveness, nail-biting last minute rescues, surprises and, best of all, a happy ending. Read this to your younger children or share the reading with older readers! (Multiple copies of this very elegantly covered hard back book were just some of the loot our school personnel can pick up free from World Vision several times a year because our school is a Title 1 school! Needless to say, this is a great help for our struggling readers.)

Nancy Streiffert

lightly handled. All the best elements of story telling are included – the thoroughly

### AUDUBON CONVENTION 2013

#### Taking Flight Together

July 12–15, 2013

##### REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Registration for the convention is now available through the website at [www.audubonconvention.org](http://www.audubonconvention.org)! Visit the site for online registration and links to make reservations at one of the three convention hotels. You will also find detailed information about field trips, workshops, transportation options, and scholarships, as well as birding and other activities in the local area. For any questions, please contact [convention@audubon.org](mailto:convention@audubon.org) or Cindy Sherwood at 802-865-5202 or [csherwood@audubon.org](mailto:csherwood@audubon.org)

##### Rainier Audubon will pay for 1/2 you're registration fee (\$150)

The RAS Board encourages you to go to this educational event. At the March Board Meeting, we voted to pay for 1/2 the cost of registration for any RAS member that wants to go.

### A Sincere Apology

My sincere apology to Joe, Ruth and Matt Terlow who participated in the 2012 RAS Christmas Bird Count and whose names were not included on the list of participants. This is especially grievous since Joe and his family have been participating in the CBC and Rainier Audubon since Day 1 when Thais Bock founded our chapter. I regret the oversight and look forward to working with Joe, Ruth and Matt on future CBC's. Thank you.

Nancy Streiffert



### **Mewsings from Millie**

Hello and welcome back to my musings!

You know, I do enjoy watching the little House Sparrows that hop around and feed at the tray feeder on the sidewalk in front of the store. I'm sure many of you enjoy watching the birds in your yards as well. I thought it would be fun, with a little help from our friends at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, to share some fun facts about birds that are often seen in yards and at feeders.

Although some of us may have never seen one, Mourning Doves are very common in our beautiful state. Mourning Doves can store seed in an enlargement of the esophagus called the crop. One dove set a record by storing 17,200 seeds in its crop! Once the crop is full, the bird flies to a perch to digest its meal. Mourning Doves eat 12-20% of their body weight per day or an average of 71 calories. The oldest recorded Mourning Dove lived to be 31 years, 4 months old.

Dark-eyed Juncos are among one of the most populous birds with an estimated 630 million individuals across North America. The oldest recorded Junco lived to be 11 years, 4 months old.

In winter, Downy Woodpeckers divide their feeding areas with the males feeding on small branches and weed stems and the females on larger branches and tree trunks. The oldest recorded Downy lived to be 11 years, 11 months old.

The American Goldfinch is the only finch that molts its body feathers twice a year, once in late winter and again in late summer. American Goldfinches are among the strictest of vegetarian birds, eating only an occasional insect. Paired American Goldfinches make identical flight calls. The oldest recorded American Goldfinch lived to be 10 years, 5 months old.

The House Finch has a huge presence in North America with scientists estimating there are between 267 million and 1.4 billion individuals. House Finches feed their nestlings plant food exclusively which is rare in the bird world. The oldest recorded House Finch lived to be 11 years 7 months old.

Black-capped Chickadees hide seed and other food items in a variety of different locations and can remember thousands of hiding places. Black-capped Chickadees always sleep in individual cavities. The oldest recorded Black-capped Chickadee lived to be 12 years 5 months old.

The Red-Breasted Nuthatch stays here all year but northern populations migrate south very early possibly beginning in early July especially during irruptive years. Red-Breasted Nuthatches will steal nesting material from other birds. The oldest recorded Red-breasted Nuthatch lived to be 7 years, 6 months old.

House Sparrows were introduced to Brooklyn, New York in 1851. House Sparrows love to take dust baths. The oldest recorded House Sparrow lived to be 15 years, 9 months old.

Although American Robins are thought of as harbingers of spring, many American Robins spend the winter months in their breeding range - you don't see them as much because they are roosting in the trees. American Robins can become intoxicated if exclusively eating honeysuckle berries. The oldest recorded

American Robin lived to be 13 years, 11 months old.

A House Wren weighs as much as two quarters. House Wrens nest in tree holes or nesting boxes and sometimes incorporate spider egg sacs into the nesting material. When the spiders hatch, they help devour mites and other parasites that can harm the nestlings. The oldest recorded House Wren lived to be 9 years old.

The male Bewick's Wren learns its song from neighboring territorial males and retains it for life. The Bewick's Wren is named after British engraver, Thomas Bewick who was a friend of John James Audubon. The oldest recorded Bewick's Wren lived to be 8 years old.

Northern Flickers love to eat ants and forage on the ground for them. Northern Flickers often drum on metal to make the loudest noise possible to communicate and defend territory. The oldest recorded Northern Flicker lived to be 8 years, 9 months old.

A group of Anna's Hummingbirds is not called a flock. More appropriately the terms bouquet, a glittering, a hover, a shimmer or a tune of hummers is used. Native Americans thought that hummingbirds poked holes in the night sky and the holes became the stars. An Anna's Hummingbird's body temperature is 107 degrees. The oldest recorded Anna's Hummingbird lived to be 6 years, 4 months old.

The Steller's Jay is the only North American jay with a crest. Steller Jays use mud to build their nests. They are excellent mimics. The oldest recorded Steller's Jay lived to be 16 years, 1 month old.

The Bushtit is the only member of its family in the Americas. Seven species are found in Eurasia. When breeding, only one adult Bushtit sleeps on the nest at a time but in non-breeding season, all of the Bushtit family members sleep together in their large, hanging nest. The oldest recorded Bushtit lived to be 9 years, 1 month old.

A White-crowned Sparrow was tracked to have traveled 300 miles in a single night. Although male White-crowned Sparrows are the dominant singers, the females sometime sing a quieter and more variable song. The oldest recorded White-crowned Sparrow lived to be 13 years, 4 months old.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow is one of the least known of our songbirds. As days get longer in the spring, Golden-crowned Sparrows detect the change through light-sensitive cells and respond by putting on fat and getting an urge to migrate. The oldest recorded Golden-crowned Sparrow lived to be 10 years, 6 months old.

Well, I've thoroughly enjoyed sharing these fascinating tidbits with you. I hope you found these cool facts to be fun and educational.

Until next time,

Millie, the Muse of Mews

**Seen & Heard** (Continued from page 3)

Ken and a couple of other birders saw a **Cassin's Auklet!** Cassin's Auklets are labeled as level five in King County. There have been fewer than five recordings of Cassin's Auklets in King County. Great sighting!

**March 10<sup>th</sup>** Barbara reported not seeing **Varied Thrush** for much of February; but to Barbara's delight, she spotted a male on the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> and a female on the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of March. Barbara also observed a couple of **Townsend's Warblers** through February. Later in the month, Barbara saw some **Bushtits** checking out the nest that had been used last year by bushtits. A few weeks later, Barbara saw two bushtits exploring what remained of the fallen bushtits nest from two years ago. Could some decoy nest-hunting be going on? Lastly, Barbara spotted an intergrade **Northern Flicker**. Barbara said "we had one here with a noticeably large and bright V on the back of its head, and its malar stripe was half red and half black." --Barbara Peterson, Federal Way

**March 15<sup>th</sup>** Ralph and Sandra Embrey wrote in that they "have at least one **Varied Thrush** making regular

appearances in the backyard. They also watched a **Bald Eagle** sail overhead, while crows dive-bombed it.—Ralph and Sandra Embrey

**March 15<sup>th</sup>** While at Juanita Bay, all I could hear were **Red-Winged Blackbirds** and **Virginia Rails**. One of the rail calls came from just off of the boardwalk. Low and behold, right in front of me, stood a Virginia Rail belting out its kiddick-kiddick call. It looked like a bagpipe, filling with air and deflating, as it made its call. For ten amazing minutes, I was able to watch it before it scurried away into the marshland.—Calen Randall

**March 15<sup>th</sup>** This is not an April Fool's report. Heather Raeburn of Burnaby, B.C., told me about some **Barred Owls** nesting in a greenbelt near her condo. Recently, the City of Burnaby had taken down a sign that had said "Caution, owls nest here. They are known to take small dogs and cats." It was changed to "Please clean up after your pet." Heather had been talking to a man who had moved into the building after the sign had been changed. He had unknowingly walked his dogs on the trails around where some Barred Owls live. He said that he had been throwing a ball for his dogs when suddenly, out swooped a Barred Owl. Ironically, the owl did not go

for the small dogs, but instead, dove for the tennis ball, thinking it to be a small rodent!

**Mystery Bird of the Month**

Ed Stanton spotted this bird in his yard during February! Ross and Annette Tabor also had one regularly come to their yard since December. Here are the clues:

A group of me is called a 'wrench', a 'bouquet', a 'confusion', or a 'fall' of warblers

I am the only migrant warbler found in the tropical high planes

Brow-Headed Cowbirds often sneak their eggs into my nest

I am small, but have a long tail

I catch insects while on the wing, like a flycatcher

Birders in the west get the treat of seeing the brightest coloration of me

American ornithologist Alexander Wilson named me

Who am I?

Send your sightings/hearings to calenbirds@hotmail.com I love reading your reports!

Answer: Wilson's Warbler

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Delight your favorite birders with the newest – the seventh and final – map of the Great Washington State Birding Trail: the Puget Loop. Hot off the press, this signature route features 220 of our 346 annually recorded bird species around Puget Sound from Seattle to Mt. Rainier, plus Lake Washington, Kitsap Peninsula; and Vashon, Bainbridge, Whidbey and San Juan islands.  
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Nancy Streiffert



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"People would rather believe than know."  
— [Edward O. Wilson](#)

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