

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

December 2015

RAS Membership Meeting December 21, 2015

Bird Photography

Dan Streiffert

I grew up in Rochester, New York, home of Eastman Kodak. My dad worked for Kodak as a research physicist for 40 years. So I grew up with cameras, black and white photography, and dark rooms full of chemicals. My first SLR was a Minolta STR 101 with through-the-lens metering. I also had a 300 mm "automatic" lens. One still had to manually focus and match exposure to the moving needle in the viewfinder. Image stabilization did not exist. I used Tri X black and white film and set up my darkroom in the bathroom once a week to process photos. On a good day I would take 36 photos, develop them all and maybe print one or two 8 x 10 black and white photos. I purchased black and white film in bulk rolls and loaded canisters manually to save money. My Minolta lasted me for about 20 years.

Things have changed.

I bought my first Digital camera in 2007 and have migrated through four new bodies since. Now that these cameras are computers, they seem to have a half-life of about two years. We keep getting new features, faster focusing, better image stabilization and more pixels. When photographing birds, it is easy to come home with 300 – 500 photos in a single day. These all need to be uploaded on my computer, cataloged and selectively edited. This means hours at the PC and the continual need to upgrade my computer to keep up with the advances in the cameras.



In this presentation, I hope to give you some ideas on how to improve your photography, what you should spend time and money on, and what not to. I want to encourage you to move from taking snapshots, to creating a piece of art. A painter begins with a blank canvas and adds detail. A photographer begins with lots of detail, and needs to determine how to eliminate the distracting elements, and bring attention to the subject. I will discuss several ways that this can be accomplished, both in the field and on the computer. This is not a lecture on Photoshop, but instead, more focused on how to take good photos. Not everyone wants to spend hours at a computer. You need to determine what part of this hobby is "fun" for you. I encourage you to bring questions (or email me ahead of time to dan_streiffert@hotmail.com) and I will try to answer them.

The presentation will include several of my favorite shots from the past year.

Rainier Audubon programs are held at 7:00 PM at the

Federal Way United Methodist Church

29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001 (in unincorporated Auburn)



Join us for conversation and snacks at 6:30 PM

Rainier Audubon 35th Christmas Bird Count Sunday, January 3rd

The Rainier Audubon 35th Christmas Bird Count will be on Sunday, January 3rd, 2016. Come out and be part of our chapter's thirty-five years of citizen science.

Sign up to go out with a team and count birds in our Audubon circle. Teams will bird by car and by foot from 8 AM to 4 PM. Can't go out with a team, but want to count birds in the comforts of your own home? Sign up to participate in our CBC Backyard Bird Count. Join us afterwards to enjoy our Rainier Audubon Pot Luck Dinner and to hear the day's species tally.

Contact Alex Juchems to sign up: 253-670-5513 or cooperjuchems@mac.com

Potluck Dinner

Our casual potluck is a great way to celebrate our Christmas Bird Count. Dinner will begin at 6 PM, with doors opening at 5 PM. Bring a dish to share and come listen to our CBC species count tally and our teams' interesting finds of the day!

Address of Potluck:
Federal Way United Methodist Church

29645 51st Ave, Auburn, WA 98001

What Happens to Our Count Data?

Along with hundreds of Audubon chapters nationwide, we send our tallies to National Audubon for compilation. Throughout the year, scientists use the results to study bird distribution and population trends and identify conservation priorities. Recently, our CBC records were used in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a proposed siting of a King County Solid Waste Transfer Station at a location in the Green River Valley. Our birding records helped to prove that the site was not environmentally suitable for a solid waste transfer station and in October 2015 King County eliminated the site from the process.

We report the key findings from the Rainier Audubon count in our newsletter, *The Heron Herald*, and post the highlights on our website.

- Cindy Flanagan

What is the Christmas Bird Count?

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of citizen science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the US, Canada and many countries in the Western Hemisphere, go out over a 24 hour period on one calendar day to count birds.

Can I just do my own CBC and send you my data? No. Since each CBC is a real census, and since the 15-mile diameter circle contains a lot of area to be covered, single-observer counts (except in unusual circumstances) cannot be allowed. To participate on the CBC you will need to join an existing CBC circle by contacting the compiler in advance of the count day.

As an alternative, you may be interested in getting involved in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) organized by Audubon with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It takes place President's Day weekend each February and you can count the birds each day in your backyard/community and then enter the results online. For more information on the GBBC, visit the Audubon GBBC page.

Rainier Audubon Officers

President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
Treasurer	Laura Lavington*	253-941-7372
Secretary	Heather Gibson*	253-856-9812
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Field Trip Chair	Open	
Membership Chair	Pat Toth*	206-767-4944
Backyard Habitat Chair	Marie West-Johnson	206-817-8754
Conservation Chair	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Mailing Chair	Debra Russell	425-271-0682
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Newsletter Editor	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Webmaster	Treesa Hertzell	253-255-1808
Education Chair	Annette Tabor*	253-927-3208
Christmas Bird Count Coordinator	Alex Juchems	253-529-8996
Board Member	Max Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Erin Wojewodski-Prinsen	425-432-9965
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 at the Federal Way United Methodist Church, and are open to all members.

Sign up for our Google email list!

The intent of this site is to assist in publicizing our activities to 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 at:

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

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.



Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

that's what happened to me as I pushed away at Sparrow Loop

The responding "pink, pink" calls of a flock of White-crowned Sparrows pulled me out of my reminiscent daze. Low down in the brambles a pair of Song Sparrows hopped about playfully. A couple Golden-crowned Sparrows poked their heads out of the berried bush to check what all the commotion was about. As I glanced back at the group of White-crowns, I spotted an unfamiliar pair of dashed red lines on one sparrow's head. Excited, I pulled out my binoculars to observe the sparrow closer. It had a grey chest and a brown-grey lined back, but with its red lined cap it looked like an American Tree Sparrow. A couple years earlier, Dan Streiffert had spotted a pair of American Tree Sparrows a few miles up the river from Sparrow Loop. Was this the same bird? As I stared at the red cap of the sparrow, a telltale sign of a tree sparrow, I felt elated. Spotting an American Tree Sparrow might not be rare, but it was definitely not a regular

As winter's foreshadowing chill sets in (not to mention exam deadlines, which loom like vultures on lampposts), I try to spend time out viewing all of our winter migrant returnees. The sight of the first Trumpeter Swans at Carpinito's Pumpkin Patch or a sky dotted flock of Snow Geese or Cacklers always brings a smile to my face. Even a greasy flock of Starlings on a telephone wire reminds me that the next Christmas Bird Count is just around the corner. One treasured spot of mine to stop by for winter birds is the turnaround loop off West Valley Highway, just east of Frager Road. I nicknamed it "Sparrow Loop" for its abundance of sparrows.

One November morning, I stopped by the Sparrow Loop to look for winter returnees and some sparrows. In the trees lining the river, several Western-scrub Jays gathered calling to one another. A flock of Golden-crowned Kinglets flitted to a row of coniferous trees at the tree nursery across the street. As I gave a whistling "pishhh" for any sparrows in the blackberries, I was reminded of my first birding field trip with birder extraordinaire, Steve Johnson. As our entourage stopped for an early morning bathroom break at Wendy's, Steve, a glint in his eye and a mischievous look on his face, turned to the group and said "Ok, now everyone is required to spot a House Sparrow with a French fry in its beak." Later on the trip, someone glimpsed a sparrow species in the center of a brambly bush. "Ah," Steve said with a chuckle, "a little brown job." Steve Johnson's summation of sparrows and other small birds was quite precise. Sparrows and other songbirds can be a challenge to identify, particularly in bushes or poor lighting. Even sparrows in clear view can fool a birder into misidentifying;



occurrence in the valley. However, as I peered closer at the sparrow, I noticed the beak was not multicolored (black on top and yellow on the bottom), but yellow, like the white-crowns next to it. As well, the grey chest lacked the black splash on an American Tree Sparrow's chest. As I consulted my photographic guide of the *Sparrow of United States and Canada*, I saw that my tree sparrow looked more like a chestnut-headed juvenile White-crown. So much for my rare surprise!

While a birder's dream is to spot a "life bird" in his or her backyard, or

glimpse a rare sighting while out birding, we all know that the reality of spotting rare birds is low. That's why it's important to enjoy getting outside and connecting with our everyday birds around us. Have you had any surprising sightings lately? What birds regularly visit your yard? Do you have any interesting stories about them? I would love to hear about what you are seeing. Happy birding!

Recent Bird Sightings:

Thanks to this month's reporters Lisa Mesplay, Dan Streiffert, Sandra Embrey, Jay Galvin, and Laura Lavington. What have you been seeing lately? Send your reports to calenbirds@hotmail.com.

October 17th, 2015 Laura Lavington's feeders were visited by a **Pileated Woodpecker**.

November 2nd, 2015 Lisa Mesplay was "delighted to report that the Pine Siskins were back in full belligerent form." Lisa added that the siskins were "driving larger birds away from the feeders." Lisa's yard was also visited by a **Western Scrub-Jay**, however, it did not hang around, possibly because of the "fifteen **Stellar's Jays**" patrolling the yard.

November 6th, 2015 Sandra Embrey viewed a handful of immature **American Goldfinches** at her sock feeder. Sandra was also excited about the return of a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** to a "sap-riddled" tree in her front yard.

November 10th, 2015 Dan Streiffert photographed a **leucistic Dark-eyed Junco**. Check out Dan's smug mug site for some great shots of the Junco.

Mystery Bird of the Month

Jay Galvin spotted this bird at the Everett Marina. Can you guess the bird? Here are the clues:

[Continued on [page 9](#)]

Bio: Calen is a 16 year old birder. He enjoys birding in the Green River Valley and the Skagit Valley Flats. Calen is thrilled to continue the 'Seen and Heard' for a fifth year. When not birding, Calen can be seen flying up and down the ice at Kent Valley Ice Center or trekking to class at Highline Community College.

Field Trips - We Need a new Chair!



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. In winter the estuary boardwalk will add an additional 1 3/4 miles total, so the whole walk including the boardwalk extension is up to 3 3/4 miles.

Bring: Good walking shoes or boots, rain gear, 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



Theler Wetlands

Thursday December 10th at 8 AM

Meet at Theler Wetlands at Belfair. About 4-5 hours on level paths. See great birds AND great public art! No need to sign up -- Just show up.

If you need to Google directions, the address is 22871 NE State Route 3, Belfair 98529. These walks are led by Faye McAdams Hands and John Riegsecker and are twice-a-month events. Assume this will be cancelled if really bad weather.

Meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday. Next on **Dec 10** (will skip Thanksgiving Day).

- Adele Freland

Taco Time coupon books For Sale

For the second year, Rainier Audubon Society is going to be selling Taco Time coupon books at the welcome table at membership meetings during early 2016. Taco Time NW says that they will begin mailing the coupon books in January, so the books will likely be sold at the January, February, and March membership meetings.

The books are \$1.00 each, and they contain \$5.00 worth of coupons.

The coupons are valid through April 30, 2016. You can buy as many coupon books as you would like, and the entire \$1.00 goes to Rainier Audubon. So, if you buy a book and use just one coupon, Rainier comes out ahead, and you come out even.

For more information, visit www.TacoTimeNW.com, or talk to Laura Lavington at the welcome table before or after membership meetings.



Alaska Cruise - by Laura Lavington



genuine). I guess we caught the whales on a good day, because we even got to see them bubble net feeding.

Several members of the crew said that they go out on the water several times every day, and they only see bubble net feeding a handful of times during the summer. Bubble net feeding is when Alaskan humpback whales come together as a group to blow bubbles and herd fish into a condensed area near the surface, and when it happens, the whales all push up from below with open mouths and gorge themselves with fish. Well, groups of gulls notice the whales' behavior before human observers do, so gulls conglomerate in the air above bubble-net-feeding whales, waiting for their chance to

snatch some fish. Our crew members noticed the gulls and knew what must be going on, even while the whales were still underwater herding. So, gulls are useful. I heard one crew member say he didn't actually like gulls, but he was glad to see them in such circumstances. I wondered why one would dislike gulls. Well, I guess for a while I was a little uneasy around gulls, after a crafty individual plopped a green mess on my head while I was along the waterfront in Victoria

In July, my mom and I rather spontaneously decided to go on an Alaskan cruise. She had been on a cruise to Alaska several years before, but I had not. Of course, there are many things I could mention about the cruise that would have very little to do with birds or nature (such as ordering cheese plates from room service), so I'll try to not be too off-topic.

"Be prepared" is a saying I remember well from Girl Scouts, so naturally I ordered an Alaskan bird field guide before I left home. I picked *Guide to the Birds of Alaska* by Robert H. Armstrong because of the book's photographs, and because the publisher released a new edition in 2015. The book seems fine, but I'm not crazy about it for one big reason: instead of range maps, the species descriptions involve these range charts. On the top of the chart are the four seasons, and at the side of the chart are six regions of Alaska.



Well, probably the information is fine, but I much prefer a map.

So, cruising along on the cruise ship, I didn't see that many birds (although the captain had us frequently peering about for whales), but there were three instances during the trip that I did see some birdlife. One of the ship's stops was in Juneau, and my mom and I decided to go on a whale watching excursion with Juneau Whale Watch. We had great luck that day: we saw so many humpback whales so close that the crew got excited (which I believe was

during high school. It was the only time in my life that I was speechless. My mom had to clean my head off in the drinking fountain in the wax museum. But that hasn't happened to everyone, so I don't know what the guy's problem with gulls was. And no, I'm not sure what species of gulls were there that day—I was kind of focusing on the whales!

After we disembarked from the whale watch boat, I saw some northwestern crows along the water's edge in the marina area. I didn't get any good pictures of the crows, but I wanted to **[Continued on page 8](#)**



Featherhaven

Native Songbird Rehabilitation
featherhavennsr@gmail.com
 P.O. Box 242, Enumclaw, WA 98022

Bird of the Month: Pine Siskins

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

Siskins are small songbirds with sharp, pointed bills and short, notched tails. They are brown and very streaky with subtle yellow edging on the wings and tail. Pine Siskins are highly nomadic and may inundate your thistle feeder one year and be totally absent the next. You may see these little acrobats clinging to the branch tips of pine trees or other conifers. They forage for food in tight flocks and twitter incessantly to each other even in flight.

Other fun facts about these entertaining songbirds:

- *Pine Siskins become considerably plumper through accumulation of fat with the onset of winter. Each bird can pack enough seeds into its expandable esophagus to support itself through five hours of rest at -4° F temperatures. During cold nights, they can accelerate their metabolic rate up to 5 times more than normal to keep warm.*
- Pine Siskins have difficulty opening the large seeds of striped sunflower but enjoy hulled sunflower seed, chips and Nyjer.
- A siskin may take up a position near an Evening Grosbeak that is eating larger seeds like striped sunflower to pick up dropped particles and will even defend the position against other siskins.
- Pine Siskins may nest in loose colonies and will tolerate the occasional visit to one another's nests after their young are hatched.
- The Pine Siskin is the most common of the "winter finches" to be found at your feeders...but not every year. An "irruption" migration usually takes place every two or three years that can bring large numbers of Siskins to your backyard. A failed seed crop in the boreal forest is the usual cause of this.
- Some "irruptive" Siskins may stay near a dependable food source and nest far south of their normal breeding range.
- The primary natural foods of Pine Siskins are the seeds of hemlocks, alders, birches, and cedars.
- Pine Siskins, like most northern finches, are fond of salt. They seek out natural salt licks and in the winter they can be found along highways eating the salt used to melt ice and snow.



Pine Siskin feeding on Alder Cones
- Dan Streiffert

- Siskins, crossbills and other finches have been observed eating flaking mortar as a source of sodium and calcium.
- Pine Siskins are particularly susceptible to salmonella disease which is spread by fecal contamination of food or water. Sick birds may appear lethargic, puffed up, thin and may have swollen eyelids. If you detect a sick bird at your feeder, empty it, discard the food and disinfect the feeder with a solution of 9 parts water and 1 part bleach (do not use this solution on wooden feeders). Soak the feeder for 10 minutes, rinse thoroughly and let it dry completely before refilling it. Clean up any food debris that is on the ground and put it in the trash. Clean the feeder with the bleach solution every two weeks as a preventative measure

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 2014.

All you have to do is come to a meeting, join up and get your free Discover Pass. The cost of joining is \$25.00/individual and \$30/family. The cost of a Discover Pass is normally \$35.00 dollars so you've just saved \$10.00 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.

Mewsings from Millie

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

I recently heard two of my people talking about their up-coming birding trip to Ecuador. They were discussing the possibility of having altitude sickness and that got me to wonder - why don't birds ever suffer from this malady? Most songbirds migrate below 1,200 feet but some shorebirds often fly above 10,000 feet and raptors have been recorded at well over 20,000 feet! Humans can begin to feel symptoms of altitude sickness at 8,000 feet so why don't these birds get sick?

Well, I found out that birds' respiratory systems are very different from those of mammals. Although their lungs are very small, their physical make up allows the oxygen to be diffused over a large surface area and the barrier between the oxygen and the blood is very thin. Birds also have a series of air sacs that work like bellows to continuously move air through the lungs. This maximizes the amount of fresh air going through the system and oxygen exchange is almost continuous.

Then I thought more about these birds and the long flights they make. They must get tired! Do they sleep? How much do they sleep? Do birds yawn?

Yawning occurs in just about every vertebrate animal yet there is no conclusive evidence as to why this behavior is exhibited.

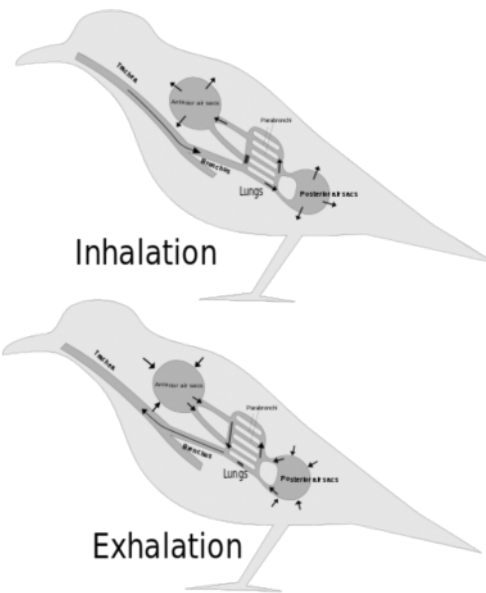
In contrast to what most people believe, yawning does not increase oxygen to the brain in humans nor does it help keep humans awake or prepare their brains for sleep.

Yawning in birds could serve as a thermoregulatory behavior. Birds

yawn more in warmer conditions and it doesn't mean they are feeling drowsy.

As far as sleep goes, birds don't sleep for long periods of time like mammals do. Birds seem to sleep off and on during the day and night when they are not busy foraging, avoiding predators, tending to young or defending a territory.

Birds "sleep" in a semi-alert state in which half of the brain remains awake.



No deep sleep REM dreams for them! This type of sleep is called "unihemispherical sleep". This allows birds to stay vigilant and detect predators. Ducks are often seen resting on the water with one eye open and one eye closed. They are "sleeping".

Birds also sleep this way during migration. Most songbirds migrate at night but then they must actively



forage for food during the day. Napping while flying with one eye open is just another example of the amazing lives of birds.

Until next time,

Millie

The Muse of Mews

- A tip of a whisker to Birdwatching magazine



CHECK OUT THE NEW RAINIER AUDUBON MEETUP GROUP AT

<http://www.meetup.com/Rainier-Audubon-Society/>

Anti-Environmental Amendments Multiplying

As Congress and the White House negotiate next year's spending bill, not only will the funding levels for key conservation programs be determined, but numerous harmful amendments, or "riders," could be added to the legislation that would put birds and other wildlife at risk.

Congress made headway in avoiding a government shutdown by passing a budget deal in late October. The deal will increase spending by \$80 billion over the next two years. It could have a positive impact on conservation programs by boosting spending for federal agencies, though the outcome depends on the ongoing negotiations. A new spending bill must be passed by December 11 to keep the government open.

One of the major concerns as these talks take shape is whether "policy riders" will be included in the final funding bill. Riders that are tacked on to bills can have far-reaching implication for birds, wildlife and habitat. More than 100 harmful riders that attack wild-

life protections and environmental laws are waiting in the wings as potential threats in the next spending bill.

Over a dozen of these riders are aimed at undermining the Endangered Species Act. One would remove protections for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken, and others undo protections for species like the gray wolf and northern long-eared bat.

Other damaging provisions would block signature environmental achievements, including the Clean Power Plan, which is the most significant federal action taken yet to address climate change, and the Clean Water Rule, which solidifies protections for many of our nation's streams and wetlands.

Audubon and the conservation community have called on Congress and the White House to reject these riders and pass a clean spending bill to fund the government. Riders only further the risk of a stalemate and another government shutdown, and roll back fundamental protections for wildlife, clean water, clean air, and a healthy climate.

http://www.audubonaction.org/site/MessageViewer?em_id=64853.0&pgwrap=n

Alaska Cruise (Continued from page 5)

be sure to mention them. I enjoy watching northwestern crows at our vacation home on Hood Canal (no, they are not American crows). These northwestern crows at the marina outside Juneau were also working over the beach, just as my dear friend Cletus does on our beach. Among other differences, northwestern crows have a very different voice than American crows have.

We chose our specific cruise on Holland America because the itinerary included Glacier Bay. Glacier Bay is a national park where many large glaciers extend down to the water, and only two cruise ships a day are permitted into the bay. Our ship's trip into Glacier Bay was near to the end of the cruise, and that day it was quite rainy. We cruised along through the national park for quite a while before we got to the glaciers in front of which we would stop, so I sat inside in the crow's nest (yes, that's what they call the observation bar at the top front of the ship) while the informative park ranger lectured. I had insisted that we get up quite early and claim window-side spots in the crow's nest before the park rangers had even come aboard. It paid off. After we had cruised through the national park, the captain parked us in front of Margerie Glacier and Grand Pacific Glacier. The rain had subsided by then, so most people headed outside to observe the glaciers. It was pretty cold in front

of the glaciers! However, I had gone a little overboard with my layers (again with the "be prepared"), so I was not actually uncomfortable. Still, it was interesting to be rather frosty in July. We listened to the glaciers calving for some time, and I tried to get some good photos of this black-legged kittiwake flying about (although at the time I thought he was a gull). I thought there was something interesting about seeing a gullish bird flying past glaciers, and while everyone oohed and ahed about the glaciers, I tried to photograph mister kittiwake standing atop an ice floe. Some birds just don't cooperate. When we first entered the park, we saw a colony of Steller's sea lions on a large rock, but I was really hoping I'd see a harbor seal resting on an ice floe. The kittiwake had to do instead.



The final opportunity to see birds was during the excursion out of Seward. The cruise was over and we had left our suitcases at the train station, but we had quite a few hours to kill before the train trip to Anchorage. We went on a nature boat trip, and it wasn't quite as fun as the Juneau Whale Watch trip a few days before. We didn't see many whales at all, but I guess one of my problems was that I couldn't stay awake! The crew had advised us that the water would be rough, and wow! The non-drowsy anti-nausea medicine still made me quite sleepy. So, I did see some birds, but the memory is a little fuzzy, and I don't seem to have taken many pictures. We were in the general area of Kenai Fjords National Park, and the boat went past a colony of black-legged kittiwakes, pigeon guillemots, rhinoceros auklets, horned and tufted puffins, and double-crested and pelagic cormorants. There were more, but that's all I remember. We also saw a colony of northern fur seals. I did manage to get a photograph of a mountain goat (his white fur stands out against the green hillside). So, so-so excursion, but the Alaskan birds definitely are there, if you take the time to seek them.

The Alaskan cruise was quite fun, and my mom and I were only home for a few weeks before we started talking about the next cruise! Stay tuned for that one.

Brown Bag Auction Results

I'm writing this to you the morning after November's brown bag auction / photo share / pizza party. I really think the event was a success! As you may have noticed, this was the first year that we had a photo share and pizza party during the brown bag auction, and I wasn't sure how the experiment would go, but it seemed like people were having a good time (at least that's what folks said!). For those of you who could not make it, we missed you and hope to see you next year. I was pretty busy during the night, but I did make some mental notes about how to make next year's event even more successful. This was my first year organizing the brown bag auction, so inevitably I will be able to make a few improvements. For one thing, I noticed that the corporate donations were particularly popular, so I'm going to try to double the number of solicitation letters I write next year.

Of course, you are wondering how much money the brown bag auction made, aren't you? Well, the auction brought in just about \$500. It was my plan to keep track of which members donated what, so I could thank those people, so I could announce who donated each item when it was time to draw tickets, and so I could list everyone who donated in the Heron Herald. I regret that there was just too much hustle and bustle for me to mark on my list everyone who donated

(I think some of you slipped in the back door!), and I missed out on writing down some pretty substantial donations (you know who you are). I would like to thank you here: on behalf of the board, thank you to those who attended the event, to those who donated items, to those who bought tickets, and, last but not least, to those who brought their beautiful bird photos to the photo share. Since Rainier Audubon Society is a 501c3 nonprofit, the value of the items you donated to the brown bag auction is tax deductible. If you need further information about that, please email me. (If you give me enough notice before tax day, I can write you a receipt, if you feel like it would help you.)

Several people helped me last night. Thank you Annette Tabor for helping to sell tickets, thank you Lisa Lavington and Heather Gibson for setting up the auction items and preparing the brown bags, thank you Sandra Embrey for supervising the food area, and thank you Fulton for helping to pull the winning tickets (my apologies Fulton if I am misspelling your name). Also, I would like to give a special thank you to those members who could not attend the event, but who were still so thoughtful as to donate auction items ahead of time.

Unfortunately, I am unable to list here all of the people who donated items to the auction, but I would like to acknowledge the

four businesses that donated. Wild Birds Unlimited of Burien donated a wooden suet feeder and two high-quality suet cakes. Taco Time NW donated \$40 worth of Cactus Card gift cards. McLendon Hardware donated a \$25 gift card. Finally, R.W. Morse Company (a Washington publisher of regional bird books) donated two signed copies of *Birds of the Puget Sound Region* by Bob Morse, Tom Aversa, and Hal Opperman. Thank you.

I would like to leave you with a final suggestion. Some people picked up good material for holiday presents at this year's event, since the brown bag auction is a great source for gifts. However, with some foresight, you can also prepare some items this holiday season for next year's brown bag auction. I, for one, always end up with a gift or three that I don't especially want, but this year instead of immediately donating the items to charity, I'm going to put them in a box and save them for 2016's brown bag auction. Brand new gifts that the receiver doesn't particularly want make perfect items for the auction. Further, you can pick up some really cheap items during the after-Christmas sales, and with a little planning, you can be ready for next year's auction.

Thank you everyone, and let's make 2016's event even better!

-Laura Lavington

Seen and Heard (Continued from [page 3](#))

- A group of me is called a "skewer", a "herony", a "congregation", or a "wedge" of egrets.
- I usually hunt by wading through the water, standing still, then striking with my sharp beak.
- I have a slow flight and I hold my head craned back when I fly.
- The oldest record bird of my kind was nearly 23 years old.
- I was nearly hunted to extinction in the late 19th century because of my elegant feathers.
- I am not snowy, reddish, and I don't like cattle.
- I am the symbol bird for the National Audubon Society
- I am a great bird, but I am not a Great-blue Heron.

Who am I?

Answer: Great Egret



"Birds are indicators of the environment. If they are in trouble, we know we'll soon be in trouble." – Roger Tory Peterson



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