

# The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

December 2018

Rainier Audubon Membership Meeting

## **Brown Bag Auction, Photo Sharing and Cookie Exchange**

7:00 P.M. December 17, 2018

**B**ring your favorite photos and videos to share on a thumb drive. Instead of having a speaker, there will be a photo show and auction.

Tickets for the brown bag auction are \$1.00 each, and there is no limit on how many you can buy. Of course, Rainier needs people to donate items for the auction. Bird-related items are always popular, but you are not limited to them. Perhaps you got a gift card for Christmas last year that you haven't gotten around to spending: it would be great for the auction! Or, you could be a little creative and make a gift basket. The brown bag auction helps pay for Rainier's expenses, so we definitely want this year's event to be a success. If you are donating items, please have those items at the church by 6:30 pm the day of the event.

Bring your favorite cookie or bar or other goodie and enjoy a variety of snacks other folks have brought. You will be able to mingle, get an eyeful of some excellent bird pictures, bid on the items up for auction and have something yummy to munch on!

For more information, contact Heather Gibson, 206-226-2050.

Join us at 6:30 for conversation and refreshments.



Sandhills at M Street Pond - Jay Galvin



The Mouser - Dan Streiffert

### **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 programs are held at 7:00 P.M. at the  
Federal Way United Methodist Church  
29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001  
(in unincorporated Auburn)

## Rainier Audubon Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/rainieraudubonsociety/>

## New Rainier Audubon Google Group / email list

We are combining the old Rainier Leaders email list with the ras-activities list into a new RainierAudubon google group.

The [ras-activities] group has been renamed to [RainierAudubon]. So if you were previously a member of this list, then you are still a member of the renamed group. The only difference being that when you send an email to this group, the address is [RainierAudubon@googlegroups.com](mailto:RainierAudubon@googlegroups.com)

If you did not get an invitation, you may request to join the group by going to [groups.google.com](https://groups.google.com) and searching for "Rainier Audubon". You can then request to join the group. Alternatively, you can sign up on the [RainierAudubon.org](http://RainierAudubon.org) website.

## **BECOME OUR NEXT RAINIER AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP CHAIR**

Rainier Audubon is initiating its search for a new membership chair. Please consider volunteering for this very important and vital job.

The membership chair keeps our monthly membership totals up-to-date, invites members of national to join our chapter and is an essential link in insuring that our members receive their much-loved Heron Heralds.

Duties include:

- Receiving data each month from national and adding potential members to the data base
- Inviting these potential members via snail-mail or e-mail to join our local chapter
- Keeping membership data up-to-date monthly – adding new members, renewing members
- Sending the address list to the printers each month for the mailing of the Heron Herald
- Assisting, if needed, with readying Heron Heralds for mailing
- Reporting membership totals to the board each month
- Keyboarding and basic computer skills in Excel a plus.

Current membership chair will train and assist you. If interested, please contact Pat Toth, [h2opat@msn.com](mailto:h2opat@msn.com) or 206-767-4944

## **Heron Herald is Available Online**

The current issue of the Heron Herald is always available to download from [www.RainierAudubon.org](http://www.RainierAudubon.org). I will try to send an email on our mailing list as soon as it is posted. The October issue was delayed due to mailing problems.

## **Rainier Audubon Society Directory**

| <b>Position</b>        | <b>Name</b>        | <b>Board Member</b> | <b>Phone</b> | <b>email</b>   |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| President              | Heather Gibson     | Yes                 | 206-226-2050 | <a href="mailto:hedder_swedder@yahoo.com">hedder_swedder@yahoo.com</a>     |
| Vice President         | Jay Galvin         | Yes                 | 253-939-3094 | <a href="mailto:gjgalvin@comcast.net">gjgalvin@comcast.net</a>             |
| Secretary              | Open               |                     |              |  |
| Treasurer              | Laura Lavington    | Yes                 | 253-941-7372 | <a href="mailto:laura.lavington@gmail.com">laura.lavington@gmail.com</a>   |
| Membership Chair       | Pat Toth           | Yes                 | 206-767-4944 | <a href="mailto:h2opat@msn.com">h2opat@msn.com</a>                         |
| Education Chair        | Cindy Flanagan     | Yes                 | 253-941-3933 | <a href="mailto:camcalcin@hotmail.com">camcalcin@hotmail.com</a>           |
| Program Chair          | Dale Meland        | No                  | 253-946-1637 | <a href="mailto:dmeland@hotmail.com">dmeland@hotmail.com</a>               |
| Field Trip Chair       | Barbara Petersen   | Yes                 | 253 389 3204 | <a href="mailto:bpbatfan@aol.com">bpbatfan@aol.com</a>                     |
| Publicity Chair        | Jay Galvin         | Yes                 | 253-939-3094 | <a href="mailto:gjgalvin@comcast.net">gjgalvin@comcast.net</a>             |
| Backyard Habitat Chair | Marie West-Johnson | Yes                 | 206-817-8754 | <a href="mailto:crgrie123@yahoo.com">crgrie123@yahoo.com</a>               |
| Conservation Chair     | Dan Streiffert     | No                  | 253-796-2203 | <a href="mailto:dan_streiffert@hotmail.com">dan_streiffert@hotmail.com</a> |
| Newsletter Editor      | Dan Streiffert     | No                  | 253-796-2203 | <a href="mailto:dan_streiffert@hotmail.com">dan_streiffert@hotmail.com</a> |
| Webmaster              | Treesa Hertzell    | No                  | 253-255-1808 | <a href="mailto:Autumn207@comcast.net">Autumn207@comcast.net</a>           |
| Member at Large        | Stephen Feldman    | Yes                 | 360-802-5211 | <a href="mailto:stephanfeldman@gmail.com">stephanfeldman@gmail.com</a>     |
| Hospitality            | Sandra Embrey      | No                  | 253-517-3633 | <a href="mailto:sandra.embrey@gmail.com">sandra.embrey@gmail.com</a>       |
| Mailing                | Debra Russell      | No                  | 425 829 4008 | <a href="mailto:debrarussell@comcast.net">debrarussell@comcast.net</a>     |
| Lifetime Members       | Max Prinsen        | Yes                 | 425-432-9965 |  |

# Field Trips - Barbara Petersen



## Weekly Birdwalks at Nisqually

Wednesdays 8 am to 11 am  
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 visitors' 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.

**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](mailto:scrubjay323@aol.com)

## Burien Wild Birds Unlimited Bird Walk

Leader: Barbara Petersen  
Sat, December 22, 2018  
8:20 AM to Noon

Meet in the bird store parking lot  
15858 1st Ave S  
Burien 98148

We'll visit Lake Fenwick, M Street, West Valley, Frager and Russell Road spots, Boeing Ponds and, if time, Normandy Park Cove.

Call to sign up call or text Barbara at 253 389 3204, or by email Barbara at [BPbatfan@aol.com](mailto:BPbatfan@aol.com).

## Rainier Audubon 38<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count Sunday December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

The Rainier Audubon 38<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count will be on Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Come out and be part of our chapter's thirty-eight 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 Dinner and to hear the day's species tally.

Contact: Ken Schroeder at [kenschroeder@msn.com](mailto:kenschroeder@msn.com)  
253-939-7470

### Dinner

Our CBC Dinner is a great way to celebrate our Christmas Bird Count. Dinner will begin at 5 PM, with doors opening at 4 PM. Dinner will be provided. Come listen to our CBC species count tally and our teams' interesting finds of the day!

Address of Dinner:

Federal Way United Methodist Church  
29645 51<sup>st</sup> Ave,  
Auburn, WA 98001

Olympic Peninsula April 12-14, 2019  
**BirdFest**  
Come bird with us!

- ▣ San Juan Island Cruise
- ▣ Neah Bay Birding Excursion
- ▣ Guided Birding Trips
- ▣ Bird Art Classes
- ▣ Photography Workshop
- ▣ NAS Photography Exhibit
- ▣ Auction & Raffle
- ▣ Gala Banquet with Speaker: John Marzluff

Located in Sequim, WA  
For more information:  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org)  
[info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org)  
or 360-681-4076

Logos for Olympic Peninsula, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, First Federal, Dungeness River Audubon Center, and a FUNDRAISER logo.

Klamath Basin Audubon's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
**WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL**  
Save the dates!  
February 14-17, 2019

**Keynoters:**  
Pepper Trail | George Lepp | Julie Zickefoose

[WinterWingsFest.org](http://WinterWingsFest.org)

### Upcoming Programs

- 1/21/2019 - "Great Salt Lake Birding" - Jay Galvin
- 2/18/2019 - Malheur NWR - Dan Streiffert
- 3/18/2019 - "Wildlife of Brazil's Cerrado and Pantanal" - Sally Vogel
- 4/15/2019 - "The Falconer" - John Prucich
- 5/20/2019 - Open

# Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

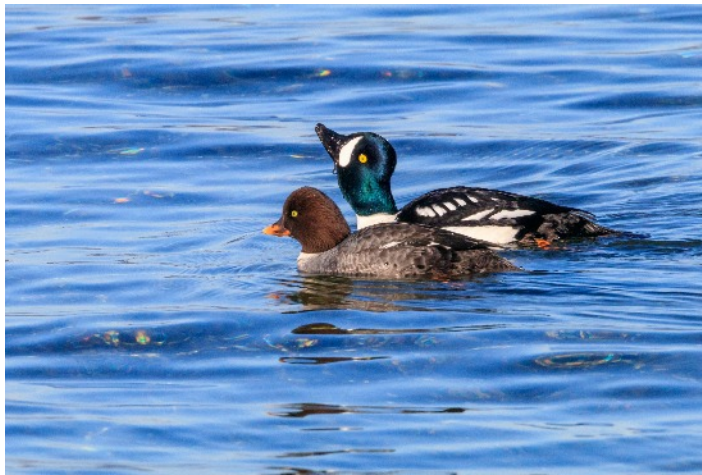
Are you looking for a fun and scenic place to find birds this winter? If you live in the Rainier Audubon area, chances are you live a short drive away from a couple of our beautiful Puget Sound-side state parks--namely Saltwater State Park and Dash Point State Park. Very few hotspots blend such excellent sea and land birding. At Saltwater, you can watch an otter scurry to its den in the hillside, then spot owls while walking the trail loop. Dash Point offers an impressive network of trails and a view of droves of White-winged and Surf Scoters. Even if you are not from the area, you can enjoy the habitat while staying in the campgrounds that are open from May to September. With our winter sea birds returning to the Puget Sound, the two state parks are again busy with bird sightings. Here are some species to keep your eyes peeled for if you take a trip out to any of our beautiful marine hotspots.

At Saltwater State Park you should always check for Harlequin Ducks, especially the radiant males. Often you can spot them bobbing along near the mouth of McSorely Creek around high tide from October to May. Of all hotspots in the South Sound, Saltwater is unrivaled in terms of consistent Harlequin sightings. With expansive views to the north (you can see all the way to Bainbridge Island) you can usually view Western, Horned, and occasionally Red-necked Grebes. Saltwater is often home to large numbers of diving ducks like Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, and American Wigeon.

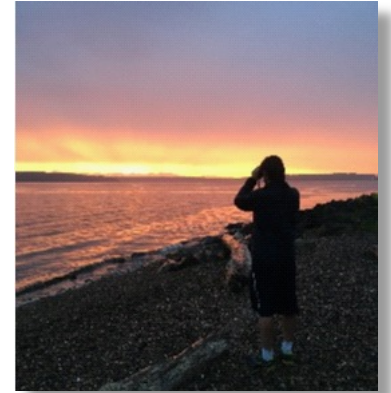
Dash Point features a number of specialties, none more common than its massive rafts of Surf and White-winged Scoters commonly found adrift off shore. Last month on the Puget Sound Seabird Survey, we even sighted a female Black Scoter, so keep watch for them amongst the other two species. Like Saltwater, it is a popular hotspot for grebes, and highlight species Eared Grebes have hung around the past few months. Finally,

Dash Point is a great place to practice non-breeding loon identification, as all three loon species can be found throughout the winter.

One waterfowl species has anomalously been sighted traveling down the Puget Sound waterway this year. While leading a Rainier Audubon field trip at Saltwater State Park in mid-November, a line of white geese was spotted flapping around north of Maury Island. The geese, Snow Geese, were the first to be viewed from Saltwater (and the first seen in that part of East Passage). Snow Geese are more often found up and down the Green River Valley at M Street in Auburn or 204<sup>th</sup> St in Kent. After poking around eBird I found that up until 2018, Snow Geese had never been reported in the East Passage. However, recently numerous flocks have used the waterway as a migration path. In addition to our Saltwater Snow Geese, a flock of 75 was sighted at Dash Point, 55 were sighted in Normandy Park, and large flocks were spotted from Ruston Way in Tacoma throughout November. What could be



causing so many Snow Geese to divert their course and travel down the Sound? Perhaps the answer correlates to population increases of Snow Geese in the past decade. With more Snow Geese, it is possible that more have found a less busy area to migrate down. While the answer remains unknown, it will be interesting to see in the coming years if more continue migrating down the Puget Sound.



## Recent Sightings:

### November 16<sup>th</sup>, Dan Streiffert's Backyard, Kent, WA

Dan and Nancy Streifferts' backyard is well known in our Rainier Audubon circle. They host an annual May Birdathon outing on their pristine parcel of land which is home to a plethora of birds. Dan captures many terrific photos even just from his living room. This November, Nancy and Dan received a very unexpected visitor, one of the biggest shockers the Seen & Heard has received in years. Their visitor can occasionally be sighted at Sunrise near Mt. Rainier, but rarely makes appearances west of the Cascades. Who was this mystery bird? A **Northern Goshawk!** In the past year, I have only heard of one other goshawk report west of Greenwater, so the Streifferts' sighting was truly remarkable. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, goshawks will hunt a variety of organisms, but they enjoy large game birds like grouse. Later that day Dan added, "We are now missing a chicken...". It sounds like the goshawk came for an early Thanksgiving feast!

### November 8<sup>th</sup>, M Street, Au-

### burn, WA

Typical for this month, M Street was a busy landing pad for migrants. In late October a pair of **Pectoral Sandpipers** stopped by the flooded fields at the south end of the road. M Street was a hit for other late-season shorebirds like **Long-billed Dowitcher**, **Least Sandpiper**, and **Dunlin** all showed up in early November and over 45 **Killdeer** were spotted on one corner of the pond. It did not take long for waterfowl (*Continued on [page 5](#)*)

*Calen is a 19-year-old birder entering his eighth year writing the Seen and Heard. Currently attending the University of Washington, Calen enjoys exploring new birding areas in Washington and familiar regions in South King County.*

(Continued from [page 4](#)) to make their way through the valley. In late October, a flock of well over 1000 **Cackling Geese** greeted me with a deafening cacophony. On some nights I could hear their calls from my house a mile up the hill from the fields. Other waterfowl like **Greater White-fronted Geese** and **Snow Geese** were sighted by the barn as well. In the surprising passerine category, a **Northern Shrike** hung around the north end of the road for a few days. Perhaps it will stick around through the winter. All of those are terrific birds, but likely the most exciting of all was a flock of 27 **Sandhill Cranes** sighted at the beginning of November. I hear Jay Galvin has photos...

In addition to feathered creatures, a scaled sighting was also found at M Street. In mid-October, while searching for the Pectoral Sandpipers, I noticed a large object thrashing about in the southern pond. To my astonishment, the object was a salmon spawning in the flooded field! Clearly the fish had used the creek on the back side of the field to access the fields. It was definitely an exciting first to see so close to home.

**October 27<sup>th</sup>, Steve Johnson's Fabulous Federal Way & Fife Field Trip**  
Every November, Steve Johnson leads a field trip around prominent hotspots along the East Passage and Hylebos Waterway in Federal Way and Fife. This year's contingent featured a nice blend of familiar faces and first time field trip participants. After good looks at **Purple Finch** at Lake Fenwick we forayed on to the Rhododendron Garden in Federal Way which was again very productive. We heard the honks of numerous **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, watched a trio of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** hop up a tree, and glimpsed a pretty **Townsend's Warbler** perched atop a tree at the entrance. A stop at the Hylebos Creek in Fife yielded **California Scrub-Jay** while a **Marbled Murrelet** greeted us off the end of Dash Point Pier. All around it was another very successful birding trip with Steve!

If you have an interesting sighting or story you want to share send your reports to me at [calenbirds@hotmail.com](mailto:calenbirds@hotmail.com).

Editor's note: On November 19 the Goshawk made another flyby. Later that afternoon I found a new pile of chicken feathers in our backyard. A head count indicated that we were still down only one chicken, so he must have stashed her somewhere overnight.



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29645 51<sup>st</sup> Ave, Auburn, WA 98001

# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 30 YEARS AGO... - Calen Randal

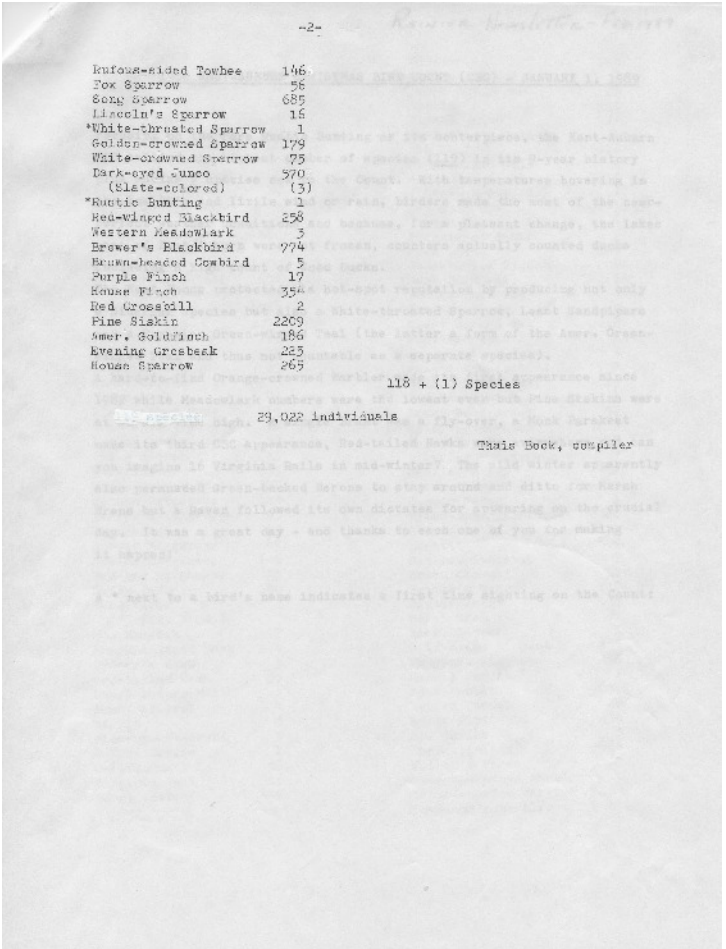
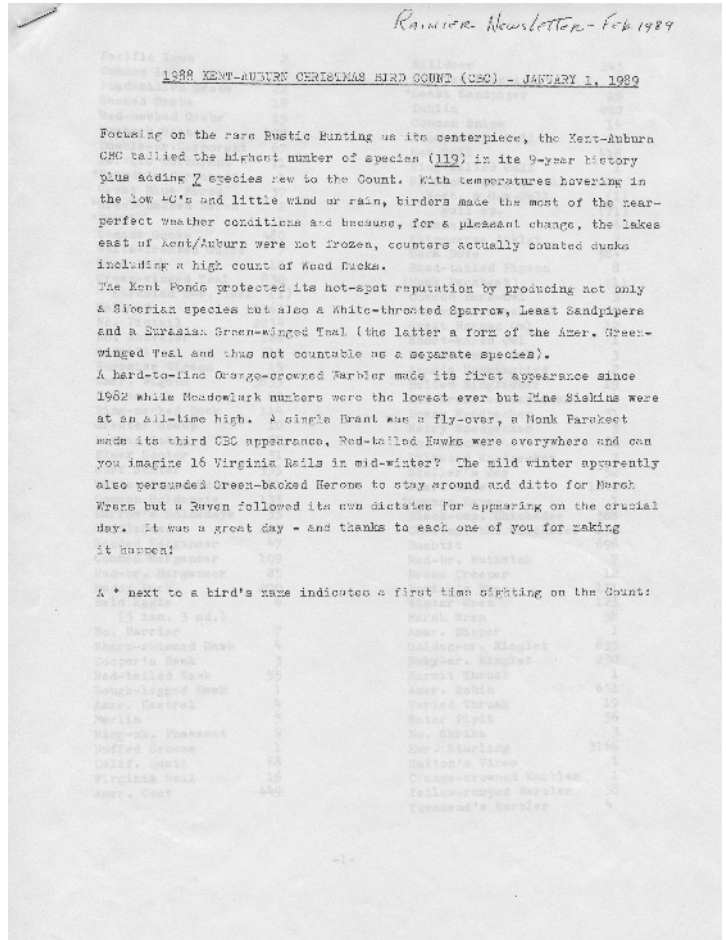
The following is the CBC report for 1988 submitted by Thais Bock.

It is fascinating to see how different our count circle was three decades ago. You will notice that Barred Owl, California Scrub Jay, and Eurasian-collared Dove did not make it onto the list. None were sighted until 1994.

Meanwhile a Ruffed Grouse or Rough-legged Hawk sighting is almost unfathomable for today's counts. The totals of owls on the 1988 count were truly remarkable (4 species and 25 individuals) while game birds like California Quail and Ring-necked Pheasant were far more populous three decades ago.

Like today, waterfowl were a backbone of the count. Finally, over 30 years Anna's Hummingbird numbers have increased exponentially, from just 2 in the 1988 count through 128 last year! Vast changes on our counts since 1988 makes one wonder, what will the 2048 Rainier Audubon CBC tally look like?

|                        |      |                         |      |
|------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|
| Pacific Loon           | 2    | Killdeer                | 243  |
| Common Loon            | 3    | Spotted Sandpiper       | 1    |
| Pied-billed Grebe      | 22   | *Least Sandpiper        | 25   |
| Horned Grebe           | 18   | Dunlin                  | 490  |
| Red-necked Grebe       | 15   | Common Snipe            | 14   |
| Western Grebe          | 107  | Bonaparte's Gull        | 11   |
| Double-cr. Cormorant   | 67   | New Gull                | 416  |
| Belagic Cormorant      | 11   | Ring-billed Gull        | 1    |
| *Brandt's Cormorant    | 1    | Glaucous-winged Gull    | 1019 |
| Great Blue Heron       | 37   | West. x G-w. Gull       | (1)  |
| *Green-backed Heron    | 2    | gull sp.                | (71) |
| *Brant                 | 1    | Common Murre            | 6    |
| Canada Goose           | 480  | Rhinoceros Auklet       | 2    |
| White-fronted Goose    | 7    | Rock Dove               | 384  |
| Wood Duck              | 10   | Band-tailed Pigeon      | 6    |
| Green-winged Teal      | 830  | (Monk Parakeet)         | (1)  |
| Eurasian G-w. Teal (1) |      | Common Carr-Cwl         | 3    |
| Mallard                | 1763 | Western Screech-Owl     | 9    |
| No. Pintail            | 2234 | Great Horned Owl        | 12   |
| No. Shoveler           | 169  | Short-eared Owl         | 1    |
| Gadwall                | 215  | No. Saw-whet Owl        | 3    |
| Eurasian Wigeon        | 15   | Anna's Hummingbird      | 2    |
| Amer. Wigeon           | 3833 | Belted Kingfisher       | 19   |
| Canvasback             | 63   | Red-breasted Sapsucker  | 4    |
| Ring-necked Duck       | 114  | Downy Woodpecker        | 31   |
| Greater Scaup          | 10   | Hairy Woodpecker        | 3    |
| Lesser Scaup           | 27   | Co. Flicker             | 68   |
| Black Scaup            | 31   | Pileated Woodpecker     | 7    |
| Surf Scoter            | 333  | Steller's Jay           | 32   |
| White-winged Scoter    | 211  | Amer. Crow              | 1649 |
| Common Goldeneye       | 133  | *Common Raven           | 1    |
| Barrow's Goldeneye     | 35   | Black-cap. Chickadee    | 388  |
| Bufflehead             | 223  | Coast-tr. bk. Chickadee | 152  |
| Hooded Merganser       | 47   | Huskitit                | 696  |
| Common Merganser       | 109  | Red-br. Nuthatch        | 7    |
| Red-br. Merganser      | 25   | Brown Creeper           | 12   |
| Ruddy Duck             | 200  | Ewick's Wren            | 131  |
| Bald Patele            | 6    | Winter Wren             | 123  |
| (3 imm, 3 ad.)         |      | Marsh Wren              | 58   |
| No. Harrier            | 7    | Amer. Dipper            | 1    |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk     | 4    | Golden-cr. Kinglet      | 635  |
| Copper's Hawk          | 3    | Ruby-cr. Kinglet        | 230  |
| Red-tailed Hawk        | 55   | Horned Thrush           | 1    |
| Rough-legged Hawk      | 1    | Amer. Robin             | 651  |
| Amer. Kestrel          | 4    | Varied Thrush           | 19   |
| Merlin                 | 5    | Water Pipit             | 56   |
| King-uk. Pheasant      | 9    | No. Shrike              | 3    |
| Ruffed Grouse          | 1    | Eur. Starling           | 2166 |
| Calif. Quail           | 68   | Hutton's Vireo          | 1    |
| Virginia Rail          | 16   | Orange-crowned Warbler  | 1    |
| Amer. Coot             | 449  | Yellow-rumped Warbler   | 38   |
|                        |      | Townsend's Warbler      | 4    |



# Bird of the Month: Bewick's Wren

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

If you encounter a noisy, hyperactive little bird with bold white eyebrows flicking its long tail as it hops nimbly from branch to branch, you may have spotted a Bewick's Wren (pronounced "buick's", like the car).

The Bewick's Wren is a medium-sized bird with a slender body and a strikingly long tail often held upright. Its slender bill is slightly down curved. The bird is brown and gray with a long white stripe over each eye. The back and wings are plain brown, underparts are gray-white and the tail is barred with black and tipped with white spots. The male and female look the same.

The Bewick's Wren is a master vocalist and can belt out a string of short whistles, warbles, burrs and trills or scold visitors with raspy calls.

As it skulks through tangles of branches and leaves looking for insects, the wren cocks its long tail up over its back often flicking it from side to side or fanning it.

The Bewick's Wren favors dry brush areas, chaparral, scrub thickets in open country and open woodlands near rivers and streams but they are equally at home in gardens, residential areas, cities and suburbs.

Although the Bewick's Wren primarily eats insects, it will come to suet, shelled peanuts and shelled sunflower seed.

The Bewick's Wren builds its nest in a cavity or on a ledge within 30 feet of the ground. The nest is cup-shaped and made with grasses, rootlets, leaves, moss or other plant materials. Some contain spider egg cases. The inside may be lined with feathers, wool, hair or plant down with a final inner lining of snakeskin. The male initiates the nest building and then the female helps out. The female will lay 3 - 8 eggs which will hatch in 14 - 16 days. The babies will fledge in 14 - 16 days.

Other cool facts about the Bewick's Wren:

- The species is named after British engraver Thomas Bewick who was a friend of pioneering bird artist John James Audubon.
- A young male Bewick's Wren learns to sing from neighboring adult males while growing up in his parents' territory. The songs he develops differ from his father's, with a note changed here, a syllable there. The melodious signature he acquires between the ages of about 30 and 60 days will be his for life.
- Courting Bewick's Wrens normally form monogamous pairs and the male and female often forage together.



- At the sound of approaching humans, a female Bewick's Wren incubating eggs usually flushes quietly from her nest cavity but remains nearby and scolds. Some females, however, sit tightly on their eggs even when disturbed.
- The Bewick's Wren population in the eastern United States has greatly declined mainly due to the expansion in range of the House Wren. The House Wren is suspect in the decline because they will frequently remove eggs from nests in cavities.
- The oldest recorded Bewick's Wren was at least 8 years old when it was recaptured and rereleased during banding operations in California.
- In his 1889 Ornithology of Illinois, Robert Ridgway attested that "No bird more deserves the protection of man than Bewick's Wren. He does not need man's encouragement, for he comes of his own accord and installs himself as a member of the community, wherever it suits his taste. He is found about the cowshed and barn along with the Pewee and Barn Swallow; he investigates the pig-sty; then explores the garden fence, and finally mounts to the roof and pours forth one of the sweetest songs that ever was heard."

## CONSERVATION CORNER by Cindy Flanagan

### ***Agencies and Tribes Weigh in on Federal Way's 'No Significant Environmental Impact' Decision for Proposed Warehouse on Weyerhaeuser Campus***

#### **WAREHOUSE A IS NOW ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY!**

On October 25th, the city of Federal Way issued an environmental Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance (MDNS) for Warehouse A, which if built, will rub shoulders with the east end of the nationally acclaimed Headquarters building on the former Weyerhaeuser Campus. The City has determined that there is no relative environmental impact to the proposed site and surrounding area. There is one caveat. The owner Industrial Realty Group (IRG) must thicken the asphalt if there are more than 28 truck trips daily because the City's is concerned with Weyerhaeuser Way's ability to withstand truck traffic. Should IRG comply with this minor mitigation, the City will approve the land use proposal.

Many groups are shocked by the City's decision. At the November 6<sup>th</sup> Federal Way City Council meeting after Community Development Director presented the MDNS decision, Save Weyerhaeuser Campus president Lori Sechrist spoke, "Just the term non-significance should bring everyone pause - in our opinion, as well as the numerous experts we have solicited - there is nothing non - significant about any of these proposed developments.

A bit of background may be needed to understand why Rainier Audubon is so vested in opposing the warehouse complex on the historic Weyerhaeuser Campus. The 425-acre campus is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Of the 425-acres are 200-acres of forest and meadow. Throughout these forests and meadows are a rare 12-miles of easily accessible trails that have been open to the public for over 40 years. The campus provides an incredibly diverse habitat and is a hot spot for Rainier Audubon, with over 120 bird species sighted. And we all know, if it is good for the birds, it is good for us. But IRG's proposed developments threaten all of this.

In September 2016, the new owner IRG applied for a land use permit to build a fish processing plant. In December, with strong community pressure, the warehouse use as a fish processing plant was withdrawn; however, IRG proceeded with its land use application for a 45-foot tall, 225,000-square-foot warehouse. Warehouse A is the first of 3 warehouse projects proposed for the campus. Total area of the projects will exceed 2 million square feet of impervious surface and all its stormwater flows will be channeled down the Hylebos. The campus is at the headwaters of the sensitive salmon-bearing Hylebos stream system, which has had millions of dollars from Federal Superfunds, State funds, tribal funds and others spent on bank erosion, floodwater restoration and salmon habitat restoration. The Hylebos is listed on the State Clean Water Act's 303(d) list—which is a list of impaired and threatened waters—and is highly sensitive to future urban development like IRG's projects. In addition to downstream issues, there are traffic congestion issues. IRG's proposed warehouse complex will clog the keystone entrances of Federal Way with 800 semi-truck trips and 4,350 passenger vehicles to the campus daily.

Following the city of Federal Way's 'Warehouse A MDNS' announcement, the City issued a 14-day public comment period. Not only did environmental groups like Rainier Audubon

and Save Weyerhaeuser Campus weigh in—so did some heavy hitters:

- Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT),
- King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT),
- King County Department of Natural Resources (KCDOT),
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP),
- Puyallup Tribe of Indians (PTI) and
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (MIT).

Rare is it that on a land use application such a span of agencies and tribes weighs in. Each of the agencies and the tribes commented on environmental concerns that the city of Federal Way did not acknowledge in its Mitigated Determination of Nonsignificance:

Both the Muckleshoot and Puyallup tribes are concerned with the cumulative impacts of IRG's 3 proposed developments and believe that the City should issue an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address significant site and cumulative impacts. The Puyallup Tribe further argues that "Filling wetlands where Warehouse A and B are proposed not only will permanently impact site wetland hydrology, but will also impact downstream flows to Hylebos Creek, used by Endangered Species Act species such as steelhead, chinook and bull trout." The Tribes and others have spent millions of dollars to restore the system over the last several decades. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe requests that "Tribal treaty rights must be respected and successful resolution of tribal concerns addressed."

King County Department of Natural Resources also commented on the need to study downstream impacts that include the Hylebos Basin. A downstream analysis "must include all available information on the downstream area to fully identify existing drainage and water quality problems." The analysis has only been done for one-quarter mile downstream; it potentially must extend further under the regulations of the 2016 King County Surface Water Design Manual, which the city of Federal Way has adopted.

Both WSDOT and KCDOT request that a cumulative review be done. WSDOT's concern is the impact these four project proposals will have on I-5 and SR-18. All four project proposals — Warehouse A, Warehouse B, Greenline Business Park and the DaVita office building — must be analyzed together to fully assess the "direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of all four developments to WSDOT's facilities and their function." Warehouse A, alone, triggers a FAIL by exceeding the vehicular trip threshold for determining whether a highway improvement should be requested. The City, in its MDNS decision, has failed to recognize this impact. As a result, WSDOT cannot ask IRG for funds to cover the mitigative costs, as WSDOT is not the lead agency that makes the decisions—FEDERAL WAY holds this power. And currently, the City has ignored WSDOT's comments and request. The WSDOT reached out to the City in March 2017, but its concerns were not addressed. KCDOT argues that the city's apparent "incremental project-level approach" of reviewing one warehouse proposal at a time is insufficient. KCDOT further



argues that the scope of IRG’s Traffic Impact Analysis should be expanded to surrounding streets and alternate routes trucks will use to access Interstate 5, including Military Road between South 320<sup>th</sup> Street and the South 272<sup>nd</sup> Street interchange.

The Washington Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) disagrees with the MDNS because comments that it previously submitted to the city “requesting an evaluation of the property for its historical and architectural significance” have not been appropriately considered. DAHP has determined that “The campus is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places,” and, “Given the high potential that the subject site and surrounding Weyerhaeuser property is significant for its design, landscape, and plan, we recommend that the City consider the impact of the proposal on the character and quality of this location and on Federal Way’s heritage as well as its future.” Furthermore, DAHP stresses that a comprehensive survey and inventory should be completed, and there should be a thorough exploration of alternative proposals.

Any of the individuals and groups who weighed in on Warehouse A’s MDNS comment period can file a SEPA appeal by November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and take the fight to the next level, a Hearing Examiner. Save Weyerhaeuser Campus has indicated, if necessary, it will appeal.

As lead agency, the City’s Community Development Director Brian Davis has the authority to ignore the agency and tribes’ comments and plod forth. Without the City requiring further studies and possible mitigation for downstream impacts or traffic impacts, the result will be that the citizens of Washington—not IRG--may have to pay millions of dollars to cover the costs of possible environmental and traffic issues. Is that fair?

But, after reviewing all the MDNS comments, the City Community Development Director also has the authority to rescind the MDNS because of the significant environmental arguments that have been made. If the City rescinds the MDNS, it can require further study, including an Environmental Impact Statement, which could take at least a year to complete. How would that affect IRG’s warehouse plan? Would they consider a better alternative to warehouses? The community hopes so.

Throughout the land use process, Federal Way Mayor Jim Ferrell has adamantly stated, “We will follow the letter of the law.” As the lead agency, the City does have the right to decide on what comments it will heed; however following SEPA regulation, one would think that agency and tribally raised concerns about downstream impacts and traffic impacts would count for something. The City has ignored WSDOT’s professional expertise and input that the developments will impact State highways. Why would the City ignore such valuable input? The DAHP has pointed out that the historic Weyerhaeuser campus is a national treasure that should be protected. Yet, the City requires no historical or cultural studies from IRG. That, presently, the City ignored regulation in the

**IRG’s Proposed Greenline Business Park**

- 3 warehouses = 1.068 MILLION square feet
- More than 2,400 significant trees clear-cut
- Loss of trails, woods & meadows enjoyed by the public for nearly 50 years
- More than 400 semi truck-trips every day
- Water quality, wildlife habit impacts

Existing Meadow area

Source: IRG application documents. Some labels added for clarification.

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**IRG’s Warehouses A & B**

- 2 warehouses = 440,000+ square feet
- More than 1,500 trees clear-cut
- Nearly 400 semi truck-trips every day
- Wetland, stream impacts

Source: IRG application documents. Some labels added for clarification.

**Save Weyerhaeuser Campus** Join the legal battle! Donate now!

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King County Surface Water Design manual (that the City has adopted in its code) by not requiring IRG to do a downstream analysis of the Hylebos as required in the Hylebos Basin Plan and an impact study to the salmon and their habitat as required in the Puyallup Tribe Salmon Plan has many questioning the City’s fairness to all parties. We hope that before the SEPA appeal deadline of November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 that the City makes a wise decision and rescinds the MDNS and orders an EIS.

The positive is that Save Weyerhaeuser Campus will appeal this SEPA decision and with the strong arguments of the WSDOT, the Washington DAHP, the KCDOT, the King County Department of Natural Resources, and the Puyallup and Muckleshoot Tribes one hopes the Hearing Examiner will recognize and issue the necessary historical, environmental and traffic studies needed.

**Wondering how you can help? Donate to 501(c)3 non-profit Save Weyerhaeuser Campus so that it can fight this MDNS decision and work towards a better alternative for the community and the campus.**



"Everything works out right in the end. If things are not working right, *it isn't the end yet*. Don't let it bother you—relax and keep on going."  
- Michael C. Muhammad



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