

# The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

February 2019

Rainier Audubon Membership Meeting

## ***Malheur National Wildlife Refuge***

*By Dan Streiffert*

*7:00 P.M. February 18, 2019*

The first time I went to Malheur was in April of 2007 for the John Scarff Bird Festival <http://www.migratorybirdfestival.com/>. I have been going back every year since. In my opinion, this is the best birding/photography location in the Pacific Northwest. The birds are plentiful and the people are not.

Three migration routes converge in this area, making it one of the most important feeding and resting locations on the Pacific Flyway. Thousands of Northern Pintails, Snow and Ross's Geese, American Wigeons, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers and Canvasbacks rest and refuel here on their long migrations. Hundreds of Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans add to this spectacle, which is in full swing from mid March to mid April.

Because it is a basin lake, Malheur varies in size and depth each year depending on snowpack and rainfall. Last year (2018) there was virtually no snow on Steens Mountain and as a result, Malheur Lake was barely visible, even from the Visitor Center. Many that visit in such a year are disappointed and leave early. Yet if one knows where to look, there are plenty of birds to see.

This show is a journey through space and time (2007 – 2018), starting from the area adjacent to the cities of Burns and Hines, and working south to Malheur Lake, the Visitor Center, and continuing to Page Springs Campground at the south end of the refuge.

Dan Streiffert is a retired Software Engineer who worked in the economic operation of power systems. He now spends as much time as possible photographing wildlife. He is currently the Conservation Chair of Rainier Audubon Society, and the editor of the Heron Herald newsletter.

Join us at 6:30 for conversation and refreshments.



### **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/>

## Upcoming Programs

- 3/18/2019 - "Wildlife of Brazil's Cerrado and Pantanal" - Sally Vogel
- 4/15/2019 - "The Falconer" - John Prucich
- 5/20/2019 - Open

## 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.



## 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.

## Rainier Audubon Society Directory

Position	Name	Board Member	Phone	email
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	Barbara Petersen	Yes	253 389 3204	<a href="mailto:bpbatfan@aol.com">bpbatfan@aol.com</a>
Treasurer	Laura Lavington	Yes	253-941-7372	<a href="mailto:laura.lavington@gmail.com">laura.lavington@gmail.com</a>
Membership Chair	Ken Schroeder	No		<a href="mailto:kenschroeder@msn.com">kenschroeder@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	Stephan 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)

## Soos Creek Owl Prowls

Feb 23rd and Mar 23rd, 2019

10:30PM - 1:00AM

Free, ages 12+

Register through Covington Parks and Recreation

Come learn about and see the four owl species that live in Soos Creek Park. After a 45-minute talk indoors, head out into the park to locate and view owls in their natural habitat through night scopes. Dress in warm layers! Meet at the Maintenance Building on 148th Ave.

## Birding and Photographing on the Enumclaw Plateau

Sunday Feb. 10th

8:30 AM - 12 PM

Leaders Jay Galvin and Barbara Petersen

Come with Jay and Barbara as we explore the winter fields of the Enumclaw Plateau for Trumpeter Swans, Eagles, Geese, Sparrows, and Thrushes, just to name a few.

We will meet at the Park and Ride lot located on the Auburn-Black Diamond Road. Take Hwy. 18 East and take the SE Auburn- Black Diamond exit. The Park and ride is to the right.

Travelling up the green River Valley we will keep our eyes open for birds in the trees and pastures. We will leave the valley before Flaming Geyser State Park and enter the plateau from the north.

We should be done birding by Noon and head back to the Park and Ride. Bring binoculars, food, and proper clothing.

Signup: Call or email Jay Galvin 253-939-3094, [gjgalvin@comcast.net](mailto:gjgalvin@comcast.net)

## Lakes and Parks of Federal Way & Vicinity

Sat, March 9, 2019

8:00AM to 2:00PM

Leader: Steve Johnson

Steve will be taking us on his always popular excursion to visit some of the many lakes and ponds in Federal Way, where we will seek uncommon to rare ducks. We will also look for songbirds and seabirds in the Fife and Redondo areas. Since this takes place in early March we'll be looking and listening for early migrants along the way. We may walk up to a mile.

Bring: Binoculars, lunch, hot or cold drinks, warm clothes. Scopes are welcome.

Meet: 8:00AM at the Star Lake Park & Ride north of Federal Way. Folks who wish to

leave early may do so. We'll form carpools accordingly.

Directions: Take I-5 to Exit 147 north of Federal Way at S 272nd St. Turn to west and proceed. Park & Ride will be on your right. Turn right at light at 26th Ave S, then right again into P&R and head to the north side.

Sign-Up: Call or email Steve Johnson, 253-941-9852, [johnsonsj5@msn.com](mailto:johnsonsj5@msn.com)

## Migratory Bird Festival

April 11 - 14, 2019

HARNEY COUNTY

February 4, 2019: Membership Registration

February 11, 2019: Open Registration

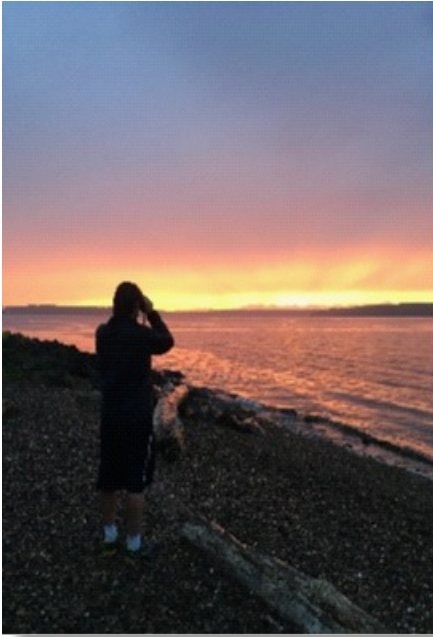
The Harney County Migratory Bird Festival was first held in 1981 to celebrate the large annual migration of birds passing through Harney Basin on the Pacific Flyway. Harney Basin is one of the three most important areas left in the western United States for spring migratory birds stopping on their way north.

Over 300 species of birds use the refuge throughout each year, making Harney Basin a bird watcher's paradise. Today, we continue to celebrate the migratory birds' return each year with guided tours led by experts, workshops, and fun activities for both youth and adults.

<https://www.migratorybirdfestival.com/>



# Seen & Heard by Calen Randall



In January, many birders kickstart their new year list with a flurry of birding activity. Often birders will stop by South King County for specialties like the flock of Redheads at North Lake or Harlequin Ducks at Saltwater State Park. This year, a Black Phoebe, American Bittern, and Cinnamon Teal at the 212<sup>th</sup> Street ponds in Kent brought numerous birders to the south part of the county, eager to glimpse some rare winter sightings. My mom and I got out for some New Year's Day birding of our own at 212<sup>th</sup> ponds and as always, a surprise lay in wait.

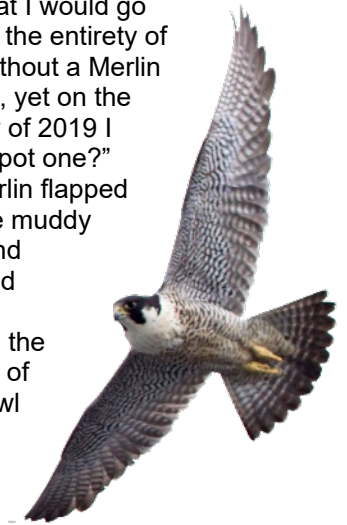
With the Christmas Bird Count just two days before, our plan was to add possible count week birds

including American Bittern, Least Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and Spotted Sandpiper and the Kent Valley seemed most promising. Our outing started well. A minute after pulling into the 212<sup>th</sup> parking lot, I trained my scope on a duck tucked into the reeds. I blinked in surprise as the striking crimson head of a stunning male Cinnamon Teal slid into view. Even with many other waterfowl species in breeding plumage, Cinnamon Teal and their vibrant coloration are always a treat to see, especially here in winter when they are a rare sighting. "The most beautiful part about Cinnamon Teal males might be their eyes," I said to my mom as the male teal stared back at me with its piercing bright red eyes, "they might have the most stunning eyes of all bird species." To our excitement, four female teal and another male drifted out of the marsh and into view. For whatever reason, three of the females had ditched their dazzling male counterparts and were trailing after a lone male Northern Shoveler. "To each, their own," I laughed.

We didn't spend long watching the sextet of teal before a small dark falcon flashed by. Bemused, I thought to myself, "what were the



odds that I would go through the entirety of 2018 without a Merlin sighting, yet on the first day of 2019 I would spot one?" The Merlin flapped over the muddy fields and rain-filled ponds, towards the masses of waterfowl at 204<sup>th</sup>



Street. A lone first-of-the-year Wilson's Snipe stood oblivious to the approaching predator, while the Merlin, perhaps also thrilled about its first-of-the-year snipe sighting, abruptly dove and made a beeline for the unsuspecting shorebird. With a



flash of wings the snipe flushed; any later and the snipe would have become the Merlin's first-meal-of-the-year. Like a pendulum, the Merlin would rise into the air and plunge down towards the panicking snipe. I felt like a terrified, but entranced, Animal Planet viewer as each time the Merlin seemed to come closer and closer to snagging the snipe.

The adventure was only just getting started. A Bald Eagle, that we spotted earlier, perched in a tree, decided to flap out of its tree and join the hunt. Unfortunately for the eagle, the snipe finally evaded the predators by flying north towards the dense brush just north of 204<sup>th</sup>. The eagle, perhaps enraged at missing out on a plump snipe meal, directed all its fury towards the Merlin, and the bulky bird thundered after the Merlin, but that wasn't all. A Peregrine Falcon, with a penchant for creating chaos, zipped in from the east. Its target - any of the waterfowl in the 204<sup>th</sup> St. ponds. Like a splash of water, the waterfowl shot in all directions and despite the plethora of targets, the peregrine came up empty handed. Meanwhile, my mom and I gawked as a fourth raptor, a Red-tailed Hawk who had surveyed the proceedings from a snag, decided to join the fray. Never had we seen four different raptor species involved in one "hunting party". Inexplicably, none of the four individuals managed to bag a bird.

Our attention returned to the eagle thundering after the Merlin. Suddenly, the two swapped roles and the Merlin began hurtling towards the eagle. Though the eagle had the definite power advantage, the Merlin showcased its swift maneuverability as it dive-bombed the eagle repeatedly. In perhaps the finest piece of agility of the day, the Bald Eagle pulled off a mid-air barrel roll and the Merlin went streaking past. Finally, each of the four raptors flew off to its own respective tree, no doubt sulking about the meals-that-got-away. My mom and I were thr

illed. No doubt 204<sup>th</sup> Street had provided the best chase scenes I had ever seen. Any high action movie director would have been impressed at the wild events we had witnessed. What a day to start a new year of birding!

Looking for a new year adventure or want to see some winter rarities? The Black Phoebe, Cinnamon Teal, and American Bittern were still hanging out at 212<sup>th</sup> ponds as of mid-January. You can access the ponds through the parking lot on the south side of 212<sup>th</sup> Street, west of the 216<sup>th</sup> housing developments and east of 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. If you hope to see some raptors, head down to the Kent Valley to watch for them. While I cannot guarantee that every day will be as thrilling as ours was, there is always an interesting raptor to be found.

#### Recent Sightings:

January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Puget Sound Seabird Survey, Brown's Point, Dash Point State Park, Dumas Bay

In early January, we kicked off the Puget Sound Seabird Survey for 2019. We eagerly set out as mere weeks before on the Tahoma CBC **Common Murre**, **Iceland Gulls**, and **Marbled Murrelets** had all been sighted. The water appeared quiet at first as we scoped from Brown's Point, but first of the year **Red-breasted Merganser** and **Bonaparte's Gull** flew past the light house and entertained us. Clearly Brown's Point was the meeting grounds for the Mid-Winter **Rhinoceros Auklet** Conference as we spotted six of them! The highlight of the stop came when a pair of murrelets popped up amongst a group of feeding gulls. We collectively held our breath in hopes that they were ancients, but

their dark bills and dark backs ensured they were a pair of **Marbled Murrelets** in gorgeous non-breeding plumage!

January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Langley, Whidbey Island & Mukilteo—Clinton Ferry, Snohomish

One gorgeous January Saturday we stumbled upon some exciting first-of-the-year birds on Whidbey Island. Our destination was Langley, a small town on the south side of the island. While waiting for the ferry at Mukilteo, we strolled out to the pier to take in the panoramic view of Glacier Peak, Mt. Baker, and the gorgeous Olympic Mountains. Upon the pier next to us a dozen **Brandt's Cormorants** lounged in the sun. Outside Village Pizzeria, on the high banks in Langley, I heard my sister call out, "what is this goose on the water in my photo?" I hurried over to one of the public scopes set up on the hillside. In view, was a flock of black geese, **Brant!**

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).

Bio: Calen is a 20-year-old birder in 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.





# Christmas Bird Count Preliminary Report

By Calen Randall and Cindy Flanagan

The Christmas Bird Count team pulled off another productive count. This year, our fine sunny count day was wedged in between stormy, windy weather; as a result, we had good bird activity and happy, dry birders.

This year we had a total of **124 species** (numbers included count day and count week). Official species numbers will be posted in the March 2019 edition of the Heron Herald.

Snow Goose	Common Loon	Common Murre	Marsh Wren
Cackling Goose	Pied-billed Grebe	Pigeon Guillemot	American Dipper
Canada Goose	Horned Grebe	Rhinoceros Auklet	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Trumpeter Swan	Red-necked Grebe	Rock Pigeon	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Wood Duck	Western Grebe	Band-tailed Pigeon	American Robin
Gadwall	Brandt's Cormorant	Eur. Collared Dove	Varied Thrush
Eurasian Wigeon	Dbl-crested Cormorant	Mourning Dove	European Starling
American Wigeon	Pelagic Cormorant	Barn Owl	American Pipit
Mallard	Great Blue Heron	Western Screech Owl	Orange-crowned Warbler
Cinnamon Teal	Green Heron	Great Horned Owl	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Bald Eagle	Barred Owl	Townsend's Warbler
Northern Pintail	Sharp-shinned Hawk	N. Saw-whet Owl	Spotted Towhee
Green-winged Teal	Cooper's Hawk	Anna's Hummingbird	Fox Sparrow
Canvasback	Red-tailed Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	Song Sparrow
Redhead	Amer. Kestrel	Red-breasted Sapsucker	Lincoln's Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Merlin	Downy Woodpecker	White-throated Sparrow
Greater Scaup	Peregrine Falcon	Hairy Woodpecker	White-crowned Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Virginia Rail	Northern Flicker	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Harlequin Duck	Amer. Coot	Pileated Woodpecker	Dark-eyed Junco
Surf Scoter	Killdeer	Hutton's Vireo	Red-winged Blackbird
White-winged Scoter	Greater Yellowlegs	Stellar's Jay	Western Meadowlark
Black Scoter	Least Sandpiper(CW)	California Scrub Jay	Brewer's Blackbird
Bufflehead	Dunlin	American Crow	Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Goldeneye	Long-billed Dowitcher	Common Raven	Purple Finch
Barrow's Goldeneye	Wilson's Snipe (CW)	Blk-capped Chickadee	House Finch
Hooded Merganser	Mew Gull	Chestnut-bkd Chickadee	Pine Siskin
Common Merganser	Ring-billed Gull	Bushtit	American Goldfinch
Red-breasted Merganser	California Gull	Red-breasted Nuthatch	House Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Herring Gull	Brown Creeper	<i>Short-tailed Shearwater</i>
California Quail	Iceland Gull (Thayer's)	<u>Bewick's Wren</u>	<i>Brant</i>
Red-throated Loon	Glaucous-winged Gull	Pacific Wren	<i>Black Phoebe</i>

CW=count week

## Tallies will be in the March Heron Herald.

### Some highlights for the day:

Area 1 saw large waterfowl numbers at M Street west of Emerald Downs in Auburn: among their waterfowl were over 3000 **Northern Pintail**, over 1300 **Green-winged Teal**, and a **Snow Goose**. Also, a nice find was a **White-throated Sparrow**. Area 1 took the honors of submitting the highest **crow** count 481.

Area 2, besides a comical tale of losing a boot in the mud, had a good mix of species. Area 2 took the high for most woodpecker species: **Red-breasted Sapsucker** 2, **Downy Woodpecker** 3, **Hairy Woodpecker** 1, and **Northern Flicker** 13.

Area 3 had 2 **Northern Saw-whet Owl** twice during count week—the day before and the day after CBC! They took the high count for **Anna's Hummingbirds** with 37, and also had 88 **Double-crested Cormorants**.

Area 4, as always, found the most owl species: **Barn**, **Great Horned**, **Barred**, and **Northern Saw-whet Owl**. They also took highest numbers for **California Quail** with 6.

Area 5 in the Kent and Renton area had a **Black Phoebe** at Boeing Ponds and close by on 204<sup>th</sup> had **Cinnamon Teal**.

Area 6 North (Kent Ponds) had the high on **Cooper's Hawk** with 4 and **Mallard** with 487.

Area 6 Central (Lake Fenwick and farmland along west valley) had a goldmine of **Western Meadowlark** in Kent with 45. They also had a **Green Heron**.

Area 6 South had a **Hutton's Vireo** in Pacific and a first-time spotted **Eurasian Collard Dove** (2) in Pacific.

Area 7 had a single **Brant** in Des Moines. Also, at Des Moines Pier, Charlie and Linnaea Wright and Adrian Lee, were lucky to spot a **Short-tailed Shearwater**. Unlucky was the shearwater as a Bald Eagle decided the shearwater was its bird of choice for its CBC dinner.

Area 8 took the honors for most **Ring-necked Duck** with 383, **American Wigeon** with 794 and 2 **Eurasian Wigeon**. Also noted was the **Western Grebe** count with 41.

Many leaders have been participating in our CBC for years, even decades. Leader Steve Johnson has been doing our CBC since its beginning! This year we were thrilled to add new leader Penny Rose to our team. Thank you to our leaders for their organization and leadership.

We also have strong participation from our youth birders. Calen Randall's area 6 team had two young families join with Declan (9) and Rachel (13) anchoring the team. A shout out to Rachel who came to count on her birthday. Happy birthday Rachel! Youth birder Katerina Grishina also helped lead area 6C, and birding ace Adrian Lee teamed up with Charlie Wright to cover the saltwater area along Des

## Federal Way request \$1 Million in State Capital Budget Funds for North Lake Conservation

- Cindy Flanagan

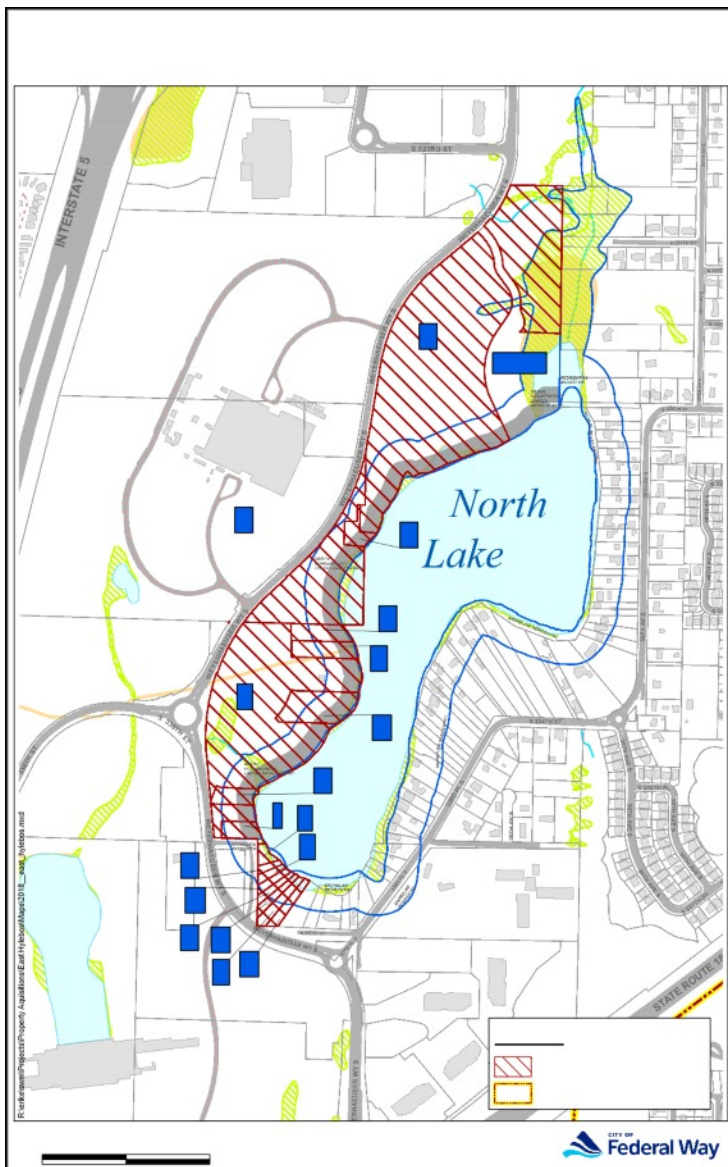
The city of Federal Way has approved in its 2019 State Legislative Priorities a request for \$1 million from the 2019 State Capital Budget for acquisition of the 54-acre western shoreline of North Lake. Now the request will be reviewed by State House and State Senate.

Rainier Audubon and Save Weyerhaeuser Campus organizations have been working with the city of Federal Way, King County, Washington State and Forterra for the past three years to conserve this high conservation value land. The property is part of the former Weyerhaeuser Campus, now owned by California-based Industrial Realty Group.

The 54-acre shoreline is the longest undeveloped lake shoreline in South King County. It is the headwaters of the East Hylebos and provides important flows to salmon habitat downstream in the Hylebos. The healthy riparian forest along this piece is critical in controlling stormwater flows. This area is home to over 120 bird species.

Currently, almost \$3 million have been raised for acquisition. Efforts to have a property assessment done are in the works. Purchase price is estimated to be between \$6-10 million.

Put your support behind this conservation effort. Contact your state representative and state senate member and let them know that you support the city of Federal Way's \$1 Million Capital Budget request for the 54-acre North Lake western shoreline acquisition.





Rainier Audubon Society  
PO Box 778  
Auburn, WA 98071

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Kent, WA 98031  
Permit No. 441

It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment. - Ansel Adams



### Rainier Audubon Membership Subscription or Renewal Form

One-year Membership in Rainier Audubon  
\$25—Individual Membership / \$30—Family Membership

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Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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