

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

February, 2020

Rainier Audubon Membership Meeting
7 PM February 17, 2020

“*Birding Southern Africa*”

By Barbara Petersen, Cheryl White and Marie West-Johnson

In February of 2018 Barbara Petersen, Cheryl White, and Marie West-Johnson went on a birding tour of southern Africa with Roads Scholar. We visited South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Zambia. Marievale Bird Sanctuary, near Johannesburg, is a protected area in Gauteng, South Africa. It is flanked by extensive floodplains on either side and hosts over 250 bird species. We also enjoyed birding several national parks including Hwange and Zambezi in Zimbabwe, Chobe in Botswana, Mosi-Oa-Tunya in Zambia on the Zambezi River, and many private concessions and safari lodges.

The lodging and food were top notch making birding and hiking activities pleasant and comfortable. Other participants on the tour were engaging and interesting people. All in all we saw over just over 250 bird species and it was a wonderful trip. So, come enjoy photos of southern African birds as we share stories and experiences.



- Red-billed Oxpecker on an Impala
- African Bush Elephants



Rainier Audubon programs are held at:
Federal Way United Methodist Church
29645 - 51st Ave. So.
Auburn, WA 98001

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.

Upcoming Programs

- 3/16/2020 Ben Silesky - Survival by Degrees: 389 Species on the Brink”
- 4/20/2020 Kim Adelson - "The Dinosaurs Amongst Us"
- 5/18/2020 Sally Vogel - “Ethiopian Birds & Mammals”

Resources

- **Rainier Audubon Facebook Page** www.facebook.com/rainieraudubonsociety/
- **Heron Herald is Available Online** The current issue of the Heron Herald is always available to download from www.RainierAudubon.org. I will try to send an email on our mailing list as soon as it is posted.
- **Rainier Audubon Email List** - You can join our email list by going to groups.google.com and searching for “Rainier Audubon”. You can then request to join the group. Alternatively, you can sign up on the www.RainierAudubon.org website.

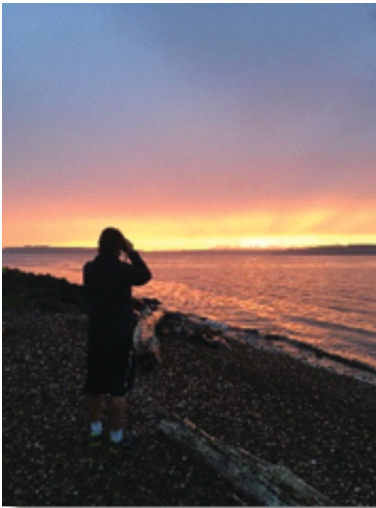
Rainier Audubon Society Directory

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Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

Seen and Heard Special Report: 2019

Christmas Bird Count



From six owl species, to more cormorants in Maple Valley than on Puget Sound, to three times as many Eurasian Wigeon sightings than Killdeer, the 39th Kent Auburn Christmas Bird Count was wild and the birds provided a wonderful dose of variability. Birders ventured out on December 29th, and like last year, we were treated to spectacular weather as a damp cool morning transitioned into a brilliant, clear, sunny day. Many teams spotted rainbows and the elusive Mt. Rainier (sadly not ABA countable) and the lucky Area 7 team on the water got picturesque views of the rainbow reflection on a glassy Puget Sound. While some bird totals may have fallen

short of those in years past, 119 species (including three count week species) were spotted including a handful of high counts and good times were enjoyed by all.

Waterfowl numbers were puzzling in this edition of the CBC. Far fewer Cackling and Canada Geese were seen relative to last year's explosion of geese in the valley; however, 14 Greater White-fronted Geese were spotted in Renton. Wood Ducks bounced back from just 8 last year to 28 this year, while Canvasback (0) and Redhead (1-cw) dropped to a combined zero on the count day. Our most prevalent species like Mallards and American Wigeon had lower counts than normal, while less frequent species like Lesser Scaup (78) nearly set high counts. Eurasian Wigeon were out in full force as birders spotted 21, an astounding three times more than our minuscule Killdeer count of 7. Certainly no one expected that! On the salt water, seabird totals dipped relative to last year as Harlequin Ducks, Surf & Black Scoters, Red-throated & Common Loons, and Barrows & Common Goldeneye were all seen in lower numbers than in 2018. However, I would not worry too much about seabirds in the South King County region, as large totals have consistently been seen on the Puget Sound Seabird Survey from Brown's Point through Three Tree Point. Likely their lower numbers can be chalked up to variability.

Heading inland, Maple Valley continued its annual entry of two American Dippers at the Cedar River and a wowing (100+) Double-crested Cormorants on Lake Wilderness, even more cormorants than on the Puget Sound! Overall, our 300 Double-crested Cormorants smashed the previous record of 234. Great Blue Herons (36) were up from last years mere 22, while Kent was skunked on last year's Green Heron near Lake Fenwick. Renton yielded two American Bittern, surprisingly not a count record as three were seen way back in 1983. Gulls once again had a poor year, particularly inland, though at least one California, Ring-billed, Herring, Western, and Iceland Gull were seen on the count. Raptors had an interesting count. Sadly, Northern Harrier were absent from the valley for the fourth consecutive year and while eagles had higher totals, they were in lower quantity than in 2018. American Kestrel (4) were hard to find, but Peregrine Falcon (4) and our high count of Merlin (7) were in abundance compared to last year's totals of 1 and 3, respectively.

Clearly birders were into getting up early in search of owls this year as their efforts paid off in a mammoth owl count of 6 species and 23 individuals spread throughout the circle. Northern Saw-whet Owls set a record with six and a rare Northern-pygmy Owl was heard at Echo Lake. Great Horned Owls (8) doubled up Barred Owls (4), while a pair of Western-screech Owls were found in Area 8 at the Redondo Canyon. Barn Owls rounded out owl totals with 3. I think we are all happy that more than just Barred Owls are doing well in our circle. Moving deeper into the woods, several woodpecker species like Red-breasted Sapsucker and Hairy Woodpecker had near high counts. Passerine species like chickadees and Bushtits were prevalent, while sparrows had surprisingly low totals. Brown Creepers pleasantly surprised with a high count of 45, and even the shy Hutton's Vireos popped up from the bushes enough for us to establish a new high count of 10. Spotted Towhee came within a couple backyard counts of setting a new high, while Cedar Waxwings required count week birding just to make the checklist. Valley species were quiet this year. While California Scrub Jay expectedly established a new high count, American Pipits skipped the count entirely and the aforementioned Killdeer total was a measly 7. To add insult to injury, on the last day of count week, over 150 Killdeer were spotted hiding in the vegetation of 285th Street in Auburn. A Black Phoebe was again sighted in Kent (Black Phoebe are quickly becoming a regular sight around the 204th St and Kent Ponds area), this time in Area 6N at Kent Ponds. On a happy low count note, 2019 was our first ever CBC where under 1,000 European Starlings were sighted.

Heading into the count, I am sure everyone was eager to see how Anna's Hummingbirds would fare after 2018's record setting total. In 2016, birders counted a total of 88 hummingbirds and totals were on the rise. Within two years they had doubled to 168. How would they perform as an encore? I admit, I had my doubts that they would eclipse last year's lofty total, but I was happily proven wrong. Once again, Anna's smashed the high count, besting it by 53 birds to attain a new high count of 221! Since 2016, hummingbird numbers on the CBC have nearly quadrupled! These totals were again buoyed by David Swayne's feeder home to 25 coexisting Anna's. Wild!

Thanks again to all leaders, participants, back yard birders, and everyone who helped out at the dinner event. I look forward to what 2020 has in store for the 40th Kent Auburn CBC!

Participants

Area 1

Brien Meilleur, Alex Juchems, Patrick Vanthull

Area 2

Barbara Petersen, Ken Schroeder, Cheryl White, Linda Carlson, Lucia Faithful, Lindsey Watts, Ann Petersen, David Ness, Ivana Halvorsen, Ted Gatlin, Hal Grubb

Area 3

Caren Adams, Sara Brown, Laurie Beden, Chris Kirkpatrick, Debbie Johnson, Bruce Dodge, Mary Frey, Barbara Retelle, Dave Swayne, Doreen Deaver, Linda Schwab, Cindy Flanagan

Area 4

Joe Miles, Tom Bowden, Linda Bartlett, Patt O'Flaherty, Sandy Buzzelli, Brenda Tom, Liz Miles, Ron Toonen, Anne Bengelink, Vivienne Staggs, Chris Staggs, Zoe Staggs, Erin Staggs

Area 5

Penny Rose, Jan Hadley, Scott Hoskin, Randy Robinson

Area 6

Roger Orness, Calen Randall, Garrett Haynes, Joanne Cormier, Cam Randall, Jay Galvin, Liz Cormier, Carley Randall, Dan Streiffert, Etta Cosey, Katerina Grishina, Jerry Broadus, Will Stone, Clarice Clark, Greg Bilsland, Alan Grenon, Meris Mullaley

Area 7

Charlie Wright, Linnaea Wright, Nick Wright, Carol Schulz

Area 8

Jim Flynn, Steve Johnson, Marissa Benevente, Susan Livingston, Geoff Jackson, Curt Petersen

Backyard Birders

Nancy Streiffert, Pam Cunningham, Roland Cunningham, Becky Holesapple, Linell Arbuckle

Bio: After 21 years of searching in his backyard, Calen has yet to find his quest bird, Blue-footed Booby. Currently a student in Atmospheric Science at the University of Washington, Calen has spent the last 9 years turning in overdue Seen and Heard articles. Calen loves exploring new regions of the Pacific Northwest, but always looks forward to returning home to familiar hotspots in the South Puget Sound

Rainier CBC Checklist		Date: 12/29/2019	
Species	Count	Species	Count
Gr White-fronted Goose	14	Western Grebe	38
Snow Goose	0	Brandt's Cormorant	3
Cackling Goose	1296	Double crested Cormorant	300
Canada Goose	1043	Pelagic Cormorant	10
Trumpeter Swan	10	American Bittern	2
Tundra Swan	0	Great Blue Heron	36
Wood Duck	28	Green Heron	0
Gadwall	91	Osprey	0
Eurasian Wigeon	21	Bald Eagle	47
American Wigeon	1944	Adult	
Mallard	1539	Immature	
Green-winged Teal	1196	Northern Harrier	0
Eurasian-Gw Teal		Sharp-shinned Hawk	6
Blue-wing Teal	0	Cooper's Hawk	10
Cinnamon Teal	1 count week	Northern Goshawk	0
Northern Shoveler	157	Red-tailed Hawk	57
Northern Pintail	725	Harlan's Hawk	0
Canvasback	0	Rough-legged Hawk	0
Redhead	1 count week	American Kestrel	4
Ring-necked Duck	477	Merlin	7
Greater Scaup	2	Peregrine Falcon	4
Lesser Scaup	78		
Harlequin Duck	2	Virginia Rail	9
Surf Scoter	40	Sora	0
White-winged Scoter	9	American Coot	763
Black Scoter	0	Black-bellied Plover	0
Bufflehead	328	Killdeer	7
Common Goldeneye	100	Spotted Sandpiper	2
Barrow's Goldeneye	13	Greater Yellowlegs	0
Hooded Merganser	112	Black Turnstone	0
Common Merganser	150	Western Sandpiper	0
Red-breasted Merganser	163	Least Sandpiper	8
Ruddy Duck	107	Dunlin	350
		Long-billed Dowitcher	0
Ring-necked Pheasant	0	Wilson's Snipe	1
Ruffed Grouse	0		
California Quail	23	Bonaparte's Gull	0
		Mew Gull	52
Red-throated Loon	4	Ring-billed Gull	1
Pacific Loon	1	California Gull	1
Common Loon	7	Herring Gull	2
Pied-billed Grebe	64	Iceland Gull	1
Horned Grebe	134	Western Gull	1
Red-necked Grebe	25	Glaucous-Winged Gull	243
Eared Grebe	0	WestxGlc-Winged Gull	176

Rainier CBC Checklist		Date: 12/29/2019	
Species	Count	Species	Count
Gull sp.	57	American Dipper	2
Common Murre	0	Golden-crowned Kinglet	302
Pigeon Guillemot	8	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	189
Marbled Murrelet	0	Hermit Thrush	0
Rhinoceros Auklet	9	American Robin	730
		Varied Thrush	13
Rock Pigeon	936	European Starling	932
Band-tailed Pigeon	2	American Pipit	0
Eurasian Collared Dove	30	Cedar Waxwing	19 count week
Mourning Dove	5		
		Orange-crowned Warbler	0
Barn Owl	3	Yellow-rumped Warbler	30
Western Screech-Owl	2	Audubon's	
Great Horned Owl	8	Myrtle	
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	Townsend's Warbler	21
Barred Owl	3	Common Yellowthroat	
Short-eared Owl	0		
Northern Saw-whet Owl	6	Spotted Towhee	243
		Savannah Sparrow	0
Anna's Hummingbird	221	Fox Sparrow	50
Belted Kingfisher	17	Song Sparrow	421
Red-breasted Sapsucker	14	Lincoln's Sparrow	10
Downy Woodpecker	48	Swamp Sparrow	0
Hairy Woodpecker	14	White-throated Sparrow	2
Northern Flicker	141	White-crowned Sparrow	42
Y-shafted		Golden-crowned Sparrow	148
Pileated Woodpecker	9	Dark-eyed Junco	879
Northern Shrike	0	Slate-colored Junco	
Hutton's Vireo	10		
Steller's Jay	101	Red-winged Blackbird	560
California Scrub Jay	42	Western Meadowlark	1
American Crow	2638	Yellow-headed Blackbird	0
Common Raven	10	Brewer's Blackbird	1
		Brown-headed Cowbird	0
Black-capped Chickadee	619	Purple Finch	27
Mountain Chickadee	0	House Finch	291
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	180	Red Crossbill	0
Bushtit	448	Pine Siskin	116
Red-breasted Nuthatch	38	American Goldfinch	54
Brown Creeper	45	Evening Grosbeak	11
Bewick's Wren	96	House Sparrow	151
Pacific Wren	63	Black Phoebe	1
Marsh Wren	27		



Soos Creek Owl Prowls

Feb 8 and Mar 8, 2020

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.

Harney County Migratory Bird Festival

April 16 - 19, 2020

HARNEY COUNTY

February 3, 2020: Membership Registration

February 10, 2020: 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/>

Weekly Birdwalks at Nisqually

Wednesdays 8 AM to 12 PM

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

2020 WINTER WINGS FESTIVAL
in Klamath Falls, Oregon

Take a shot at some of our photography events... and don't miss our photo contest!

February 13th - 16th

FOUR PROS
Gerrit Vyn Tim Boyer
Max Waugh Bill Gogo

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHY KEYNOTE
Conservation Media Expeditions
by Cinematographer Gerrit Vyn

FIELD WORKSHOP TOPICS
Wildlife Photography
Birds in Flight w/West Coast Falconry
Photographing Bald Eagles
Photography Blinds
Shoot with a Pro

Don't miss Mel Clements' Great Gray Owl talk and photography!

Registration starts December 7th
winterwingsfest.org • 877.541.BIRD • info@winterwingsfest.org

Photography program partially underwritten by Olympus Cameras. This project has been funded in part by a grant from Klamath County.



Rainier Audubon Society
PO Box 778
Auburn, WA 98071

Nonprofit Organization
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Kent, WA 98031
Permit No. 441

"I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear
I feel every day. And then I want you to act."

- Greta Thunberg

Rainier Audubon Membership Subscription or Renewal Form

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

Circle one New / Renewal

For new members:

How did you hear about Rainier Audubon Society?

To join or renew, mail this application with your payment to:

Rainier Audubon Society - Membership

PO Box 778

Auburn, WA 98071

Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____



Are you interested in:

- Volunteering?
- Field Trips?
- Classes?

(Please circle)

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