

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

January 2016

RAS Membership Meeting
January 18, 2016

Bluebird Reintroduction Program



The Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) was a common inhabitant in oak-prairie and other open habitats in western Washington and southwestern British Columbia until the early-1900's when habitat loss and fragmentation and competition for nest cavities from exotic species triggered a wave of extirpations across the region. Since 2007, the Western Bluebird has been the subject of a large-scale reintroduction project. Join us as Gary Slater provides an update on the reintroduction, discusses the progress and setbacks to this conservation program, and describes the important role that South Puget Sound and private landowners play in the recovery of this iconic species.

Gary Slater is an Avian Ecologist for the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) and

research associate for Ecostudies Institute. His current research focuses on the reintroduction ecology of passerines and avian-habitat relationships in prairie-oak habitats in South Puget Sound.

He received a B.S. in Wildlife Science from Purdue University (1989) and a M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida (1997).

Join us at 6:30 for conversation and snacks.

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



Taco Time Coupon Books for Sale



Rainier Audubon Society is going to be selling Taco Time coupon books at the welcome table at the membership meeting this month. They will also be for sale at the 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.

Upcoming Programs

- 2/15/2016 Jay Galvin
- 3/21/2016 Shari Tarantino - Orca Conservancy
- 4/18/2016 Joy & Craig Johnson - Birds and Backyard Wildlife Habitat
- 5/16/2016 Peter Hodum - Plastic Debris in the Environment

Rainier Audubon Officers

President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
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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.



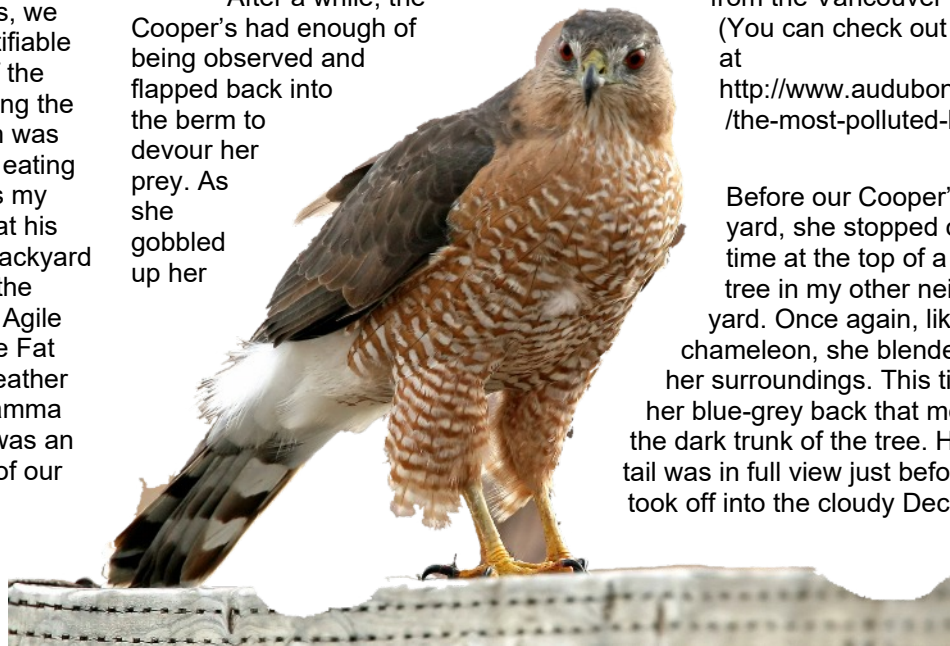
Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

One damp December afternoon, as I walked in the door back from school, my gramma called from the kitchen table, "Look at that hawk over there in your neighbor's yard." Sure enough, standing on a wooden perch in my neighbor's yard was a Cooper's Hawk. The hawk's mottled russet and white chest blended in smoothly with the rich browns of the trees and brambles behind her. If she had not moved her head, she would have been nearly impossible to spot, even though she was perched in the open. As we pulled out the binoculars, we spotted an unfortunate unidentifiable lump of prey--another victim of the hawk's "dash and grab". Spotting the hawk just about to eat its lunch was different than spotting a raptor eating a meal out in the field; this was my backyard area, and I hoped that his kill wasn't one of our favorite backyard frequenters like Piebald Pete, the Junco, or our squirrel, Fat and Agile IV (the latest descendent of the Fat and Agile line). Only a single feather remained on the kill, so my gramma and I chose to believe the kill was an unwanted rodent and not one of our treasured song birds.

We were quite lucky that the hawk was not in a hurry to eat, and for over an hour, we stared at the accipiter through our birding scope and marveled at its hawkish majestic beauty. Though I had seen numerous Cooper's Hawks gliding on air drafts in the valley and perched in trees scanning for prey, it was spectacular to watch the

Cooper's for such a long period of time. I admired its stocky and powerful body, dappled with red and white on its chest, and coated with blue-grey on its back. Its broad chest and large body was a telltale sign that she was female. Accipiters like the Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Northern Goshawk exhibit reverse sexual dimorphism, the females are much bigger than the males. This causes confusion as the Cooper's male and the Sharpie female are nearly the same size. Her piercing eyes were captivating. When they struck the light, they flashed a deep clear orange, like the glowing molten glass fresh out of the oven kiln. I could make out a dark black slit on her curved beak, the rest was blood-stained from her recent kill. However, what entranced me most was her striking rufous cheek.

After a while, the Cooper's had enough of being observed and flapped back into the berm to devour her prey. As she gobbled up her



meal (she was the perfect zero-waste machine, nothing of her kill went to waste), I wondered, when would her next meal be? Would she eat again that day, or would she be full enough to wait until the next sunrise? I had

seen her fly over the house once before. Would our backyard become a regular kill spot, or had she already frequented here without us knowing? I enjoyed watching her up close, but I really didn't want to start losing the familiar song birds of my yard!

As I searched through the internet to find out more about Cooper's Hawk foraging behavior, I came across an interesting study in Vancouver, BC. Recently, Canadian researchers were studying liver contaminants of Cooper's Hawks and Peregrine Falcons. One Cooper's in Vancouver was found to have toxicity levels over sixty times higher than average. Scientists expected that the toxicity was due to a diet rich on Starlings that lived around a landfill. Thankfully, the prey our Cooper's ate was most likely "organic" compared to the diet of a Cooper's Hawk from the Vancouver landfill! (You can check out the article at <http://www.audubon.org/news/the-most-polluted-bird-world>)

Before our Cooper's left the yard, she stopped one more time at the top of a deciduous tree in my other neighbor's yard. Once again, like a chameleon, she blended in with her surroundings. This time it was her blue-grey back that meshed with the dark trunk of the tree. Her long tail was in full view just before she took off into the cloudy December skies.

Recent Bird Sightings:

Thanks to Dan Streiffert, Lisa Mesplay for their **[\(Continued on page 9\)](#)**

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



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

Raptors of the Auburn/Kent Valley

Sunday, Feb 14, 2016; 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Leader: Roger Orness

Roger Orness will take us to prime raptor viewing spots in the valley during this very-popular field trip. Past trips have been productive for falcons, accipiters and many red-tails to compare the different color morphs. Eagles could be occupying their nest and there is a chance for an early nesting red-tail, if we are lucky.

Meet: We will meet at the Auburn Super Mall parking lot north of McDonalds on 15th SW off I-167 at 08:00 and start at 08:30. We will carpool and return by 2 PM.

Bring: Bring your lunch, drinks and snacks, dress warmly for the weather and be prepared for a short walk on a level gravel road inside a closed area of the Kent ponds.

Space is limited, so email or call Roger soon to reserve your spot.

Roger Orness, r.orness41@gmail.com, [253-922-7516](tel:253-922-7516), [253-312-6561](tel:253-312-6561)(cell)

Soos Creek Owl Prowls

Saturday Night, [Feb 27, 2016](#) -
or Sat. Night, [Mar 26, 2016](#);
10:00 PM to 1:00 AM

Leaders: Joe and Liz Miles

Join Friends of Soos Creek Park volunteers Joe and Liz Miles for this late night program and walk exploring the world of owls. We'll start indoors for the first hour learning calls, ID, and info about our local owls, then venture outdoors to prowl for owls.

There is limited space for this program. Reservations are required. Best for adults and children over 13 years. Group size is limited to 15. The owls program is sponsored by Kent City Recreation Dept.



Meet: Meet at the Soos Creek Park Maintenance Shop. Soos Creek Park/Trail 24810 148th Avenue SE, Kent.

Directions: Take James Street east from Kent. To reach James St, exit I-167 at Willis, turn east to Central, and North to James. Travel east on James as it becomes SE 240th St. Travel about 4 miles, as 240th dips and turns downhill. Turn right (south) on 148th Ave near the bottom of the hill. The Soos Creek maintenance yard will be down the road about 1/4 mile on the left at a barn and chainlink-fenced parking lot.

Sign-up: Call Kent Commons, Kent City Parks and Recreation, [253-856-5000](tel:253-856-5000). This trip FILLS EARLY. Please register in advance.

For further info: E-mail or call Joe Miles, (friendsofsooscreekpark@q.com), (253) 639-0123. Joe can answer your questions but cannot arrange the sign-ups.

Birding Rochester - by Laura Lavington

In September, I took a trip to Upstate New York. In several of my travel articles for the Heron Herald, I've made the disclaimer that, while I did see birds, I was not specifically on a birding trip. Well, the trip to New York definitely *was not* a birding trip. And yet, sometimes birding just happens, doesn't it?

I found out about a September editing conference in New York sometime in late August. When I read the list of session topics, I was immediately interested. I thought, "Oh, Alaska Airlines flies to New York City now, and my mom works for Alaska Airlines, so maybe I can go standby..." However, right after I had that thought, I realized that the conference was actually in *Upstate* New York, and Alaska Airlines most certainly does *not* fly to Rochester. Well, the short version is that I found out about someone attending the conference who was driving from New York City, so I contacted her about carpooling. Pretty normal sounding, huh? Well, the stressful part was that, when I initially began planning this, I did not realize that the Pope was going to be arriving in New York City the same day that I planned to arrive. Even the same airport! I was going standby, so that means there has to be an empty seat... when I initially looked at the flight loads a couple of weeks before, there were plenty of seats. I guess everyone else got the news about the Pope late, too, because seats started filling like crazy right before I was set to leave, and I had

already paid for the conference! Well, it was all right: my schedule is pretty flexible, so I flew to JFK on a red-eye a day earlier. Because of that, I got to visit Manhattan for a few hours, and things were certainly abuzz about the Pope! (The plane was full of folks on pilgrimage to see the Pope, too.) Yes, I definitely did buy some Pope merchandise.

Well, the car ride to Rochester was about five hours, and the weather was absolutely perfect. It



able to take a couple of us there. It worked out: the conference ended early enough on the last day that we were able to drive across town to a park on Lake Ontario. And that, my friends, is how this trip got its birding element.



When I first asked about driving to the lake, I wasn't thinking about birds, really. I guess that is pretty disloyal of me, because I suppose true birders are constantly thinking about birds. Well, blame it on the red-eye flight and the subsequent modest amount of sleep I had been getting, but I kind of forgot about birds. I just thought that it would be a shame to come so close to a Great Lake and not see one. However, once we arrived at Ontario Beach Park and

walked to the beach, I no longer could forget to remember the birds. The sandy beach was covered with gulls! I didn't see many other birds, perhaps because as we got there, the late afternoon turned into evening, but I certainly did see gulls.

Now, before I became a birder a few years ago, I thought that the things were "seagulls." I now know that that term is frowned upon in birding circles, for gulls, of course, are not just on the coast. Even though **[\(Continued on page 8\)](#)**

was late September, and the colors were turning on the deciduous trees. You may think from all of my recent articles in the Heron Herald about travel that I surely have been everywhere, but in fact, I'd never been to the northeast before this trip. The conference went well, but there was something that I wanted to do: Rochester is so close to Lake Ontario, and I had never seen a Great Lake before (yes, never!), so I hoped my driver would be



Featherhaven

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

Bird of the Month: Chickadees

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

Found across much of North America, the chickadee is a favorite bird of many people. In Washington, we have three kinds of chickadees: Black capped, Chestnut-backed and Mountain.



The Black-capped Chickadee has an oversized round head with a black cap and bib. It has white cheeks, a gray back, wings and tail and whitish underside.

The Chestnut-backed Chickadee is boldly black and white on the head but the back is a rich chestnut brown instead of gray.

The Mountain Chickadee is found in the evergreen forests of the western mountains. It is also black and white on the head and gray elsewhere but it has a distinctive white stripe over each eye that distin-

guishes it from other chickadees.

Chickadees are cavity nesters and will use nesting boxes. They mate for life and can live upwards to 10 - 12 years.

The female will lay 6-8 speckled eggs which will hatch in about 12 days. The chicks will fledge the nest about 21 days later.

Although chickadees visit seed and suet feeders readily and regularly, research has shown that over 75-80% of their winter food supply still comes from natural



sources. They will supplement their feeder diet with spiders, dormant in-



sects and even carrion. Research has also shown that having access to feeders during the winter almost doubles the chickadees' survival rate.

Weighing less than half an ounce, chickadees are tough little birds that do not migrate. During cold weather, they need twenty times as much food as they do in the summer. A chickadee can gain as much as 10% of its body weight each day and lose it during a cold winter night.

Chickadees are excellent "cachers". They will hide hundreds of seeds and be able to locate them later to dine on.

The Black-capped Chickadee is the state bird of Massachusetts and Maine.

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

As some of you know, a couple of my people had the exciting opportunity to go on a birding tour in Ecuador recently. Yes, like in South America! As it turned out this adventure was so much more than that.

Besides seeing many awesome birds, they also met some fascinating and inspiring people not the least being Paul J. Greenfield who illustrated and helped author "The Birds of Ecuador Field Guide". He was a co-leader on the trip! He is also the executive director of the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation. Along with his friend and colleague, Juan Veintimilla, he also co-owns the Mindo Cloudforest Reserve which includes the Milpe and Rio Silanche bird sanctuaries.

Some years ago, Paul, Juan and a few other like-minded people banded together to fight the oil companies who wanted to build pipelines through the jungle. As a result, much of the land on the northwest slopes of the Andes Mountains is owned, managed and protected by local people and others who are interested in preserving and restoring habitat. Where jungle habitat had been mowed down to create ill-conceived cow pastures, native species are being planted and areas are being reforested.

There are people like Richard and Gloria Parsons who founded Bellavista Cloudforest Reserve by acquiring 136 acres of land back in 1991. Today, Bellavista is approximately 2000 acres in size and is a certified ecolodge with 10 kilometers of trails and other amenities. It is home to an enormous variety of bird species and other wildlife including the endangered

spectacled bear, the puma, the Andean coati and the tayra.

My people visited the humble home of Rolando near Mindo. He has created an incredible haven for tanagers and hummingbirds in his back yard and delights birders and tourists from all over the world.

Likewise, Rafael has developed a biodiversity corridor at his Rancho Suamox by reforesting his land with native species and creating a garden paradise that prevents the advance of agricultural and ranching practices.

My people were honored to travel to Refugio Paz de las Aves and be treated by host, Angel Paz and his



Ochre-breasted Antpitta and Giant Antpitta

brother, Rodrigo, to excellent views of an Andean Cock of the Rock lek. In addition, they experienced up close and personal encounters with Carino and his world-famous girlfriend, Maria, a pair of Giant Antpittas; Willemina, a Yellow-breasted Antpitta; Susannah, a Moustached Antpitta; Shakira, an Ochre-Breasted Antpitta and Pepita and Pepito, a pair of Rufous-breasted Antthrushes. They said it was nothing short of miraculous as the two men coaxed these shy, skulky birds out into the open by offering food and calling the birds gently by name!

My people said Tony Nunnery and Barbara Boltz must also be mentioned for the amazing work they have done. These two diligent, hard-working people have taken scores of useless acres of cow pasture and over the last



twenty years transformed the land into a totally native and natural habitat, Pacha de Quinde (Hummingbird Woods). The feeders they had set up around their yard behind their house were absolutely swarming with all kinds of hummingbirds. It must have been something to see!

Last but not least, my people learned that Ecuador has a road that is unequivocally dedicated to birding. The 50 kilometer Nono-Mindo Road is now the Ecoruta El Paseo del Quinde otherwise known as The Hummingbirds Trail or simply the Ecoroute. The traditional purpose of this road is to develop the economy of the local communities and create jobs in activities directly and indirectly related to bird tourism and ecotourism. Is that inspired or what?

So besides seeing a huge variety and number of birds, my people were certainly educated about the fantastic efforts being made by everyday people to preserve and restore habitat in the beautiful country of Ecuador.

If you would like to learn more and/or support these types of efforts, please visit www.mindocloudforest.org.

Until next time,

Millie, the Muse of Mews

The Messenger

I work for The Grand Cinema, and I wanted to be sure that you had heard about the conservation documentary, The Messenger, that will play in Tacoma as part of our Tuesday Film Series only on January 5 at 1:15 p.m. and 6:45 p.m.

With stunning imagery, The Messenger is an artful investigation into the causes of songbird mass depletion and the people working to turn the tide. Ultimately, the film reveals what birds have to tell us about the state of our planet and our shared future.

Watch the Trailer at : <http://www.grandcinema.com/tuesday-film-series-1/the-messenger/>

There will be a post-film discussion hosted by the Audubon Society's, Art Wang after the 6:45 p.m. screening.

Please consider joining us for this special event to help raise awareness around the need for conservation and land stewardship.

Tickets are \$10 general admission, \$8 matinee.

Sincerely,

Darcy Nelson

Director of Marketing and Communications

606 S. Fawcett Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

Ph: 253.572.6062

Birding Rochester (Continued from [page 5](#))

I was aware of that, it was still striking to see so many gulls inland. In fact, the lake didn't look a whole lot different from the ocean. The beach was sand (I collected some sand for my sand collection), there were waves, and there was a significant amount of breeze created by the lake (perhaps one might even call it "windy"). I was plenty aware, however, that I was inland, and I looked at the gulls, thinking "you sly creatures, you really *aren't* seagulls." The grass beside the beach was completely blanketed in white or light gray feathers. One of my companions commented on the fact, and I realized that those feathers belonged to the gulls. I guess the wind blew massive

amounts of feathers into the grassy picnic area of the park.

The lake's enchantment was pretty convincing—I almost felt like I was at the ocean—but the smell wasn't right at all. When I go to the coast, I hear the sounds of the waves and gulls at the same time that I smell the salty scent of the sea. Instead, Lake Ontario mostly smelled like gasoline from all the boats on it (it was a Saturday, and the place was quite bustling). Also, there were signs everywhere about how it was forbidden to bring dogs into the park because their waste polluted the lake (the signs gave some shocking statistic about the pollution caused by dogs), but I still saw lots of dogs. Hmm. Fishermen were on the pier trying to catch salmon (and to confirm that, I did see a dead salmon floating by), but I just didn't feel like the

salmon should be there, so far inland, so far from the sea. It was like the whole short experience was a juxtaposition of conflicting observations: is it the coast, or is it an inland lake? I did, however, enjoy seeing the gray squirrels scampering about within their native range. Oh, some people were swimming that evening, but I suspect it was mighty freakin' cold.

I had to look up the gulls when I got home, for as fond as I sometimes am of gulls (and sometimes am not), I am not quite yet a "gull expert." I saw ring-billed gulls and herring gulls. I liked looking at them, with the surf behind them, as the sun set amidst a beautiful sunset. We certainly did have wonderful weather on that trip.

Seen & Heard (Continued from page 3)

reports this month. What have you been seeing lately? Send your reports to calenbirds@hotmail.com.

November 16th, 2015 Lisa Mesplay was pleased to spot her first **Townsend's Warbler** of the season. According to Lisa, usually two or three are sporadically seen in her backyard around the winter. Lisa also spotted several **Bushtits** in her yard

December 5th, 2015 Dan Streiffert had several great bird sightings over the Thanksgiving week. Just west of the Green River Natural Resource Area's South Tower, Dan viewed a **Northern Shrike**. Nice spot, Dan! During some of the colder days, a trio of **Mourning Doves** frequented the Streiffert's feeders. At the tail end of the month, Dan watched a **Hermit Thrush** catching bugs on the Soos Creek Trail just north of James St.

Mystery Bird of the Month

I spotted this bird at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. Can you guess the bird? Here are the clues:

- A group of me is called a "chime", a "flight", a "flock", or a "herd".
- Like Bushtits, I will build additional "decoy" nests to confuse predators. I build my nests high in thorny bushes and trees, with only a slim gap as my entrance.
- Nest predators beware, I will mob squirrels, birds, and other animals that intrude upon my real nest and young.

- On the flip side, occasionally I have destroyed other bird's eggs and nests to eliminate competition for food. It's a tough life in the desert.
- I am the largest of the family *Troglodytidae*
- I'm not from a marsh, I don't live in Carolina, and I don't like canyons. I do like Cacti though.
- I am a bird of the desert, as I can survive without free-standing water.
- I am the state bird of Arizona.



Who am I?



Answer: Cactus Wren



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Climate change is a terrible problem, and it absolutely needs to be solved. It deserves to be a huge priority.
-Bill Gates



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
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Auburn, WA 98071

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