

# The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

May 2015

## RAS Membership Meeting

May 18, 2015

### **"YELLOWSTONE IN FEBRUARY"**

Dan Streiffert

Meeting begins at 7:00 PM.

This presentation is from a trip I made in February, 2015 to West Yellowstone. I spent 5 days on a photography tour with John and Barbara Gerlach. Each day we toured the park via two snow coaches. Our destinations were dependent on wildlife and weather. We visited Old Faithful, The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, and Norris Hot Springs. Following this, we drove to Gardiner, MT and spent two additional days touring the Lamar Valley and Mammoth Hot Springs by car.



This was a low snow year with very mild temperatures, but we still managed to get some good photos. We encountered elk, bison, beaver, coyotes, a bobcat, wolves, wild turkeys, and much more.

Join us at 6:30 for coffee and conversation.



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

This is the last Heron Herald  
until September, 2015!



# Tufted puffin listed as state endangered species

In case you haven't heard the news, the state Fish and Wildlife Commission voted on Friday to list the tufted puffin as a state endangered species. I'd like to extend a sincere thank you to you and your board members for taking the time to let the Commission know the importance of this step. Having testified along with Black Hills Audubon member Elizabeth Rodrick at the Commission meeting back in February, I can tell you that WDFW staff were very grateful for our involvement.

Of course the reasons behind the puffin's decline are complex and simply listing the bird won't erase this fact. However, we can use this listing to help bring attention to the plight of this bird and to highlight its existence in our region. It also means we have work yet to do – our next step will be to ensure that the department moves quickly to develop and enact a recovery plan for this iconic bird.

Here's a link to the tufted puffin status review in case you'd like more information.

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01642/wdfw01642.pdf>

All the best,

Trina



Trina Bayard, Ph.D. | Director of Bird Conservation  
 Audubon Washington | [wa.audubon.org](http://wa.audubon.org)  
 5902 Lake Washington Blvd S, Seattle, WA 98118  
[tbayard@audubon.org](mailto:tbayard@audubon.org) | 206.652.2444 x109

Rainier Audubon Officers		
President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
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Board Member	Max Prinsen	425-432-9965
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Board Member	Lisa Mesplay	253-946-3820
Board Member	Ed Stanton	206-870-3107
Publicity	Tom Sernka	253-529-8970
*Also serves as Board Member		
Board meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday 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>

**Upcoming Programs**  
 by Dale Meland

- June 15 - Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

**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

I have a new bird hanging out in my yard whom I have named Piebald Pete. He is a leucistic Dark-eyed Junco. His abnormal white nape feathers look like he has eyes in the back of his head. Watching him, I wondered about his pigment challenged feathers and how exactly it happened? I wanted to learn more about leucism and I found an interesting discussion about it in the new second edition of David Sibley's *The Sibley Guide to Birds*.

Sibley points out that many birders use the term leucistic to refer to birds that lack melanin from some or all feathers, as well as using leucism to refer to birds that have dilute plumage (which gives the faded look). However, current scholarly publications (Buckley 1982, van Grouw 2006) define leucism as total lack of melanin from some or all feathers. Sibley comments that we lack a simple umbrella term encompassing all forms of reduction of pigment in birds. Sibley puts forth an argument that the term partial albino, would be more accurate than leucism, seeing as albinism is already used commonly for non-melanin producing birds. Sibley states that when one is out in the field and spots a bird with abnormal plumage, identifying whether a bird is not producing melanin pigment, has a reduction of melanin pigment, or has a problem depositing melanin on new feathers is impossible. Many conditions can cause abnormal plumage like environmental and genetic factors. As well, the conditions can be temporary or permanent. Often we only see a bird in the field for a short while and identifying the underlying cause is difficult.

Considering Sibley's argument, I recognize that simply saying that Piebald Pete is leucistic is not necessarily accurate. By just observing him, I don't know why he has a reduced amount of coloration. I would be more accurate in saying that Piebald Pete is a partial albino. I can assume that Piebald Pete's abnormal coloration is not from a trauma, as his white pigmentation is bilaterally symmetrical. However, I cannot specify whether the white pigmentation is due to inability to produce melanin, or inability to deposit the melanin in the new feathers.

Though Pete was singing away, he didn't seem to be having any luck garnering a mate. I wonder if his lack of coloration in his plumage feathers is affecting his love life. Luckily for Pete, the location of his abnormal feathers is not on his wings as the feathers lacking melanin are weaker and wear down more easily, which could have an impact on his flying. Regardless of the underlying nature of Piebald Pete's lack of coloration, it was a treat to have him visit our yard.

## Recent Bird Sightings:

Thanks to this month's reporters Ralph and Sandra Embrey, Ross and Annette Tabor, and Pamela Phillips.

**March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015** The Embreys had a late season surprise visitor. A female **Varied Thrush** stopped to have a sip of water from their pond before flying on. Sandra said "I can't remember seeing the thrushes in March; usually they are in our backyard during November-January."

**March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015** Ross and Annette Tabor spotted a **Townsend's Warbler** in the bushes in their backyard.

**March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015** Pamela Phillips reported of spotting **Pine Siskins** in her yard again. Pamela also saw **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpeckers**, **White-crowned Sparrows**, **Violet-green Swallows**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, and a **Brown Creeper**.

**April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015** Ralph and Sandra Embrey's yard remains a popular place for owls. This month, a **Barn Owl** frequented their yard, "cruising the hillslope and fairway below the house." Reportedly, the owl has shown up repeatedly between 8:15 to 8:20 PM. Sandra commented "I wonder how many more times I will see the little brown bunny that has been hanging around here too." Other regular visitors to the Embrey yard this month were **Golden-crowned Sparrows**, **Anna's Hummingbirds**, and **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpeckers**.



## Mystery Bird of the Month

This bird is commonly seen on coniferous trees. Can you guess the bird? Here are the clues:

- A group of me is known as a "spiral".
- When threatened, I can freeze and stand motionless for several minutes. Sometime this can fool predators because I can camouflage with my brown plumage.
- I build a hammock-like nest, underneath a loose flap of bark.
- Sometimes I nest in odd places such as window shutters, fence posts, boxes, and even in concrete blocks.
- Some of my nests can have a pair of openings, an entrance and an exit.
- I am a great conserver of energy, food energy. On a given day I burn barely 10 calories, as opposed to a human who burns about 2,000. One spider gives me enough energy to nearly climb a tree.
- As opposed to my cousin, when foraging I hop *up* a tree and flit down to the bottom of the next tree. My cousin passes me hopping *down* the tree.

Who am I? Answer Page 9.

Send your sightings/hearings to [calenbirds@hotmail.com](mailto:calenbirds@hotmail.com)

I love reading your reports.

*Bio: Calen is a 16 year old birder. He enjoys birding around Lake Fenwick, Frager Road, and Boeing Ponds—especially with Charlie Wright. Calen is thrilled to revive Charlie's 'Seen and Heard'. When not birding, Calen can be seen flying up and down the ice at Kent Valley Ice Center*

# Field Trips by Michele Phiffer



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

## 2015 Grays Harbor Shorebird & Nature Festival

May 1-3, 2015  
Hoquiam, WA

EACH SPRING, hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed in Grays Harbor estuary on their migration northward. Coming from as far south as Argentina, these Arctic-bound shorebirds are among the world's greatest migrants. Some birds travel

over 15,000 miles round trip! Tens of thousands of shorebirds feed on the open mudflats in the estuary. This concentration of birds offers people a great chance to view a number of shorebird species, and with luck, to see the birds fly together in beautiful formations while trying to escape the fastest creature on earth, the Peregrine Falcon.

For more information call 360-289-5048 or see [www.shorebirdfestival.com](http://www.shorebirdfestival.com)

## 15th Annual Backyard Wildlife Festival

Saturday, May 9th, 2015

9:00 am to 3:00 pm  
Tukwila Community Center

A free, all-day event to educate and inspire people to welcome wildlife - such as birds and butterflies - into their backyards, gardens and communities. Join us as we celebrate wildlife, nature and gardening at the 15th Annual Backyard Wildlife Festival!

Here is the festival website:  
<http://backyardwildlifefestival.org>.

This event features a 9:25 AM Birdwalk led by a Rainier Audubon member, presentations from local experts including Sue Goetz and Marianne Binetti, and a variety of educational exhibitors, arts & craft vendors and native plant sales.

Don't leave the kids at home... there is plenty to keep the entire family entertained at this event - make sure you check out the Kids Garden Party area.

More information is at  
<http://backyardwildlifefestival.org>.

## Fauntleroy to Vashon Island with Ed Swan

Monday, May 11, 2015

We will meet on the 8:25 AM ferry from Fauntleroy.

We will start birding from the Fauntleroy ferry! There may still be Rhino Auklets and Common Murre on the way over. We'll bird a little at the dock on the Vashon side, catching the last of the water birds in breeding plumage such as the bright white

plumes on the Brandt's Cormorant. We'll head to Fisher Pond, which may be covered with Wood Duck and Mallard broods. We'll also visit Mukai Pond to look and listen for flycatchers and warblers.

Let Nature Shop know if you can drive when you sign up - we'll need 2 cars (plus Ed's car). You can park for 4 hours in the southern-most parking lot at Lincoln Park (1 block north of the ferry dock) or find parking on nearby neighborhood streets. Do not park on Fauntleroy Way or you risk getting towed.

Participants should plan to arrive early enough to park, purchase a ticket, and board the 8:25 AM ferry. Ed will meet up with participants on the ferry.

Carpool cost: \$5.20 passenger ticket, share of \$13.95 car ticket, share of gas costs to driver.

Contact Ed to sign up: (206) 949.3545 or email [edswan@theswancompany.com](mailto:edswan@theswancompany.com).

## WENAS AUDUBON CAMPOUT

**Memorial Day Weekend (May 22-25, 2014) | Wenas Creek Campground (SW of Ellensburg)**

You're invited to attend a celebration of birds, botany, and the beauty of spring in eastern Washington.

**The annual Wenas Audubon Campout takes place on Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26) at the Wenas Creek Campground.** This casual and friendly gathering offers a variety of activities, including birding field trips, flower walks, field sketching, and bat and owl prowls. You do not need to be an Audubon member to attend. All are welcome.

Visit the Wenas Audubon website ([www.wenasaudubon.org](http://www.wenasaudubon.org)) for directions, an outline of field trips and programming, and more information. Pre-registration is not required. The campout is free and open to all ages; however, donations are encouraged.

Every vehicle must display a Washington State Discover Pass (<http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov/>).

(Continued on [page 9](#))

# Book Reviews by Laura Lavington

Last year I visited Mexico twice, and on each trip I visited a botanical garden. Naturally, I took my binoculars with me and kept my eyes open for birds. As you shall see, the two botanical gardens were quite distinct, and my experiences differed.

In late February last year my mom and I flew down to Puerto Vallarta on Mexico's Pacific coast to celebrate my birthday. After seeing a poster in the airport, I decided that for my birthday itself I wanted to visit Vallarta Jardín Botánico (maybe because the poster had a hummingbird on it). I was prepared: a few days before I had picked up Princeton Illustrated Checklists' *Birds of Mexico and Central America* by Ber Van Perlo, which covers more than 1,500 species. On the flight down I had looked through the pages, reading out loud names of exotic species and getting excited. But first, before I could see any unfamiliar species on my birthday, we had to get to the garden.

In Puerto Vallarta my mom and I did not rent a car, but the garden's website was helpful and told exactly how to get to the garden by bus (the botanical garden is down the coast a little bit). If you have never been on a Mexican bus, it can be a bit of a cultural experience. The public buses in Mexico—or at least in the resort areas—don't resemble the buses in the United States: either the Mexicans like a vintage look, or that bus predated World War Two. Anyhow, I'll let you imagine the twisting, the turning, and the shaking as the bus slowly followed the coastline, and I'll merely say we got to the garden fine.

The bus stopped right in front of the garden, and an employee immediately gestured to me to come see a nest. He didn't seem to know much English, but I knew the Spanish word for hummingbird, and I asked him if that's what it was. Indeed! The mother had built the nest quite low, and I could look in at the two babies who filled the nest. Of course, I was careful to not get too close, although I did wonder why she had built it in such a low spot. Later I saw the mother, but I'm not quite sure what species she was—females are tricky to identify, and the region has more different species than the two we have up here. Oh, before I move on to telling you about the relaxing lunch we had several stories up in the hacienda's restaurant, I'll mention that as we bought our entrance tickets I shelled out two hundred pesos for a plasticized chart of the birds of the Puerto Vallarta region. Also important: we bought some

insect repellent, as we were advised to do.

My mom and I wandered leisurely along the trails for a while, during which time I saw an elegant trogon and a golden-cheeked woodpecker. The best birdwatching was during lunch, however, for there were feeders a short distance from the restaurant. We were up several floors looking down at the San Blas jays and yellow-winged caciques that came to the fruit that the botanical garden had so kindly provided. There were also several hummingbird feeders, but I had a hard time getting photographs of the birds. I'm pretty sure I glimpsed plain-capped starthroats and cinnamon hummingbirds. After lunch we wandered around some more, and even walked down the hill to the riverside, and I also saw either tropical kingbirds or great kiskadees (my pictures aren't great, and my notes are a little unclear). As we were leaving, I saw a group of stripe-headed sparrows. Oh, according to my notes I also saw a crested caracara. I definitely enjoyed the visit to the botanical garden, and I was pleased with the amount we saw. It was pretty hot, though, so after a while we took the bus back to town.

The trip to the botanical garden outside Cancun (on Mexico's Caribbean coast) last December was quite different. First of all, I remembered my binoculars, but I forgot my Mexican bird book! I was quite frustrated when I realized that. I tried to take photos of the birds I saw so I could identify them later, but that system only sometimes works. The area had great promise, too, for I figured that the birds we would see would often be different from the ones we saw on the Pacific coast.

I had found out about the Jardín Botánico – Dr. Alfredo Barrera Marin when we only had one full day left, so the visit there kind of had to be squeezed into the itinerary (we went snorkeling in the morning and didn't get to the botanical

garden until mid afternoon). On that trip to Cancun my sister accompanied my mom and me, and wow! I felt like one of the three stooges trying to find the botanical garden (oh, yes, we had a rental car—which it seems like would have made things easy). The garden's website didn't give directions, and my Garmin didn't really like the address. I knew about how far south the place was supposed to be, but I had hoped for a sign or something. In the end, after we got off the freeway and back on going in the opposite direction several times (after I had said "I think we've gone too far"), we determined that the entrance was literally on an off-ramp (of course, we had already passed it then, and we didn't dare back up to it). So, by the time we got to the botanical garden, the day was significantly into the afternoon (it was December, after all, and even in Mexico the days are shorter in the winter). I think we might have seen more birds had we visited the garden in the morning, but we really couldn't do much about it at that point.



As you may have gathered, the Cancun-area botanical garden is a bit off the beaten track, and we never saw any other visitors there. When we arrived we saw two employees, who took our money and gave us bird brochures (in English!), and I understood from them that the garden closed in about an hour, but we didn't have to leave by then... hmmm, is that what they said? Then who shuts the gate? There was a general vagueness about everything. Well, everything except the (Continued on [page 8](#))



**Featherhaven**

Native Songbird Rehabilitation  
[featherhavennsr@gmail.com](mailto:featherhavennsr@gmail.com)  
 P.O. Box 242, Enumclaw, WA 98022

# Bird of the Month: American Goldfinch

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

- Goldfinches are found across North America. The three species include the American, Lesser and Lawrence's Goldfinch.
- Goldfinches are sometimes referred to as wild canaries. They are actually in the finch family as their name suggests.
- Northern populations of the American Goldfinch are mostly migratory and southern populations are mostly residential.
- Banding studies have revealed that some American Goldfinch in Ontario migrate more than a 1,000 miles to Louisiana.
- Female American Goldfinch will stay further south during the winter than males and younger males will winter further north than adult males.
- American Goldfinch rarely over-winter in northern areas where temperatures fall below 0°F for extended periods.
- Residential flocks of American Goldfinch roam widely between food supplies during the winter and have been recorded moving over 4 miles between multiple feeding stations in a single day. Other records show movements of over 30 miles in a single winter.
- American Goldfinch have an interesting flight call consisting of four syllables that can be likened to "po-ta-to-chip."
- The genus name, *Caruelis*, is from the Latin word *carduus*, which means "thistle." Goldfinches are very dependent on thistles for food and even use thistledown to line their nests.
- The American Goldfinch is one of the latest breeding songbirds, waiting to nest until mid-to-late summer when thistle seeds and down are readily available.
- When breeding for the first time, young American Goldfinch will begin nesting at least two weeks later than experienced adults.
- Unlike many birds, the American Goldfinch undergoes a complete molt each spring. This molt requires a large amount of nutrients and energy which probably diminishes their ability to nest earlier in the season.
- American Goldfinch typically have only one brood per year, although veteran females may produce an additional brood. To facilitate a second nesting, a female will leave her original mate in care of the first brood and find a new male as her partner for the second nesting.
- It is estimated that there are three males for every two females in the population of American Goldfinch. This imbalanced ratio may be due to the fact that male goldfinch live longer than their female counterparts.
- The female American Goldfinch chooses the nest site, builds the nest and incubates the eggs all on her own. The male feeds the female on the nest throughout incubation and takes on an ever increasing role in feeding the nestlings as they grow older.
- American Goldfinch can weave their nest so tightly that it will temporarily hold water.
- American Goldfinch attach their nest to supporting twigs with spider web.



- American Goldfinches prefer to nest in habitats with trees and shrubs and usually place their nest 4-10 feet high, often near a water source. They will sometimes nest in a loose colony.
- Goldfinches usually lay 5 pale-blue or greenish-blue eggs that will hatch in about 12 days. Nestlings will fledge about 12 days after that.
- While most Brown-headed Cowbird eggs fool the female American Goldfinch and are incubated to hatching, few cowbird chicks live longer than three or four days. This is due to the low amounts of protein found in the vegetarian diet of the goldfinch.
- Young American Goldfinch are dependent on their parents for at least three weeks after fledging. Be sure to watch and listen for their energetic begging as they harass their parents for food at your feeders.
- Female American Goldfinch are dominant over males in the summer and appear to be subservient to them in the winter. See if you can tell a difference at your feeders.
- American Goldfinch will use almost any feeder, including ones that require them to hang upside down to eat. Studies have shown their preference is to sit upright at perches on feeders that are hung in trees above head height.
- American Goldfinch are dominated by Pine Siskin and House Finch during the winter and play second fiddle to them at feeders.
- American Goldfinch are common feeder visitors and prefer thistle (nyjer) and shelled sunflower seeds.
- American Goldfinch are rather acrobatic, often dipping upside down while feeding on weed seeds such as coneflowers and sunflowers.
- To stay warm on a cold winter's night, American Goldfinches have been known to burrow under the snow to form a cozy sleeping cavity. They will also roost together in coniferous trees.
- Unlike many birds, Goldfinches completely molt their feathers twice a year, before breeding in the spring and after nesting in the fall.

(Continued on [page 7](#))

# Mewsings from Millie

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

**H**ello and welcome back to my musings!

I was pawing through some issues of BirdWatching magazine and noticed an article entitled Amazing Birds. It was written by Eldon Greij, the founding editor of Birder's World magazine. He explores and explains fascinating aspects of birds and their world.

For example, did you know that long ago in prehistoric times birds had teeth? As birds evolved and modified their bodies for flight, bones were lost, some were fused together and heavy, compact bone was replaced by lighter, spongy bone. This was most evident in the skull. The jaws of birds became smaller and more delicate meaning the teeth had to go. The molars were replaced by the muscular organ called the gizzard which grinds food. This trade off of the teeth and skull for a gizzard was a smart thing as it decreased body weight and moved the center of gravity under the wings creating a more aerodynamic weight distribution.

The gizzard is just one part of a bird's stomach. The other section is in front of the gizzard. It's a small, thin-walled glandular chamber that secretes digestive enzymes and acid.

Fruit-eating birds have weakly developed gizzards. Seed and insect eaters, on the other hand, have a gizzard with thick masses of muscle that can contract with tremendous force. It is lined with a tough,

grooved and ridged layer of keratin which is constantly being regenerated.

Birds that have well developed gizzards include turkeys, pheasants, pigeons, doves, ducks and many finches. Sea ducks such as eiders and inland divers like scaup eat mussels and other shellfish that are easily ground up.

Turkeys can crush pecans, shell and all, in an hour. It has also been reported that a person back in the 17th century tried an experiment in which glass balls, lead cubes and chunks of wood were introduced into a turkey's stomach. The following day the glass was pulverized, the lead cubes flattened and the wood badly worn. When a modern researcher tried to duplicate these feats with a vise he needed to apply a force of 437 pounds!

In birds of prey the gizzard has a different function. Many owls and hawks swallow small rodents and birds whole. The non-digestible feathers, bones and fur remain in the gizzard and are compacted into a pellet and regurgitated. Grebes ingest feathers (did you know they feed feathers to their young?!) which settle in the bottom of the gizzard and prevent fish bones from moving into the intestine.

You may have heard that sometimes birds eat pebbles. These are kept in the gizzard to increase its pulverizing ability. Pebble munching has had some interesting results. In India, ruby mines



were discovered after a ruby was found in the gizzard of a pheasant and in Oklahoma, a minor gold rush occurred when gold nuggets were found in duck gizzards. I guess you could say that the evolution of the gizzard was a gem of an idea!

It seems strange and somewhat outlandish that losing teeth and developing a powerful, muscular grinding organ would be associated with the ability to fly but as Mr. Greij exclaims, "...nothing should be a surprise when it comes to the amazing lives of birds."

Until next time,

Millie

The Muse of Mews

## Bird of the Month (Continued from page 6)

- During their fall feather molting, American Goldfinches grow a new set of feathers that are much denser than their summer plumage. These soft feathers provide an additional layer of insulation to help keep them warm throughout the winter.
- The color of the legs, feet and bill of the American Goldfinch change with each feather molt. In winter plumage, their legs, feet and bill are dark grayish brown. In breeding plumage they change to a buffy yellow orange color.
- The American Goldfinch is the state bird of New Jersey, Iowa and Washington.
- Of the more than 3 million banded American Goldfinches, the oldest one ever recaptured in the wild was at least 10 years and 5 months old.

## New Members Since December

Judy Collins	Simon Lee
Susan Quinzel	Ken Steffenson
Tom & Ann Church	Ann Petersen
Jan Wilson	Penny Weller
Barbara Taylor & Richard DePoppe	Pamela Reaville
Jim Flynn and Marissa Benavente	Aniko Juhasz



**CHECK OUT THE NEW RAINIER  
AUDUBON MEETUP GROUP AT**

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

# The Month of May is **BIRDATHON**

## What is it?

It's "birding for dollars!" Count as many bird species in one day as you can! Choose any day in May. **Get family, friends and co-workers to sponsor you**, then go birding! Afterwards, send them a list of what birds you saw, and they will donate X amount for each species you saw (i.e. 25 cents). Or they can just donate a flat fee. 100% of the proceeds support Rainier Audubon activities in south King County.

You can also conduct your Birdathon birding on one of our field trips. Earn money for chapter activities while enjoying a great field trip led by an expert birder. Or just stay at home and count bird species at your feeder. Or be creative and come up with your own Birdathon experience!

Sponsors are happy to support your efforts, and many look forward to being asked again the following year. They especially enjoy your list of bird species seen. We will provide helpful hints, examples of solicitation and report letters, prizes for birders, thank-you gifts for sponsors, and one-on-one help as needed.

Why do it? Rainier Audubon needs the money! The portion of your membership dues to Rainier Audubon covers only a portion of the costs associated with running a successful Audubon chapter. Birdathon is our largest fundraiser, and we depend on it to provide a sta-



ble funding base for our many activities and services such as: printing and mailing our chapter's newsletter, general administrative costs, programs (speaker fees), environmental education activities, conservation committee activities, etc., We wouldn't want to have to cut back on any of our activities due to lack of funds!

Our goal for Birdathon 2015 is \$5,000, which is attainable if everyone helps!

Stay tuned for prize announcements such as most money raised, first time birder, and most species seen.

Sponsor sheets are available at Rainier Audubon membership meetings or online at [www.RainierAudubon.org](http://www.RainierAudubon.org).

-Alex Juchems



Nashville Warbler photographed by Mick Thompson at Streiffert's Birdathon on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

## Book Reviews (Continued from [page 5](#))

mosquitos: they were out in full force. The Cancun botanical garden is evidently a smaller affair than the one I had visited in Puerto Vallarta, and they did not sell insect repellent. Hmm, about a half hour after trudging along the path we found that we were literally in a mangrove swamp—yep! A perfect place for mosquitos. In fact, we spent so much time fighting the mosquitos that it was hard to use our binoculars: every time I raised either my binoculars or my camera, I ended up with a bite or four. That kind of scenario makes it hard to spot a lot of birds. I was wearing shorts that day, and I got so eaten by mosquitos that my legs were polka-dotted—the kind of look that actually makes strangers stare.

I actually feel a little cautious about calling that place a "botanical garden" in that it more resembled the jungle with paths. At times there were dilapidated signs telling what a fern or other was, but I more felt like I was on a hike through the jungle. Oh, well, I think my

mom and my sister were wondering "where in the hell has Laura brought us?" but I tried to stay positive. After all, the wooden towers, platforms, and bridges were exciting... if less than safe. At one point when we were several stories up my sister was clutching the edge of the tower and asked me to take some pictures—evidently she didn't dare let go. Also, there were tall skinny trees growing up between the planks of the wooden suspension bridges—at what point do they remove the trees?

I did see a few birds on the hike through the jungle that shadowy afternoon, though, despite the forces working against me. The trogon I saw and photographed from the back, and I am not sure if it was a female violaceous trogon or a female black-headed trogon (drat!). Also, early on we were nearly knocked over by a speedy hummingbird, but I never got a good look at the fellow (I know it wasn't a mosquito: mosquitos don't move that fast). I also have recorded in my notebook that I saw a common yellowthroat and a northern waterthrush

(not too exotic there). Actually, the neatest thing I saw was the coatis (or at least that's what I think they were). Cat/raccoon-like with long striped tails standing up tall. I didn't get a picture of them, though—they moved too fast. Come to find out that the things are as common there as raccoons here (and equally crafty).

Lest my recollections of the Cancun-area botanical garden make you feel like it's not worth visiting the Yucatan Peninsula, I will say this: the Yucatan is incredibly rich in bird life (albeit birds are hard to spot in the jungle), but you may actually do better visiting Chichen Itza or another archeological site than you would visiting the botanical garden. It was at Chichen Itza that I saw the melodious blackbirds, the yellow-backed oriole, and the great kiskadees—and that was even amongst all the crowds! I think next time I go to Cancun I will visit one of the less-visited Mayan sites and look for birds there—but most of all, next time I'll remember my bird field guide!



## "Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary & Garden Tour"

Backyard 'n Birds

Excitement for the month of June!

Save the date! Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup> from 9 AM to 5 PM is the Backyard Habitat and Garden Tour. The tour will be fun and educational for all ages.

Hosting their properties are:

- The Frey's at 23329 – 172<sup>nd</sup> Ave SE
- The Bartlett's at 24433 – 156<sup>th</sup> Ave SE
- The Streiffert's at 10102 SE 270<sup>th</sup> Place.

The addresses are all in Kent. Save these addresses to google or GPS.

**Powellswood** is participating. Their address is 430 South Dash Point Road in Federal Way. Their hours on Saturday will be 10 AM to 3 PM. The admission fee for adults will be \$3.00 and children under 12 free. This is an exciting property, plan on

spending 45 minutes to 2 hours at Powellswood. To find out more go to their website: <http://www.powellswood.org>.

As an added bonus for our tour, **FeatherHaven** is featuring their property. Their address is 46119 – 284<sup>th</sup> Ave SE in Enumclaw. It is a bit out of the way, but well worth the visit. Their hours will be noon to 4 PM. Entrance is free, however they do except donations for their bird rehabilitation program. Their property has an aviary with educational birds. This is another exceptional location, plan on spending at least one hour here. A FeatherHaven volunteer will be there to help you. To learn more about FeatherHaven go to their website: <http://www.featherhaven.org>.

To ensure everyone is able to participate in the fun, **we will need at least 6 volunteers**. The volunteers are needed to help property owners so they can get away and enjoy touring other properties. Volunteers are needed for 4 hour shifts, 9am - 1pm and 2pm - 5pm. If you would like to volunteer to "pair up" with a hosting property please contact me at 206-817-8754 or email me at: [crgrie123@yahoo.com](mailto:crgrie123@yahoo.com). I need volunteers by mid-May. If you personally know the property owners, you may contact them directly, then let me know.

Thanks! Marie

### Field Trips (Continued from [page 4](#))

Contacts:

Doris Johnson, [dellenj@comcast.net](mailto:dellenj@comcast.net)

### Green Valley in Early Summer

Saturday, June 6th  
8:00 AM to Early Afternoon  
Leader: Steve Johnson

In June, the migrant birds should be singing on their territory near Auburn and in the beautiful Green Valley east of Auburn. We'll visit Academy Drive, Green Valley Road, and Flaming Geyser State Park. We may see and hear warblers, thrushes, vireos, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Virginia Rail, flycatchers, and more. We may walk up to 2 miles on trails and roads.

People who bring their own cars, and want to leave early may do so.

**Bring:** Lunch, snacks, drinks, hiking shoes. Scopes welcome.

**Meet:** Auburn Safeway at Auburn Ave & Main at 8:00 AM.

**Directions:** Take hwy 18 to Auburn, and exit at Auburn Ave (hwy 164). Turn north (right) on Auburn Way and drive 3 blocks north. Safeway sign and gas station is on the left. Park in the lot just beyond the gas station straight out from the right entry door at Safeway at 8:00 am.

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

## Bird Word Nerd

Where did the prothonotary warbler get its name? I'd read in a novel that prothonotary was the title of a clerk of the church who wore bright yellow robes like the bright yellow feathers of the warbler. I assumed the Catholic church and did find 2 levels of this type of office but they wear black and red with purple capes – no warbler like that! The word originated with the Byzantine court and was in use from the 7th to the 10th century but I did not find anything about what color they wore! The word is still in use, sometimes spelled protonotary, for various clerk positions in Australia and other countries. The folks who named many of our birds were very well-read, well-traveled, well-educated men (yes, usually men!) who used their knowledge to distinguish even small feathered creatures in noble ways! Enjoy!

Nancy Streiffert

Answer: Brown Creeper



“The good man is the friend of all living things.”

—Gandhi



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