

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

May 2016

RAS Membership Meeting May 16, 2016

Plastic: It's what's for breakfast

Dr. Peter Hodum
University of Puget Sound



The issue of plastic debris in the oceans is of growing concern globally, with plastic accumulating in marine habitats from the equators to the poles and from coastlines to the middle of ocean basins. Although patterns of plastic ingestion by marine wildlife such as sea turtles, marine mammals and seabirds are increasingly well documented, the consequences of ingestion remain poorly understood. The pervasiveness of marine plastics, especially micro-plastics, throughout marine food webs is also unknown. In this talk, Peter Hodum will discuss the magnitude of the marine plastic pollution issue, the impacts of plastic debris on marine wildlife, and the use of biological indicators, ranging from seabirds to mussels, to better understand the impacts of plastics on marine ecosystems. He will also talk about the challenges and opportunities of dealing with this global environmental issue.

Biographic blurp:

Dr. Peter Hodum is an associate professor at the University of Puget Sound and the Chile Program Director for Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge, a conservation non-profit organization. In Chile, Dr. Hodum leads a long-term program dedicated to conducting applied conservation research, restoration and community-based conservation programs. His research focuses primarily on the conservation and ecology of threatened seabirds and island ecosystems in Chile and here in Washington State. His research program also focuses on issues related to marine plastic debris and its impacts on marine wildlife. He is an enthusiastic educator who loves working in the field and with communities, both locally and internationally.

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)

Bag Busters - "People for Plastic Free Kent & Covington"

www.bagbusters.org

Top Ten Reasons To Ban Plastic Bags
courtesy of Ted Dubois

<http://gotmybag.org/>

TED Talk: GreatPacificGarbagePatch
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXKpqHtkmHw>

Plastic Pollution: A Social Injustice

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-kaas-boyle/plastic-pollution-a-social_b_7184298.html

The 5 Gyres

<http://www.5gyres.org/>

Imagine a World Where Oceans are Free of Trash

<http://www.algalita.org/>

May Board Elections

We will be having the election of Rainier Audubon Board Members at the May 16, 2016 meeting.

The biographies were printed in the April, 2016 Heron Herald. Unfortunately, the editor left one candidate off of the list. So her biography is included below.

We are very fortunate this year in having 4 new members running for the Board, and one returning member. These include:

- Cindy Flanagan
- Marie West-Johnson
- Pat Toth
- Jay Galvin
- Barbara Petersen

Barbara Petersen's Biography

I'm Barbara Petersen. I joined Rainier Audubon in 1992 for the field trips, so I could learn to identify birds. My first field trip was led by kind, patient Jim Tooley. Other memorable RAS activities were awesome Birdathon trips, a nestbox building workshop at the home of AJ and Debbie Fisher, nestbox installation in local parks with Todd Tannery, many Christmas Bird Counts, and meeting the very welcoming Linda Bartlett at the first Rainier Backyard Habitat Tour. Cherished mentors and friends

have come into my life through Rainier Audubon - Thais Bock, Jim Flynn, Adele Freeland, Cheryl White and many more. I enjoyed a rich childhood in Tacoma, WA, where I spent my days outside observing our native reptiles and amphibians. In 1984 my husband Curt and I moved to Federal Way. After seeing my first hermit thrush there, followed by red-breasted nuthatches, I rushed to the library to check out a field guide. I have been hooked on birding ever since. An early inspiration was my father-in-law, Leland Petersen, a CA birder and docent at Monterey Bay's Elkhorn Slough (look for his memorial oak leaf on the wall when you visit.) I retired after thirty years of teaching deaf children, and now work a few days a month at Pat Toth's Wild Birds Unlimited store in Burien, where I now live.

I encourage you to support these candidates with your votes on May 16.

Dan Streiffert

Rainier Audubon Officers		
President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
Treasurer	Laura Lavington*	253-941-7372
Secretary	Heather Gibson*	253-856-9812
Program Chair	Dale Meland	253-946-1637
Field Trip Chair	Barbara Petersen	253-941-4055
Membership Chair	Pat Toth*	206-767-4944
Backyard Habitat Chair	Marie West-Johnson	206-817-8754
Conservation Chair	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Mailing Chair	Debra Russell	425-271-0682
Hospitality	Sandra Embrey	253-517-3363
Newsletter Editor	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Webmaster	Treesa Hertzal	253-255-1808
Education Chair	Annette Tabor*	253-927-3208
Christmas Bird Count Coordinator	Alex Juchems	253-529-8996
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.		

RAS June Membership Meeting Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Potluck 7:00 PM June 20th, 2016

We will be celebrating our Birdathon results and socializing.

Bring your favorite foods.

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

Ralph Waldo Emerson had it right with his quote "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." This quote is perhaps most applicable to the Dents-de-lion, or "lion's tooth", a gang member of the Aster family. Some abhor this tap-rooted, yellow flowered, *Taraxacum* because they can invade a grassy lawn and turn many yards into green galaxies speckled with droves of little suns. While the dandelion is a pest to many, a spring field full of dandelions is a source of excitement for me. Not only do white fluffy dandelion ends evoke childhood memories of blowing dandelion seeds for "wishes", they also remind me of the numerous birds that utilize these weeds for variety of means.

Early in the Spring, the plentiful bright dandelions are a great source of food for the birds. From Pine Siskins, standing tip-toe and precariously pecking out the seeds of the flowers to Robins plucking at the buds, the dandelions are much loved and devoured by many a bird. However, the species that I enjoy watching amongst the dandelions the most are the Juncos. A cluster of dandelions is like a Junco's playground. Often I will spot an adult Junco with a juvenile or two in tow, hopping around the flowers, "showing the ropes" of dandelion harvesting to its young. The juvenile Juncos watch attentively as their parent leaps gracefully onto a dandelion stem and slides, like a surfer cresting the wave, down the stem to pin down the treasure trove of seeds. Rapid learners, the baby Juncos quickly follow suit and leap onto dandelions of their own. They lack the expertise of their parent and slide down the stem more like a child slips down and slide, but nonetheless they successfully pin down the dandelion and, victorious, gulp the seeds of their labor.

This Springtime ritual is just another example of the lengths that birds will go to prepare for and teach their

young. While the Robins need not worry about paying for their young to go to University (school for the birds, perhaps), but raising several naïve juveniles whose size and appetites quickly outgrow their parents is no easy challenge. As spring rolls on, I anticipate watching all of the intricate relationships and rights of passage between adults and juveniles and hope to see those same young pass on the knowledge of their species to broods of their own, for Springs to come.

What Spring behavior have you noticed lately? Do you have an interesting bird story or a good sighting to report? Send me what you are seeing and hearing at calenbirds@hotmail.com. Have fun birding!

Recent Bird Sightings:

Thanks to this month's reporters Sandra Embrey and Alex Juchems. What have you been seeing lately? Send your reports to calenbirds@hotmail.com.

April 8th, 2016 In early April, Ralph and Sandra Embrey's backyard was as vibrant as a Van Gogh painting, the many gorgeous birds their splashes of paint. A pair of deep dark blue and black **Stellar's Jays** "bounced around", their pond as Sandra glimpsed the milk white flashes of the **White-crowned Sparrows**, their backyard's first of the year. Sandra spotted a quintet of the bright flecked **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, flittering nearby an ebony-colored **Hairy Woodpecker** "with his distinctive red." To add to the explosion of color, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** stopped by to use the water feature. To round out the kaleidoscopic colorful day, a hunting **Red-tail Hawk** added its russet feathers to the collaboration of colors. Unfortunately no Violet-Green Swallows showed up to the Embrey yard to complete the full rainbow of birds, but it was definitely a lively day of sightings.

April 13th, 2016 Alex Juchems viewed a female **Yellow Warbler** bathing in his pond's waterfall stream. Alex commented "great to see those neotropical birds returning." Great spot Alex!

Mystery Bird of the Month

Chances are you've seen this bird. Can you guess the bird? Here are the clues:

- Groundhogs move over! Many people in cold areas consider a sighting of my kind to announce the arrival of spring.
- A group of me is known as a "worm", which is quite ironic because of my affinity for catching them.
- In a few rare cases, I have been known to wade into shallow water to catch tiny fish. I usually stick to my diet of worms and berries though.
- During breeding season, I grow black feathers on my head to attract females.
- My life is hard, as most generations of my kind change every six years. While only a quarter of chicks laid survive until adulthood, my species is never low in population because the females of my kind can have up to three broods a year.
- My eggs are light blue. I have a crayola crayon color named after them.
- Chances are I'm the first bird you hear calling in the morning. I have a very familiar call.
- I'm not European
- I'm one of America's birds, a favorite for chain restaurant titles, and also share the name with a certain cartoon character.

Who am I?

Answer: on last page.

Bio: Calen is a 17 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 - Barbara Petersen



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.

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

Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival

May 6 - 8, 2016
Hoquiam, Washington

Celebrating Nature and the Spring Migration of Shorebirds in Grays Harbor County

<http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>

Birdathon RAS Members Only

Saturday, May 14th
Leader Jim Flynn
6 AM - 6 PM

Meet at the Federal Way Park & Ride

Federal Way/S 320th St Park & Ride
32320 23rd Ave S

Note that this is not the same as the Federal Way Transit Center

This will be a local trip, primarily in S. King County and perhaps a little bit of north Pierce. We will try to see at least 70-80 species and destinations may include: Dash Pt. and Dumas Bay Parks, Hylebos Waterway, Flaming Geyser and Kanaskat St. Parks, Emerald Downs wetlands, Smith Brothers Dairy, Kent Ponds and more, depending on where the action is! Expect a fast-paced but not inhumane pace and lots of birds!

Return to the park and ride should be around 6 PM although if some people want to leave at noon we can arrange that. Carpooling is required as always. Please bring a lunch and drinks, as well as carpool money.

To sign up for this fabulous all day field trip contact Jim by email, text message or phone call. merlinmania@comcast.net,

206 399 6418.

Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival

May 14, 2016

Robin Haglund is the founder and president of pioneering garden coaching firm Garden Mentors®, which thrives on empowering others in their personal garden spaces. Robin is an HGTV, NWFSG, WALP, and WSNLA award-winning designer, a down-to-earth speaker, a popular writer, and a frequent garden television expert guest and contributor. Her popular articles, videos, and seminars are infused with vibrant anecdotes derived from her childhood on the farm, her daily adventures with pollinators and pets in the garden, her promising forays into growing and cooking crops for better blood sugar management, and her garden coaching experiences teaching successful gardening practices to beginner and professional gardeners alike. Robin's garden coaching methods, design insights, seed-to-fork solutions, tips for gardening with pets, and her experiences with urban beekeeping are featured in several media sources including Organic Gardening Magazine, The New York Times, PBS's "Growing a Greener World", Sunset Magazine, HGTV's "Landscape's

Challenge", The Seattle Times, Garden Mentors® Garden Help Blog, A Dry Rain Podcast, Fiskars Gardening Experts, MSN, and Dog Park Wisdom.

<http://backyardwildlifefestival.org/>

2016 Leavenworth Spring Bird Festival

May 19 - 22

<http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.org/>

Audubon Wenas Campout

Memorial Day weekend May 22 - 25

<http://www.wenasaudubon.org/>

Green Valley in Early Summer

Saturday, June 4th
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

(Continued on page 7)

Western Field Ornithologists Youth Scholarships for Calif. Conference

Western Field Ornithologists is pleased to announce the availability of youth scholarships for the WFO 2016 conference to be held in Humboldt County, California from Sept. 28 through Oct. 2nd. Eight scholarships are available for youth between the ages of 12 and 22, with six scholarships for youths in Grades 6 through 12 and two scholarships for collegiate youths working toward a Bachelor's degree. The application deadline is May 15, 2016. The annual WFO conference is a four day event that includes scientific presentations, workshops, field trips, experts' sound and visual identification panels, and social activities. For additional details about the

scholarships and conference, visit the WFO website at <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org>.

Please share this information as soon as possible with your Audubon membership and youth organizations. This is a great opportunity for motivated youth to meet those who earn their living and/or volunteer in the field ornithology, bird conservation, biology and other distinguished fields.

Joyce Meyer
Redmond, WA
meyer2j@aol.com
WFO Member
Audubon member



The Presidential Debates

Bird of the Month: The Bald Eagle

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

The Bald Eagle has been the national emblem of the United States since 1782 and a spiritual symbol for native people for far longer than that. In 1978 the bird was listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act and has since made a remarkable recovery. It was removed from the endangered list in 2007 and has continued to thrive although it is still threatened by



environmental pollution, poisoning from hunting ammunition, collisions with motor vehicles and stationary structures and destruction of nesting habitat.

This bird stands at 31" tall with a wing span of over 6 feet. Its gleaming white-feathered head contrasts sharply with its rich chocolate-brown body thus earning the title of "bald".

The Bald Eagle is a powerful flier and is able to soar long distances. It is also able to swim using its wings to mimic a motion similar to the butterfly stroke.

Typically, the Bald Eagle nests in a forested area near a large body of water. It builds one of the largest of all bird nests using sticks and branches and averaging 5 to 6 feet in diameter and 2 to 4 feet tall. The largest Bald Eagle nest on record was found in St. Petersburg, Florida. It measured about 9 feet wide and 18 feet tall.

The Bald Eagle mates for life. In one of the more spectacular courtship displays, a male and female fly high into the sky, lock talons and cartwheel downward together, breaking off at the last instant to avoid crashing to earth.

Usually, two eggs are laid. Both mom and dad incubate the eggs and both parents care for the young after they hatch. While the eggs are in the nest, the parents are very careful around them even clenching their toes to prevent the eggs from being punctured by their talons.

The eaglets hatch in 35 - 46 days and will leave the nest in 10 - 11 weeks. Mom and dad will still feed them for about a month after fledging. Gradually the young eagles will spend more and more time away from their parents and learn to hunt by trial and error.

The Bald Eagle usually prefers to eat fresh fish but will also eat birds, mammals and carrion. It will hunt from a high perch gliding down to catch its prey or wade into shallow streams or rivers for fish. This bird will also snatch prey from other creatures such as harassing an osprey until it drops its catch in midair and swooping it up. It will even snatch a fish directly out of an osprey's talons!

Sometimes even the national bird has to cut loose. Bald Eagles have been known to play with plastic bottles and other objects. A pair was once seen passing sticks to each other in midair.

An immature Bald Eagle will spend the first four years of its life exploring vast territories and can fly hundreds of miles in a day. Young birds from Florida have been found in Michigan and birds from California have reached Alaska.

Bald Eagles can live a long time with a longevity record of 38 years in the wild.

As you may know, Benjamin Franklin was not a fan of the Bald Eagle. In 1784, he said, "I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of bad moral Character. He does not get his living honestly.....Besides he is a rank Coward."

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, will reimburse the cost of a Discover Pass to any new member who joins Rainier Audubon during 2016.

All you have to do is join Rainier Audubon, bring the receipt for your Discover Pass to a meeting and give it to our treasurer and she will reimburse you.

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

Hello and welcome back to my musings!

Imagine a world with no flowers, fruit, coffee or chocolate. Sounds pretty dismal doesn't it? We have all of these wonderful things and more because of the work of pollinators.

Usually when you think of pollinators the honey bee pops into your head. However, many other insects and critters help with pollinating including birds, beetles, bats, wasps and even flies.

It is estimated that more than 1300 types of plants are grown around the world for food, beverages, medicines, condiments, spices and even fabric. Of these, about 75% are pollinated by animals. More than one of every three bites of food you eat or beverages you drink are due to the efforts of pollinators. I'd even bet there are ingredients in my cat food that needed to be pollinated.

Pollinators are vital to creating and maintaining the habitats and ecosystems that many animals rely on for food and shelter. Worldwide, over half the diet of fats and oils comes from crops pollinated by animals. They facilitate reproduction in 90% of the world's flowering plants.

Among the most common native pollinators are "solitary bees", so-called because they don't live in hives or colonies like social Honey Bees. Mason Bees and Carpenter Bees are in this group. Some solitary bees are less than an eighth of an inch long and are at least as busy as Honey Bees, if not more so. They are often overlooked even though they pollinate

valuable commercial crops such as strawberries. In recent years, Mason Bees have become more and more popular with gardeners because they are easy to keep, non-aggressive and they work like the dickens to pollinate flowers and fruit trees.

Some flies that pollinate are as small as the smallest solitary bee. They may resemble bees since both have wings that are transparent and membranous, but flies bear only two wings while bees have four. Flies visit flowers in search of sweet nectar. While lapping the nectar up they pick up a little pollen and transfer it to the next flower they visit.

One group of pollinators that is often forgotten is the wasps. Wasps will go from flower to flower crawling around on flower heads consuming nectar and collecting pollen. Some pollinating wasps are as small as the miniature flies and solitary bees.

Another important pollinating group is the beetles. There are more beetles in the world than any other insect group with more than 750,000 species and counting. There are large beetles and tiny beetles that look like black specks on flowers. The beetles stumble about in the blossoms bumping up against stamens that deposit sticky pollen on various beetle parts.

Many adult butterflies are important pollinators. They will flit from flower to flower looking for tasty sugary snacks all the while collecting and depositing pollen.

During the night, nocturnal moths and bats will be hard at work pollinating night-blooming flowers in the desert



*regions of the southwestern U.S. and Mexico. One bat has an elongated snout that is perfect for probing the flowers of a particular tropical tree. Just imagine your cereal, smoothie or peanut butter sandwich being "banana-less" if it weren't for *Musonycteris harrisonii* or the Banana Bat!*

Another important and popular pollinator is the hummingbird. Hummingbirds visit all sorts of native and imported flowers in search of nectar. Their long, thin bills are perfectly adapted to tubular flowers like honeysuckle. If you look closely, you may see a hummer with a smear of white or yellow powder on its forehead or bill.

What can you do? Provide a diverse assortment of flowering plants and encourage native species in your yard. In addition and perhaps more importantly, look for alternative, organic ways to deal with pest and disease issues before reaching for a pesticide and you can make a positive difference for our hard-working pollinators.

Until next time,

Millie, the Muse of Mews

Field Trips (Continued from page 4)

the right entry door at Safeway at 8:00 am.

Sign-up: Call or email Steve Johnson, 253-941-9852. johnsonsj5@msn.com



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 stable 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 on-line at www.RainierAudubon.org.

-Alex Juchems



The Living Bird: 100 Years of Listening to Nature

- Laura Lavington

Ever since the King County Library System got some copies of it, the wait list to check out *The Living Bird: 100 Years of Listening to Nature* has been quite long. This book was published by the local Mountaineers Books, and it was produced in conjunction with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to celebrate the lab's one-hundred-year anniversary. The book features photographs by Gerrit Vyn and essays by Scott Weidensaul, Seattle's own Lyanda Lynn Haupt, John W. Fitzpatrick, Barbara Kingsolver, and Jared Diamond. Fitzpatrick, the director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, describes *The Living Bird* as both a celebration of birds ("an ode to birds") and a call to arms.

So, what is a book of bird essays like? Well first of all, no one skimmed on the bird photographs: the book is worth checking out from the library just in order to see the pictures. As for the essays, I generally enjoyed reading them, particularly at the moments when I came upon a bird anecdote that I didn't yet know. However, I can't help but feel like the book preaches to the choir a little bit. I guess both you and I are members of the choir, and inevitably we show up every week because we like the topic... so you'd probably enjoy reading this book. However, one can't help but hope that someone other than the choir hears the "call to arms."

As you may have inferred, the book partially focuses on mankind's impact on the environment, both thus far and in the future. Further, in one of his sections, Fitzpatrick asserts that "birds teach us

about the unity and connectedness of our planet better than any other organism on earth." I am not sure if I'd given that that much thought—the fact that birds make the best indicator species (or so the book says). Another of Fitzpatrick's sentences on the same page interested me: he says, "Birds are such accessible indicators of ecological health that many national governments have formal procedures for using birds to assess environmental well-being." I thought such a thing sounded pretty cool, but I did wonder if the United



States was one of those countries.

I won't say much about the half of the book that celebrates birds. Some of that part is a little scientific, and other parts are more philosophical. I found that it was pleasant enough to read. I did learn a few things about various birds, one of which was interesting enough that I'd like to share it here. I had always heard that brown-headed cowbirds are nest parasites because they used to follow the bison herds and thus could not settle



down and have a nest. Well, in the essay by Scott Weidensaul, I found out that that idea has been disproved. Weidensaul says, "DNA has shown that brown-headed cowbirds evolved from South American species that had already developed brood parasitism far from any buffalo herds."

I appreciated that in his essay in which he discusses modern environmental threats to birds, Fitzpatrick also talks about some of conservation's successes. He shows that the situation is not hopeless. Even so, I felt depressed as I read about the ivory gull. The ivory gull is the northernmost breeding bird in the world, and it is even more threatened by climate change than the polar bear. Also, Fitzpatrick says that spotted owls are now extinct in Canada, which I did not realize. Further, he says that one-eighth, or 13 percent, of

the world's bird species are under immediate threat of extinction. Very sobering.

I said that this book seemed a little like it was preaching to the choir, but I guess it's a good sign that so many people have had holds on it in the King County Library System. Maybe I'm wrong.



"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

— Mahatma Gandhi



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 _____

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