

The Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

Rainier Audubon Membership Meeting
7 PM May 18, 2020

“Panama’s Cloud Forest: The Junction of Bird Communities”

By Thomas Bancroft



This will be a “virtual” meeting using the GoToMeeting application. Instructions on how to join the meeting will be sent out on our Membership Mailing List.

The mountains of Western Panama are a mixing pot for birds. Neotropical migrants come to winter or pass through on their travels. Altitudinal migrants move in and out with the seasons, and then there are the permanent residents that make up a complex and diverse component. Central America is an active geological area, and over the last ten million years, the formation of the Isthmus has had a profound influence on the bird communities found throughout North and South America, including those in Washington state. Come learn more about this fascinating place, its influence on the Western Hemisphere, see some of flora and fauna, and listen to sounds from the cloud forest.

Thomas Bancroft is a writer-photographer focused on the natural world. His goal is to capture people’s imagination, hopefully getting them to think about life, nature, and the importance of protecting wild things. Through stories about birds and wild place, he uses his scientific knowledge, photography, and sound recordings to help the reader see nature in a new way, slow down, and ponder the earth. His Ph.D. is in Ornithology, and he was the Vice President of the Research Department at the Wilderness Society and Chief Scientist for National Audubon. He now lives in Seattle, Washington where he also serves on the scientific advisory board for Birdnote,

the Board of Washington Ornithological Society, and chairs the Naturalist Group at the Mountaineers. He teaches nature courses for Eastside Audubon Society and The Mountaineers.

Here is the GoToMeeting link for May 18th Tom's Presentation:

Mon, May 18, 2020 6:45 PM - 8:45 PM (PDT)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/809780341>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: +1 (786) 535-3211

Access Code: 809-780-341

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/809780341>

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

RAS Mission Statement: To conserve and restore natural ecosystems and protect birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and biological diversity in South King County and the world we live in.



Resources

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

Rainier Audubon Society Directory

Position	Name	Board Member	Phone	email
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Seen & Heard by Calen Randall

Special Report: Spring Migration

Straddling the mouth of the picturesque Saguenay Fjord, where the Riviere Saguenay spills into the mighty St. Lawrence River, lies the village of Tadoussac, Quebec. You would be forgiven for glancing over this village of 800 as it appears like many towns on Quebec's northern St. Lawrence Seaway coast. In the summers it surges in size with vacationing beachgoers. Whale watching and fishing draw outdoor adventurers. Unbeknownst to many, Tadoussac is an undercover superstar amongst birding hotspots, especially in terms of mass migratory movements. On May 28th, 2018, Tadoussac cemented itself as a hotbed for mass passerine migrations when a ludicrous flurry of warblers and other birds passed over the St. Lawrence through the entire day. Ian Davies (who I met at Cornell's Lab of Ornithology in 2016), eBird's Project Coordinator at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, described the day:

"On our arrival (545a), it was raining. A few warblers passed here and there, and we got excited about groups of 5-10 birds. Shortly before 6:30a, there was a break in the showers, and things were never the same. For the next 9 hours, we counted a nonstop flight of warblers, at times covering the entire visible sky from horizon to horizon. The volume of flight calls was so vast that it often faded into a constant background buzz. There were times where there were so many birds, so close, that naked eyes were better than binoculars to count and identify....the biggest challenge of the day—balancing the need to document what was happening with the desire to just bask in the greatest avian spectacle I've ever witnessed."

Davies and five others estimated that the warbler count for the day summed to 721,620 individuals. A dozen warbler species totaled over 1,000 individuals and eight species numbered over 10,000 individuals! Warblers, while the crown jewel of the day, were not the only birds on the move over Tadoussac that day. A multitude of other avian species from waterfowl to flycatchers were also spotted crossing the seaway.

A major reason that Tadoussac was so conducive for a major migratory movement that day was the weather conditions. What weather patterns affect bird migration? Wind direction and speed play huge roles. For example, when faced with light winds and clear skies, birds will take advantage and ride in faster winds at higher altitudes. High flying waterfowl like Snow Geese, Trumpeter Swans, and even Mallards have been observed flying miles above sea level (the highest flying migrants, the Bar-headed Goose, can be viewed flapping through the Himalayas at elevations equivalent to the peak of Mount Everest!). When the migrants face oncoming head winds or encounter bad weather, they are forced to fly at near surface heights. For a small

passerines whose maximum flight speed tops out at 30 mph, a brief headwind of 15 mph (quite common aloft) is enough to greatly impede their progress and in breezy conditions above 25 mph, the bird will make little to no progress at all. Thanks to wind drag from trees and other objects on the earth's surface that slow wind speeds it is much easier for birds to fly near the ground when facing head winds and precipitation.

As a meteorology student, I applaud Davies and the rest of the birding crew for their detailed notes on the weather conditions while the bird flurry occurred. Their observations were very descriptive and concur with the general patterns described above. Most bird species loathe flying over large open water bodies such as the St. Lawrence River, and many are known to exhibit more erratic behavior when flying beyond a half mile from shore. This factor coupled with strong southwesterly winds through the night held off many birds from crossing until early in the morning of the 28th. As the birds attempted to cross the river at a narrower point by flying west, they were met by opposing wind gusts pushing them towards Tadoussac. Davies described that when winds were calm and rains ceased, the migrants flew high above them, often further inland or above the water. However, the times of greatest activity occurred when wind speeds picked up from the west or southwest, and the birds were forced to fly near the surface. During a brief rain squall tens of thousands of birds descended upon the coast. Some of the highest counting rates of the day occurred during this time of active precipitation. The physical toll was readily apparent on these songbirds; according to Davies, many even stopped on the sandy beaches to rest.

While this gargantuan quantity of birds migrating at one place on one day is an outlier, the synoptic weather pattern causing the event is not. Paul Kerlinger's *How Birds Migrate*, features a chapter on the relationship of weather patterns and bird migration. He details how strong high pressure systems (usually accompanied by clear and sunny weather) off the Atlantic Coast drive air from the Gulf of Mexico northward. Many migrants coming from Central and South America via the Caribbean utilize this as an Autobahn, and surge towards their northerly destinations. On the Pacific Coast, similar situations may arise with high pressure in the Rocky Mountains and stronger air flow up the coast.

Recently you may have seen posts from the National Weather Service about large clouds appearing on weather radar for precipitation. These clouds are often large groups of migrating birds off which the radar beam reflects. Thanks to an abundance of radar data in North America, there is more available bird migration data than ever before. Some of these radar observations

range back to the 1960's and scientists can use it to analyze topics such as how birds migrate differently in a warming climate and the changes in total population of migrating birds. These tools have enabled the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to produce migration forecasts through their project BirdCast. You can visit <https://birdcast.info/> to view these paired bird and precipitation forecasts.

Not only are these forecasts enthralling for us birders, they can help make migration safer for birds. Colorado State University professor Kyle Horton works with Cornell's BirdCast on Lights Out Alerts, a program designed to limit the amount of light pollution birds face while migrating. During the night, lights from cities can be very distracting and sometimes fatal for migrating birds. According to the Lights Out Alert program, over half of all migratory movements occur in around nine nights per season. That's a lot of birds moving at one time! The Lights Out Alerts use the BirdCast migration forecasts to advise cities and their citizens when the most birds will be passing through their area so that they can turn off lights and curb light pollution. You can read more at <https://aeroecolab.com/uslights>

We have some exciting migrants on our way including the vibrant Western Tanager and the vocal Western Wood-Pee wee. This week I glimpsed a shy Hermit Thrush amongst the Rhododendrons in my back yard. They typically migrate through about four weeks earlier than their mellifluous cousins, the Swainson's Thrush. What migrants are you seeing? Send your reports to calenbirds@hotmail.com.



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

Remembering Jim Tooley

by Barbara Petersen

Our chapter has lost another longtime member, Jim Tooley, who passed away on February 29th, 2020. We are grateful to Jim's wife, Anne, and daughter, Carolyn, for contacting Rainier Audubon to let us know this.

In the early 1990's I joined Rainier Audubon for the purpose of going on field trips. My very first Rainier field trip on a cold January day was led by Jim Tooley, the chapter's Field Trip Chair at the time. As a brand new birder I benefited from and was struck by his kindness and patience. During the years that followed I went on more trips that I can count with Jim - local trips, Birdathon trips, trips to Eastern Washington and back. I appreciated his relaxed manner and pace when leading a birding trip.

For years Jim was a member of our chapter's large 'mailing team' that gathered at Linda Bartlett's house every month to fold and prep the Heron Heralds for mailing. Jim took over picking up the newsletters from the printer when ready, and for a while I remember folding and prepping them at his and Anne's home in Kent. In addition to roles as field trip chair, field trip leader and mailing team member, Jim served on Rainier Audubon's board as Treasurer for many years. He attended the monthly membership meetings regularly. His sense of humor and the corresponding twinkle in his eye made this fine gentleman a pleasure to be around.

Six years ago Jim and Anne moved to Wesley Homes in Des Moines. He still attended chapter meetings and events when possible, less so in recent years. Those of us who knew Jim feel lucky. We got to share our interest in birds and birding with this wonderful chapter member, Jim Tooley, who made so many significant contributions to our Rainier Audubon Society.



Stay Home

Rainier Audubon's Backyard Birdathon

April 20 to May 31st

Join Rainier Audubon's Backyard Birdathon to see just how many of Washington's native birds we can collectively find in April and May.

Collect sponsors and count bird species in your backyard or on walks. No teams. No competition.

Sponsor Sheet included in this issue. Please send checks and a tally of birds seen to: Rainier Audubon Society, PO Box 778, Auburn, WA, 98071

We may not be physically together, but together, we can accomplish a lot. Join us.

As you join in, please respect Governor Inslee's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order and any future recommendations to keep you, and our community, safe.

Birding Basics Classes at Seahurst Park

A Spring Outdoor Experience

June 20th & June 21st and/or June 27th & June 28th.

Kevin O'Malley and Barbara Petersen will be teaching Birding Basics classes this June for beginners, intermediate and expert birders wanting to further their knowledge about birding. Classes will focus on bird language, behavior, habitats, nests and bird tracks. Birding is a fascinating recreational activity. Participants will learn to talk more in depth about birds they are seeing and hearing. Burien's Seahurst Park has both forest and saltwater habitats offering a great diversity of bird species. Binoculars are recommended but not required. Kevin is lead naturalist at South Sound Nature School. Barbara leads bird walks and field trips for Wild Birds Unlimited and Rainier Audubon.

Classes will be \$50.00 per weekend. Maximum 8 participants. For more information and to register go to: southsoundnatureschool.org

A Look Back in Time - Barbara Petersen

Kent Ponds Become The Green River Natural Resources Enhancement Area

by Lauri Johnsen

Groundbreaking took place on March 26th (1996) for a unique City of Kent Public Works Department project. The abandoned sewage lagoon site familiar to many Auduboners as a favorite birding spot is now the Green River Natural Resources Enhancement Area. Over the next 15 months it will become a combined storm water detention and wildlife habitat facility as mandated by the Kent City Council years ago during a formal planning process for the valley.

The lagoon will be re-configured to create 300 acre feet of storm water storage. Direct storm water runoff to the facility will pass through a wetland treatment system designed to improve water quality for runoff pumped into the river and for overflows returning to Mill Creek downstream. Diverse habitat areas will be created including a large open water wetland, emergent marsh, meadows, and forested uplands. Wildlife viewing towers and a limited trail system will open portions of the site for passive recreational use. Recently the city obtained grants to acquire over 200 acres of adjacent land which had been slated for development. This will greatly expand the habitat and buffer areas and allow space for a native plant nursery and for eventual construction of an educational resource center.

I was appointed to a citizens advisory group to help with the planning of this project. Few of us on the Environmental Task Force can recall the exact year we got involved. But never, in those early days of seemingly endless and intense public hearings to decide the future of the valley floor, did we imagine we might still be

involved 15 years later. In our innocence we did not know that projects like this don't happen overnight.

We began by feeling fortunate to have preserved 60 acres of prime wildlife habitat even if it also had to be used for flood control. The years passed. We struggled with whether or not to accommodate the model boat hobbyists who saw the pond as an ideal race site. We wrestled with developers eager to push a major roadway through and with others who envisioned a park for the lunch time recreation of future adjacent office workers. We despaired as the site was declared off limits due to hazardous waste residues. We agonized over funding uncertainties. We considered countless design proposals. But, we were not willing to let the city give up on this idea. As city officials came and went, we were there to remind them of their historical commitment to this project.

The difficult design phase was at last concluded this spring. We stood with city officials and turned over the first shovels of dirt to implement this project. And, finally, after the ceremony, when everyone else had gone, those of us on the task force lingered there, each with our gold-sprayed shovels, to savor the moment, to reflect back on the years we had invested in following this project. We laughed about how our preschool children then were now in college and how unborn children then were now teenagers. We joked about how some of us wondered if we would even live long enough to see this project built. We rejoiced that we had come this far! What a powerful moment in our lives as we realized that we really had made a difference, that we had played a part in preserving something that will outlast our time here and become even more valuable to future generations.

Projects like this happen when persistent citizens mesh their efforts with equally committed city officials. Can it happen again? You bet! Take the time to get involved in your corner of the world!

Also from the May 1996 issue - From Theodore Roethke's "The Far Field"

... to come upon warblers in early May

Was to forget time and death:

How they filled the oriole's elm, a twittering restless
cloud, all one morning,

And I watched and watched till my eyes blurred from the
bird shapes, -

Cape May, Blackburnian, Cerulean, -

Moving, elusive as fish, fearless,

Hanging, bunched like young fruit, bending the end
branches,

Still for a moment,

Then pitching away in half-flight,

Lighter than finches,

While the wrens bickered and sang in the half-green
hedgerows,

And the flicker drummed from his dead tree in the
chickenyard.

1992 Rainier Audubon Birdathon

Report by AJ Fisher, Birdathon Chairperson

On Saturday, May 16th Steve Johnson led 6 birders on our annual Birdathon. We met at the Peasley Canyon Great Blue Heron Marsh. The weather was uncommonly warm for the time of year and along with the dry Spring our count was less than expected.

The areas we visited included North Lake; Dash Point State Park; Dumas Bay Park; Redondo Beach; Saltwater State Park; Green River; Auburn Ponds; Snake Lake Park; Titlow Beach Park and the Green Valley Road. The most bird species seen was 57. We had 167 sponsors and raised \$2660!

Our chapter took 1st place in the Western region for our chapter size of 300-999 members!!!

As 1st place winners, we will receive the following prizes from National: 1993 Audubon calendars from Macmillan, Tiny Audubon Elephant Folios, Patagonia jacket, Nikon binoculars and Audubon prints from Aaron Ashley.

Local merchant Birdathon prizes to Rainier Audubon have been awarded to:

Highest Funds Raised:	\$1,193	Debbie Fisher	Wild Birds Unlimited \$30 gift certificate
Most Sponsors:	71	Debbie Fisher	Golden Blend \$25 gift certificate
Oldest Birder:		Jim Tooley	Espresso Depot sandwich and drink
Most Species Seen	57	AJ Fisher	Jube's Frame \$25 gift certificate
Most New Members:	1	Debbie Fisher	The Ivy \$25 gift certificate
Highest Single Sponsor:	\$125	Karen LaFe	Audubon Field Guide and book cover donated by REI



Rainier Audubon Birdathon Sponsor Sheet

Name	Address	Phone	Email	\$/Species	Set Amount





Rainier Audubon Society
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Auburn, WA 98071

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Kent, WA 98031
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"I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear
I feel every day. And then I want you to act."

- Greta Thunberg

Rainier Audubon Membership Subscription or Renewal Form

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

Circle one New / Renewal

For new members:

How did you hear about Rainier Audubon Society?

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

Rainier Audubon Society - Membership

PO Box 778

Auburn, WA 98071

Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____



Are you interested in:

- Volunteering?
- Field Trips?
- Classes?

(Please circle)

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