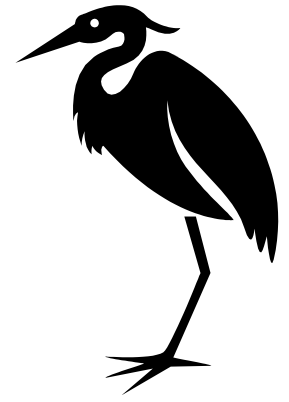


The

# Heron Herald



Rainier Audubon Society

September 2014

**September 15 2014**  
**RAS Membership Meeting**

**Craig Moran—Master Falconer**

Meeting begins at 7:00 pm.

**C**raig will discuss his work with Wildlife Research Institute (WRI) located in Ramona California. He will show how the research was conducted (near Wolf Creek, Montana) and how the research was utilized. Craig will discuss the location, the process of capturing the Golden eagles, the bait used, the procedure for gathering the data and what the data was used for.

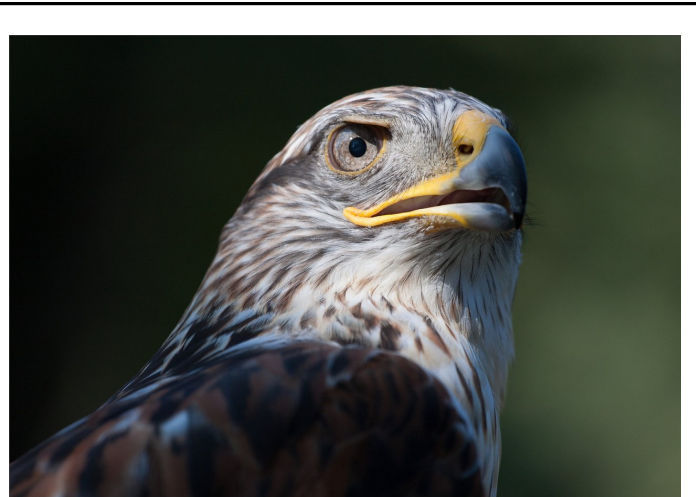


WRI also conducted other Golden eagle research in the mountains of San Diego county California where the team would take young eaglets from the nest, and apply transmitters to the chicks, then replace the chicks back into the nest until they reach fledgling age. This data was used to track young eagles to determine their migration patterns to increase WRI and other research institutions' knowledge regarding Golden eagles.

Craig has worked for 10 years in the zoo world working with animals from insects to elephants and as a zoological educational coordinator. He first started working with Bald Eagles in Missouri, flew hawks and falcons for Point Defiance zoo, Golden eagle research in Montana and San Diego CA. He

has given papers on secondary uptake of pesticides in raptors to EPA pesticide applicators for 3 years in VA. Craig has given many programs over the years with Bald Eagles, great horned owls, falcons and other buteo's to students, camps and adult venues.

**Join us for conversation and refreshments at 6:30 PM.**



August—Buteo Regalis

Craig is a Master falconer and has been involved with raptors since 1980. **He has a 23 year old ferruginous hawk named "August" that he will bring to the meeting.** He will provide a brief A/A with her with some brief history of her life.

**Rainier Audubon programs are held at**

Federal Way United Methodist Church, 29645 - 51st Ave. So. 98001 (in unincorporated Auburn)

**Directions:** In Federal Way, take 320th St. EAST past The Commons, crossing over I-5 and Military Rd.

At 321st St, turn left. Stay on 321st as it becomes 51st Ave. So. Follow 51st Ave. to 296th. Church will be on your left.

## Welcome Back! - Dan Streiffert

**W**elcome back to another year of entertainment and educational opportunities.

This summer, the Board spent considerable time reviewing the results of our “Brainstorming Sessions”. In support of this, we are promoting a couple of activities that we hope will interest you.

Many of you indicated an interest connecting with other chapter’s activities related to “Flyways Alignment” from National Audubon. One of the best ways to do this is to attend the September ACOW meeting at Ocean Shores. This meeting will also include speakers from National discussing their new Climate Initiative. We encourage you to attend, and the Board will pay your registration fee!

For October, 2014, our speaker will be Jennifer Syrowitz, the Chapter Associate for Audubon Washington. She will tell us a bit

about her job as well as how Audubon Washington works in coordinating chapter activities. RAS has been sponsoring her activities for several years so this is your opportunity to see the results.

One last area of interest is increasing diversity of membership. We are currently looking into creating a “Meetup Group” to help publicize our field trips. The main requirement for this is a volunteer to administer the sight. If you are interested in this please let me know.

Jim Tooley has resigned from the Board after 12 years of participation. We thank him for his years of work as treasurer and his participation in Birdathon, CBC and other activities.

### RAINIER AUDUBON OFFICERS

President	Dan Streiffert*	253-796-2203
Vice President	Steve Feldman*	360-802-5211
Treasurer	Laura Lavington	253 941 7372.
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Board Member	Max Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Erin Wojewodski-Prinsen	425-432-9965
Board Member	Lisa Mesplay	253-946-3820
Board Member	Ed Stanton	206-870-3107
Publicity	Tom Sernka	253-529-8970
Volunteer Coordinator	Janet Williams	503-851-7721

\*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.



The [ACOW 2014 Draft Agenda](#) is available now (minor updates will be posted to <http://wa.audubon.org/chapter-meetings>). You will notice an emphasis on the impending Climate Initiative rollout and some key NAS climate staff in attendance that will be helping us all take advantage of this momentous opportunity to engage the Audubon network and our local communities to create demand for transformational national action to reduce greenhouse gases. Hands-on breakout sessions will equip you with tools needed to understand and share this important research. The afternoon will focus on efforts closer to home, along the flyway and in Washington, and opportunities for chapter-state conservation stewardship. We hope you are inspired to attend and encourage others to do so as well!

## Volunteers Needed!

Please contact a Board Member

- Door Greeters for Membership Meetings
- Articles for Heron Herald—send to [dan\\_streiffert@hotmail.com](mailto:dan_streiffert@hotmail.com)
- Conservation Chair.
- Projection & Sound setup person for meetings.

## 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



**A**nother year of *Seen and Heard* is upon us! Over the summer, I received many reports of your surprise bird sightings and birding stories. One of my favorite stories that I received was from Pamela Phillips about a Junco's nest in her yard. Here it is:

"The warmer weather and sunshine have made it necessary to be out managing the property. From experience I know that juncos like to nest on a small slope that I need to weed wack so I make a point to watch the area for a few days to see where they may have a nest. I noticed two spots where juncos were flying in and out. I could easily check one spot and found a small nest full of eggs. Last year I regularly checked a nest and saw eggs, then hatchlings, then it was empty, then eggs again, so I pretty much just leave the grass around these spots alone. Just a little extra caution on our part can make a big difference in a bird's life.

Being in tune with nature is key to helping our feathered friends and other wildlife survive, and to help us better understand the world around us. "

I am sure that many of us, like Pamela, have enjoyed a summer of magical birding: watching nests, fledglings, bird families, absurd bird behavior and whatnot. What a wonderful world! As we begin another season of Audubon, I encourage all of you to reach out and help others around us to discover the birds and nature in our midst.

**NOTE: Rainier Audubon Bird of the Year Nominations Needed** In May, I asked members to send in nominations for

Rainier Audubon Bird of the Year. The 2014 Bird of the Year candidate nomination period has been extended until October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Send in your vote for your 2014 Rainier Audubon Bird of the Year to [calenbirds@hotmail.com](mailto:calenbirds@hotmail.com)!

### Recent Bird Sightings:

Thanks to this summer's reporters Alex, Sara, and Mathew Juchems, Carol Schulz, and Pamela Phillips.

**April 18<sup>th</sup> 2014** Way back in April, the Juchems clan spotted a new "life-list bird". On top of a birdhouse, that Mathew had built, was a Townsend's Solitaire! Alex raved "Using Carol's scope (that she lent the Juchems) we clearly saw the white eye ring, small black beak, and large mostly grey body. The final confirmation came when we saw the orange-buff colored mark on the wing." Carol Schultz commented that "these birds are more common in eastern Washington, and are not that common even over there." Great spot, Juchems!

**April 29<sup>th</sup> 2014** Pamela Phillips noticed some new flyers at her suet feeder-- **Bushtits**. A couple months after her bushtit sightings, Pamela Phillips viewed a bedraggled female **Black-headed Grosbeak** clutching onto her suet feeder. A **Downy Woodpecker** tried several times to get the grosbeak to move over, but he was unsuccessful. Pamela said "Every few minutes she (the grosbeak) would reach down and grab some suet, and then just sit there quite still." Since the first female grosbeak, Pamela has seen several other Black-headed Grosbeaks, including some juveniles, but they have all been much more invigorated than the first.

### April-July 2014

Throughout the late spring and early summer, Carol was a busy birder. Often spotted birding in the Kent Valley, Carol seemed to see everything from yellowlegs to flycatchers. Here are a few of Carol's summer highlights:

**April 18<sup>th</sup> 2014** In the field south of 204<sup>th</sup> street in Kent, Carol observed ten **Greater Yellowlegs**, some of which preformed their "rolling display song along with their usual 'tu tu tu's'". In the fields northwest of the intersection of Southcenter Parkway and 200<sup>th</sup>, were a dozen **American Pipits**, as well as a lone adult dark intermediate morph **Red-tailed Hawk**.

**April 25<sup>th</sup> 2014** Carol was notified by Marv Breece of some bird sightings in the Kent area including a **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Lake Fenwick. On M street near Emerald Downs Marv Breece spotted ten Greater Yellowlegs, as well as a **Lesser Yellowlegs**.

**May 8<sup>th</sup> 2014** Carol and Mary Frey went birding at the Tukwila Community Center. As Carol put it, the "birding was pretty slow. We had the usual swallows, a Brown-headed Cowbird, and a few other common birds. I don't know why the birds were not active. Birding is funny that way". However, after a drive to Codiga Park, the birding would get much better, especially with one surprise sighting. Carol heard some odd calls along the park trail, coming from a cluster of cottonwood trees. Then the mysterious bird started to give a harsh syncopated call of an oriole. Unable to see the mysterious bird, Carol

*(Continued on page 9)*

*Bio: Calen is a 15 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, raingear, 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)

### Magnuson Park in NE Seattle

(With a possible short visit to the Arboretum)

Sunday, [September 21](#)

8:00 a.m. to Mid Afternoon

Come with us to visit Magnuson Park in NE Seattle. This large Seattle City Park has it all: wetlands, a wooded hill, fields, trails, a meadow, and a long shoreline along Lake Washington with great views. We may see raptors, flycatchers, song birds, warblers, gulls, and fall sparrows. Migrants are likely to be seen in September.

**Bring:** Warm layered clothes, waterproof shoes or boots, lunch, snacks, and drinks. We may walk up to 2 miles. Scopes are very welcome. Folks who wish to leave early may do so.

After our Magnuson walk, we may do a short visit to the Arboretum.

**Meet:** At the Kent-Des Moines P&R. Take I-5 to exit 149 and turn east (toward Kent). Go about 3 blocks, and turn north (left) onto Military Road. The P&R is on the immediate left. Please arrive a little before 8:00am, so we can gather and form carpools.

**Sign-Up:** Contact Carol Schulz, [carol.schulz50@gmail.com](mailto:carol.schulz50@gmail.com), [206-824-7618](tel:206-824-7618).

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**Don't forget the link to the Tahoma Audubon Field trips:**  
[fieldtrips@tahomaaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@tahomaaudubon.org)

### Visiting with Raptors:

#### Fifth Annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival

Join the Methow Valley Ranger District, North Central Washington Audubon Society, and HawkWatch International this fall for the fifth annual Chelan Ridge Hawk Migration Festival!

This free family event combines activities in Pateros with a field trip to the Wells Wildlife Area and trips to the Chelan Ridge Hawk-Watch site to learn about and celebrate raptors as they journey to winter territories. This all happens at Memorial Park in Pateros, Washington on September 13th, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

You will get to visit vendors, see raptor demonstrations, listen to live music, and take a trip to the spectacular Chelan Ridge Raptor Migration Site. During the day, shuttles will run from Pateros to Chelan Ridge where visitors will be able to see raptors such as Cooper's Hawk up close when they are banded and released. Also included is a field trip from 8am to noon to the Wells Wildlife Refuge.

Chelan Ridge sits 5675 feet above sea level along the flyway of migrating raptors. Biologists who live at the Ridge during the migration season will offer insight into what it is like to live and breathe raptors and show how the birds are banded and tracked. The festival is also a great place to check out cutting edge optics from Wild Birds Unlimited and the latest birding guides and books from Trails End Bookstore.

This festival is scheduled to coincide with the peak of southbound migration of raptors at Chelan Ridge — the best place in Washington to view fall migrating raptors. Past festivals have brought several hundred people delighted to see hawks up close, build nest boxes, and spend a day learning all about raptors. So please join us for the 2014 festival!

**To sign up for any of the activities or to learn more about the festival please visit our website:** [ncwaudubon.org](http://ncwaudubon.org). **or contact the director: Richard Scranton at** [rscrans4350@yahoo.com](mailto:rscrans4350@yahoo.com).

## Book Reviews by Laura Lavington



Noah Strycker's 2014 *The Thing with Feathers: The Surprising Lives of Birds and What They Reveal about Being Human* is a really easy read: I finished the book soon after I began it. The book is an average length, so I guess my ease in quickly completing it suggests that it caught my interest (even though the first three chapters are about pigeons, starlings, and vultures—go figure). *The Thing with Feathers* has thirteen chapters, each of which discusses a bird-behavior topic and focuses on a particular bird. Strycker incorporates recent scientific research throughout the book, and he connects avian behavior to the human world (in part to show the surprising things we have in common with birds). While reading the book, I did not always agree with the conclusions that Strycker draws (he thinks that Americans

should try harder to like starlings), but I enjoyed the journey.

Some of the conclusions that Strycker entertains in his book suggest humanlike attributes of birds. For example, he refutes some of the traditional explanations of snowy owl irruptions south of their normal range, and he instead raises the possibility that snowy owls have “wanderlust.” Also, he recognizes that his view may not be altogether supported by scientists, but he maintains the opinion that albatrosses love their mates, and that they may even think about the other bird outside the mating season when the birds are hundreds of miles apart. Ultimately, in the process of providing recent information about bird behavior, Strycker illustrates just how much about birds we still just don't know.

### “The Thing With Feathers”

- A book review by Stephen Feldman

The truth is I'm not much of a birder. When I go out birding with Carol or Jim or Dan or Barbara or any of the real experts I am dazzled and amazed at how much they see out there that I don't. While they fuss with each other about whether the bird in their bins has a white or yellow eyebrow I am still trying to find the tree, no less the branch or bird under discussion.

When they are calling out the identity of a bird on the wing high up in the sky I am looking about wildly trying to decide if it's a bird I'm seeing or a speck of dirt on my glasses

So bird identification books are absolutely essential for me. But they don't have much of a plot so I don't get very excited about any new one that comes out.

However, when I pick up "The Thing With Feathers" by Noah Stryker I can't put it

down. It is filled with stories, facts, histories, and legends of birds and the people who study, draw, breed and research them (including Audubon who maybe was wrong about how vultures find carrion). The author tells of homing pigeons making it home from 2,000 miles away, and how they can do it. He tells the story of the pigeon who was awarded the Croix de Guerre by France in WW I, and the 250,000 pigeons employed by the British in WW II to carry messages during periods of radio silence. He tells his own story of collecting road kill to put out in his own backyard to test vultures ability to locate carrion. Is it sight or smell or both?

He explains irruptions of snowy owls, that is, the sudden invasion of the owls coming down from the north in certain years. Is it because of too few lemmings to feed on, or too many? Or is it not related to lemmings at all? And then there's the

hummingbirds. The smallest one - the bee hummingbird - weighs 1.8 grams. That's less than a sheet of printing paper. Hummingbirds have the fastest heartbeat of any animal. It has been measured at 1,200 beats per minute, and to fuel this motor they ingest their own weight in nectar every day. In order to sleep they go into a state of torpor at night. Otherwise, if their system kept operating at its daytime rate they would starve to death by morning for lack of nutrients.

I've learned so many interesting things about so many birds - and I'm only half way through the book-- that I am inspired to go out, and see if I can't do a better job of spotting and identifying them on my next trip. I can't recommend this book highly enough. It's the most well written, interesting book on birds I've ever read.

## GOING HOME & FINDING BIRDS

2014 Washington Ornithological Society Conference Trip Report by Mary Frey

I grew up on a small farm in the Yakima Valley. So, as soon as I collected my high school diploma, I packed up my 1969 Ford Fairlane & moved to the Puget Sound area. Yet, when I learned that the Washington Ornithological Society (WOS) was holding their yearly conference in Yakima from June 13 to the 16th, I didn't hesitate to sign up. I wanted to know what I had been missing during my youth. There were over a dozen full day field trips but they were limited to twelve participants including the leader so the popular ones filled up quickly. I was able to secure one in the Sunnyside valley, two in the mountains & a "chase" trip for the return to the Seattle area.

We gathered in a parking lot at 5:30 a.m. on Friday to arrange carpooling. I have a small wagon so I was able to take three people. This was wonderful because I'd never met any of them & we had a great day together. Our leader was John Hebert & he did an outstanding job scouting out the various locations we were to bird this day. Our first stop was at Kerry's Pond that included Black-necked Stilt & American Avocet, both lifers for me. We then spent three hours in the Status Wildlife Area with highlights including Lewis's Woodpecker, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Eastern Kingbird & an active Bullock's Oriole nest. Several times during the day, a flock of White Pelicans flew over in formation. Through the day we saw American Meadowlark, Horned Lark, Long-Billed Curlew & over a hundred Bank Swallows nesting in an enormous mound of soil in a water treatment plant. Our final stop was a turnout along Highway 24 where a Burrowing Owl was posing next to her nest. For the day, I recorded 47 species and added 12 to my life list.

Friday night there was a "Stump the Expert" quiz in which photos were projected. Two teams of experts & the audience were given chances to identify the bird. This was not only a lot of fun but also educational. George Gerds was chastised by Shep Thorp for using his iPhone! Later in the evening, I was enjoying sitting on the hotel balcony overlooking the Yakima River when I saw birds I didn't recognize. I called down to some people wearing binocu-

lars & asked what the birds might be. One yelled back, "Probably Osprey!" But I knew that wasn't correct because these birds were dark with white bands on the wings. Consulting my bird book I realized they were Common Nighthawks. Another lifer!



Saturday we again met at 5:30 a.m. & I agreed to drive. Today our group was headed to the Chinook Pass area with the focus of finding various woodpeckers such as White-headed & Three-toed. A few of us were crest fallen when we were told we wouldn't see these birds. This was a very busy day that included thirteen stops along roads, through campgrounds & besides streams & rivers. We did see the very lovely Lewis's Woodpecker & I added Veery, Hermit Thrush, Hammond's Flycatcher & a couple more species to my life list. For this day, I counted 60 species. I didn't attend the evening's banquet but I did enjoy watching the sun set over the river & once again the Nighthawks returned.

Sunday's field trip leader was Scott Downes. Scott started birding & studying nature when he was nine. Today, he is a biologist working in the Yakima Valley & his daughter is his birding companion. I again drive where we'll bird the upper White Pass area. We spend a very productive time in the Hause Creek Campground. This was a challenge for twelve people to be actively looking for birds while campers slept. We found five warbler species, Mountain Chickadee, Western Tanager, Vaux Swift & 23 more species. We then spent four hours driving & stopping on Bethel Ridge Road. I added

nine life birds here including Williamson's Sapsucker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Northern Pygmy-Owl & Cassin's Finch. We had three more stops with rewards of seeing a thick-billed Fox Sparrow & Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker. It was a fabulous day with 72 species recorded including 11 life birds.

Monday was the going home field trip through Cle Elum. I was looking forward to this excursion because I wanted to find birding stops along I-90. Our first stop was along the canyon road heading toward Ellensburg. An adult Bald Eagle was perched in a tree near the nest holding three juveniles. We also heard a Rock & a Canyon Wren. We then detoured to Vantage where we saw several Say's Phoebe with active nests. Our next stop was a walk through a canyon near Old Vantage Highway. Two Red-tailed adults were feeding their young high up on a cliff near a Say's Phoebe nest. One fellow scoped the nest & said, "Look, you can see blood on the edge."! I declined his offer. We also saw a Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow-breasted Chat & Lark Sparrow. We then headed north & we drove & drove & drove. We got out near an open field where we were told a Grasshopper Sparrow was spotted five years ago. Somewhat puzzling. As we continued driving, the woman in front of me kept swerving & driving erratically. She finally sped up & had the leader's car pull over. She had just gotten back from the Philippines on Friday & she was getting sleepy so she left. My final stop before I headed home was the Teanaway Campground. We spent an hour here & I listed 23 species but none that were new.

My first birding conference was last year in Olympia hosted by the Western Field Ornithologists (WFO). It opened my eyes to the marvelous & sometimes wacky world of birding. Here, I met renowned authorities like Jon Dunn & Ed Harper who openly shared their knowledge & even owned up when they misidentified a bird. But I also grew to admire people who simply love birds & enjoy finding them. Yakima hasn't changed much in the nearly forty years since I left. Yet, I unearthed a secret world that was there all along.



## Mewsings from Millie

Hello and welcome back to my musings!

As many of you know, I like to paw through "Birdwatching" magazine or listen to "Birdnote" on KPLU while my people are away. I'd like to share with you a couple of tidbits I learned about recently.

People adore the tiny songbird known as a Bushtit. Bushtits are one of the smallest songbirds weighing in at 5.3 grams. That's about the weight of four paperclips! Their size gives them an advantage, though. While larger insect-eating birds look for food on the upper surface of leaves and twigs, bushtits hang beneath them. This way, they can find all of the tiny bugs and spiders hiding out of sight of other birds.

Bushtits flock together in groups of 30 or more. You will see them flitting through bushes and shrubs, constantly chirping which helps them keep track of each other. If they find a suet feeder, it can suddenly look like a huge ball of pulsating feathers!

If you've been up on our beautiful mountains taking in nature's beauty at a scenic viewpoint or relaxing at a campground, you've probably encountered a Clark's Nutcracker. These birds are strikingly handsome with a

whitish-gray head and underparts set off by jet black wings. The tail is long and the bill sharply pointed. The tail and long

Clark's Nutcracker is named for Captain William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame who first observed and described it in Idaho in 1805. He mistakenly thought it was a woodpecker until Meriwether Lewis correctly identified it as a member of the crow family (Corvidae).

Nutcrackers eat a wide variety of foods but prefer pine seeds when available. In winter, they are almost entirely dependent on the seeds they have collected and cached from the previous autumn. They nest earlier than just about any other North American songbird and are able to do this due to the energy provided by the hidden seeds. Other birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees cache food but not to the extent of Clark's Nutcracker. Nutcrackers will hide tens of thousands of seeds in thousands of different cache sites when seed crops are good.

Nutcrackers hide the seeds of mostly higher-elevation pine trees by thrusting their bills into the ground, depositing a few seeds and then covering their cache with dirt, pebbles or leaf litter.

Besides hiding seeds, Clark's Nutcrackers use their long, sharp, sturdy bills to collect the hidden treasure, determine the thickness of the seed coat, test whether the seed is full or empty and open and shred unopened pine cones. Unlike other western jay species, nutcrackers, with their strong bills, do not have to wait for cones to open naturally.

Another interesting adaptation of the Clark's Nutcracker is that it can hold and transport a large number of seeds. The



Clark's Nutcracker—Dan Streiffert

nutcracker drops pine seeds through an opening at the base of its tongue into a special pouch that is like an elastic sack-like extension of the floor of the mouth that can swell enough to hold up to 95 seeds. That's almost 13% of the bird's total body weight!

Finally, it's one thing to collect and cache all of those seeds, but quite another to return and be able to find them later. Clark's Nutcracker does this with astonishing accuracy. This bird has been observed flying directly to cache sites and digging through deep snow, even pecking through ice to retrieve seeds it had hidden eight to ten months earlier. Scientists have found that the more a species depends on cached seeds for its survival in winter, the better its spatial memory will be. Simply amazing!

Now if I could only remember where I batted that super ball I was playing with last night

Until next time,

Millie, the Muse of Mews

## Fun Facts About Nuthatches

Reprint Courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited, Burien

- The name Nuthatch probably results from the corruption of the word “nuthack” which refers to its habit of hacking away at a seed with its beak until it opens.
- Red-breasted Nuthatches favor spruce and fir trees
- A nuthatch’s foot has one big toe (the hallux) that faces backward, while its other three toes face forward. They are able to walk head first down the trunks of trees by moving only one foot at a time while the hallux toe on the other foot holds firmly to the bark.
- Nuthatches are monogamous and defend a territory throughout the year. They will forage together a few meters apart along the trunks and branches of pine or spruce trees and stay in constant vocal contact with each other
- Red-breasted Nuthatches will drink sap from the holes let by sapsuckers.
- Red-breasted Nuthatches are rather tame and will come to suet, sunflower seeds and nutmeats at feeders. They can be trained to eat from the hand.
- Red-breasted Nuthatches carry food away from feeders to hide it, forcing it into tree trunk crevices or rough-barked branches
- During courtship, the male Red-breasted Nuthatch will fly in an ellipse 100 feet long above the tops of pines.
- Red-breasted Nuthatches accept nestboxes
- Red-breasted Nuthatches are the only North Ameri-



can Nuthatch that migrates looking for conifer seeds to eat.

- Nuthatches are able to recognize the alarm calls of chickadees and downy woodpeckers and can thus reduce their own level of alertness by relying on vigilance of these other species. This leaves them with more time to concentrate on finding food.
- The Red-breasted Nuthatch will line the entrance to its nesting cavity with drops of sticky conifer resin. It is thought that this may be a tactic to discourage predators or nest competitors from entering the cavity. The nuthatches avoid the resin themselves by diving directly into the nesting cavity without ever touching the sides of the entry hole.
  - The Red-breasted Nuthatch is a very aggressive defender of its nesting cavity, especially during the building period. It chases away much larger birds such as the Downy Woodpecker and it has even been observed to bully the very aggressive House Wren.
- When natural food supplies are scarce in northern Canada, numerous species of birds will “irrupt” into a southern migration in search of food. Red-breasted Nuthatches are typically the earliest species to head south for the winter, leaving as early as mid-summer and settling into their new southern winter territories by the end of September.
- The longevity record for a Red-breasted Nuthatch is 7.5 years

### 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 \$20.00/individual and \$25/family. The cost of a Discover Pass is normally \$35.00 dollars so you’ve just saved \$15.00 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](http://www.RainierAudubon.org).



*Seen & Heard (Continued from page 3)*

and Mary decided to check out birding further down the trail. While walking back up the trail, they finally spotted their mysterious bird perched on top of a fir tree. It was a **Bullock's Oriole!** Carol said "It was very cool to see the oriole out in the open, after we had been stalking it for a while."

**May 29<sup>th</sup> 2014** While birding with her sister along the grassy knoll south of the Animal Shelter on 64<sup>th</sup> street in Kent, Carol ran across a **Blue-winged Teal**. Carol reported of seeing the Great-blue Herons flying in and out of the heronry behind the animal shelter (she counted 47 nests). At the south observation tower in Kent Ponds, Carol sighted an **American Bittern!** At first, Carol could hear a pair of bitterns hidden away in the marsh performing their "'oonk a loonking' calls"; then one bittern flew out, landed nearer to the tower that Carol and her sister were birding from, and continued performing its call.

**July 6<sup>th</sup> 2014** The last of Carol's adventures involved a trip to Des Moines Creek Park to view a **Cooper's Hawk** family. Carol reported that there were three newly-fledged fledglings, flying around near a stick nest. Carol also heard a **Western Tanager** in the park near the footbridge. Thanks for all your great reports Carol!

### Mystery Bird of the Month

Several of these birds made a rare appearance on M street by Emerald Downs in May. Can you guess the species? Here are the clues:

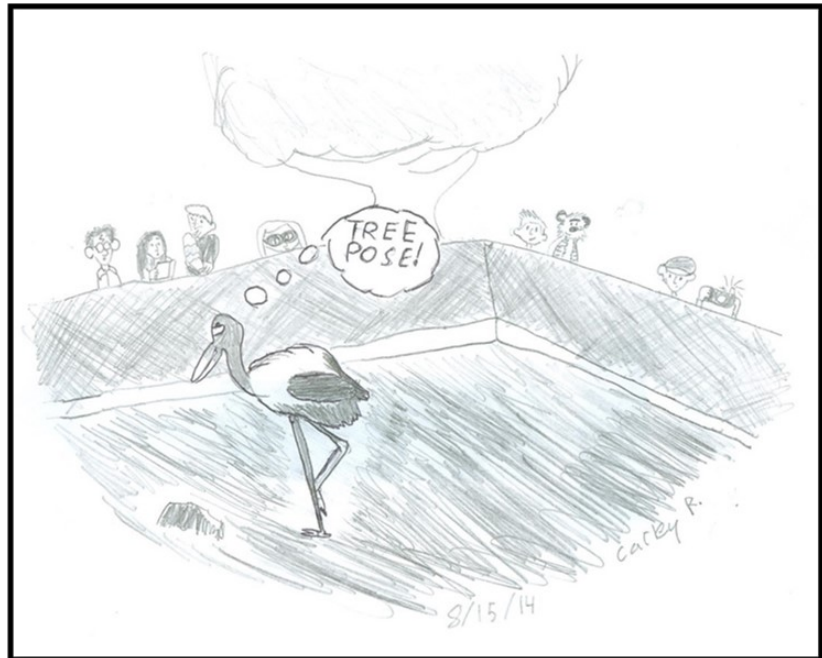
- I am a shorebird
  - I am of the genus Himantopus
  - I feed in both salt and fresh water areas.
  - I can be found from Brazil to North Carolina to eastern Washington
  - I have a white eye ring
  - I am second only to the flamingo in longest legs in proportion to the body.
  - Not only are my legs long, they are red
  - I am black-necked, however the underside of my neck is white.
- Who am I?

Send your sightings/hearings to [calenbirds@hotmail.com](mailto:calenbirds@hotmail.com) I love reading your reports!

## Bird Brainz

By Carley R

The real reason birds stand on one leg--Bird Yoga.



Answer: Black-necked Stilt



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“Oh Beautiful for smoggy skies, insecticided grain,  
For strip-mined mountain's majesty above the asphalt plain.  
America, America, man sheds his waste on thee,  
And hides the pines with billboard signs, from sea to oily sea.”  
— [George Carlin](#)

## Rainier Audubon Membership Subscription or Renewal Form

One-year Membership in Rainier Audubon

- ◇ \$20—Individual Membership
- ◇ \$25—Family Membership

To join or renew, mail this application with your payment to:  
Rainier Audubon Society - Membership  
PO Box 778  
Auburn, WA 98071



**Renew Now! Prices are going up in September.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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