



# Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society

March 2023

*Whidbey Audubon Society is dedicated to the understanding, appreciation, and protection of birds and other wildlife species and their habitat on Whidbey Island and surrounding waters.*

## Whidbey Audubon Society Meets Thursday, March 9 Glorious Gulls with Constance Sidles

When many people — including a lot of birders! — see a gull flying by, they shrug and say, “Oh, there goes another gull.” They don’t see the glory of these silvery inhabitants of sea and shore. Gulls are wondrous birds: smart survivors in a world much changed by humans; graceful flyers that fill our skies; raucous communicators full of secrets. If you’re curious about their lives, come hear master birder Connie Sidles explore the wild nature of gulls. You’ll never shrug them off again.



Constance Sidles



Photo by Tim Kuhn

Sidles is a master birder and long-time member of the Seattle Audubon Society where she serves on the Conservation Committee and is chair of the Publications Committee. She has written four books about nature focusing on her favorite “backyard” Montlake Fill, otherwise known as the Union Bay Natural Area at the Center for Urban Horticulture. Her most recent book, *Forty-Six Views of Montlake Fill*, includes poems and Sumi-e paintings about how to find joy in the connections we make with nature and with each other.

Join us for the general meeting of the Whidbey Audubon Society at 7 p.m., and the program will begin at 7:30. Connie will present remotely on Zoom. However, **this will be a hybrid meeting** — the program can be viewed communally at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation meeting house at 20103 State Route 525 in Freeland, or you can register on [the website](#) to receive a Zoom link.

## Upcoming Field Trips

**Wednesday, March 15: DEER LAGOON.** Come join us at 9 a.m. as Carlos Anderson leads a trip sure to please since it is one of the best birding areas on the island. All are welcome and this is a great opportunity for new birders to see many species of birds. Meet at the parking area at the end of Deer Lagoon Road in Freeland. Please be mindful that you don’t block driveways of the residents.

**FIELD TRIPS AT DECEPTION PASS STATE PARK** with [Hayley Johnson](#), Americorp Interpretive Naturalist, are every two weeks on Saturday mornings, 10 a.m. to noon. A Discover Pass is required for each vehicle.

**Saturday, March 4: BOWMAN BAY.** Join Patty Cheek as she leads this trip with Hayley. Meet at the parking lot at the end of Bowman Bay Road off Rosario Road. This is a beautiful area of

### Field Trip Checklist

- ✓ Field trips are free and open to anyone interested in birding or conservation. Bring your friends!
- ✓ Beginners are very welcome.
- ✓ Carpooling is encouraged and even required for some sites with limited parking.
- ✓ Dress for the weather and in layers.
- ✓ Very bad weather cancels a trip. Check with the trip leader.
- ✓ If you have them, bring binoculars, scope and field guides.
- ✓ If you might need them, bring a drink and snack.

We are always looking for new trip leaders and assistants. If you are interested, please contact Charlotte Ginn at [cginnsixbit@yahoo.com](mailto:cginnsixbit@yahoo.com).

More Trips, see [page 5](#)

# Conservation Column: Conservation Matters

## Recycling

Many recycling opportunities are available to residents of Whidbey Island. Residents of Oak Harbor can take advantage of curbside recycling. Those who live outside the city limits can take their recyclables to one of several recycling centers on the island or to drop-off locations at certain retail establishments.

Good news about Styrofoam! Since polystyrene products will persist in the environment for eons, it's best to try to limit one's use of them. That's not always possible. You generally don't know if that cardboard box containing your new computer or big screen TV is padded with Styrofoam or a more environmentally friendly product. If you do find yourself with unwanted Styrofoam on your hands, the good news is that it can now be dropped off for recycling at Island Recycling, 20014 SR 525, Freeland. They accept clean, dry Styrofoam — packing material, food containers, even those dreaded

packing peanuts! Just be sure and pack those peanuts into a clear plastic bag first. If you're planning a trip to or through Freeland, drop off your Styrofoam at Island Recycling (along with your other recyclables while you're at it). They are closed on Mondays.

Plastic bags and overwrap (such as the stuff covering packages of paper towels, cases of water and the like) can be dropped off at participating locations. Also included in this category are plastic bubble wrap mailers (you may have gotten a shipment from Amazon Prime recently in a plastic mailer). Look for the "store drop-off" symbol on the mailer. If you see it, you can include this with your plastic bags for recycling. Be sure and remove any paper labels first. A great resource for finding locations that will accept plastic bags is the *Drop-off Directory*. You can enter a zip code and find nearby drop-off locations. Currently, the Wal-Mart and Safeway in Oak Harbor have bins for plastic bag recycling. Off island, you can drop off these recyclables at Fred Meyer's, Target and QFC to name a few.

Glass recycling has gotten easier for many islanders. We no longer have to sort glass by color. No more contemplating "is this wine bottle brown or green?" or "where does the blue bottle go?" All glass jars and bottles now go into the same bin at the recycle parks at Bayview, Freeland, Coupeville and North Whidbey. Oak Harbor residents should not place glass in their curbside bins but should drop it off at one or the above locations or at the Safeway store or Oak Harbor Marina.

— Linda Griesbach



## President's Column: On Vacation in Arizona

Great Birding! Stay tuned for April.

— Patty Cheek, President

### Whidbey Audubon Society

[www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org) • 509-906-1663

P.O. Box 1012, Oak Harbor, WA 98277

A chapter of National Audubon Society and a nonprofit organization EIN #80-0488910

### Board and Cabinet Chairs 2022-2023

#### Executive Committee

President Patty Cheek  
Vice President Linda Griesbach  
Treasurer Sheri Croll  
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#### Auxiliary Committee

Past-president(s) Sharon Gauthier  
Nominating 2023 Kathy Obersinner  
Sharon Gauthier  
Patricia Duarte  
Internal Audit Stephanie Neis  
Roy Seliber

#### At Large Appointments

Cathi Bower  
Roy Selibert  
Janet Jernigan  
Kathy Obersinner

#### Core Cabinet Chairs and Subcommittees

Support Services Jann Ledbetter  
Membership Management, Jann Ledbetter  
Online Services & Technology Support OPEN  
Special Project Grants and Fundraising OPEN  
History and Records – Anita Badri

#### Conservation & Science Charlotte Ginn,

Conservation – Linda Griesbach (temporary chair),  
Salish Sea Guillemot Network – Frances Wood

Salish Sea Guillemot Network – Cathi Bower  
Christmas Bird Count North – Jay Adams,  
Christmas Bird Count South – Govinda Holtby  
Bird Specimen Library – Robin Llewellyn

#### Outreach Susan Prescott

Publicity – Susan Prescott  
Newsletter Editor– Jenny Brown  
Volunteer Recruitment and Management OPEN  
Social Media – Cathi Bower

#### Events Stephanie Neis

Membership Meetings & Programs – Stef Neis  
Field Trips – Charlotte Ginn  
Birding in Neighborhoods South – Cathi Bower  
Birding in Neighborhoods North – Denise Marion  
Nancy Luenn

Page Peepers – Patty Cheek  
Birdathon – Kathy Obersinner  
Birds 'n' Beer – Patty Cheek  
Bird in Hand Festival – Robin Llewellyn  
Wings over Whidbey Festival – Stephanie Neis

#### Education Sharon Gauthier

Online Educational Classes, Patty Cheek  
Public Presentations OPEN  
School Programs OPEN  
Birds of Whidbey Class – Dyanne Sheldon  
Scholarship Program – Ann Sullivan

# Wings over Whidbey Festival Updates

## Youth Photography Contest

The Wings over Whidbey Festival K-12 grade photography contest is launching this month! This is a free entry photography contest focused on bringing our youth on board to the amazing world of birding. Contest rules and submission instructions will be made available on our website. Contest submission dates are March 15 to April 28, 2023. We will be sending “take home” fliers to all three school systems on Whidbey Island but, if you know of a child that is a resident of Whidbey Island and in a private school system, please let them know of this opportunity!



Photo by Jim Gage

American Kestrel

## Festival Presenters

We are very excited to have all our presentation programs for the festival now lined up! We will be adding the program and presenter information on the website as it becomes available to us. But, for now, we are happy to announce:

**Peter Cavanagh** – *Birds in Flight*, Thursday, May 18 at 7p.m. (live and zoom; Coupeville Recreation Center)

**Bill Ray** – *Diving into Photography* and youth photography awards, Friday, May 19 at 4 p.m. (live only; Coupeville Recreation Center)

**Tom Bancroft** – *The Joy of Spring and Summer Birds*, Friday May 19 at 7 p.m. (live and zoom; Coupeville Recreation Center)

**Nathan Pieplow** – *The Language of Birds* and book signing Saturday, May 20 at 1 p.m. (live only; Coupeville High School)

**Puget Sound Birds Observatory** – *Bird Banding* presentation Saturday, May 20 at 2:30 p.m. (live only; Coupeville High School)

## Volunteers and Sponsors still needed!

We have gotten a smattering of volunteers so far. We still need set-up and take down volunteers (about 30 minutes each), greeters, bird tour guides and another juror for the photography contest. I will be personally soliciting sponsorships but if you know of a private

business or B'n'B that I would not otherwise know about, please let them know about this opportunity. Sponsorships are also open to individuals. For more information, to volunteer or sponsor, please email Stef at [programs@whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](mailto:programs@whidbeyaudubonsociety.org).

Robin Llewellyn is also still needing volunteers for the Bird in the Hand event. If you were part of this event prior years or would like to know more about volunteering for it, please email her at [bird-in-hand@whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](mailto:bird-in-hand@whidbeyaudubonsociety.org).

## Poster Contest

I approached the Coupeville and Oak Harbor high schools in January about participating in a poster design contest for the Wings over Whidbey Festival. I am happy to report that we have received 35 submissions!

We will be reviewing the posters and announce a winner in our next newsletter and will present the winning student with the award at the April 9 general meeting in Coupeville. We will also print out the top ten choices and have them on display at the April general meeting and at the festival. I want to express special thanks to the schools and teachers who made this possible.

Remember, we can only make this a free community event with volunteer and sponsorship support.

— Stef Neis, Events Chair

# Whidbey Audubon Needs Your Help!

Whidbey Audubon Society is currently looking for members to assist in several positions.

First, we are seeking a new treasurer, since our current treasurer has reached the maximum of her allowable term. This is a two-year position on the board, beginning in May, and requires someone familiar with accounting practices. If you could do this, we really need you!

Then we are looking for a new secretary, again a two-year board position. We do have a volunteer, but if you are interested, please contact us.

Nominations from the floor will also be taken at the March 9 general meeting. Candidates for these two board positions will be announced at the April 13 meeting, with voting taking place

at the May 11 meeting.

Our conservation and education committees also have openings. These are not board positions, but are vital to Audubon's mission. Both committees entail working as a small group towards set projects to protect birds and their habitats on Whidbey Island. You could make a difference in our community!

If you wish to be more active in Whidbey Audubon in any of these open positions, in other ways, or just want to find out more, please contact Kathy Obersinner or Sharon Gauthier at [contact.us@whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](mailto:contact.us@whidbeyaudubonsociety.org) or call Sharon at 425-466-2430.

**NOMINATE NOW!**

# Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

**January 27:** A flock of eight to 10 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were at Pacific Rim Institute this afternoon. They were hawking some sort of flying insects. — *Steve Ellis*

**January 28:** **Rusty Blackbird** still with **Brewer's** flock. We (again) found the flock on Admiral's Drive near the Byrd intersection with the Rusty still amongst the Brewer's. The Brewer's number was greater than I saw on Wednesday and also joined by a few **European Starlings** and **Red-winged Blackbirds**. — *Deb Stewart*

**January 29:** Dozens of **Ancient** and **Marbled Murrelets** a half mile offshore from Key-stone. Location: On ferry.

— *Dave Parent*



Photo by George Heleker

Purple 1-S is a banded male Cooper's Hawk.

**January 30:** An eight-year-old male **Cooper's Hawk** hunting in our yard and at the feeder area continues to visit our place. Banded as a juvenile in September 2014 in Seattle, this bird first started visiting our place in the fall of 2015. He was a regular visitor until

last summer when he became absent from June 8 through the rest of the year. We thought we had seen the last of him. On January 1, he reappeared and has been a steady visitor again this month. It has been great to see "Purple 1-S" frequenting our yard once again! Location: Two miles southwest of the Clinton ferry.

— *George Heleker*

**January 31:** We saw the **Rusty Blackbird** this afternoon at the intersection of Byrd and Farragut. It was with a large flock of **blackbirds**, **Starlings** and a **Brown-headed Cowbird**. Location: In a tree and then on a powerline at the intersection of Byrd and Farragut. — *Steve Ellis*



Photo by Libby Hayward

Tundra Swan among Canada Geese.

**February 3:** A **swan** among **Canada Geese** and **gulls** this morning at Deer Lagoon. My ID is a **Tundra** based on relative size (to the geese) and tall erect neck versus a Trumpeter's more curved neck at its base. The bird was not close enough to examine its bill in photos or scope. Visible mid estuary

from the west dike trail and also the south end of Deer Lagoon Road; swimming, flying and resting with head tucked.

— *Libby Hayward*



Photo by Stephanie Neis

Rock Sandpiper

**February 4:** Drove around the Penn Cove area for over an hour before spotting 40 to 50 **Black Turnstones**, 15 +/- **Surfbirds** and two **Rock Sandpipers**. Close to the bank on Madrona Drive about 100 feet east of the gravel turnout.

— *Stef Neis*

**February 15:** A **Rough-legged Hawk** was perching, hovering, and flying around the Dugualla Bay Lake area.

— *Steve Ellis*

**February 19:** Two male **Eurasian Wigeons** are with the flock of **American Wigeons** at Oak Harbor City Beach.

— *Steve Ellis*

PLEASE POST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS to the *Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) website*. Select the aqua button, "Report a Sighting." You can also submit a photo using the aqua button labeled "Submit Gallery Photos."

Sightings should be on Whidbey Island or relate in some way to Whidbey Audubon. Reports should refer to birds or other wildlife that are not commonly seen here. Alternatively, they may refer to migratory birds that arrive outside their normal seasons.

Reports of especially interesting sightings in nearby areas are welcome. Greater selectivity is needed to keep the email volume reasonable so editors will exercise judgment on whether the rarity, proximity and significance of sightings merit inclusion.

These guidelines reflect the interests of local birders. Please respect the essentially scientific nature of the Sightings feature. Thanks for your cooperation.

There are designated spaces to submit your information, such as what you saw, where you saw it and the date and approximate time. Although we are asking those who post to leave a phone number or email address with your sighting, they will not be included on the actual "Sightings" page. Thank you!

Keep up with "Sightings" on the was website or on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety](http://www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety).

## BIN North at Dugualla Bay and Ala Spit

Four intrepid birders met at Dugualla Bay in the chilly morning on February 8. The early birder watched four **Bald Eagles** flying low over the wetland. Two eagles landed in the marsh next to Dike Road. We saw **Trumpeter Swans**, **Canada Geese**, **Northern Pintails**, **Canvasbacks** and **Ring-necked Ducks** on the lake. **Red-winged Blackbirds** sang a continuous chorus. In the saltmarsh, numerous **Greater Yellowlegs** waded in the company of several **Dunlin**, **Hooded Mergansers** and **Green-**

**winged Teal**. On the open water, **Short-billed Gulls** (formerly Mew Gull) floated in the company of other gulls.

**California Quail** were spotted next to the road on the way to Ala Spit.

At Ala Spit, the tide was low enough to walk along the spit. Near the parking lot, we watched **American Wigeon**

**BIN North, see page 5**

## Earth Sanctuary Nesting Boxes are Ready

Many thanks to Boy Scout Troop 57 for their hard work getting the nesting boxes at The Earth Sanctuary ready for the 2023 spring nesting season. This great group of Scouts carried big ladders and supplies into the woods to clean and repair seven nest boxes. After removing all kinds of “treasures” that had accumulated in the boxes over the years, they added new wood chips and left the boxes refreshed and ready for cavity nesting ducks such as Wood Ducks and Mergansers.

Photos by Jann Ledbetter



## BIN South Enjoys the View from Deer Lagoon Dike Path

**January 26:** You know that you are on a relaxing bird walk, when everyone is perfectly content observing sparrows for minutes on end. Last week on the Deer Lagoon Dike path, **Golden-crowned Sparrows** and **White-crowned Sparrows** in various degrees of maturity and plumage, pecked around with one another, and we got great looks at the comparisons. We even noticed the differences in bill coloring and are still wondering what exactly makes that happen. I suspect that Sarah

will enlighten us next time.

A few of us stayed until the not-so-bitter end, when we saw and heard **Meadowlarks**, and when there was finally enough shore to attract four different shore birds. Trees were crawling with **American Goldfinches** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers**. Noticeably absent— not a Starling or a Goose. But we saw and/or heard at least 47 other species.

Finally, toward the end of our satisfying stroll, when we heard howling across the valley, we were surprised to watch — not coyotes — but a lone Husky dog out in the field above Double Bluff Road, his snout to the heavens and singing the song of his people.

For those who would like to dip a toe or ankle or all of yourself into the highly rewarding pool that is Whidbey Audubon Society (was), there are some opening positions on the was board (Treasurer and Secretary), and also on the Education Committee or the Conservation Committee, whose participants are not necessarily on the board, and one has a lot of free reign with any projects that grab you.

was members are invited to submit nominations before the elections in May or join a committee anytime.

**February 23:** Fortitude.

Also, intrepid, sturdy, staunch, tough, strong, solid, able, rugged, hardy, hale, undaunted. Words used to describe Birders this week. (There are even a couple of good Wordle start words in there.)

Today a handful of aforementioned fill-in-the-blank Birders found ourselves on a surprisingly pleasant path out on Deer Lagoon. We would have held it against no one to have not shown up. But as always, ducks don't care, and between those usual suspects and the protected path in the trees, during our brief venture we observed at least 29 species. When our faces weren't freezing off.

### BIN North, from page 4

and **Mallards**. One birder spotted a **Pacific Wren** among the driftwood. At the north end of the spit, several rafts of birds floated near the tideline. We saw **Common Goldeneye**, **Barrow's Goldeneye**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Bufflehead**, **Pigeon Guillemot** and **Double-crested Cormorants**. A **Belted Kingfisher** hovered repeatedly above the water and dove several times. With cold fingers and toes, we made our way back to our cars.

— Nancy Luenn

**Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) North** meets the second Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. Contact [Denise Marion](#) or [Nancy Luenn](#),

### More Trips, from page 1

the park with possibilities of seeing numerous sea birds and an area with woodland habitat.

**Saturday, April 1: WEST BEACH.** Carlos Andersen will lead this trip with Hayley. Meet at the West Beach parking lot, north end.

**Saturday, April 15: HOYPUS POINT.** Jay Adams will lead this trip with Hayley. Meet at Cornet Bay parking lot.

Check with the [events calendar](#) on the Whidbey Audubon Society website for future trips. For additional information: email [Charlotte Ginn](#) or call 209-352-6534.

## Field Trip Reports: Loons at Deception Pass

More than 45 people gathered at West Beach for Whidbey Audubon's annual Loons Field Trip on January 28. We had decent winter temperatures and no rain. Between the north-west point of land at the north end of West Beach and the western shore of Cranberry Lake, we counted 31 species.

The gathering of loons is thought to occur most winter days from December to March. Observations of a mass inflight of Red-throated Loons and other fish-eating species suggests that the early ebb tide corresponds with a concentration of prey fish, primarily surf smelt. The feasting follows the timing of the reversal from flood to ebb as currents begin to race out through Deception Pass. Whidbey Audubon has been offering this annual field trip since 2009. Our inherited rule of thumb for timing is to arrive "45 minutes before Port Townsend high tide," which approximates the beginning of the tidal outflow (ebb) at the pass. Nature doesn't seem to be quite so predictable; sometimes we hit it just right, sometimes we have a long wait before activity picks up, and sometimes we wish we'd arrived earlier. No doubt there is variation in the smelt run day to day — a probable explanation for days when the birds fly in, but we don't see them diving and they soon depart.

This year I tried a new tool for predicting current ebb with disappointing results. Folks who arrived early witnessed hundreds of Red-throated Loons flying in about 45 minutes before our start time and they were leaving as we arrived. Many hundreds of loons remained on the water westward toward Rosario Strait, but they were visible only with spotting scopes — which thankfully were widely shared.

We did see all three loon species, **Red-throated**, **Common** and

**Pacific**. Species for study nearer shore included **Surf Scoter**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Red-necked Grebe**, **Horned Grebe** and **Pigeon Guillemot**. While scoping distant birds eventually revealed both **Common Murre** and **Marbled Murrelet**. Cranberry Lake afforded close views of **Bufflehead**, **American Coot** and **Hooded Merganser**. A few who returned to the northwest overlook with coleader Steve Ellis after Cranberry Lake were delighted to see a flock of **Red Crossbills** in good treetop view.

I am trying to get a better understanding of the timing and variability of the maximum influx of loons at Deception Pass. If you have witnessed it, I would welcome a report of the date and time you saw maximum activity; *email me*.

Mark your calendar for next year's Loons Field Trip on January 20, 2024.

— Sarah Schmidt

## West Beach at Deception Pass State Park

Hello everyone, thank you so much for joining us on February 4th at West Beach for a wonderful bird walk!

I also want to thank Dave [Parent] and Joe [Sheldon] for sharing their wealth of knowledge with us and for helping us discover some of these special birds in the park.

Here is a list of the species that we saw down at West Beach: Deception Pass sp – West Beach, Island, Washington, us; February 4, 2023, 10:07 a.m. to 12:06 p.m.; Protocol: traveling, 1.122 mile(s); 29 species (+1 other taxa).

- |                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Surf Scoter            | 18. winged Gull (hybrid)      |
| 2. White-winged Scoter    | 19. Red-throated Loon         |
| 3. Bufflehead             | 20. Pacific Loon              |
| 4. Common Goldeneye       | 21. Common Loon               |
| 5. Hooded Merganser       | 22. Pelagic Cormorant         |
| 6. Red-breasted Merganser | 23. Double-crested Cormorant  |
| 7. Ruddy Duck             | 24. Belted Kingfisher         |
| 8. Pied-billed Grebe      | 25. American Crow             |
| 9. Horned Grebe           | 26. Chestnut-backed Chickadee |
| 10. Red-necked Grebe      | 27. Bushtit                   |
| 11. Anna's Hummingbird    | 28. Ruby-crowned Kinglet      |
| 12. American Coot         | 29. Red Crossbill             |
| 13. Black Oystercatcher   | 30. Dark-eyed Junco           |
| 14. Black Turnstone       | 31. Spotted Towhee            |
| 15. Pigeon Guillemot      |                               |
| 16. Short-billed Gull     |                               |
| 17. Western x Glaucous-   |                               |

— Hayley Johnson (shelher), AmeriCorps Interpretive Naturalist at Deception Pass State Park

## BIN South, from page 5

It was a sparrow day again, including a **Fox Sparrow**. But that dike exposure was brutal — well, depending which direction we were facing. Scoping east and south was painful, so after noting **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Dunlin**, **Black-bellied Plovers**, **gulls** and some of those **ducks**, we looked west and north instead, and watched the beginnings of a fir-top nest construction, way over on the very north side of the wetlands area, where an **Eagle** was trying to get a small stick placed just so.

The same birder adjectives above may apply to yesterday's Skagit field trip participants, but it was a fun time, and we observed at least 40 species, including our target Big White Birds, which were only a bit harder to spot against grey skies and snowy fields!

Next BIN South is March 9.

— Cathi Bower – *Bird Early, Bird Often*

**Birding in Neighborhoods South** meets every other Thursday morning. Time varies with the season. Contact *Cathi* for more information.

## Bird of the Month: Pacific Wren (aka Winter Wren, aka *Troglodytes pacificus*)

A tiny brown dynamo of a bird, Pacific Wrens are heard more often than seen, their complex song bubbling up from the understory of old growth evergreen forests. When they sing, they hold their stubby tail upright and their entire body vibrates with sound. Once you hear their song, look around the forest floor for little mouse-like movements as the wren hops along logs and upturned roots. A sharp chip! will let you know you've disturbed their scene, and they'll dive into the brush, usually popping out a moment later to assess the situation. When flying, they beat their tiny wings rapidly to move short distances as they seek cover.

Pacific Wrens are one of the smallest wrens in the United States, between 3.1 to 4.7 inches long and weighing between three to four ounces. They are brown overall with darker brownish-black barring on the wings, tail and belly. The face is brown with a slight pale mark over the eyebrow. You may think all this brown makes for just another LBB (little brown bird), but really, if you can get a good look at them, their patterned feathers reveal their jewel-like quality. And every artist knows that 'brown' can be caramel, umber, burnt sienna, chestnut...



Photo by Jann Ledbetter

Pacific Wren

We used to call them Winter Wrens. (Some of us still do at times.) Pac Wrens were considered the same species as Winter Wrens until 2010 when researchers found that wrens' DNA in the West differed from those in the East or in Europe. *Winter Wren* was then split into three different species; the Pacific Wren of the West, the Winter Wren of the East and the Eurasian Wren in Europe — which is the only wren species that occurs outside the Americas.

Pac wrens use their thin bills to catch beetles, caterpillars, ants, spiders and other tasty insects as they inspect crevices and probe decaying bark. In the Pacific Northwest, they may gather near streams when salmon are migrating, to glean the insects that are attracted to salmon carcasses. Pacific wrens build domed-shaped globular nests and also nest inside natural cavities. The male builds multiple nests out of moss, bark, twigs and other plant material, then leads the female around to each nest to choose which she prefers. She then lays one to nine eggs, which hatch in 14 to 17 days.

Wrens often appear in folklore and mythology. The Irish venerated wrens as wise and clever birds. The story goes that the birds decided to have a competition to elect a king, and the winner would be the bird that flew the highest. Eagle was sure he would win, but clever little wren perched on Eagle's back and when Eagle reached the highest point, Wren flew higher, winning the competition!

Here are a few cool wren facts:

- Some populations of Pacific Wrens move short distances after the breeding season and others stay in the same place year-round.
- Pacific Wrens sometimes pile into nest boxes to stay warm when the weather turns cold. Thirty-one individuals were found together in one nest box in western Washington.
- Pac wren nests can be the size of a football.
- Pacific Wrens do not form flocks with other species and are normally solitary or paired with their mate.

Although populations appear stable, Pacific wrens' old-growth habitat is threatened by logging and management practices that remove downed logs, roots and slash piles important for nesting and foraging. We can help provide habitat by keeping those snags and brush piles around after windstorms instead of *cleaning up*.

## Acquiring a Discover Pass

Now you can borrow a Discover Pass for one week from any Sno-Isle Libraries community library, or from the Library on Wheels Bookmobile. Two Discover Passes are available at each community library and the Bookmobile — 48 Discover Passes in all. And just like with all other Sno-Isle Libraries materials, customers will be able to *request a hold* for a Discover Pass to pick up at their preferred library. The pass checks out for seven days with no renewals and may be used on lands managed by: Washington State Parks, Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife.

When I checked the library catalog on February 27, there were 46 available, three holds and 21 available to borrow. This is better than when I checked in January.

If you want your own Discover Pass, it costs \$11.50 per park visit and \$35 annually. It is available at most hardware and sporting goods outlets or in the park you visit itself. You can buy it online on the *Discover Pass website*. While on the website, learn about the 12 holidays in the year that don't require a Discover Pass.

— Prescott

— Kathy Obersinner

## Birding in My Yard (BIMY): Winter Edition

First, I want to thank Patty Cheek who in her article last month, made me realize that I am a “slow birder” and probably have always been. I enjoy watching the birds in my yard and the behavior they show. It has nothing to do with the fact that I’m a fair-weather birder who avoids cold temperatures, wind, snow and rough terrain.

Although it’s still winter and there are some signs of spring,

### Dates to Remember

Please check the *Whidbey Audubon Society Events Calendar* and *Listings* on its website for more detailed information and how to enter Zoom for some of these upcoming events. There also might be further information elsewhere in this issue.

#### MARCH

**4: Field Trip: Bowman’s Bay** Deception Pass State Park 10 to 12

**9: Program: *Glorious Gulls*** with Connie Sidles. 7 p.m. hybrid

**14: Online Class: Spring and Summer Birds**, Session I

**15: Field Trip: Deer Lagoon**

**15: Birds ’n’ Beer Get-together**, 5 p.m.,

**21: Online Class: Spring and Summer Birds**, Session II

**22: Page Peepers**, 7 p.m.

**23: Board Meeting.** Freeland Library. 6 to 8 p.m. Members welcome

**28: Online Class: Spring and Summer Birds**, Session II

#### APRIL

**1: Field Trip: West Beach**, Deception Pass

**4: Online Class: Spring and Summer Birds**, Session IV

**5: Earth and Ocean Month Kickoff**, 4 p.m. Bayview Cash Store; Keynote: *Climate Grief, Hope and Action: Inner Strategies for Our Age of Crisis*, Jennifer Atkinson at 6:30 p.m., hybrid, [whidbeyearthday.org](http://whidbeyearthday.org)

**7: Program: COASST/Seabirds** with Julia Parrish

**11: Online Class: Spring and Summer Birds**, Session V

**15 Field Trip: Hoypus Point**, Deception Point

**19: Birds ’n’ Beer Get-together.** Zoom 5 p.m.

**27: Whidbey Audubon Society Board Meeting.** Members welcome

### SAVE THE DATE

**APRIL 13 to 16: Olympic Peninsula Birdfest**, Sequim. [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org) (Register soon. Some sessions are filling up fast!)

**MAY 18 to 20: Wings over Whidbey Festival.**

we have had some cold winter weather, especially in December. The snowstorm brought many birds out of the woods, especially **Varied Thrush**. The storm kept me busy ensuring the birds had enough feed to maintain their body temperature. I was especially busy keeping **Anna’s Hummingbirds** alive. I was committed to keep the feeder filled and unfrozen. I had two feeders that I changed out when one froze. Other methods are to wrap small Christmas-style lights around the feeder. Do not use LED (light-emitting diode) lights because they don’t give off heat. You can also buy hummingbird feeder heaters.

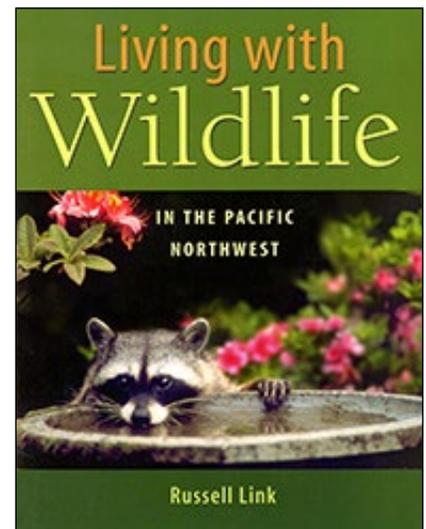
Both squirrel species (Douglas and eastern gray) have been out and about all winter. The chipmunks seem to be hibernating. The squirrels don’t seem to understand that the bird seed is for the birds. It’s always good to have some squirrel-proof feeders. I have one suet feeder and a seed feeder that have prevented the squirrels from figuring out how to get to the food — so far.

### Other observations:

For several predawn days, I have heard three **Great Horned Owls** hooting, usually two close together and one farther away. I know that owls begin mating and nesting in winter, so I’m thinking it is some sort of *love* triangle.

I have noticed that **Bushtits** are roosting in my eaves at night. Every dusk, I see them settling in.

I love observing the wildlife in the woods around my house. However, sometimes it becomes too intrusive. I keep telling myself that I am invading their territory, but sometimes that’s hard to deal with. If you want to get some ideas to reach a balance, go to the *Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website*. Search for Living with Wildlife. There is also a great book you can order: *Living with Wildlife* by Russell Link. — Jenny Brown

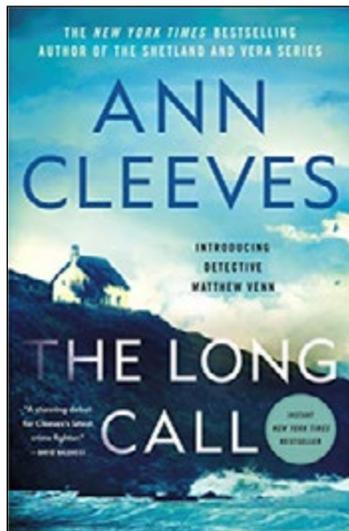


*Living with Wildlife* by Russell Link; University of Washington Press; Illustrated edition (May 1, 2004).

## Page Peepers: *The Long Call*

Wednesday, March 22 at 7 p.m. is the next meeting of Page Peepers, Whidbey Audubon's very own book club, hosted by Patty Cheek. The meeting is via Zoom, so *please register* to receive the invitation under events on the Whidbey Audubon website. [Red text is hyperlinked to the destination, just click.]

A different kind of book for Page Peepers, *The Long Call* by Ann Cleeves, is a mystery including an albatross tattoo on the victim and gulls that use their long calls to alarm the characters in the book. It is a complex novel with so much back history of the characters (well developed by Cleeves) — a detective rejected by his family because of his sexual history, two women with Down Syndrome, and a victim who is guilt ridden over something he did. It includes many issues that are blended well in the story. And, best of all, it includes birds. Come join us even if you don't read the book. Perhaps you'll get your interest piqued.



The Page Peepers meet every other month. The next book discussion is May 24. The book is *Wesley the Owl: the Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl* by Stacey Brian.

## Welcome New and Renewing Members

### New Members:

Michele Sakaguchi & Leigh Bloom, Pigeon Guillemot  
 Rita Enders Patricia Bradley  
 Casey Cumming

### Renewing Members:

Steve & Martha Ellis, Red-Tailed Hawk  
 Frances Vandal & Denice Killian, Pigeon Guillemot  
 Patty & Larry Cheek, Pigeon Guillemot  
 Alice & Martha Lindahl, Spotted Towhee  
 Cheryl & Dennis Kamera, Spotted Towhee  
 Chuck & Claudia Pettis, Osprey Janet & David Armstrong  
 Jenny Brown, Pigeon Guillemot Gaea Van Breda  
 Jack Burchard, Spotted Towhee Christine Kelly  
 Verleen Boyers, Spotted Towhee Mimi Bommersbach  
 Ellen Nelson, Spotted Towhee Cathleen Queeno-Wall  
 Cathi ONan-Bower Wendy Temko  
 David & Sharon Winkel Christi Shaffer  
 Elizabeth & Pete Berg L. Lee McGuire  
 Marti & Pat Murphy Denise Marion  
 Anthony & Alice Tobias Nancy Steifel Boyle  
 Sara & George Gray Marcia Sill  
 Susan Prescott & Michael Seraphinoff

## WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY — MEMBERSHIP

Please make your check payable to: WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY  
 Mail to: Jann Ledbetter, 1112 Maple Place, Coupeville WA 98239  
 Or pay online: [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership)

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- Osprey \$250
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SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP for first year National Members only. Receive a joint membership in National and Whidbey Audubon for one year for only \$35. Make check payable to National Audubon.

*The Whidbey Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible.  
 It is Whidbey Audubon policy to never share our membership and subscription information with other groups.*

# SSGN Asks: *Who Will Fill Brendan's Shoes?*

The Salish Sea Guillemot Network (SSGN) is about to search for a new Regional Coordinator. The position is seasonal, paid, and yet — a labor of love. (But who doesn't love Pigeon Guillemots?)

As Brendan McGarry, understandably, begins his next chapter, we appreciate his three survey seasons of dedication to SSGN, thank him from the bottom of our collective hearts, and wish him the best.

Meanwhile, spread the word that we would like to welcome a new coordinator onto the team as soon as possible! Responsibilities are almost entirely conducted remotely — meetings and communications are online. What began years ago as an internship, has evolved into a creative tech-and-people position, no longer requiring hours on the beach during the summer, though a visit to each of the regions throughout the season is irresistible. The organizing structure of SSGN is ever-changing and expanding, and the coordinator keeps us all speaking the same language — to one another and the wider community of the Puget Sound Area.

We are excited to begin another fulfilling Pigeon Guillemot Breeding Survey Season — here on Whidbey and also in the other seven survey regions.

To learn more about the Guillemots, the survey and the data, visit the [Salish Sea Guillemot Network website](#). To find out more



Photo by Cathi Bower

Pigeon Guillemot pair at Glendale Colony on Whidbey.

about the SSGN coordinator position, ask [Frances Wood](#). [Click red text for email link.]

To find out more about the Whidbey survey, contact [Lee](#) at or [Michele](#).

— Salish Sea Guillemot Network Team

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**Thursday, March 9**  
Both In-person and Virtual  
Meeting and Socializing at 7,  
Program at 7:30 p.m.

## Glorious Gulls with Connie Sidles

Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
20103 State Route 525, Freeland  
OR click to [Register for Zoom](#)

**Online Class Series  
with Tom Bancroft  
Spring & Summer  
Birds of Washington**

Five week series on Tuesdays  
starting March 14

[Register Now](#)