

EARTHCARE

FALL 2018

NORTHWEST



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

p3

GO BIRDING FOR
CLIMATE SCIENCE

p4

FUN 30TH ANNIVERSARY

p5

PLANTS OF MEANING

p7

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SEATTLE AUDUBON SOCIETY

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings, members:

Summer at Seattle Audubon is a time for reflection, as I look back and see how the goals and plans we set in the last fiscal year have become reality. As with any careful plan, big changes don't usually happen overnight. Rather, the incremental progress we've made realizing the vision of our 2016 strategic plan is now more apparent than ever. Our commitment to urban conservation, program expansion, and genuine community engagement is thriving across all aspects of our work.

As relayed in this issue, teachers at Rainier Beach High School invited our support in adding bird-friendly native plants to their school garden. We look forward to continuing this partnership with additional plantings scheduled for the fall.

Also in this issue, we invite you to join us in celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Finding Urban Nature (FUN) program, our in-school, place-based environmental education and engagement program. Prompted by continuing evaluation, FUN underwent a recent overhaul that incorporated Next Generation Science Standards into the curriculum.

In Science, Seattle Audubon recently received a small grant from the National Audubon Society's new "Audubon in Action" program to help launch Climate Watch, a new community and citizen science effort. National

Audubon's 2014 Audubon Birds and Climate Change Report highlights the risks birds face and prompted people to become proactive in tracking how birds in their areas were responding to these changes. Climate Watch now gives people in Seattle, the surrounding areas, and across the nation an easy way to take action and make a difference.

As of this writing, we're recruiting for a new position at Seattle Audubon, our Urban Conservation Manager.

We've chosen, strategically, to focus this new role squarely on the cornerstones of our urban conservation program. Over 100 years ago, we were the first environmental conservation organization in Washington; however, these days, we benefit from the partnership of 23 other Audubon chapters across the state, as well as many other conservation organizations beyond the Audubon network. Having the support of so many among this mosaic of collaborators allows us to focus locally and to realize a modern vision of what it means to do urban conservation advocacy and engagement here and around Seattle.

These are exciting times at Seattle Audubon, and we cannot do any of it without you, our community of friends and supporters. On behalf of the birds who rely on us, we thank you. Happy reading!

For the birds and nature,



John Brosnan
Executive Director



BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mark Greenfield, President
Rod Brown, Vice President
Mary Bond, Secretary
Susan Marks, Treasurer

Bryony Angell
Ashley Black
Mary Bond
Jill Ericsson
Stephen Geissler
Emily Krieger
Jen McKeirnan
Kathryn Reniewicki
Bob Sieh
Barbara Wright

STAFF

John Brosnan
Executive Director
Hanae Bettencourt
Education Associate
Claire Catania
Development Director
Rasheena Fountain
Communications Manager
David Garcia
Nature Shop Manager
Leigh Hiura
Member Services Associate
Jennifer Lang
Conservation Science Coordinator

Melissa Melloy
Nature Shop Assistant
Toby Ross
Senior Science Manager
Christine Scheele
Senior Education Manager
Russ Steele
Finance & Operations Director
Wendy Walker
Community Engagement Manager

GO BIRDING FOR CLIMATE SCIENCE

by Toby Ross, Senior Science Manager



Red-breasted Nuthatch Photo by Mick Thompson

National Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report predicts that nearly half of all US bird species will lose more than half of their climatic range by 2080 due to climate change. Research has shown that as the impacts of climate change continue to unfold, 314 U.S. bird species could struggle to adapt. The future is impossible to predict with certainty; however, the 2014 report was based on a complex statistical model that focused on climatic variables that affect birds within the US. The report shows which species we need to be most worried about, and helps indicate the whole suite of challenges these species will be facing.

To test the model's accuracy, Climate Watch was launched. This nation-wide community and citizen science project focuses on areas of predicted change for two bird groups: bluebirds and nuthatches. These areas include the potential for range expansion and contraction based on the climate model. For example, will the breeding range of each species move north as the climate warms, or will their wintering grounds move further south?

The two bird groups were chosen because they are easy to identify, are loved by many birders, and the model for these two groups offer strong predictions for range shifts that can be tested.

So, how is climate change already affecting species in Seattle? Seattle Audubon is counting on volunteers for Climate Watch to find out! The project's success depends on help from our eager and knowledgeable Seattle Audubon and greater Puget Sound community. Of the project's two focal species, we only have the Red-breasted Nuthatch in Seattle, so volunteers will need to be comfortable identifying this species by sight and sound or be eager to learn. This first year will start off small, with only a few survey sites, but as more volunteers join in, we'll spread our surveys further.

The next season of Climate Watch is January 15 to February 15, 2019. If you want to take part in the project contact Senior Science Manager, Toby Ross (toby@seattleaudubon.org) for more information on how to participate.



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

| OVER 27,000 STUDENTS SERVED |

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FINDING URBAN NATURE!

by Christine Scheele, Senior Education Manager

Without any stake in the places where we live, we walk through days in which there are trees but no tree in particular, we drive along roads that could be anywhere, never registering the mountains to the east and lake to the west that determined, in fact, exactly where that route would run. Such casual familiarity is the opposite of intimacy and attentiveness. ~**David Elder**

David Elder wrote those sentences in the introduction to *Stories of the Land, a Place Based Environmental Education Anthology* in 1998, but he could have been describing the problem that Seattle Audubon's Finding Urban Nature (FUN) program, which launched a decade prior, was trying to solve.

In 1988, Seattle Audubon was among five Audubon chapters awarded a seed grant from the National Science Foundation to develop an environmental education program to be used as a national model in public school systems. The FUN program was based on Denver Audubon's successful Urban

Education Project and was adapted from the UC Berkeley's "Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies" method. Of the five chapters that were a part of the original NSF grant pool, Seattle Audubon's FUN program is the only one still operating.

Thanks, primarily, to a dedicated group of individuals who were willing to put up an annual fight for funding and stick up for the ability of all children to have outdoor learning experiences, approximately 27,500 children have participated in FUN since 1988.

From serving one school at the start to the maximum of 26 schools in 1998, FUN has been a remarkably adaptable program over the course of its 30-year run.

Anniversary continued on Page 6

PLANTS OF MEANING AT RAINIER BEACH H.S.

by Rasheena Fountain,
Communications
Manager

We will expand the accessibility of our conservation and education programs and continue to open the eyes and ears of kids and kids-at-heart to the vast array of bird species present in Washington State – and the native plants they rely on for healthy local habitats.

~John Brosnan, Seattle Audubon Executive Director



New habitat awaits at Rainier Beach High School—ripe with fertile ground to welcome Northern Flickers, Bushtits, passing Great Blue Herons and other birds in south Seattle. In June, Seattle Audubon worked with two of the school's teachers to supply native plants for birds to the school garden and help students create interpretive signs about birds. On a scorching summer day in August, Jenn Lang, Seattle Audubon Conservation Science Coordinator and I were able to visit the garden to witness the power of birds to bring new excitement and knowledge to city schoolyards.

Jimale Hussein is a rising sophomore at Rainier Beach High School who is helping with the native plants for birds project. His enthusiasm is contagious, his passions and knowledge as diverse as the flora filling the small garden nestled behind the school.

It is summer, and Jimale is in Freedom School, a summer enrichment program for 9th and 10th grade students. He doesn't have to be in the garden under the intense sun—it's a choice. He appears happy, comfortable, and exuberant amid the sunflowers, the rows of kale, and the tiny Oregon grape plants. He is joined by Mark Epstein, a 21-year educator at the school who helps students develop more of a "green thumb". He and another teacher, Aaron Jefferson, were inspired by Nature Shop Manager David Garcia's "Birding As Resistance" workshop at the school's BLOC Party event earlier this year. They thought native plants for birds would be a great addition to the school garden.

"It's completely interdisciplinary and metaphorical," Mr. Epstein says. "All of the lessons of their life can come out of this work to help them understand their place in shaping nature," he adds. It is apparent that Mr. Epstein and Jimale share a passion and respect for nature and find meaningful connections

with the birds surrounding them.

"Do you want to tell them the story?" Mr. Epstein asks. Jimale recounts finding a dead American Crow in the garden when beginning to plant. Out of respect for the bird, he buried it—feeding it back into the soil. Jimale and Mr. Epstein now consider this crow to be a messenger of "the end of bad things," and believe some of the crow visitors to the space to be guardians.

As Jimale sits reading interpretive signs filled with Spotted Towhees, Song Sparrows, and other species, as if cued, two Northern Flickers appear. Jimale notices and points.

"Those are Northern Flickers," Jenn tells him. He shuffles through the papers, landing on the sign with the Northern Flicker.

"I had never noticed these before," Jimale responds.

The Lushootseed names, ones given to the birds by native Coast Salish peoples in the greater Seattle Area, are included on the interpretive signs. Jenn hopes that, "By including the Lushootseed names, we hope to encourage the students to learn more about the rich Coast Salish culture."

Partnerships with teachers like Mr. Epstein and Mr. Jefferson are essential to restoring resilient and productive tree canopy in Seattle. It drives the idea that, "The urban forest is not just trees in greenbelts – it's gardens, parks, street trees, backyards, and school yards," as Seattle Audubon Executive Director John Brosnan asserts.

And Jimale sees the potential of his school yard. He flips through the signs, stopping on a Great Blue Heron.

Plants continued on Page 6

Plants continued from page 5

"Do we have these here?" he asks as he admires the photo. "They're cool. I want one as a pet maybe or to feed them," he says.

Mr. Epstein prompts him to think further about his place as a human interacting with wildlife.

"What are some ways that you could help them as a human?" Mr. Epstein asks. "Stopping deforestation," Jimale sharply responds.

Mr. Epstein has high hopes for students through environmental education. "I also want them to be agents for food justice," he says.

Jimale tells us of a harvest in his community later in the day and his plans to go attend a protest an issue affecting his community the next day. He politely invites us to stay for the harvest, telling us he will also be on the lookout for the Great Blue Heron. And before we part, his last request was a simple one—a signifier of the power of seeing local school yards as bird habitats.

"When you come back, can you bring back bird seed and some feeders?" he asked.

"I would really appreciate that," he says sincerely. In the fall, Seattle Audubon will have more native plants for birds delivered to the Rainier Beach High school

garden, which we plan to help plant.

Perhaps more students will use birding as resistance like Seattle Audubon Nature Shop Manager David Garcia urged them at the workshop. Maybe the colors that fill their landscapes will become more familiar, more rich, and enhanced with new birds appreciative of the new habitat.



Jimale Hussein and Jenn Lang discuss birds and plants.

Anniversary continued from page 4

FUN has historically relied upon adult volunteers – approximately 150 volunteers per year – to lead small groups of children through eight outdoor lessons in their schoolyard habitats.

With fewer stay-at-home parents available to volunteer these days, a small team of paid "FUN Contractors" joined the mix this past year to help fill gaps, with incredible success. The curriculum has adapted to help teachers meet current academic learning standards, and volunteers will have the option to learn the activities via webinar starting this fall.

What has not changed is the goal of FUN: for students to take a closer look at nearby nature, ask questions about what they're observing, and follow through with guided investigations and scientific principles to satisfy their curiosity. The edge of a parking lot, a patch of grass near a sidewalk, and landscaped shrubbery are all wonderful places for FUN activities; urban nature can feel as exotic and strange as more "wild" places farther from the city when one takes the time to look at it differently.

At the conclusion of Elder's introduction in *Stories of*



the Land, he wrote, "Our pressing need now is for a pedagogy that exposes people to the range of their possible relationships in the world, and that gives them the language and models to explore and express such affiliation within a vivid community of values." This applied to the FUN program then, and possibly rings even truer in the present and into the next 30 years of FUN.

CHRISTINE BENITA BELIEVES IN FUN!

by Rasheena Fountain, Communications Manager



"Its success is based on its simplicity," Christine Benita, Seattle Audubon Education Committee member said about the Finding Urban Nature Program (FUN). FUN is a program originally founded in 1988 by a Seed Grant from the National Science Foundation that inspires children to explore the natural environments in their school yards. It is a "simple" concept that Benita argues can have lasting impacts on the way children see the natural world around them.

For Benita, being outside was constant as a child, even as a city dweller growing up. She received a master's degree in Science Education from the University of Houston, the only one in her graduate class to specifically focus on elementary school students. She is driven by the passion to get more science in elementary schools. And, as an educator and now Science Specialist with Seattle Public Schools, she is doing exactly that.

When Benita taught at Adams Elementary School in Seattle, she was able to observe the FUN program before implementing it. She felt enthusiastic about seeing children making new connections outside. When she left Adams Elementary School to help start what is now known as Hazel Wolf K-8 E-STEM School, the impression of Seattle Audubon's FUN program stuck with her. At the time, when she first inquired about having FUN at her school, Seattle Audubon explained not having the capacity to expand.

"What if I ran it?" Benita asked. Luckily, Seattle Audubon agreed, and this long-lasting relationship with Benita to encourage children to explore their familiar environ-

ments began. Benita has now been an influential member in FUN—starting with the Seattle Audubon program over 7 years ago.

One of her favorite memories in the early days administering FUN involves a decapitated pigeon.

"All of a sudden, a decapitated pigeon fell from a tree," Benita said. Instead of freaking out, the children who had been taking part in the FUN program instantly became, "Finding Nature Naturalists", as Benita refers to them.

"I was in awe of the fact that nobody lost it," Benita said. She explained that when students first begin the program, they are hesitant about natural aspects of their environment, but as they progress in the FUN program, they begin to see their urban environments in new ways. This was the case for the students who witnessed the pigeon falling from the tree.

"They understood it as just a part of their urban landscape," Benita said. They then asked questions about possible environmental factors like predation that could have led to the pigeon's state.

Thus, the FUN program is more than getting children outside. They learn important concepts that support the Next Generation Science Standards. Benita believes that getting FUN students to question natural phenomena in their environment to be one of major benefits of the program.

"Science is trying to understand the natural world and trying to make sense of it," she said.

Benita's favorite lesson to do with children is the Worm Worlds lesson where students learn scientific measurements like quadrats and experimental concepts like the scientific method by observing Earthworm characteristics. As she has observed in doing the Worm Worlds lesson with students, diversity in who is contributing in the learning environment is another benefit she appreciates.

"It keeps kids engaged," Benita said, adding that, "All kids contribute, even kids who typically have issues in the classroom."

As the FUN program includes parent participation, Benita has great hopes for both children and families who participate in the program in the years to come.

"I hope that they cultivate their sense of curiosity, and keep that," Benita said. It's a "simple" concept that is rooted in an educational need and foundation that Benita doesn't see going away any time soon.

SEATTLE
AUDUBON



Seattle Audubon Society
8050 35th Avenue Northeast
Seattle, WA 98115

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SEATTLE, WA
PERMIT NO. 7918

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



seattleaudubon.org

Printed on recycled paper
with vegetable-based inks.



What's happening in The Nature Shop?

Seattle Audubon's 22nd Annual Fall Plant Sale

Saturday, September 15th from 10 AM – 4 PM
@ The Nature Shop

Featuring several local vendors selling wildlife-friendly native outdoor plants. A portion of the proceeds from the plant sale are donated to Seattle Audubon to support our programming. This year, we will also be having a giant used book sale featuring everything from birding memoirs to rare field guides from around the world!

