

SPRING 2017

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SEATTLE AUDUBON

Seattle Audubon leads a local community in appreciating, understanding, and protecting birds and their natural habitats.

A Big Year Done Locally

Did you know Seattle Audubon has started a twice-monthly blog? Here is an excerpt from one of our recent articles. Read the full interview on SeattleAudubon.org!

One night last June, the air thick with heat and the only light source her car's headlights, Jen McKeirnan edged along a canyon road outside of Ellensburg, looking for the tell-tale diamond-shaped shine of the Common Poorwill's eyes. The cryptic bird breeds in this remote area, and is most active and easily seen at night. McKeirnan's sister and her family accompanied her that evening, muttering their unease to be in the middle of nowhere. "Once talk started about serial killers, I knew I had to abandon my effort," McKeirnan chuckles.

Against the tradition of a birder's Big Year, which can have a birder running all over the country to count birds, McKeirnan focused her project on Washington state birdlife. She also sought to capture each bird she saw in photographs--along with the habitat those birds occupy--and share her project at her website, *wabirdyear.com*. Her project caught the attention of National Audubon, which featured McKeirnan on its magazine's website. McKeirnan, a long time Seattle Audubon member, Master Birder, and current board member, sat down with us to share more details of her memorable year.

How much planning went into where to go, when to go, and what resources did you use to find specific species at certain times of the year?

Jen McKeirnan: I used Tweepers (email listserv), eBird and a Birder's Guide to Washington book. I strategized by season, focusing on birds that would most likely be here during a particular season and narrowed my trips by that. Overall, if I could do it again, I would strategize a bit differently by including species that are particularly hard to find by keying in on their mating season when they are most vocal.



How many of your goal birds did you successfully photograph? Was it more important to you to be able to count the bird or to photograph it and its environment?

JM: I created very specific requirements for myself: to see how many species I could photograph and have easily identifiable from the photos I took. Taking pictures of birds is not always easy. Some are only seen at dusk, so the lighting is low; some fly past you so quickly and are gone and some are too far away. It was important for me to take a picture of it to count it for my project. But of the 10 birds that I saw (where) I couldn't get the picture, I still enjoyed seeing them very much. Of the 346 bird species listed for Washington, I saw 284 species in total, with three of those species not on my original list: a Snowy Egret, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, none of which are usually found this far north.

Visit McKeirnan's website, *www.wabirdyear.com*, to learn more about her planning, species seen, and the ground she covered. Read the full interview on Seattle Audubon's website, *www.seattleaudubon.org*.

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Letter from Executive Director, John Brosnan

Greetings, folks!

I bet everyone has at one time been glued to an internet webcam, watching a pair of osprey or eagles tend to their eggs. When I was with Minnesota Land Trust, I knew a landowner who'd set up a webcam to monitor a brood of peregrine falcon chicks. I spent a lot of time watching that webcam right from the start, even though I knew it would be a long time before I saw anything new.

In a way, that watching and waiting is similar to launching a new strategic plan. Birds take careful thought and time to build a strong nest. Once the eggs are laid, dedicated parents delicately maintain the right conditions for those eggs to hatch. Even though those chicks still receive a lot of care before they fledge, the moment you see them for the first time is a singularly exciting moment.

I appreciate your indulging this metaphor, but -- that exciting moment -- that's what I'm feeling about a very special upcoming event. On Thursday, April 6, from 2-7PM, at Town Hall Seattle, Seattle Audubon is convening a broad group of local conservation experts who will help us consider our conservation priorities in the year ahead. Called the Neighborhood Flyways Symposium: Partners for Seattle's Tree Canopy, this discussion will engage thought leaders in public programs, city regulations and policies, green infrastructure, environmental justice, community engagement, carbon sequestration and climate change, and -- of course -- restoring urban bird habitat. Speakers include staff from Seattle Audubon, the City of Seattle, Seattle Public Utilities, the Nature Conservancy, the Seattle Parks Foundation, and the Urban Forest Carbon Registry. Following presentations, the event will conclude

with a panel discussion and questions from the audience. This event is sponsored by a generous grant from the Horizons Foundation, which allows us to engage our members and the public alike, free of charge.

The symposium concept originated from the Seattle Audubon conservation committee planning retreat last summer. The committee was considering a broad range of conservation advocacy priorities as I was reflecting on elements of our new strategic plan, such as the Neighborhood Flyways campaign, broad coalition building, environmental justice, and addressing climate change. I wanted to encourage our entire community to dig deeper into these topics, bring more questions than answers, and develop our advocacy priorities in a thoughtful and coordinated way.

From there, we started building our nest for the Flyways Symposium and the enthusiasm for it has been heartening -- and growing by the week. We hope you will mark your calendars and join us for this event. We're very excited to engage you in this stimulating conversation and explore these intersecting issues as we finalize our conservation priorities and formally launch our Neighborhood Flyways campaign.

For the birds,



Osprey

© Gary Simmons

SEATTLE AUDUBON

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Save the Date!

Last year, we celebrated Seattle Audubon's 100th anniversary with a Centennial Gala and Masquerade: The Bird Ball. Due to popular demand, The Bird Ball is back, but this time at the Seattle Aquarium!

Mark your calendars for **October 21, 2017** and start planning your costumes – there's a sea of possibilities! Our challenge for you is, can you top last year's costume contest winner? Ticket information coming soon.



© Cathleen Shattuck

The Bird Ball

Welcome Wendy Walker

Seattle Audubon is thrilled to share that Wendy Walker has joined the staff as Community Engagement Coordinator. Not only is Wendy our newest staff member, but her role is also new to the organization.

After the departure of our much-loved Volunteer Coordinator, Cassandra Sandkam, we decided to expand that formerly part-time role into a full-time position to add capacity for community outreach activities. We developed the new Community Engagement Coordinator position to keep the core tasks of the Volunteer Coordinator role, with the addition of community engagement functions to enhance the reach of all our programs. Our new strategic plan outlined growth in environmental education, citizen science, urban conservation, and coalition building – we look forward to having Wendy help to advance these efforts.

Wendy's extensive skill set, unique experiences, and long-time passion for Seattle Audubon's mission have demonstrated she has what it takes to effectively connect people with birds and nature. Wendy has been a Seattle Audubon supporter for many years, having participated in the Christmas Bird Count.

Most recently, Wendy brings seven years of experience with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, having worked in the areas of community relations, communications, and

project management.

She also brings several years of experience as a stage manager and has had a hand in producing more than 35 shows, so we're quite confident that she'll be adept on her feet for all of the opportunities ahead in her new role.

Please join us in welcoming Wendy and, volunteers, don't be afraid to stop by to introduce yourselves!



A Day in the Life of a FUN Volunteer

By Melissa Melloy

Standing in the halls of an elementary school, coffee in one hand, a paper bag of carrots in the other, I questioned what I had gotten myself into. My experience with children was minimal and the panic set in as I noticed that everything around me was miniature: tiny pencils on tiny desks with tiny chairs.

Onward, I thought to myself, they are waiting. Pushing through the door covered with tiny handprints, my heart raced, but as I looked upon the faces staring up at me, my fears quelled. My nervous mind was met with thirty excited and smiling faces, looking up at me like I was the smartest and most interesting woman in the world.

Over the next hour, my group of five children and I explored the schoolyard and learned about roots, with the carrots turning out to be both a mesmerizing example of a tap root and an enticing snack. I was touched to see how genuinely their eyes widened as they pulled grass and weeds out of the ground and discovered a whole world underneath.

They examined the roots with magnifying glasses and found bugs living among the myriad of colors, shapes, and textures. They showed me each and every fabulous find. "Woah! This root is HUGE," "LOOK! A WORM," "Ms. Melissa, look how cool this is!" With them, I also rediscovered the enchanting complexity of nature.

Our lesson ended and I walked away from the school, dirt under my fingernails and a smile on my face. I felt like I had made a difference; and beyond that, I was thrilled that I would get to come back the next week and do it all again.

If you're interested in becoming a volunteer for the Finding Urban Nature (FUN) Program and experiencing the magical world of outdoor education, email FUNvolunteer@seattleaudubon.org.



It's not too late to help protect the Marbled Murrelet in Washington State!

This endangered seabird feeds in the ocean and flies up to 55 miles inland to nest in old growth forest. The Washington state population of this unique bird has shrunk by 44% over the last 15 years, mostly due to removal of its habitat.

Seattle Audubon members have been advocating for greater protections for Marbled Murrelet habitat for many years. Now, as part of a coalition of environmental groups, we are proposing a new Conservation Alternative, designed to make significant long-term contributions to Marbled Murrelet conservation and to timber-industry sustainability in our state.

ACT NOW! Public comments on the Long-term Conservation Strategy are being accepted until **5:00pm on Thursday, March 9, 2017.**

In writing: Mail to SEPA Center, PO Box 47015, Olympia, WA 98504-7015

In email: Send to sepacenter@dnr.wa.gov

*Make sure to include 'SEPA File No. 12-042001' in the subject line of email and written comments.

Everything you need to make a comment on the Washington Department of Natural Resources Long-term Conservation Strategy for the Marbled Murrelet can be found on Seattle Audubon's website, seattleaudubon.org, including sample comments and a copy of the new proposed Conservation Alternative.

2016 Seattle Christmas Bird Count

December 31, 2016

126 species tallied (count day + count week)

Count day: 123 species

Count week: 3 additional species

Individual birds: 45,499 birds

Observers: 338

Overview:

The 2016 Seattle Christmas Bird Count was marked with a normal number of species seen, but with lower overall numbers, almost across the board. The lower tally was not for lack of effort: The total number of observers reached a record high, both for numbers in the field, and for feeder-watchers. The total number of birds counted (45,499) was the lowest total recorded since 1996 but was remarkably only 107 birds lower than last year. Our count-day species count of 123 was only slightly below the normal totals for recent years. Three additional species (California Quail, Western Tanager, and Western Meadowlark) were added in the count week, giving a total of 126 species, a couple below our 10-year average.

Highlights:

338 people took part on December 31st, setting a new record, with 261 birders in the field and 77 feeder watchers. This level of participation is more than 100 participants higher than our previous record high from just last year. If last year's numbers are a guide, we should end up in the top five CBC circles nationally for participation this year. The most exciting birds of the count included: Rufous Hummingbird in Ballard -- only the 2nd time in 40 years we've recorded one, Glaucous Gull in the Puget Sound -- seen by the boat team, the first ever for our CBC, except for one 'count week' record, and Bohemian Waxwings were reported from Magnuson, Discovery, and Seward Park this year -- though the count of nine was not a record high. It is only the 3rd time we've had Bohemian Waxwings in the last 40 years.

Read the full report and species list at www.seattleaudubon.org. Thank you to everyone who took part in CBC 2016. Let's hope the birds come back next winter.



Discovery Park Grassland and Thicket Management Plan

Seattle Parks and Recreation staff are currently developing a 'Grassland and Thicket Management Plan for Discovery Park' as a tool to help minimize the risk of harming or disturbing ground nesting bird nests during maintenance activities. The plan will include maps, timing and strategies for mowing, and the identification of areas routinely mowed for master plans, historical designations, safety and visibility, fire suppression, regulated noxious weed or invasive weed suppression and control, and outside of nesting season.

Seattle Audubon staff and volunteers will work closely with Seattle Parks and Recreation to track whether Parks staff follow the management plan. There will be a public meeting to review the plan, Thursday March 9 at 7:00 pm at the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center/Visitor Center. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually. We will post a link to the final plan for 2017 on our website, seattleaudubon.org, as soon as it becomes available.



© Howard Patterson

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Field Trips – Rules of the Road

For detailed information on field trips offered in the next month, visit our website at www.seattleaudubon.org. You will find:

- A complete schedule of upcoming trips.
- A detailed listing for each trip, including destination, leader, meeting place, and a description of what you can expect to see.
- A checklist of what to bring.
- Carpool guidelines.
- Directions to the trip meeting places.
- Registration dates and process.
- General rules for field trip participants.
- A copy of the "liability release form" you will need to sign the day of the trip. *Like most other organizations that offer public field trips, Seattle Audubon now requires participants to sign a waiver as a condition of participating in these free services.*

The field trip schedule will be updated the first of each month, so be sure to check our website regularly!

Spring Birding

Spring birding is the best birding. Yes, other seasons have nice qualities, but spring birding is the complete package with migration, breeding plumage, singing, long daylight hours, warming temperatures, and even the smell of blossoms in the air. It certainly helps that by the time spring arrives, birders are ready for something other than scouring large expanses of cold for sparse winter birds or viewing the plentiful Short-eared Owl photos on the internet.

Why not join a Seattle Audubon field trip this spring? Leaders will be looking for migrants and residents, and participants will have opportunity to witness signs of the season – singing birds, battling males, perhaps even a flicker dance. Seattle Audubon offers spring field trips to a variety of birding destinations, each with its own unique mix of birds and behaviors. Seattle Audubon also offers special Bird-a-thon trips during peak spring birding in May. Many trips during Bird-a-thon are offered only once a year, so don't miss the opportunity to bird with an expert or visit a destination with limited access.

Sign-up for a trip today by calling the Nature Shop at 206-523-4483. All the information you need about current trips is posted on SeattleAudubon.org.



Tree Swallow

© Richard Griffin

Neighborhood Bird Walks Spring 2017

Join Seattle Audubon, rain or shine, for a bird walk. No sign up required! Beginning birders or new Seattleites will especially enjoy the rich variety of regional bird life. Families and non-members are welcome.

If needed, request binoculars from the nature shop at least a week in advance. Further information is available from the Seattle Audubon Nature Shop, 206-523-4483.

- **Wednesday, March 1, 9:00-11:00 am**
Lincoln Park, Seattle
Leaders: Patty North and Dick Lazeres & Anne Jacobs
Meeting Point: Southern-most Lincoln Park parking lot on Fauntleroy Way SW (8600 block of Fauntleroy Way SW)
- **Tuesday, March 14, 9:00-11:00 am**
Magnuson Park
Leader: Joe Sweeney
Meeting Point: Promontory Point Pavilion
- **Saturday, March 18, 9:00 am**
Carkeek Park
Leader: Scott Hoskin, 206-390-4388, bludog66@centurylink.net
Meeting Point: Parking lot across from playing fields at the end of Carkeek Road
- **Tuesday, April 4, 9:00-11:00 am**
Magnuson Park
Leader: Joe Sweeney
Meeting Point: Promontory Point Pavilion

- **Saturday April 8, 8:30-10:30 am**
Discovery Park
Leaders: Neil & Carleen Zimmerman, 425-485-3122, N3zims@comcast.net
Meeting Point: Discovery Park S. Parking Lot
- **Saturday, April 22, 9:00-11:00 am**
Washington Park Arboretum
Leader: Penny Bolton
Meeting Point: Graham Visitors Center Parking Lot
- **Sunday, April 30, 8:30-10:30 am**
Carkeek Park
Leaders: Julia Hansbrough and Nathaniel Peters
Meeting Spot: Parking lot across from the playing fields at the end of Carkeek Park Road
- **Tuesday, May 16, 9:00-11:00 am**
Magnuson Park
Leader: Joe Sweeney
Meeting Point: Promontory Point Pavilion

Spring 2017 Classes

Registration opens March 1st. Visit seattleaudubon.org for complete listings.

Birds and Plants of the Shrub-Steppe with Andy Stepniewski

This class will introduce you to the plant and bird communities of the shrub-steppe ecosystem in the Columbia Basin of eastern Washington. The instructor will present botanical tidbits relating to birds and touch on conservation issues. Two leaders will conduct the day-long field trip to the Columbia Basin.

Introduction to the Mammals of Washington: From Mountains to Molehills with Mike Donahue

This class will give an overview of the mammal diversity in the state, emphasizing the species most likely to be seen, their natural history, and where to see them. There will be a full day field trip to Vantage.

Introduction to Warblers and Vireos of the Pacific Northwest with Hans de Gry

This class will focus on both the natural history and the identification (by sight and sound) of this group of songbirds. We will also compare and contrast warblers to some superficially similar groups such as vireos and kinglets. This session is suitable for beginning and intermediate birders.

Introduction to Flycatchers of the Pacific Northwest with Hans de Gry

More than a dozen species of flycatchers migrate north to Washington State each spring to breed and raise their chicks. While flycatchers are notorious for being similar to each other and challenging to identify, most of our flycatcher species are actually quite distinct, with differing field marks, vocalizations, habits, and natural histories. This class will focus on flycatcher identification by sight, behavior, habitat, and voice.

Garden Hospitality- Inviting Birds and Bugs to Your Yard with Penny Bolton

A how-to for making your home gardens and yards friendly and safe for birds and other wildlife. The class will review numbers about home gardens and densification, look at and listen to the most common yard birds in Seattle, followed by discussing how gardeners can encourage and appropriately support the birds and beneficial insects native to our area.

Native Tree ID with Van Bobbitt

Learning to ID trees can change the way you relate to nature. Instead of just seeing trees, you begin to see a diversity of species, you know their names, and they become like old friends. In this class, you will learn to use a simple botanical key to ID native trees and appreciate their environmental adaptations and landscape uses.

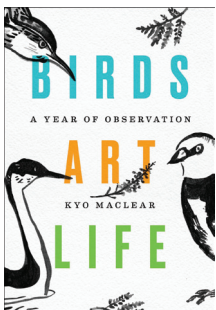
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Mondays through Saturdays year round

THE NATURE SHOP

Where profits are for the birds

8050 35th Ave. N.E., Seattle, WA 98115 • 206-523-4483
www.seattleaudubon.org

OPEN 'TIL 7:00 p.m. the 2nd Tuesday of each month
Mar 7 • April 11 • May 9



NEW *Birds, Art, Life* \$20.00

A writer's search for inspiration, beauty, and solace leads her to birds in this intimate and exuberant meditation on creativity and life -- a field guide to things small and significant.

NEW Nikon Monarch HG Binoculars

The newest addition to Nikon's best-selling Monarch family, the HG is the highest quality Monarch yet. With an even greater field of view and more brightness.



FEATURING

USED BOOKS from \$1
Selection added to regularly



EVENTS



21st Annual Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, April 1
10a.m. to 4p.m.
Seattle Audubon parking lot
Vendors to be announced

Spring Compost Days

March 6 – April 9
Buy 2 get 1 FREE
Member Price: \$4.95/cu.ft. bag

Nikon Spring Savings

April 5 – May 20
FREE Monarch 5 binocular with the purchase of any Monarch Fieldscope

Members always receive
20% OFF books!
AND Member Pricing on seed!

SEATTLE AUDUBON

FOR BIRDS AND NATURE

8050 35th Avenue NE
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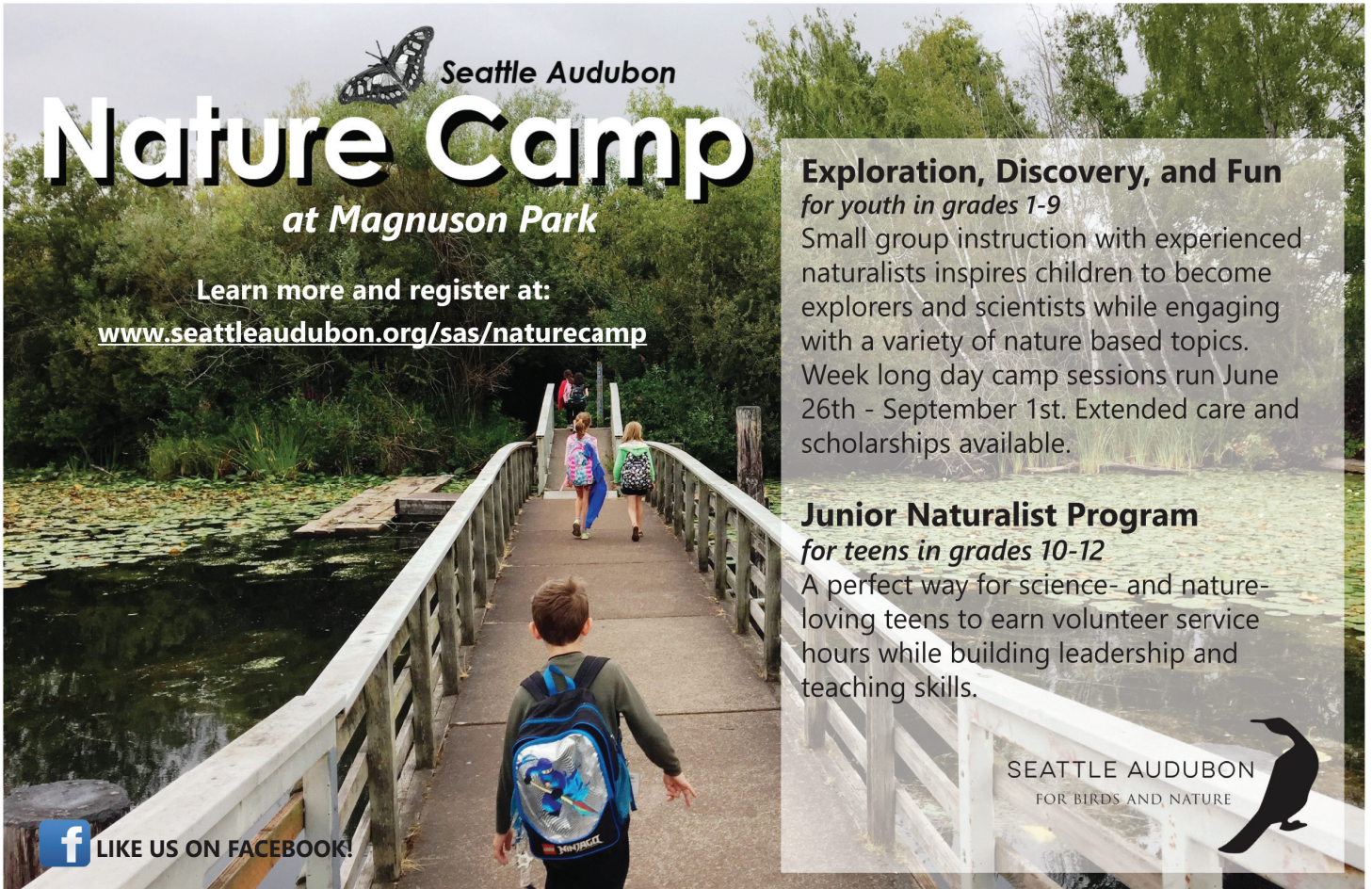
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Seattle Audubon

Nature Camp

at Magnuson Park

Learn more and register at:

www.seattleaudubon.org/sas/naturecamp

Exploration, Discovery, and Fun for youth in grades 1-9

Small group instruction with experienced naturalists inspires children to become explorers and scientists while engaging with a variety of nature based topics. Week long day camp sessions run June 26th - September 1st. Extended care and scholarships available.

Junior Naturalist Program for teens in grades 10-12

A perfect way for science- and nature-loving teens to earn volunteer service hours while building leadership and teaching skills.

SEATTLE AUDUBON
FOR BIRDS AND NATURE



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