

# EARTHCARE

SPRING 2019

## NORTHWEST



WILSON'S WARBLER, PHOTO BY MICK THOMPSON

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

p3

CHRISTMAS BIRD  
COUNT RESULTS

p4

EDUCATION REACH MAP

p5

FLEDGLINGS AND FRIENDS  
STORY TIME ON LOCATION

p7

HOW TO WIN BIRD-A-THON

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SEATTLE AUDUBON SOCIETY

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Even though I'm writing this letter on a day when all of Western Washington is buried underneath inches of snow, I know that by the time you receive it, spring will be right around the corner—and spring is such an exciting time to be part of the Seattle Audubon community.

Highlighted in this issue of EarthCare Northwest, you'll see the impact your support for Seattle Audubon is making all across the region. Of course, our flagship education program, Finding Urban Nature (FUN), is up and running at full speed, but inside this issue you'll get a glimpse into one of our newest and lesser-known programs. Our travelling Fledglings and Friends Story Time is sparking a love of birds and nature within the hearts of our city's youngest residents. Make sure you spend some time with the education programming map included on page 4 too—these are your donations in action.

If you need an excuse to make it over to Wedgwood this spring, our Spring Plant Sale is the perfect opportunity. Read more inside about this time-honored tradition that brings many of our longtime supporters out of the woodwork to gather and catch up with friends at The Nature Shop. While you're here, perusing the plants and used books that will also be on display, don't forget to pay a visit to our lending library. Current members can check out books free of charge. That extra reference material can really come in handy at this time of year, when unfamiliar migrating birds start to return for breeding

season. Speaking of spring migration, I really hope that you'll be inspired when reading about the Bird-a-thon adventures of last year's winning team. I know that I look forward to the staff Bird-a-thon trip every year and I can guarantee that if you try it just one time, you'll be hooked! But if recreational birding just isn't your particular cup of tea, mark your calendars to join us May 8 for GiveBIG 2019. It's the one day a year that our community truly comes together to make our voices heard and lift up the causes that are near and dear to our hearts. On May 8, we'll be giving together for our feathered friends and a greener Seattle.

For 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  
Jill Ericsson  
Stephen Geissler  
Jen McKeirnan  
Kathryn Reniewicki  
Bob Sieh  
Barbara Wright

### STAFF

John Brosnan  
*Executive Director*  
Hanae Bettencourt  
*Education Associate*  
Claire Catania  
*Development Director*  
Anna Dukes  
*Member Services Assistant*  
Rasheena Fountain  
*Communications Manager*  
David Garcia  
*Nature Shop Manager*  
Malcolm Griffes  
*AmeriCops Service Member*  
*Urban Environmental Educator*  
Jennifer Lang  
*Conservation Science*  
*Coordinator*

Melissa Melloy  
*Nature Shop Assistant Manager*  
Joshua Morris  
*Urban Conservation Manager*  
Toby Ross  
*Senior Science Manager*  
Christine Scheele  
*Senior Education Manager*  
Russ Steele  
*Finance & Operations Director*  
Robyn Thomas  
*AmeriCops Service Member*  
*Urban Environmental Educator*  
Wendy Walker  
*Community Engagement*  
*Manager*

# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT THEN & NOW

by Matt Bartels, Seattle CBC Count Compiler & Toby Ross, Senior Science Manager



## 2018 Seattle Christmas Bird Count December 29, 2018

Species tallied: 122 (Christmas Bird Count day + Count week )  
Count day: 117 species  
Count week: 5 additional species  
Individual birds: 46,798 birds  
Observers: 315 (includes 88 feeder watchers)

### Overview

The 2018 Seattle Christmas Bird count was held on a windy and rainy day; however, intrepid CBC-ers persisted and found all the birds willing to be found. Our total of over forty-six thousand birds was lower than average, about the fourth lowest year in the past twenty years. Not amazing, but also not as low as it might have seemed during the day. The count-day species total of 117 was the lowest since 2003, and even when we add in five count-week (3-days either side of the count day) birds, our total of 122 species was the lowest in a decade. The effects of the weather probably overwhelm most efforts to draw trend conclusions out of the results, but it is interesting nevertheless to see how this year compares with others.

### Highlights

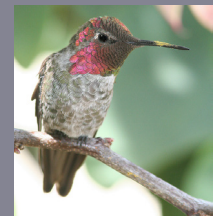
We continue to have strong participation numbers—this was our third year with more than 300 participants. Eighty-eight feeder watchers contributed 2,441 birds, about 5 percent of the total. One feeder contributed the count's only Western Tanager—always a great bird in the winter. In addition, one species was new for the count: a Eurasian Collared-Dove. Considering that over 5,700 Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported in Washington CBCs last year, and given that we were one of the last counts in the state to finally add this species to their circle, this is one of the least surprising new species to report. In Washington, I believe that the only counts without this species are the North Cascades count in the mountains and the ferry trip from Anacortes to Sidney.

The bigger story though were low numbers for many species—at least partially due to the weather keeping the boat party from their usual route. Almost all saltwater species showed very low totals, including ducks, grebes, alcids, most gulls, and loons. On land, the results were more mixed, as the more detailed discussion in the report will note: Many species were lower than average, but some species counts were surprisingly high as well.

Read the full report and species list at [www.seattleaudubon.org](http://www.seattleaudubon.org). Thank you to everyone who took part in the 2018 CBC. Hopefully, the weather will be a little kinder to us, and the birds, for the 2019 count.

## Notable CBC Species Counts in 1938, 1988, 2008, & 2018

### Anna's Hummingbird



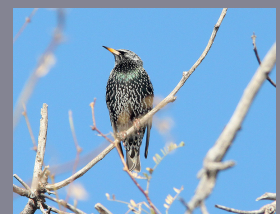
1938: 0  
1988: 27  
2008: 0  
2018: 457

### Bald Eagles



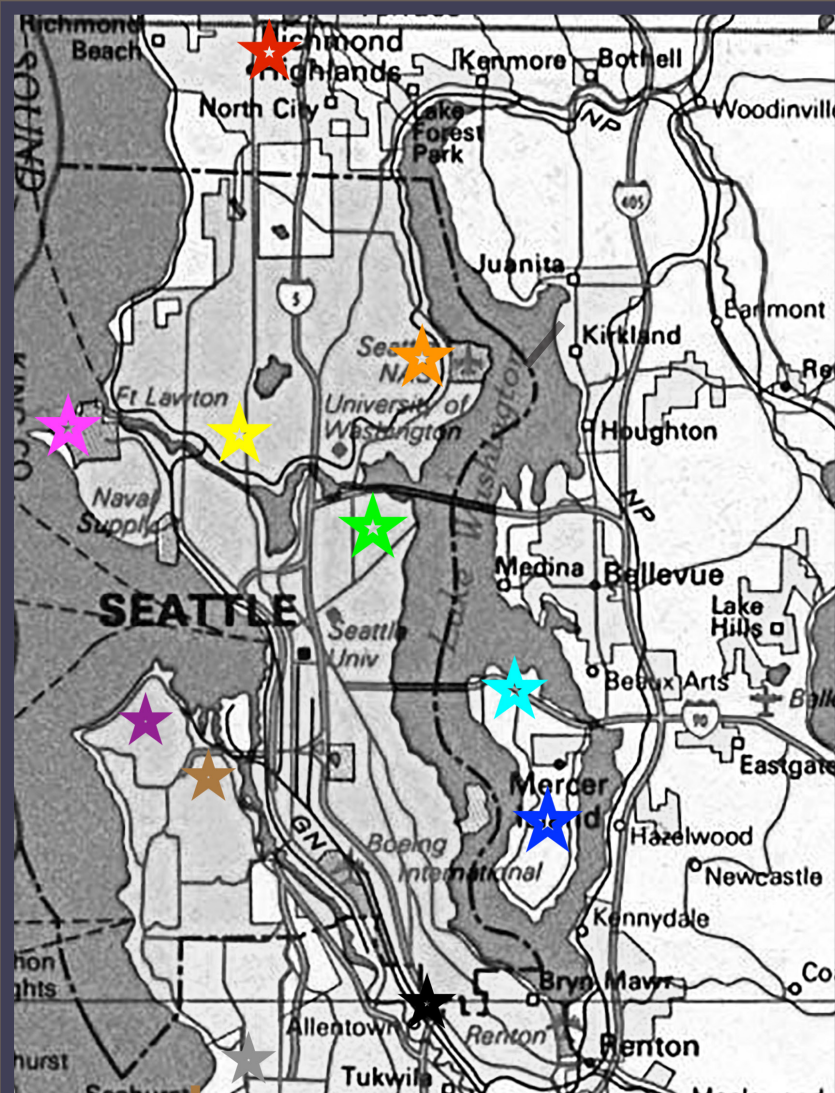
1938: 0  
1988: 8  
2008: 54  
2018: 112

### European Starlings



1938: 0  
1988: 2,976  
2008: 5,303  
2018: 1,157

# EDUCATION REACH THROUGHOUT SEATTLE



## Map Key:

**Red** - Education Kits

**Orange** - Young Birders and Fledglings and Friends in the Wedgwood office

**Yellow** - Finding Urban Nature (FUN) program

**Pink** - Field Trips

**Green** - In-class presentations

**Light blue** - Neighborhood Bird Walks

**Dark blue** - Fledglings and Friends on location

**Maroon/Darker Brown** - Classes

**Lighter brown** - Outreach

**Grey** - West Seattle Nature Camp

**Black** - after school programs

Our Education program continues to expand. The map below shows our educational programming across Seattle and the greater Seattle area, along with the type of program. Whether its educational kits, adult education, public school nature education, or field trips, we have something for everyone.

**West Seattle** (South, near Burien): Nature Camp – Seattle Audubon offers summer camp in two locations: Magnuson Park and West Seattle.

**West Seattle** (Delridge): Community Events – Seattle Audubon hosts community events around Seattle to promote Nature Camp, as well as science and conservation programs.

**West Seattle** (North): Adult Classes – Adult classes are offered at the Senior Center of West Seattle, in addition to the Phinney Neighborhood Center, Lakeside School, Wallingford Community Senior Center, and Wedgwood Presbyterian Church.

**South Seattle** (Near Tukwila): Afterschool Programming – We offer after-school enrichment opportunities to elementary aged students to get them outside learning about birds and nature.

**Mercer Island** (South): Fledglings and Friends on Location – In addition to in-house Story Time, we offer opportunities for Seattle Area preschools to have one at their school. Each story time can be tailored to fit the learning needs of the class and always includes a story and hands-on bird skin observations!

**Mercer Island** (North): Neighborhood Bird Walks, which are offered at public parks throughout the Seattle area and are open to those of all ages and abilities – no RSVP required

**Capitol Hill area:** In-school Presentations – The education team offers in-class presentations in schools for all ages, and can fit the presentation materials to teacher requests.

**Wedgwood:** Young Birders and Fledglings and Friends Story Time – The teen Young Birders program holds monthly meetings at the office in Wedgwood, go on monthly field trip near and far, and participate in service opportunities

**Fremont:** FUN – Seattle Audubon's FUN program, a schoolyard science program for 3rd graders, is currently in 10 schools across Seattle.

**Discovery Park:** Field Trips – Seattle Audubon offers field trip to local areas as well as (much) farther afield.

**Shoreline: Kits** – Seattle Audubon rents education kits to community and school groups all over the Puget Sound area.

SAVE THE DATE

WWW.GIVEBIG2019.ORG/SEATTLEAUDUBON



# EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY

by Hanae Bettencourt, Education Associate

On a sunny April morning in 2016, Seattle Audubon launched an in-house preschool story time, Fledglings and Friends, catered to 2-5 year olds. Eight little Fledglings joined us for a few stories about owls, an owl mask-making craft, and outdoor time, where the participants pretended to be owls and looked for owl food in our native garden. Our time together ended with a short bird walk around the building with toilet paper tube binoculars that everyone got to take home. Since that fateful spring day, the Fledglings and Friends Story Time program has become a monthly Nature Shop event that hosts little fledglings every third Wednesday of the month.

In spring 2017, we expanded the program and have taken it on the road to over a dozen different preschools in the area. The Fledglings and Friends On-Location option allows the education team to spread the love of birds and nature to preschool classrooms all over Seattle. Each on-location program theme is tailored to the requests of the classroom teacher. It begins with a fun story, followed by a game or activity of the teacher's choosing, and ends with an opportunity for the students to see and touch a collection of local bird skin specimens.

We took the expansion a step further this January through a partnership with the Magnuson Children's Garden. Located in Magnuson Park next to the community p-patch, the Children's Garden is a lovely public space with small picnic tables, art installations, and fun, bird-friendly plantings. We piloted the new program by hosting a small classroom of preschool students in the garden for an hour of exploration. Activities included exploring critters in the worm bin, a detective hike to discover what animals are represented in the garden, and of course, a fledgling-friendly bird walk. We are excited to add the Fledglings and Friends Field Trips option to our menu of preschool programming.

Whether we come to you, or you come to us, each story time is sure to please any 2-5 year-old nature lover with fun opportunities to engage with birds and nature with art activities, science experiments, outdoor exploration, and of course, stories. After all, who doesn't love a good story?

If you or someone you know might be interested in participating in any of our three Fledglings and Friends options, contact Hanae Bettencourt, Education Associate, at [hanaeb@seattleaudubon.org](mailto:hanaeb@seattleaudubon.org) or visit our website for more information.



# 2018 WINNING BIRD-A-THON TEAM SECRETS:

by Rasheena Fountain, Communications Manager



Black-chinned Hummingbird, Photo by Mick Thompson



**S**trong will, perseverance, dedication, and a love for seeing birds in diverse landscapes describes last year's winning Bird-a-thon team Toucan Threewill. The team name is a play on the bird name, "Common Poorwill" and a representation of the changing dynamics associated with doing Bird-a-thon for over a decade. And they're really good—like 130 species on one day good. If anyone is "eyeing" their Bird-a-thon trophy, it could be of benefit to know a few of their secrets for Bird-a-thon success.

## **Finding A Good Team, A Cool Name & Top Secret Spots**

So, what is the winning recipe for this winning team? Besides a commitment to the mission of Seattle Audubon and a genuine love for birding, the team members' different styles help create successful

Bird-a-thons. Jan Bragg, a Master Birder, has been doing Bird-a-thon since 1992. The late Kent Slaven was one of her inspirations, a member of her Master Birder program and also one of the original team members, along with Tracee Geernaert.

"He knew great spots to bird in Eastern Washington, and he set up the route that we still generally stick with," Jan said.

Jan's team members over the years have consisted of other Master Birders and Neighborhood Bird Project volunteers. This current team, consisting of Pam Cahn, David Hepp, and Jan Bragg, started in 2008. "Toucan Threewill" was hatched in 2012. The team name is obviously filled with bird puns (Common Poorwill and Toucan), but it is also in reference to their belief that two could accomplish a successful Bird-a-thon, but that three

is ideal.

At different times over the years, a Toucan Threewill member has had to step away from Bird-a-thon due to life circumstances, but the team has stayed committed to the Toucan Threewill mission by either replacing a teammate temporarily or continuing on as two.

## **Balance = Success**

And they have discovered the secret sauce, having won last year's Bird-a-thon, seeing 130 species.

"It's been a good fit, and works well. After doing it many years, you realize you need a certain team chemistry as well as a balance of skills, if you are going to spend 17 + hours in a car together," Jan said.

# TEAM TOUCAN THREEWILL'S TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Team Toucan Threewill

## The Team's Advice:

1. Research your route. Only stop at places where you'll get new species. If trying for greater than 100 species, go to place in Western Washington where you will get species you won't get in Eastern Washington. Then go to habitats in Eastern Washington where you will get unique species.
2. Bring food, drink, food, layers, food, sense of humor, and food. It's a very long day!
3. Try to focus on the birds you see instead of the ones you miss.
4. Write up a story afterwards to give to your sponsors. People seem to like to get a report!
5. Nope, they are not telling you their secret birding spots! (Find your own 😊).
6. Don't expect to win the first year, as success is about building on the experience of past years.
7. Be willing to ask people for money to support Seattle Audubon Society. That's the hardest part. Pick teammates who are willing to ask people for money, even if it's just a few. Jan always asks for pledges per species, to make it more fun.

**Save The Date For  
Bird-a-thon 2019  
May 1-31**

Jan is a dedicated birder, but early morning sunrises are not her preference. So, the Yin to her Yang comes in the form of teammates Pam and David who thrive in early mornings. This mesh in schedules is key on Bird-a-thon day. While Jan slumbers, her teammates David and Pam get a head start, recording birds early, while Jan thrives later in the day.

"And we try to balance things. David used to do all the driving, now we share it. Pam and David have each added to the itinerary. We tweak things every year, more time here, skipping a spot there."

## Embrace Laughter & Learn From the Unexpected

Jan said that David and Pam

make great team members for their ability to spot birds.

"And they both have a great sense of humor," Jan added.

Jan describes Pam as enthusiastic and hilarious. She also self-describes herself and Pam as head-strong women, so David's mellow personality acts as a needed buffer for the team. An example of this is during the long driving intervals, where Pam and Jan go overboard in their pursuit of being accurate in their bird recording. David often sits in the background as his teammates act like crazed, competitive birders, until he can stay silent no more. He points out their behavior—a scene that often crescendos into the team's continuous laughter at the hilarity of their dynamic.

Another funny practice and rule they have added through experience is going to the bathroom at

the same time.

"Because one year I was using the facilities at Vantage when my teammates both saw a White-Throated Swift, which I missed that year," Pam recalled.

"Now we all use the facilities simultaneously!" She said.

David noted that some of Toucan Threewill's memorable moments, including seeing a Black-chinned Hummingbird last year, a Sandhill Crane flying over Union Bay Natural Area, and two Burrowing Owls spotted while traveling at-speed on Interstate-90.

"There's always unexpected species, or glaring misses, which help make Bird-a-thon so much fun and challenging every year," Pam said.



SEATTLE  
AUDUBON

Seattle Audubon Society  
8050 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast  
Seattle, WA 98115

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



[seattleaudubon.org](http://seattleaudubon.org)

Printed on recycled paper  
with vegetable-based inks.

# What's happening in The Nature Shop?

## Seattle Audubon's 23rd Annual Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, April 6 from 10 AM – 4 PM

@ The Nature Shop

While non-native ornamental plants are pretty, plants that are native to the Pacific Northwest are much better at slowing stormwater, sequestering carbon and providing suitable habitats for local bugs—an essential part of many birds' diets! Stop by the Spring Plant Sale to browse our selection of wildlife-friendly plants from a variety of local nurseries. This year we will also be hosting a used book sale! This book sale will feature field guides from around the world and tons of other bird and nature related books. Questions? Call the Nature Shop at (206) 523-4483.