

EARTHCARE

NORTHWEST

Summer 2023



Savannah Sparrow | Susan Holtz | Audubon Photography Awards

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

If there is one thing the past year has taught me, it is that leading with your values is always the right choice, even when it may not be the easiest path to take. Thank you for standing beside us. Your passion and dedication to building a more inclusive bird conservation movement inspires me every day.

Birds Connect Seattle is our future, and it is a bright one. In this first issue of Earthcare Northwest under this new banner, we wanted to showcase the many ways that this new identity weaves seamlessly into our current work. You'll read about humans connecting with each other, birds connecting different ecosystems, and birds connecting people to nature.

As this idea of connection pulls us deeper into our mission, we remain committed to delivering top-tier programs for environmental education, community science, and urban conservation grounded in antiracism. Just as we have been for more than 100 years, we will continue to be here for the birds, and the people who find joy in connecting with them in meaningful ways. Thank you for making it all possible.



Onward,

Claire Catania
Executive Director, Birds Connect Seattle

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Birds Connect Seattle advocates and organizes for cities where people and birds thrive. We envision our local cities integrating and valuing nature, minimizing threats to birds, and protecting habitat. As a staff-led and volunteer powered organization, we value: Inspiration, Interconnectedness, Equity and Inclusion, Diversity, Humility, Collaboration, and Science.



Yellow-rumped Warbler | Mick Thompson

OUR TEAM

STAFF

- Sofia Argeres
Nature Camp Coordinator
- Hanae Bettencourt
Education Manager
- Claire Catania
Executive Director
- Ella Denman
Development Assistant
- Sarah Hankins
Nature Shop Retail Associate
- Mechio Hardeman
Nature Shop Retail Manager
- Kate Lanier
*Urban Environmental Educator
AmeriCorps Service Member*
- Joshua Morris
Urban Conservation Manager
- Glenn Nelson
Community Director
- Carol Roll
Development Director
- Christine Scheele
*Program Director /
Senior Education Manager*
- Sonora Troger
Operations Manager
- Ellie Yamanaka
Community Engagement Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Anthony Floyd
- Jill Fleming
- Andres Hiltbrunner
- Megan Ko, *Treasurer*
- Nathan Maltos
- Jill Naas-Blackburn
- Andrew Schepers, *President*
- Amanda Virbitsky
- Sharon Wada, *Secretary*

EarthCare Northwest Design by Carrie Hawthorne



American Coot | Erik Hansen | Audubon Photography Awards

A NEW NAME FOR AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE

On March 28, 2023, after an eight-month renaming process, we announced our new name, Birds Connect Seattle™, to our members, volunteers, partners, and the broader network of bird conservation organizations at a live virtual event.

Throughout our renaming process, we received feedback from more than 1,000 people through focus groups, surveys, emails, phone calls, and individual meetings.

In January 2023, we convened a Name Selection Committee. The committee was comprised of both internal and external stakeholders, including current and former staff, board, volunteers, partner organizations, and other Audubon network chapters. The committee reviewed the feedback and identified recurring themes of birds, community, conservation, and education.

Initially, 263 possible names were compiled from committee and community suggestions. Then, the committee developed a decision-making process to narrow down names, including ruling out eponymous names, using inclusive and simple language, and re-affirming our focus on birds as the framework for selecting a new name.

Through discussions of the merits and challenges of 50 names, the list was narrowed to 11. From there, the remaining names received an in-depth stress test, and the committee further narrowed the list to three names. Ultimately, the first choice, Birds Connect Seattle, was chosen by the Name Selection Committee, the staff, and adopted by a unanimous board vote.

“Connection” was a concept that was repeatedly raised in our focus groups, surveys, and community conversations. Birds connect people to one another and the world around us in limitless ways.

If you have been following our name change story, and that of other chapters and organizations around the country, you understand that we are at a pivotal moment. As a local and national leader in the movement for environmental groups to do better by marginalized communities, we chose a name, “Birds Connect ...”, that could be used as part of a broader naming convention, should other organizations choose to follow a similar path.

Birds Connect Seattle has now been formally adopted as our organization’s name. The name represents an open door for new communities to join us in our mission to advocate and organize for cities where people and birds thrive.

As Dr. J. Drew Lanham said at our name reveal event in March: “Conservation demands this hard work. Conservation demands this activism. Behind that effort, I think there will be higher dividends that we all reap. Birds and humans of all hues, of all identities.”

Special thanks to our Name Selection Committee for their leadership, creativity, and thoughtfulness through our renaming process: Martha Baskin, Claire Catania, David Garcia, Stuart Gordon, Tykee James, Chris Liu, Susan MacLaren, Melissa Melloy, Glenn Nelson, Chevon Powell, Denice Rochelle, Andrew Schepers, Jeremy Schwartz, Suzannah Yu

THE STORY BEHIND THE LOGO DESIGN



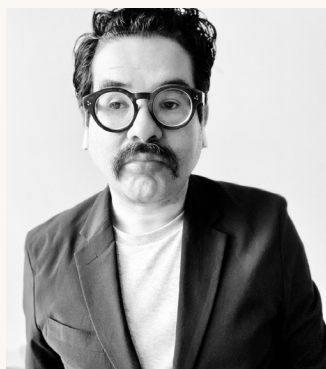
Birds Connect Seattle is proud to introduce a new visual identity for our organization, produced by graphic designer and illustrator Gabriel López. Gabriel has been nationally recognized for his design work. Specifically, his work for immigrant rights in collaboration with El Centro de la Raza has been added to the permanent collection of The Sea Mar Museum of Chicano/a/Latino/a Culture.

In his creation of the original concepts for Birds Connect Seattle's new logo and logotype, Gabriel was inspired by the photography and videography of Professor Dennis Hlynsky from the Rhode Island School of Design. Hlynsky's project, *Tracing the Ephemeral*, featured striking time lapse images of migrating birds tracing the sky. The curved lines of the birds' flight paths are echoed in the shapes of the letters in a custom font Gabriel created exclusively for Birds Connect Seattle.

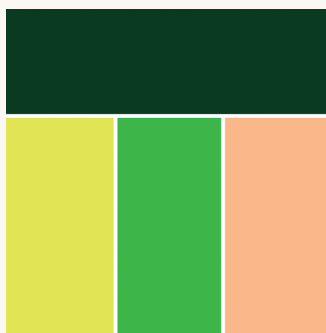
The logo's primary image is an abstract representation of a bird in flight, representing movement and forward progress. The mark also signifies connection by repeated use of the shapes that create the logo. It is a reminder that everything connects, and that the most important things in life are the connections you make with others and all inhabitants of the environment. The geometric forms are an intentional departure from representing a specific bird, generating a call to protect all birds.

Our color palette was chosen to represent a bright future and hope. The primary color is a deep green, evoking the forests of the Pacific Northwest and their beautiful evergreen canopies. This color is immediately grounding and familiar, bringing a calming serenity to where it appears. The secondary colors, while contrasting, also appear in nature. Eagle eyes may recognize one of the shades as a carryover connecting this new identity to our past. A bright yellow-green mirrors the fresh new growth on Douglas-fir trees. These tips stand out strikingly against the forest green background. Finally, the warm salmon brings out the connections birds make between ecosystems on land, air, and sea and the fish that are so important to this region and its people.

Taken all together, like our new name, this new visual representation will welcome more people into our future-focused and inclusive community for the conservation of birds.



Gabriel López, logo designer for Birds Connect Seattle.



New color palette.



Line Birds 2 from Tracing the Ephemeral. Photo by Dennis Hlynsky.



BIRDS CONNECT HEMISPHERES

One of the most profound ways that birds connect us is through the miracle of migration. Birds like the Arctic Tern pass through Washington's marine habitat in their circumpolar migration. A Yellow Warbler can bid farewell to South and Central American immigrants and refugees when they leave and greet them again as summer visitors to the Puget Sound region. Migration is, of course, as miraculous as it is perilous to birds.

We are responsible for making our cities safer for both migratory and resident birds. One way we are accomplishing this is through our Bird-Safe Seattle program, which aims to reduce urban hazards to birds, specifically through greater understanding and prevention of bird-window collisions.

Our Seattle Bird Collision Monitoring volunteers are on the frontlines of this effort. Every spring and fall migration, Birds Connect Seattle deploys community scientists to designated monitoring routes or their own homes and apartments to search for dead or injured birds. After two years of monitoring, we are already learning so much about the threats of glass collisions that birds face in our area. In our most recent project update report, our Urban Conservation Manager, Joshua Morris, writes of his experience finding a dead Orange-crowned Warbler after it collided with a window. "Finding its little body first made me sad. Perhaps this bird, weighing only a few ounces, had just arrived from Mexico. Then I felt angry that this amazing creature died because of architectural ignorance, carelessness, or vanity." We know that birds deserve better.

Through the power of our volunteers and scientific understanding, we will continue to collect collision data through the Seattle Bird Collision Monitoring Project and self-reports on [dBird.org](https://dbird.org). This understanding is a powerful tool for learning what factors may contribute to collisions and how to reduce the risk of future collisions and address problematic architectural features.

Addressing individual buildings and windows won't solve the problem, however. So simultaneously, we are advocating for change with the Seattle City Council and the Mayor's Office. In October 2022, Mayor Bruce Harrell proclaimed the first-ever "Bird-Safe Seattle Week." With more sweeping policy changes locally, we can keep birds safer as they continue to connect hemispheres on their bi-annual journey.

"Last August, a Cooper's Hawk flew into our large picture window. After the collision he flew to a nearby hedge in our yard, shook his head a few times, spread his wings, and eventually flew away. I was shaken up by the accident and attended a [Birds Connect Seattle] presentation to find out what I could do to make my window safer."

—Sally B., Member

BIRDS CONNECT FAMILIES

Birds Connect Seattle's Young Birders brings together a community of teens interested in birding for monthly meetings and field experiences. Each month, professionals in conservation, ornithology, wildlife photography, and even past Young Birders, present their research and experiences to the group. In addition, the monthly field trip allows for hands-on learning and birding experiences, and an opportunity for the Young Birders to connect and build friendships.

The 2022-23 school year brought together the largest group of Young Birders ever, with more than 23 teens regularly participating in meetings and field trips. The teens have enjoyed spotting Short-eared Owls and Bald Eagles in the Skagit, photographing a leucistic Song Sparrow, Wilson's Snipes, and River Otters at Juanita Bay, and experiencing new species together at the annual Wenas Audubon campout in eastern Washington. The Young Birders have spent time in the

field conducting surveys for Christmas Bird Count and Climate Watch. These community science projects provide important data on long-term changes in bird populations.

As a generation, these teens will experience larger impacts from climate change and declines and changes to wildlife populations than any other generation that has come before them. The Young Birders have shown interest in the greater understanding of local bird populations that participating in these community science projects has brought them. When we asked some of the teens why they take part in Young Birders, multiple teens said it was to belong to a birding community with people their same age. Young Birders is more than a birding club, though. We are fostering passion and understanding, which we know often leads to conservation advocacy, and benefits birds, people, and other wildlife.



Nature campers. Photo by Nature Camp Staff.



“Birding has given my family common activities and goals and reminds us to get outside and detach from our devices from time to time.

“I continue to be inspired by my two kids and their own conservation journeys, which first took hold during Nature Camp when they were younger. What started as a way to fill the summer months has changed into their love and interest in birds, and has led me to connect to my kids in different and meaningful ways. Now, family walks in the neighborhood always include bird identification, and trips are planned around potential birds we might see along the way. But more than the pretty birds, they’ve taken to heart the importance of enhancing habitat and how they share that information with others.”

—Anthony Floyd, Board Member



Snow Geese | Mick Thompson

The Pacific Northwest's diversity of its landscape is one of the reasons Washington state hosts such an abundance of resident and migratory bird species. The rugged saltwater coastline, temperate rain forests, the Cascade and Olympic Mountain ranges and foothills, freshwater lakes, rivers, and wetlands, and Eastern Washington's prairies and shrub-steppe, each offer distinct habitat features in which birds have evolved to thrive.

Since 1989, the Master Birder program has been offered as a year-long intensive study of Washington birds for advanced birders. Over the last two years, our staff, and prospective and past Master Birder students, have been working together to carefully consider how to reimagine the program for greater inclusivity and accessibility without losing any of the academic rigor of the course.

Birds Connect Seattle is excited to bring back the program, now called Bird University, in a new format structured around Washington's distinct ecoregions and the birds that inhabit them.

Bird University students will be able to study as many or as few ecoregions as they would like. Formerly taught in taxonomic

order in two semesters, this new structure will provide instructors the ability to teach to their expertise, and students to tailor their learning to areas of Washington that resonate with their lives, interests, and availability. In addition, this approach emphasizes the importance of habitat to students' understanding of bird biology and behavior.

Additionally, this new Bird University curriculum will include new modules of study, including Social and Emotional Field Safety, Inclusion in the Outdoors, and Communicating Conservation, aimed to equip graduates with the skills needed for their roles as inclusive leaders in our local birding community.

All our adult and youth educations programs are designed to increase participants' bird knowledge, develop a sense of wonder towards the natural world, and offer information to protect birds and conserve habitat. Education is also a powerful tool for change. We are excited to see how some of the changes to our Bird University program will open the door to a deeper understanding of birds for a greater diversity of people.



“People tend to be grounded in *Place*; it has deep meaning and creates strong connections. So are birds connected by *Place*, by habitat, by ecosystem.

“When students go to Columbia National Wildlife Refuge after taking the Columbia Plateau class and see Sage Thrashers and Swainson's Hawks, the connection between birds and habitat will be a lived experience, creating a deeper understanding and, hopefully, passionate partners in advocacy.”

—Whitney Neufeld-Kaiser, Bird University planning committee

BIRDS CONNECT COMMUNITIES

Birds make the best ambassadors for connecting communities. We know that being in green space, in the presence of bird song, makes people healthier and happier.

In recent months, Birds Connect Seattle has been deepening our partner relationships doing what we do best—meeting people outside and looking at and listening to birds. Through this work we are breaking down barriers to engagement with historically marginalized communities and busting the myth that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) aren't already outside.

Birds Connect Seattle continues to partner with Golden Bricks Events for their many local events designed to engage BIPOC communities, like Sundaes Outside, Refuge Day, and the Refuge Outdoor Festival. We also regularly lend binoculars to groups like Outdoor Asian and co-lead outings with partners

like QPOC Hikers. Our NextGen Advisory Council, a group of young professionals and student activists aged 18-39, have been leading the charge in events for young adults as well, with special bird walks and a reinvigorated series of our widely popular Beers for Birds trivia nights.

All these communities are brought together by birds. In fact, people don't even need to know each other to connect over birds. Multiple times each month, Birds Connect Seattle volunteers meet up with avid birders and the bird-curious alike in local parks for our Neighborhood Bird Outings. People can make new friends and are introduced to new green spaces and birds right outside their own front doors. Groups can be as few as a handful of people to multi-leader events with more than two dozen attendees. Good humor and a welcoming environment are always in full supply, regardless of group size.



Outdoor Asian on a bird outing. Photo by Outdoor Asian.



“Birds are an important part of our ecosystem and engaging diverse communities in bird watching and conservation efforts can create a shared sense of responsibility for the environment.”

“We value our partnership with Birds Connect Seattle because their antiracist mission ensures that our partnership will be inclusive and equitable, benefiting all members of our community.”

—Chevon Powell, Golden Bricks Events and Refuge Outdoor Festival

BIRDS CONNECT CITIES

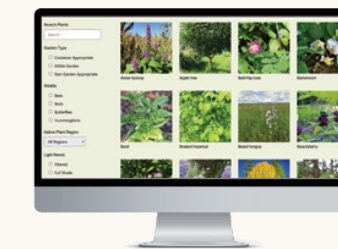
At Birds Connect Seattle, we particularly believe that birds connect cities. This concept is perfectly represented in our work on the Capitol Hill Connections project with our partners in the Seattle Bird Conservation Partnership and the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict. Capitol Hill Connections is a collaborative project to improve access to parks and green space, enhance habitat for birds and pollinators, reduce pesticide use and other hazards to wildlife, and to foster relationships between people and the nature of their neighborhood.

Habitat fragmentation is a major barrier to wildlife thriving in urban areas. The planned enhancements would help connect habitat patches from Seattle University up to Volunteer Park through the most densely populated urban village in the Pacific Northwest.

In the spring of 2023, we launched a digital hub—NatureOfYourNeighborhood.org—to strengthen the Capitol Hill community's connection to local green spaces and increase urban habitat for wildlife. A primary feature of the site is the new plant guide, with a wide range of wildlife-friendly flowers, vegetables, trees, and more that are perfect for Seattle's climate. The website also houses a curated guide of articles, webinars, and information to support gardening, biodiversity, and the wildlife of Capitol Hill.

One cannot have a conversation about urban wildlife without someone cracking a joke about rats. Rats are indeed a fact of life in any city, but you're not going to find anyone here who is “pro-rat.” Well, except maybe our urban raptors, and that's where Birds Connect Seattle comes in. We don't want to see our urban owls and hawks become collateral damage in our fight to control rodent populations. But unfortunately, second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides are not only toxic to rats, they can also weaken or even kill the birds of prey that eat them.

In Capitol Hill and beyond, Birds Connect Seattle is building awareness among the public and working with Seattle Parks and Recreation to implement wildlife-friendly rodent control strategies, like rodent-proof trash cans and non-toxic alternative control measures.



The plant guide enables visitors to search for plants based on garden and plant type as well as wildlife, native region, water needs, and more.



Check out the plant guide, interactive map, resources, and upcoming events.

Cal Anderson Park Plant Sale and Seed Swap Event, hosted in partnership with Capitol Hill EcoDistrict, Black Star Farmers, and SER UW Native Plant Nursery. Photo by Capitol Hill EcoDistrict.



“As we've considered biodiversity in public spaces, we've really focused on the idea of connection and belonging—for birds and for people.”

“When we focus on creating welcoming environments that support wildlife habitat and acknowledge the critical resources that we as humans need—trees, green spaces, pollinators—we all benefit. We also remind ourselves and each other that cities can integrate rather than displace nature.”

—Erin Fried, Capitol Hill EcoDistrict

BIRDS CONNECT PEOPLE

For all they do at an ecosystem level, birds are especially good at connecting people. One only needs to stop into our Nature Shop to see that. More than a retail store, The Nature Shop is a community gathering place. Our friendly volunteers and staff answer questions and provide resources on bird feeding, bird watching, and conservation activities over the phone and in person.

What is that bird drumming on my chimney cap? What do hummingbirds do in freezing temperatures? People want to know more about birds, and they come to us to find answers. Many first-time customers' eyes light up when they walk through the doors. The oasis of our native plant garden and wildlife tree shepherd them into a warm and welcoming environment, where connection and education are the priority over profit—and any profits are for the birds.

The pandemic motivated some reconceptualizing of our physical space in the Nature Shop, too. No longer requiring desk space for thirteen people, with many staff working remotely, we have reconsidered what our building could be and how we might put it to work differently. This inspired the creation of our new Community Classroom.

The classroom is nothing fancy, but its simple form provides us with a flexible, multi-use space that can host in-person classes, meetings, CPR training for volunteers, and other community needs. We have offered the space as a free venue for our partners. So far, it's been used by The Bronze Chapter, a BIPOC-focused outdoor leadership nonprofit, for avalanche awareness training, and by community members to host a Wingspan game night.



Bird walk with Birds Connect Seattle and QPOC Hikers. Photo by Joshua Morris.



“As a Nature Shop volunteer, I find joy in helping people understand a little more about birds, and what drives their interesting seasonal behaviors.

“It is also rewarding to help customers find the right pair of binoculars, a surprise gift for a spouse or grandchild, a bird feeder, the name of the plant in their garden, or directions to great birding sites. I hope that the personal encounters with Nature Shop staff and volunteers reflect the passion we feel for the birds, and the people that our organization is all about. We are excited to connect people to birds each time we work in the shop.”

—Alison Wysong, Member and Nature Shop volunteer



BIRDS CONNECT THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

We may have a new name, but Birds Connect Seattle still has more than 107 years of history supporting us. Founded in 1916, we remain an independently incorporated chapter of the National Audubon Society and one of the oldest environmental organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

A month after our founding, we began leading bird walks and field trips and continue that tradition over a hundred years later. In 1919, we pressed the city of Seattle to establish a bird sanctuary in Seward Park. In the Twenties, we began lobbying to protect raptors, owls, and other birds not protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and we were ultimately successful in 1961. In the Sixties, we lobbied the City of Seattle to make Fort Lawton a park rather than a missile base, and in 1973, it became Discovery Park. In the Eighties, we joined other conservation groups in our decades-long efforts to protect the habitats of the Northern Spotted Owl and the Marbled Murrelet. These are just a few ways our employees and volunteers have historically supported birds and the environment.

The connectivity of this history is everywhere you look. It's in Hazel Wolf's portrait hanging on our office walls, or in the presence of Board Vice-President Katie Amrhein-Dang, who is the granddaughter of longtime Nature Shop volunteer and manager George Johnson. You see it in the former Nature Camper, Ellie Yamanaka, who now serves as Community Engagement Manager for the organization. These stories are everywhere here, and birds are a unifying thread.

We have accomplished so much, and there is still much to be done. Each of the more than 4,000 members of Birds Connect Seattle is essential to building the deep connection between the birds and people in our city through your generosity, advocacy, and passion.

Together we will make our vision—local cities integrating and valuing nature, minimizing threats to birds, and protecting habitat—a reality.



“The organization's rich history of conservation and protecting birds is remarkable, and I'm even more excited about our future.

“Our new name, Birds Connect Seattle, represents the future we are striving for every day—a future where birds and people coexist, connect, and thrive. It's an honor to be a part of this important work as we enter a new chapter and continue advocating for birds and the places we all share.”





—Katie Amrhein-Dang, Board Vice President



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