



Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society
May 2019

Whidbey Audubon Society is dedicated to the understanding, appreciation and conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitats on Whidbey Island and in surrounding waters.

Whidbey Audubon Meets Thursday, May 9 in Coupeville Birding Whidbey Island with Craig and Joy Johnson



Craig and Joy Johnson

Join the Johnsons as they visit 21 on-island locations, showing dozens of interesting bird behaviors and featuring over 125 different bird species. This inspiring one-hour film takes you on a journey from Possession Beach to Deception Pass State Park, illustrating Whidbey Island's remarkable biodiversity.

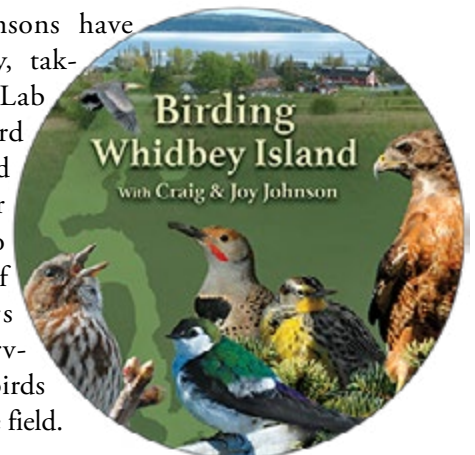
Watercolor artist, photographer, filmmaker and graphic designer Craig Johnson, with his wife Joy, a writer and former early childhood educator, created and published four books containing colorful, close-up photographs of Pacific Northwest birds, most found in the Puget Sound area. Additionally, they have collaborated on two children's books, which Craig illustrated in watercolor. All library systems in Washington State carry their books, plus their first movie on DVD, *Birds and Backyard Wildlife Habitat*.

Upcoming Field Trips

Saturday, May 11: BIRDING IN EDMONDS. Trip leaders are Bev Bowe and Sarah Schmidt. Edmonds resident and bird photographer Bev Bowe will meet us in Mukilteo and lead us to some of her favorite Edmonds birding spots for both land and water birds. Potential places we'll visit include Pine Ridge Park, Yost Park, Edmonds Fishing Pier, Brackett's Landing Shoreline Sanctuary and Edmonds Marsh. Bring a lunch, we'll return mid-afternoon. Meet at 7:40 a.m. at Bayview Park and Ride to carpool to the 8:30 ferry at Mukilteo. Contact Sarah Schmidt at 360-929-3592 or 4bats@ixoreus.com to register. There is no participant limit.

Together, the Johnsons have studied ornithology, taking the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Biology course and researching on their own, in addition to spending thousands of

hours observing birds in the field.



Craig and Joy share a passion for conservation and through Craig's unique skill set and drive, have been able to educate and outreach using many art forms. Since publishing their first photographic book in 2006, the Johnsons have given countless presentations about local birds. For the past eight years, Craig has created and updated a bird education-

Birding Whidbey, see page 6

Join Us!

Thursday evening
May 9

Coupeville

Recreation Hall

901 NW Alexander Street

7:00 socializing
(donations for snacks welcome)

7:15 brief meeting and
Board Elections

7:30 program begins

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 Patty Cheek at pattypipe@gmail.com.

Whidbey Audubon Bird Class Begins in September

We are excited to announce we are now recruiting students for the 2019 to 2020 Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) Birds of Whidbey Class. The primary goal is to improve your ability to identify birds on Whidbey. This annual class gives an overview of avian anatomy and physiology followed by expert presentations about bird life on Whidbey Island.

It meets the first and third Thursday evening of each month, (usually 6:30-8:30) from September through May and the

Birdathon 2019

Birdathon teams are polishing their binocular and telescope lenses and doing pull-ups to increase their upper arm strength as May approaches, with Global Big Day of Birding and our annual Birdathon Competition. Participating teams will record all species they observe on Whidbey Island over a 24-hour period, with the team sighting the most species winning the prestigious Golden Binoculars Award. And for the first time, the Bird Bank Award will be given to the team that brings in the most money (announced at the September meeting when all data is in).



Bob, the bronze Bird Bank, goes to the Birdathon team earning the most money.

You may contact a team member to make a pledge or donation, and we will have a table at the May Audubon meeting if you would like to make a pledge at that time. Any and all pledges help, with the money going into Audubon's General fund or the Scholarship Fund (supporting graduating high school seniors going on to a four-year college with an environmental focus, our future bird stewards!)

Remember to let teams know if you are a Microsoft employee or Boeing employee or retiree, as these businesses will match your donation. All business sponsors will be honored in our newsletter and on our website.

This year's Birdathon teams include:

- The Coupevillains, *Steve and Martha Ellis* (sremse@comcast.net)
- The Fledglings, *Jenny Brown* (jennywahere@gmail.com)
- All for Knot, *Joe Sheldon* (jkseldon43@gmail.com) and *Dave Parent*
- Wild Women of Whidbey, *Ann Casey* (cspcoach@aol.com)
- Winging It, *Sarah Schmidt* (4bats@ixoreus.com) and *Janet Hall* (birderbiker56@gmail.com)
- Shore Thing, *Cathi Bower* (whidbird@whidbey.com) and *Kathy Obersinner*

For additional information, contact Kathy Obersinner at 503-964-0873 or obergage@gmail.com.

instructors lead field trips each month to help you apply the classroom material in natural habitats. This fabulous community class will be held in Coupeville this year and it fills up rapidly, so if interested, please contact David Allen (Vice President of WAS) at dgallen@uw.edu. The fee is \$175 for Whidbey Audubon members and \$195 for nonmembers.

Conservation Column: Updates

By the time this appears, Washington may have adopted a plastic bag ban, passed a 100 percent clean energy bill and will have ended its short legislative session. There may have been last minute hitches or stalls which will delay passage of these measures, but they have been supported in both the Senate and the House and will change our state for the better.

State and National Audubon continue to promote bird-friendly habitats and landscaping with native plants. Did you know that native plants host many times more insects than non-native plants, providing more resources for birds? Did you know that the roots of native plants tend to grow much deeper than roots of non-native plants? You can learn about these issues and

Conservation Updates, see [page 6](#)

Dates to Remember

MAY

3 to 5: Grays Harbor Festival, Hoquiam;

www.shorebirdfestival.com

4 or 5: Birdathon

8: Pigeon Guillemot Training, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Freeland. 6:30 for newbies, 7:15 for returning

9: Whidbey Audubon Program: *Birding Whidbey Island* with Craig and Joy Johnson, Coupeville

11: Field Trip: Birding in Edmonds

11: Oak Harbor Community Birding Event, Oak Harbor Lutheran Church. 1 to 3 p.m.

16: Deadline for June *Shorelines* (last issue until September)

23: Whidbey Audubon Society Board meeting, Freeland Library, 7 p.m. Members welcome

24 to 27: Wenas Audubon Campout.

www.wenasaudubon.org

25: Class: Spring Birding by Ear; 8 to 11:30 a.m.

www.padillabay.gov

JUNE

13: Whidbey Audubon Program: Puget Sound Energy and Avian Protection, Coupeville

North Whidbey Community Bird Event

On May 11 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. the Whidbey Audubon Society is presenting a free Oak Harbor Community Bird Event at the



Specimens of birds and their parts will be displayed at this North Whidbey event. Cheryl Bradkin prepared the exhibit pictured here for the display case at the Freeland Library during April.

Oak Harbor Lutheran Church. A special program at 1 o'clock with Steve and Martha Ellis is designed for all the very curious bird lovers out there who would like to know more about the birds near where they live in Oak Harbor. Following the program there will be exhibits available from the Whidbey Audubon Society Bird Specimen Library for people to pick up and examine. Having a chance to look at birds that are constantly moving around is a challenge, so we have developed a Bird Specimen Collection so it is possible to see a large number of local birds up close and personal. Among the specimens displayed will be Hummingbirds, Woodpeckers, Robins, Hawks and Owls and many others. A falconer with a falcon will also be part of the event.



A visitor to the 2017 Bird in the Hand event observes a mounted owl specimen.

Please join us. Questions? Contact Robin Llewellyn, 360-320-5480.

Dan's Blog: *Water Is Life*

by Dan Petersen with Craig Johnson, #342, March 23, 2019, pedersenwrites.blogspot.com/2019/03/342-water-is-life.html

Editor's note: *Dan's Blog is published every Saturday morning. Type this website into your browser: www.pedersenwrites.blogspot.com. If you'd like to be added to Dan's email list to receive the link to the latest post each week, write to Dan Petersen at dogwood@whidbey.com.*

Much as people enjoy attracting wild birds to their yards with bird feeders, sometimes there's an even better way — water. As spring gets under way, rains will diminish and birds will be looking for fresh, clean water to carry them through the summer.

"Water is life," says my blog partner, Craig Johnson. "Birds are naturally drawn to it, whether it's a

backyard bird bath or a large pond or wetland. So if you're feeding birds, don't forget to offer them a water source. You'll be delighted at what you see, including some species that don't care about the feeder."

To help readers visualize what he means, Craig shared several photographs of birds, large and small, visiting their favorite watering holes. "I've photographed more than sixty different species drinking from our tabletop fountain and bird bath," he said.

"Placing a birdbath next to shrubs or underbrush is a good place to start in attracting more birds, but it is important to clean baths or fountains regularly, especially in spring and summer, when use is heavy," Craig said.



Photo by Craig Johnson

A Black-capped Chickadee and an American Goldfinch discuss bathing etiquette at a tabletop fountain on Craig and Joy Johnsons' deck.

"Just take care not to position any water source in a location where cats can strike. That's vital to birds' survival. No one wants to set up birds for injury or worse."

In addition to backyard fountains and baths, riparian areas are magnets for wildlife. Creeks and ponds provide foraging and nesting opportunities," Craig says.

Dan's Blog, see [page 7](#)

Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

March 31: Whimbrel, on the mudflats, Deer Lagoon, west dike. Low tide...first spotted being chased in flight by a gull. Whimbrel had food in its bill. Then it settled down on the mudflat to scavenge.

— *Mike Sheldon*

April 5: Have been waiting for the White Pelicans to return to Deer Lagoon and this morning, was rewarded with the seeing the first **White Pelican** that I have seen in 2019. Pelican was more in the middle of Deer Lagoon, but slightly closer to the dike on the east side of the lagoon. Could definitely see the pelican bill with binoculars from my house, but too far away to get a photo. Hope this one is the first of many to come.

— *Cathy Donckers*

April 7: Violet-green Swallow on perch by house eaves where they usually nest. I saw him fly by day before yesterday but couldn't get a positive ID until this morning. Location: Lagoon Point.

— *Mary Hollen*

April 9: Whimbrels back in Deer Lagoon foraging with **Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs**. — *Darwin Wile*

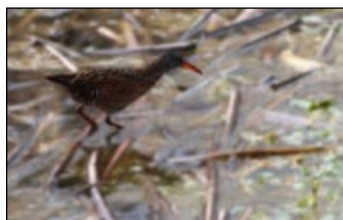


Photo by Carlos Andersen

Virginia Rail

April 12: Osprey, Virginia Rails and **Whimbrels**. Location: Deer Lagoon.

— *Carlos Andersen*

April 13: Two **Golden Eagles** performing a courtship display on the windiest day of the year! Spectacular! Location: Deer Lagoon, the birds were riding wind gusts along the bluffs. — *Darwin Wile*

April 16: Purple Martin adult male in flight over Crockett Lake in the vicinity of the nest boxes — my first-of-year martin. Seen while doing International Shorebird Survey at Crockett Lake; complete checklist posted on eBird.

— *Sarah Schmidt*

April 16: Brandt's Cormorant in breeding plumage. Location: Port Townsend ferry dock. — *Mike Sheldon*

April 17: Caspian Terns back in Deer Lagoon.

— *Darwin Wile*



Photo by Mike Sheldon

Brandt's Cormorant in breeding plumage

April 18: Merlin. Posing cooperatively on a post near the driftwood sculptures. Location: Crockett Lake.

— *Jann Ledbetter*



Photo by Jann Ledbetter

Merlin at Crockett Lake

April 18: One **Pelican** flying in. Location: Deer Lagoon, fresh water side.

— *Barbara Paul*

PLEASE POST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS to the *Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) website*.

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, on your mobile device at www.m.whidbeyaudubon.org or on the *Whidbey Audubon Society Facebook page*.

Birding in Neighborhoods South Explores the Very South End

March 28: For those who have never been all the way down to the very bottom of the Island, we recommend a visit to Possession Point State Park. It is part of the Washington Water Trails parks and there is also now an upper road access parking area — a Discover Pass is required. From the Highway at Ken's Corner, follow Cultus Bay Road for miles and miles, (only about six), continuing on it when it becomes Possession Road, and finally, *before* arriving at the turn to the county boat launch Possession Beach Waterfront Park, turn right onto Franklin Road for .4 mi until it ends at a small parking area. Walk down the dirt road

to the beach, and enjoy the diversity of the maple woods, the stony beach, the bluff and awesome views.

We identified at least 40 species of birds along there — a slightly different 40 than was reported just a few days before at that location! **Black Scoters**, all three **Cormorants** and an Orca pod were the highlights and of course, any day with **Harlequin Ducks** and **Pigeon Guillemots** is a good day. We added another eight bird species over at a quick stop at Ewing Marsh on the way back.

BIN South, see page 6

Field Trip Reports

PSE Wild Horse Wind Farm in Ellensburg

Thanks to Whidbey Audubon Society's 2019 Powerful Partnership with Puget Sound Energy (PSE), our electric utility provider, 20 members had the opportunity to visit the Wild Horse wind farm facility near Ellensburg, on the east side of the Cascade Mountains.

During lunch, Kristin Ashley gave the group an overview of the facility. We then donned hard hats and safety glasses and followed Kristin outdoors for a tour in the base of one of the turbines. We quickly appreciated why the site was chosen, as the wind speed was averaging 25 miles per hour across the 3,500-foot high ridge surrounded by sage brush terrain. We then followed Kristin by car to a more sheltered site, which contained a few ponderosa pine, and despite the 37-degree temperature and a few snowflakes, we enjoyed early alpine wildflowers. We returned to the visitor center to warm up and then headed for the Cle Elum ponds off I-90, where we added to our bird list. The group saw a total of



Photo by Cathi Bower

Leaving the PSE wind and solar facility.

41 species, including **Sage Thrasher, White-breasted Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Eastern Bluebird and Black-billed Magpie.**

We gained an appreciation for PSE's consideration of total energy consumption as well as environ-



Photo by Kristin Ashley

Pictured are most of the group in the Wild Horse Renewable Energy Center. The fellow in the white hard hat, right rear, is a mannequin.

mental concerns in the materials and methods used to construct the wind farm, which currently contains 149 wind turbines, as well as addressing environmental concerns. PSE owns approximately 8,000 acres and is managing the site to improve the sagebrush habitat. The site is open to the public through October 31. Information about walks and other activities is available on its website, pse.com/wildhorse.

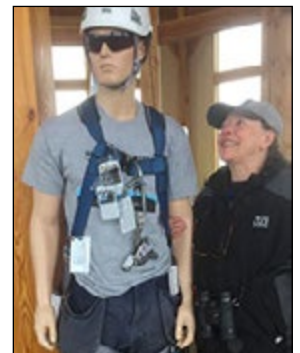


Photo by Prescott

Field Trip Chair Patty Cheek meets the mannequin.

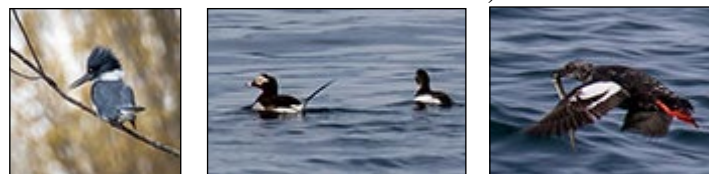
For additional photos and comments on the trip, please visit our Facebook page (@[WhidbeyAudubonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety)).

— Linda Dwight, Trip Leader

Birding Port Townsend and the Surrounding Area

As we boarded the 8:45 a.m. ferry to Port Townsend on April 16, the snow-capped Olympic Mountains were bathed in the morning sunshine exposing their majestic beauty. We took this as a good omen for sure. From the ferry we sighted **Pigeon Guillemot, Rhinoceros Auklet, Marbled Murrelet and Common Murre** along with a pair of **Long-tailed Ducks**.

We arrived in Port Townsend right at low tide and immediately went to view the exposed rocky/sand spit just east of the marina. Here we sighted, **Black Oystercatchers, Dunlin** in breeding plumage and **Sanderlings**, all foraging among the rocks and silt. A small flock of **Brant** flew in and joined the mix flock



Some of the sightings include a Kingfisher, Long-tailed Ducks and a Pigeon Guillemot (in partial breeding plumage).

of gulls and shorebirds

We enjoyed more near-shore birding at Port Wilson and along the Strait of Juan De Fuca and sighted **Red-throated**



Birders aboard the Coupeville/Port Townsend Ferry. Trip leader Ann Casey is third from the left.

Loons, Red-necked Grebe and numerous **Horned Grebe**, all decked out in the strikingly beautiful breeding plumage. A large flock of **Red-breasted Mergansers** were out foraging in the near shore area. And a little farther out in the water, we sighted a few **White-winged Scoters**.

Port Townsend, see page 7

BIN North Cancels Trip to Reifel but Bird News Closer to Home

Marcia Lazoff has been observing the Osprey nest in Dugualla Bay for the last few years, either from the deck of her house or from her kayak. This year she has been concerned because one of the pair has been waiting for the other at the nesting site for over a week *looking south*. Today there was breaking news:

After a week of waiting and rarely leaving the nest site, the Dugualla Bay Osprey #1 was rewarded for patience and faith by the sighting of two small blurs, coming from the south. As they came closer, #1 left the perch in anticipation and began to soar. One of the arriving birds broke away and joined #1 in an aerial dance. They climbed and swooped near the nest, never landing but flirting with the thought. #2's companion from the south continued its flight to wherever, leaving the

pair to their happy reunion. #1 and #2 continued their bonding for a few minutes and then together, landed on the rail of the platform. All was right in the world. When I got up this morning the first thing I did was get my binocs and look at the platform. There they sat, side by side, ready to start the new generation. I am so relieved.

Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) North meets the second Wednesday of the month. To join the group, contact Marcia Lazoff at mlazoff@comcast.net.

Bird and Cruise to Vendovi Island Preserve

About a dozen pairs of Pigeon Guillemots nest and rear their young on Vendovi Island's breakwater spring and summer. Generally, they gather in April, pair-bond in May, incubate eggs in June, feed the chicks in July, and disperse in August. To observe this progression in behaviors, trips are scheduled in May, June and July. In addition to birding, explore the island's forest, beaches, grassy meadows and lookouts on its well-maintained trail system (total two miles, 200 foot elevation gain), and enjoy your lunch with stunning vistas of the San Juan Islands, the Salish Sea, Mount Baker and the North Cascades. The San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT) has owned Vendovi Island (located off the northwestern tip of Guemes Island) since 2010 ensuring its protection. There'll also be time to bird along the way including a stop at the Cone Islands, situated between Cypress and Guemes Islands, where more Pigeon Guillemots nest.

Dates: Saturdays, May 11, June 15 and July 13

Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (about 3 hours on the island)

Group size: four people minimum to 12 maximum (invite fellow birders, friends and family)

Price: \$106 per person; reservation fee of \$31.48 secures your spot, the balance of \$75 per person is due on day of cruise

Departs: from Island Express Charters, Skyline Marina, Anacortes (please arrive at 9:30 a.m.)

What to bring: binoculars, camera, lunch, comfortable walking/tennis shoes and weather-appropriate clothing

Donations: encouraged \$2 to \$5 each for SJPT accepted at Vendovi Island donation box.

Reservations: skagitguidedadventures.com/calendar/; go to date and follow the booking flow

Contact: steph@skagitguidedadventures.com; 360-47-47-47-9

Editor's Note: This field trip is not sponsored by Whidbey Audubon Society.

Birding Whidbey, from page 1

oriented website (pugetsoundbackyardbirds.com) and Facebook page. His seemingly endless creative ideas have energized their joint projects that have connected tens of thousands of people to the wonder of birds. Their goal is to inspire others to appreciate, respect and conserve wildlife habitat for generations to come.

Conservation Updates, from page 2

many more on the [National Audubon](http://NationalAudubon.org) and the [National Wildlife Foundation](http://NationalWildlifeFoundation.org) websites, click on the red text .

Whidbey Audubon has begun a program called We Can Help — offering consultations in your yard about your landscaping, birds, habitats, trees... whatever questions you'd like answered or issues you'd like to discuss. We can help you get your yard certified as a wildlife habitat with several different programs. There is no charge for our visit, although we welcome and are grateful for donations to Whidbey Audubon Society. Our board and committee members have lots of expertise we'd be happy to share. Contact us at backyardconsultations@whidbeyaudubon.org.

— Kim Shepard, Conservation Chair

BIN South, from page 4

April 11: Deer Lagoon was on the quiet side Thursday, but maybe we're just spoiled. 40 species on a pretty decent day is nothing to turn up our beaks at. An **Osprey** did pass through. No sign of the Pelican sighted earlier this week.

We did spend considerable time watching two different occupied **Red-winged Blackbird** nests, and also enjoyed a **Marsh Wren** declaring that his particular construction was the best on all the Lagoon. It is quite visible in the cattails out by the flood gates.

— Cathi Bower, Bird early – bird often

Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) South meets every other Thursday. Time varies with the season. Contact Cathi Bower at whidbird@whidbey.com.

Dan's Blog, from page 3

"Aquatic vegetation and invertebrates, fish and insects allow birds to thrive and raise young," he says. "Important Birding Areas (IBAs) such as Crockett Lake are crucial rest and refueling stations for migratory shorebirds."

"America's second largest bird, the American White Pelican, is impossible to miss when in number," Craig says. "They consume copious amounts of small fish, making Deer Lagoon a hotspot for pelicans and 199 other birds species that have been seen there."

Port Townsend, from page 5

We had an unusual sighting of a group of 19 **Turkey Vultures** flying all together in a group and heading north. I surmised they were migrating to the San Juan Islands for their summer stay.

Our next stop was the Kah Tai Lagoon and there we enjoyed seeing a large flock of **Ruddy Ducks**, along with some **Mallards, Gadwall, Kingfisher, Tree Swallows** and those comic **American Coots**.

We finished the day with a whirlwind trip out to Indian Island and on to Marrowstone Island and Fort Flagler State Park. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and had to head back to catch our ferry home. As we left the ferry terminal we saw both **Brandt's** and **Pelagic Cormorants** atop the ferry terminal's dolphins, displaying their breeding plumage; what a great way to finish our day.

It was a fantastic day of birding in Port Townsend. Our band of adventurous birders saw a total of 58 species and had more fun than a flock of coots!

— Ann Casey, Trip Leader

Editor's Note: Visit Dan's Blog #342 to see more amazing photographs by Craig Johnson.

Welcome to New and Renewing Members

New

Anne Lawson-Beerman and Joel Beerman
Steven Hoekman

Renewing

Ruth and Michael Scrivner	Robin Llewellyn
Louie Shellenberger	Jo Prussia
Sandy Shields (Spotted Towhee)	Tom and Michelle Johnson
Lynne and George Jensen	Diane and John McClain
Eileen and Wayne Clark	Christina and Stephen Kahn
Judy Tomassene (Spotted Towhee)	
Donald Miller and Linda Jacobson	
Shirley Hendricson (Red-tailed Hawk)	
Linda and Gordon Griesbach (Pigeon Guillemot)	
Michael and Ellie Sheldon (Pigeon Guillemot)	
Frances Wood and Bill Graves (Spotted Towhee)	

I will send you an email reminder when it is time to renew your membership.

— Linda Bainbridge, Membership Chair

Whidbey Audubon Society Membership

Please make your check payable to WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY (WAS)
Mail to: Linda Bainbridge, 4459 Towhee Lane, Greenbank, WA 98253

Name _____ **Y20**

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SELECT a Category of Membership

_____ Individual Annual Membership \$20	_____ Pigeon Guillemot \$75
_____ Household Annual Membership \$30	_____ Red-tailed Hawk \$100
_____ Spotted Towhee \$50	_____ Osprey \$ _____
\$ _____ Additional Donation to be used for Scholarships	

All memberships include 9 issues of *Shorelines* annually, a WAS window decal, discounts and early registration in our educational classes.

_____ **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.

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It is Whidbey Audubon policy to never share our membership and subscription information with other groups.*