



# Shorelines

Newsletter of the Whidbey Audubon Society

January 2021

*Whidbey Audubon Society is dedicated to the understanding, appreciation, and protection of birds and other wildlife species and their habitat on Whidbey Island and surrounding waters.*

## Whidbey Audubon Meets Virtually Thursday, January 14 Hummingbirds: Masters of the Air with Connie Sidles

With their ability to hover in place, fly upside-down or backwards and cross seas without stopping, hummingbirds seem immune to the ordinary laws of physics. Their jewel-tone feathers flash in the sun brighter than rubies or emeralds. Their wings flap faster than the eye can see. Their courtship flights defy gravity. These tiny dynamos of the avian world both fascinate and flummox us. Come find out more about one of the fiercest birds in the animal kingdom, as Connie Sidles shows you the wonders of hummingbirds.



Connie Sidles shares the wonders of hummingbirds.

Master birder Constance Sidles is a longtime member of Seattle Audubon's Conservation Committee, chair of the Publications Committee, nature author and University of Washington instructor.



Photo by Gregg Thompson

Anna's Hummingbird



Photo by Doug Parrot

Rufous Hummingbird

Her favorite place to go birding is the Montlake Fill on the University of Washington campus, where you can often spot her sitting on her camp stool watching the antics of hummingbirds. She has written four books about the Montlake Fill and is currently working on a fifth. Her latest book is *In My Nature*, a book about the relationship between wild nature and human nature.

## Scholarships Deadline

With generous donor support, the Whidbey Audubon Society is offering two environmental study scholarships, valued at \$2,000 each, to 2021 graduating Whidbey high school seniors.

Applications for the scholarships can be found on the Society website, [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/scholarship-program](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/scholarship-program), or at a Whidbey high school's counseling office.

Students intending to major in environmental studies or a related field (marine biology, environmental engineering, oceanography, natural resource policy, etc.) at a college or university level, are encouraged to apply.

Completed scholarship applications are due at the high school counselors' office by March 5, (March 8 for Oak Harbor).

— Ann Sullivan, Scholarship Chair

**The meeting will be on Zoom  
7 to 8:30 p.m. (program at 7:30)  
Thursday, January 14**

Her program is via Zoom and begins at 7:30 p.m. on January 14, 2021 and is preceded by a short meeting.

Our monthly programs are free and open to all. If you are not a Whidbey Audubon Society member and would like to attend, please register on our website [whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](http://whidbeyaudubonsociety.org). We'll email a Zoom *join* link to all **members** and **registered nonmembers**. Registration closes at 8 p.m. on January 13th. And, if you are not a member, please consider joining us.

**Hummingbird program, see page 2**



## President's Column: The Window Seat Perch

I am so enthusiastic about *ornithotherapy*. “What?” my husband says. “You mean *ornerytherapy* because it might help you.” Ha! After 50 years together, I know he’s kidding. I recently attended the Zoom meetings of the Crane Fiesta sponsored by the Friends of Bosque del Apache in New Mexico. I was getting up at 4:45 a.m. to watch the cranes fly out. It was so special that I can’t even describe it. There were beaucoup subjects and information to learn. It was an exciting virtual fiesta.

I learned about ornithotherapy from Richard Crossley and his daughter, Holly Merker. They have done a Facebook group together after the Covid-crisis started. The term actually began

in 1979 with Dr. Robin A.J. Fox, a physician in London. His definition was “The simple pleasure of watching birds can be an enviable comfort, while a deeper study of their identification and behavior can add a new dimension to the most despondent lives.” He talked about this interconnectedness with nature and birds and how it helps all of us during difficult times. That was many years before Covid-19. Now there are more people who are interested in just listening to and observing birds. Birds are so charismatic. They’re our closest neighbors and give us solace in our difficult times. They provide joy with their behaviors.

Both Holly and Richard talk about “rebooting the brain” and give daily challenges on how to resynchronize with nature and how to become happier and more productive through these challenges. All of us, as birders, are aware of the richness of this statement. Check their online site, [ornithotherapy.com](http://ornithotherapy.com) or their Facebook group, [www.facebook.com/groups/Ornithotherapy](http://www.facebook.com/groups/Ornithotherapy).

Hopefully this year will give us an effective vaccine and we can return to seeing our friends and loved ones again. I wish you all a Happy New Year and many more rewarding birding adventures.

— Patty Cheek, President

*Would that I were under the cliffs, in the secret-hiding places of the rocks, that Zeus might change me to a winged bird.*

— Sophocles – *Hippolytus*, 428 b.c.



## Sound Waters University

**Sound Waters University (SWU)** will return virtually on **February 6, 2021**, 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. and registration is open at [www.soundwatersuniversity.org](http://www.soundwatersuniversity.org).

Even though in 2021 SWU will be virtual, it remains the same Sound Waters University you know and love, with the highest quality presenters and a dynamic mix of new classes and beloved sessions from past events. Exciting speakers will cover topics ranging from the natural world to the fragile environment of the Salish Sea.

You will have the wonderful opportunity to choose four out of 12 class sessions on the day of the event to interact with, while all other sessions are being recorded. This means that while the live interactive portion of our event only happens on February 6, you will have full access to all class recordings post-event except for *Understanding Treaty Rights From a Tulalip Perspective* by Ryan Miller, which will be live only! View the full schedule here [www.soundwatersuniversity.org/classes/](http://www.soundwatersuniversity.org/classes/).

**Keynote speaker:** Dr. Peter S. Ross, an international authority in the area of ocean pollution, will present, *A Sea of Trouble – Taking Action On Plastics Pollution*, and how to make a difference on this critical environmental concern.

To help us plan our attendance this year, we are offering a discount on attendance if you register by January 15, 2021. Click to [register now](#) to save your spot.

## Hummingbird program from page 1

Members receive notifications of upcoming events and do not need to register for our monthly programs. If you do not see the Zoom-invitation email by mid-morning the day of the program, please check your spam folder. If you still do not find it, click the [webmaster's email](#).

## Conservation Column: Habitat Grants Given

**B**y this summer, there will be five small new spots for Whidbey’s wildlife to perch, feed, hide, pollinate and nest! Whidbey Audubon’s first habitat grant program received many inquiries and the Conservation Committee recommended five proposals for funding.

Congrats to Coupeville Farm to School program, Sunlight Shores Homeowners Association (HOA), Whidbey Children’s Theater, Upper Langley HOA and South Whidbey Good Cheer. These groups will use native plants, many purchased from the Whidbey Island Conservation District, to transform lawns, eroding slopes, weedy fields and bare waste ground into mini sanctuaries for insects and birds. Look for photos on their progress in future *Shorelines*.

— Kim Shepard, Conservation Chair

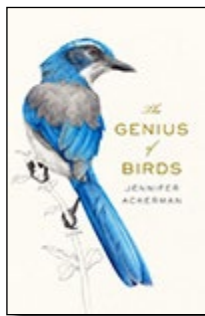
## Whidbey Audubon Starts a Book Group: *Page Peepers*

Wednesday, January 27 from 7 to 8 p.m. is the initial meeting of our book club, Page Peepers. Join us via Zoom.

Our book club hosts are *Mary Bloom* and *Patricia Duarte*. Click the red text to email either one.

Gatherings will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m.

Please register on the *Whidbey Audubon Society website*. We'll send you the Zoom JOIN link the day of the gathering by 5 p.m.



If you do not see it in your email inbox, check your spam folder. If you still do not find it, contact one of our hosts.

Our first book is *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackermann. You may read the book ahead of time or perhaps be encouraged to read it after the meeting. Sno-Isle Libraries has copies

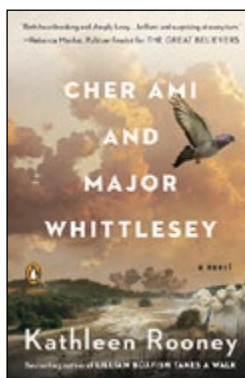
## Book Review: *Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey*

*Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey* by Kathleen Rooney is not a novel for everyone.

This book may not be for you if:

- you're hoping for a distraction from current events
- your personal policy is to not read anything with "animals in peril"
- wars' emotional and terrible realities outweigh the potential lessons learned

But if you can sufficiently compartmentalize imagery of the



grief and loss just one more time, the brilliant observations and captivating story-telling and writing may possibly outshine and outweigh the heart-wrenching tragedy of innocence lost in war.

If the story of *Black Beauty* was written from the point of view of a long-deceased World War I messenger pigeon — well, you get the idea. The pigeon's and the Major's narrative alternate and intersect with one

another. (Did I mention that it's tragic?)

Prolific author Kathleen Rooney based this story on actual events surrounding a particular battle of World War One, and inspired by actual individuals, including the Major commanding the Lost Battalion and Cher Ami, the Homing Pigeon. There are several copies — print, ebook and audio — available through the branches of our local book pushers.

Now that you're ready to subject yourself to the brutal realities of the Great War to End All Wars, during the shortest, darkest days of the year and after the most devastating months of our lives, happy reading to you. I'll be interested in your thoughts.

— Cathi Bower

**Editor's Note:** This book is not on the newly formed book group list. Cathi just thought some of you might be interested in reading it. Book reviews are always welcome for *Shorelines*.

## Dates to Remember

Please check the Whidbey Audubon Society website for more detailed information and how to enter ZOOM for some of these upcoming *events*.

### JANUARY

**9: Way of the Whales Workshop;** webinar, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., [www.orcanetwork.org](http://www.orcanetwork.org)

**14: Whidbey Audubon Program: Hummingbirds: Masters of the Air** on ZOOM with Connie Sidles, 7 to 9 p.m.

**19: Birds 'n' Beer** discussion via ZOOM; 5 to 6 p.m.

**21: Deadline for February Shorelines**

**27: NEW: Page Peepers Book Group,** ZOOM, 7 to 8 p.m.

**28: Board meeting,** ZOOM, 7 to 9 p.m., members welcome. Click [President Patty Cheek](#) to receive the meeting link

### FEBRUARY

**6: Sound Waters;** ZOOM, [soundwatersuniversity.org](http://soundwatersuniversity.org)

**11: Whidbey Audubon Program: BASH: Birds, Wildlife and Aircraft Strikes** with Mike Bianchi on ZOOM


**17: Birds 'n' Beer,** ZOOM, 5 to 6 p.m.

**18: Online Class: Habitats of Whidbey Island** with Dyanne Sheldon on ZOOM, 7 to 8 p.m.

**18: Deadline for March Shorelines**

**24: Page Peepers Book Group,** ZOOM, 7 to 8 p.m.

**25: Board meeting,** via ZOOM, 7 to 9 p.m. Members welcome, click [President Patty Cheek](#)



Whidbey Audubon Society is registered to receive donations for your purchases through Amazon Smile, [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). Bookmark and use your link so you don't accidentally shop at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) instead of [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). WAS has earned \$185.17 from your purchases.

# Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

**November 5: Snow Bunting** continues at Keystone, along the gravel road east of the viewing platform. Location: Coupeville, Keystone Spit.

— *Carla Corin*

**November 6:** I spotted a **Rough-legged Hawk** soaring over Deer Lagoon. Soon a **Northern Harrier** started harassing it and there were mid-air aerial wonderworks. What a thrill to watch!

— *Nancy Van Wormer*

**November 8:** An immature **Northern Goshawk** flushed out of a tree and was followed by a much smaller **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, a double raptor treat for us. Location: Parker Road, Coupeville.

— *Steve Ellis*

**November 8:** A dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk** circling over the marsh at the east end of Crockett Lake on a windy Sunday. Also soaring in the wind were two **Red-tailed Hawks** and two **Bald Eagles** and low over the marsh, two **Northern Harriers**. This was particularly interesting for me as I had watched a light morph juvenile **Rough-legged Hawk** two days previously at Deer Lagoon. — *Sarah Schmidt*



Photo by Kathy Obersinner

Juvenile Northern Shrike

**November 8:** Juvenile **Northern Shrike**. We were walking in the fields at Greenbank

Farm and the shrike flew from the top of one fir tree to the top of another. Confirmation: Sarah Schmitt identified it from the photo I sent her.

— *Kathy Obersinner*



Photo by Carlos Andersen

Snow Bunting

**November 12:** One **Snow Bunting** on gravel road. Location: Crockett Lake, gravel road between main highway and Puget Sound.

— *Carlos Andersen*

**November 17:** Two **Snow Geese** in the field along Ebey's Landing Road. — *Jill Hein*



Photo by Jill Hein

Snow Geese

**November 20:** A lone **Barn Swallow** flew southeast over Coupeville High School. It's somewhat late in the season for any swallow species.

— *Steve Ellis*

**November 21:** Three fun sightings this afternoon. Two juvenile **Long-tailed Ducks** foraging and preening in the pond next to Driftwood Park (east end of Keystone Spit), along with **Buffleheads**, **Greater Scaup**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Mallards** and one **Surf Scoter**. A **Horned Lark** inside the eastern entrance to the spit. And on our way home, a

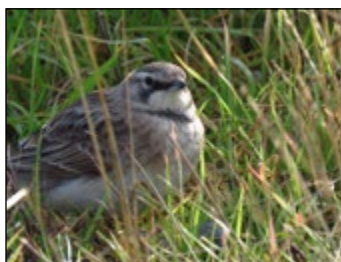


Photo by Sarah Schmidt

Horned Lark

**Northern Shrike** hunting the field on the north side of Patmore across from the T with Keystone Hill Road. It perched in various shrubs and trees around the near edge of the field. A *first* winter bird, without a distinct eye mask.

— *Sarah Schmidt*



Photo by Mary Jo Adams

American Wigeon with an unusual white face.

**November 23:** There was an **American Wigeon** with an unusual white face at the north end of Bos Lake (Swantown) this afternoon. It was swimming among other **American Wigeons** and a few **Mallards**.

— *Mary Jo Adams*

**November 26:** Pygmy or Boreal Owl? Location: Pratt loop trail, Coupeville.

— *Patty Blouin*



Photo by Patty Blouin

Saw-whet Owl

[**Editor's note:** This is a **Saw-whet Owl**, our smallest owl species in Washington. What a fabulous sighting! Saw-whet Owls are known to winter here but are so rarely spotted.

**More Sightings, page 6**

PLEASE POST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS to the *Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) website*. Select the aqua button, "Report a Sighting." You can also submit a photo using the aqua button labeled "Submit Gallery Photos."

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 or on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety](http://www.facebook.com/WhidbeyAudubonSociety).

## Bird of the Month: The Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*)

Welcome to January's bird, the Red-throated Loon! In "normal" years I colead a Loon field trip for Whidbey Audubon Society in January to see a dramatic avian spectacle — hundreds upon hundreds of loons flying in to feed in the outflowing waters at Deception Pass. Small fish run a gauntlet of all three loon species, Red-throated, Common and Pacific, but by far the most numerous is the Red-throated.

Loons are built for fishing, with dense bones, long, streamlined bodies and dagger-shaped bills. Their legs, set far back on the body, provide excellent underwater propulsion but make it almost impossible to walk on land. All species nest on fresh water but most winter in northern coastal waters of both Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Males and females look identical (to us at least). Loons' breeding and nonbreeding plumages are distinctly different. We see them primarily in winter wearing their nonbreeding patterns of gray and white.

Worldwide there are five species of Loons (called "divers" in Europe) with circumpolar distribution in northern latitudes. Although all five have been seen in Washington, three species winter in significant numbers in the Salish Sea and are seen regularly from Whidbey. Most familiar is the Common Loon, largest of the three (32 inches long, 46-inch wingspan, weighing as much as nine pounds). The haunting wails, tremolos and yodels we associate with loons are made by this species. Second is the Pacific Loon (25 inches long, 36-inch wingspan, 3.7 pounds).

The Red-throated Loon is the smallest of the three (24 inches long, 36-inch wingspan, 3.2 pounds) — similarly sized to the Pacific but lighter and more slender. It is the most widely distributed member of the loon family, breeding mostly in Arctic areas of northern Europe, Asia and North America. This loon species is able to spring into flight without first pattering across the water as other loons must do, which allows it to nest on relatively small and shallow ponds inaccessible to other loon species. In North America, it nests mainly on ponds in remote coastal tundra habitat. While most nest far to the north, some breed on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia.

The Red-throated Loon tends to sit low in the water with its thin bill tilted slightly upward. We see them almost exclusively in nonbreeding plumage, grayish above blending to white below, so we are unlikely to see the eponymous red throat. Winter adults sport white faces, necks, flanks and bellies, showing more white than the Common or Pacific. The scientific species' name, *stellata*, is Latin for "set with stars" — referring to the bird's speck-



Photo by Peter Massas

This time of year the Red-throated Loon will look more like this photo in nonbreeding plumage.



Photo from the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife

Red-throated Loon in breeding plumage.

led back in its nonbreeding plumage (only visible up close).

Fish compose most of its diet, but it also eats molluscs, crustaceans, amphibians, aquatic insects and other invertebrates. Its prey is generally captured and swallowed underwater.

When planning a field trip to see the loons I look for a day when Port Townsend high tide is around 10 a.m. The special draw of this field trip is described in the book, *Getting to the Water's Edge*, Third Edition, page 139:

*A unique phenomenon occurs in winter, when Red-throated Loons from throughout the region gather to feed at the maximum outflow from Deception Pass. During the months of December to March, approximately thirty minutes before scheduled high tide at Port Townsend, watch from West Beach and North Beach as hundreds of red-throated loons, as well as Pacific and Common Loons, Cormorants, Mergansers, Pigeon Guillemots and gulls feed in the current flowing out through Deception Pass. The loons gather in long lines offshore, then fly in to feed, drifting out and returning, until, sated, they once again gather offshore before dispersing.*

The goal is to catch the current as the outflow through Deception Pass picks up speed on the ebb tide. This apparently coincides with an abundance of small forage fish, particularly surf smelt. To my knowledge there has been no scientific study of what draws the mass numbers of birds, but one hypothesis is that the reverse in flow brings an outwash of plankton that attracts small fish, and these in turn attract the loons and other diving birds.

I encourage you to look for the Red-throated Loons this winter. If we weren't avoiding field trips because of Covid-19, I would be offering a loon field trip the morning of Saturday, January 23, when Port Townsend high is at 10:46 a.m.. You can have more flexibility planning your own trip around the weather as well as the ebb tide. The actual timing of the feeding frenzy varies, with maximum numbers sometimes earlier or later than predicted. Patience is rewarded.

The loons are unlikely to be close to shore, so binoculars are essential and a spotting scope is highly recommended. Park at the north end of West Beach parking lot in Deception Pass State Park. Check the big rock just offshore for Black Oystercatcher and Harlequin Duck. Out on the water of Rosario Strait look

## More Sightings from page 4

**November 29:** Four to six small groups of **Clark's Grebes** ranging from two to six birds. Location: Holmes Harbor.

— *Darwin Wile*

**November 30:** **Rough-legged Hawk** soaring above the fields at the east end of Crockett Preserve. — *Jill Hein*

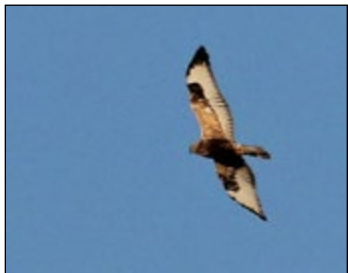


Photo by Jill Hein

Rough-legged Hawk

**December 1:** **Sharp-shinned Hawk** perched on suet feeder for over ten minutes. Location: Green Road, Oak Harbor. — *Vincent Ho*

**December 2:** **Clark's Grebe.** Multiple **Clark's/Western Grebes** well out from shore, along with plenty of **Horned** and some **Red-necked.** Iden-

tification was difficult even with scope because of distance but some clearly had the brighter yellow bill and lighter flanks of Clark's. Location: Holmes Harbor.

— *Brian Kenney*



Photo by Linda Griesbach

Common Mergansers

**December 6:** Several **Common Mergansers** (up to 11 male, a few female) on Lone Lake seen the last week or so.

— *Linda Griesbach*

**December 10:** **Cackling Geese:** A tight-packed flock of over 400 grazing in the field across from Lake Ralph, the first large field on the east side of Terry Road south of Coupeville. Not a rare occurrence, but it's a treat to see and hear Cacklers. — *Sarah Schmidt*

**December 12:** A **Red-naped**

**Sapsucker** came to our suet feeder. This is only the second or third I've seen on the island. Location: Parker Road, Coupeville. — *Steve Ellis*



Photo by Steve Ellis

Red-naped Sapsucker

**December 19:** Adult **Barn Owl.** Location: Pacific Rim Institute. — *Joseph Sheldon*

**December 19:** We heard a **Northern Pygmy Owl** tooting and trilling from a high perch. We couldn't locate the bird because it was practicing ventriloquism, throwing its voice around. It was the double toot and was certainly *not* a Northern Saw-whet owl. Location: Near the camp-

ground at Fort Ebey State Park. — *Steve Ellis*



Photo by Sarah Schmidt

Glaucous-winged Gull with red band on its leg.

**December 20:** **Banded Glaucous-winged Gull** from Alaska! While watching six **Sanderlings** at Snakelum Point, we noticed that one of the gulls they foraged beside had leg bands. The red band on its right leg read "J80". I filed an online report with US Geological Survey (usgs.) Within 24 hours I received a certificate; that gull was banded on April 14, 2016 near Cordova, Alaska. I never suspected that some of "our" gulls travel that distance.

— *Sarah Schmidt with Bill Rick*

## BIN South Spots Snow Geese and Short-eared Owl

**November 5:** As distractions go, last week really filled the bill, so to speak. In spite of the threatening weather, the few of us who braved it, dodged the rain out at Deer Lagoon that morning. We identified the usual suspects, searched for a Short-eared Owl, but haven't seen it yet and weren't particularly surprised by anything, except for not getting wet. We did hear a **Fox Sparrow** singing, which is not something you hear every day, even when they've come back for the winter. Of course, it never gets old watching the hundreds of **ducks** doing their ducky things out there.

We saw and/or heard at least 39 species.

**November 19:** Apologies for the small fib about the forecast today. Deer Lagoon was fantastic! (Because there is no bad weather — only inappropriate clothing).

A half dozen of us (exactly as it should be right now) enjoyed an invigorating morning on the dikes.

A highlight among the mostly expected species, were three

immature **Snow Geese** who were joined-at-the-wingtips, foraging and floating and generally producing much oohing and ahhhhing from the Birders. Unlike viewing them among thousands out in the Skagit fields, these youngsters really stood out with their stripey, unfinished plumage and their sweet faces. They were so pretty, I'd entertained the thought that they were young Ross's, but thankfully there are photos by which to rein in our memories and imaginations. We noted how they hung with the **Wigeons**, due to their feeding preferences, rather than — say — gulls, with whom they would have blended in. Much **Eagle** action sent everyone flapping from one side of the Lagoon to the other and back again.

Among the hundreds of Wigeons and others, we did spy one **Eurasian Wigeon!** The sunlight really made that striking copper head clearly flash among the rest, and we noted that it was the first that any of us had seen this season. Could not miss it in the

**BIN South, see page 7**

## BIN North Enjoys the Real and the Not So Real

**November 11:** Our group decided to check out Price Sculpture Forest south of Coupeville on Parker Road as well as visiting a couple of birding spots nearby. Price is a sensory treat, both for the sounds of birds such as a Raven, Northern Flickers, Black-capped Chickadees and Bushtits, and for the sight of bird sculptures like the Great Blue Heron, Albatross and Soaring Eagle. If you haven't visited yet, time to go! We also stopped at Thomas Coupe Park where we saw **Double-crested Cormorants, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Horned Grebes** and **Surf Scoters**. Our last stop was at the parking area on Madrona Way where we saw **Pigeon Guillemots, Red-Breasted Mergansers, White-crowned Sparrows** and a **Belted Kingfisher**. Without Linda's new scope, our sightings would have been sparse. In all, we saw or heard 24 species, including the not so real.

— *Marcia Lazoff*

**Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) North** usually meets the second Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. The group is following county and state guidelines for Covid-19. Contact *Marcia Lazoff* to be added to the email list.



Photo by Kim Shepard

BIN North group meets albatross at Price Sculpture Forest.

## BIN South from page 6

sun, so we decided that they had been there all along, but so far we'd only had grey light on them.

We saw and/or heard at least 50 species, also including several different **Gulls**, a **Wilson's Snipe**, a couple of **Northern Harriers** and very close looks at **Green-winged Teals, Gadwalls** and **Pied-billed Grebes**. And the **Brants** are back.

**December 3:** If you haven't treated yourself to a **Short-eared Owl** sighting, make a point of it. (The "Queen Anne" Snow Owl has nothing on *our* Island Shorties.) This time of year, there are a few regulars up at Crockett Lake, and if we are very lucky, one may be spotted at Deer Lagoon, as during Thursday's visit. It does not get much better than that.

We saw and/or heard at least 53 species and another dozen from Birders at Home on the south end, including a few who didn't know they were playing. Among the *ebird* lists during Thursday morning, there was a **Hutton's Vireo** heard near Clinton.

**December 17:** It's the time of year that even a relatively quiet bird morning is a reward and a relief when the weather cooperates. Lone Lake was lovely and still and we mostly stayed dry.

At the boat launch, about a third of the species identified was a wonderful variety of **ducks**. **Ruddy Ducks** are a favorite, but that's not to minimize the wonder of the **Mallards, Gadwalls, Buffleheads, Ring-necked Ducks, Teals, Wigeons, Mergansers, Coots** or the **Lesser Scaup**. We enjoyed a watching **Cooper's Hawk** perched in a snag for quite a time, apparently having recently dined, as it ignored the 100s of **Siskins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Starlings, Pigeons, Chickadees** and **Juncos** all around it.

Later, at the south end of the lake, we added another few species, for a total of 35 for the morning. That does not include the Guinea Hen walking around by Apollo Drive.

Peace to you, however you find it.  
And Go Hawks.

— *Cathi Bower. Bird early – bird often*

**Birding in Neighborhoods (BIN) South** meets every other Thursday and has also started a Birding at Home group. Click to contact *Cathi Bower* for more information. The group follows county and state guidelines for Covid-19

## Red-throated Loons from page 5

for the white specks of hundreds to thousands of Red-throated Loons, waiting to fly in.

Walk to the northwest point of land and watch for loons streaming in like flying white darts, highlighted against the dark trees and rocky shore of Deception Island half a mile away. Most often the loons congregate across towards the north shore of Deception Pass. Watch how they land. Unlike ducks, loons' feet are too far back to use as landing gear, so they slide in on their bellies with wings lifted for control.

If you are there when the sun shines, light reflected from the Red-throated Loons will catch the eye like a white flag, whether they are in flight or on the water.

If you do a personal Loons field trip, I'd love to hear how it turns out [click Sarah's name below to email her].

— *Sarah Schmidt*

## Dan's Blog: A Few Lessons from the Birds

**Editor's note:** As of January 2, 2021, Dan's Blog will be published occasionally instead of every Saturday morning. Type this website into your browser: [www.pedersenwrites.blogspot.com](http://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 Pedersen at [dogwood@whidbey.com](mailto:dogwood@whidbey.com).

Backyard birds may be scarcer this time of year, but they don't take the winter off. They are focused on what they must do to survive till spring. For Craig Johnson, the birds are a lifeline for the human spirit when the world's cares pile up, and they show us what really matters. See more on Blog #429 from November 21, 2020: [pedersenwrites.blogspot.com/2020/11/429-few-lessons-from-birds.html](http://pedersenwrites.blogspot.com/2020/11/429-few-lessons-from-birds.html). — Dan Pedersen

Birds keep their focus on what's important. This time of year in Puget Sound they're looking for enough nourishment to live through days and nights that dip below freezing. In a few months they'll be even busier gathering food, attracting a mate, building a nest, raising young and teaching them to get along in an alien (human) world that

presents many challenges. Watching them, I can't help thinking about our human condition and what the birds can teach us about priorities. [See the entire article online.]

— Craig Johnson

**Editor's Note:** Dan's Blog was previously published every Saturday morning. However, Dan Pedersen has decided to write his blog "every now and then."

We at Whidbey Audubon thank Dan for graciously allowing us to share part or all of his blog posts on birds. Along with Craig Johnson's photographs and comments, the articles have definitely helped to educate as well as bring pleasure to our members.



Photo by Craig Johnson © 2020

Golden-crowned Kinglet.

## Welcome New and Renewing Members

### New Members

Mike Huwe & Karyn Smith	Gigi Wickwire	Marla Herbig	George Sanders	Priscilla Capelle Haehn
Michelle Privat	Dana Zia	Katie Cumming	Helen Mosbrooker	Peter Gurney
Obermeyer	Leslie Duffy	Georgia Bennett	Jean Roberts	Victoria Henderson
Mark & Elizabeth Johnson	Elaine Higbee	Kathy West	Jennifer Megara	Susan Parke
Frank Worster & Deborah Dix	Verena Steffen	Kaili Plummer-Slate	Janice Gibson	Becky Mansfield
Kathy Kundert	Connie Veldink	Janet Burton	Judy Lantor	Misty Cain
Satnam Gfeller Family	Kerry Valentine	Linda Sovie	Sally Vongsathorn	Lynn Reinecke
Jordan Belcher	Barbara Simonsen	Annie Thoe	John Dwight	<b>Spotted Towhee level</b>
Marnie Isaacs	Don Appel	Cara Appel	Nancy Lamb	Lynne Taylor
Marie Dryden	Bob Appel	Doris Small	Marie Kadel	FJ Lepla
Amanda Buse	John Williams	Donna Gould	Frederick Matsen	<b>Red-tailed Hawk level</b>
Penelope Bourk	Nancy Pobanz	Daniel Dorsey	Mary-Thadia d'Hondt	James Dwight
Erin Neilon	Magda Hitzroth	Denise and Dan Marion	Mindy Norris	
	Jeanette Lund	Eleanor Sergi	Olivia Davis	
	Susan Yates	Andrew Buhr	Rodger Burnett	
	Joanne Burtch	Jill Blakeway	Rexalena Cooper	

### Renewing Members

Ann Sullivan	Toni Schinnerer	Janet & Blair Paul	Dave and Cathy Parent	Steve & Nancy Johnson
Beth Heffernan	Linda Mattingly	Karen Posner & Frank Ruggier	Cynthia Barrett & Karen L. Johnson	Suzannah Dalzell
Charlotte Ginn	Judy & Lyall Bishop	Margie & Gary Parker	<b>Red-tailed Hawk level</b>	<b>Osprey level</b>
Karen Brooks	Carlos & Toni Andersen	Mark & Susan Bigger	Colleen Fox & Marie Shaw	Christie Hammond
Lori Reiter	Lance Porter & Vivian Stembridge	Martha & Vern Olsen	Ed & Martha Hollis	David Earp & Louise Abbott
Mary Bloom	Stu Ashley & Linda Dwight	Sam Wolfe & Marilyn Strayer	Jo Reeves & Cathy Darracott	<b>General Fund</b>
Mary Jo Adams	Jan-Olof Johansson & Susanne Ohrvik	John Hastings & Robin Obata	Mary Jo Stansbury	<b>Donation</b> in the name of Roy and Betty Branson, made by Paul Branson
Susan Berg	<b>Spotted Towhee level</b>	<b>Pigeon Guillemot level</b>	Miriam Nack	
Rob Harris	Brian & Jan Martin	Sharon Vanderslice	Sally & Tom Cahill	
Julia Thompson				
Joan Lamphier				
Jay Adams				



# Online Education Class: The Habitats of Whidbey Island

Thursday, February 18

7 to 8:30 p.m.

Join Whidbey Audubon Society (WAS) member Dyanne Sheldon to discuss the variety of **Habitats of Whidbey Island** and how their features influence which birds use each through the year.

This one-hour Zoom class will explore the characteristics of forests, open lands, fresh water and saltwater/shore habitats from the perspective of bird utilization. Advance your birding skills by learning about how habitat characteristics influence what you're likely to see. Locations for accessing public lands with particular habitat types will be discussed as well as what birds are often found in these locations. Additional time will be provided to ask questions and engage directly during the session.

Dyanne Sheldon is a retired restoration ecologist and wetland biologist who worked in Washington State for 25 years. Her professional focus was on wetland science and management, but as a birder and natural historian she is well acquainted with the various habitats of the Pacific Northwest. Dyanne is a long-time resident of Whidbey Island, Whidbey Audubon member and instructor for the WAS Birds of Whidbey Class series.



To register — visit “Events” on the [WAS website](#) [click the red text to connect]. This class is open to all (WAS members and nonmembers) for a donation of \$12, which will include access to a recording of the class after the event. (If you are interested in the class but unavailable at the time, you may register and access the recorded version later).

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## Whidbey Audubon Society Membership

Please make your check payable to **WHIDBEY AUDUBON SOCIETY (WAS)**

Mail to: Jann Ledbetter, 1112 Maple Place, Coupeville WA 98239

Or pay online with PayPal or a credit card, [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org/membership)

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*The Whidbey Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible.  
It is Whidbey Audubon policy to never share our membership and subscription information with other groups.*

# Whidbey Audubon Society

Whidbey Audubon programs are 7 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month except December, July and August

Meetings are conducted virtually this year using ZOOM, register at [www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org](http://www.whidbeyaudubonsociety.org)

## Whidbey Audubon Board and Committee Chairs 2020-2021

President.....	Patty Cheek
Immediate Past President.....	Sharon Gauthier
Vice President.....	Dave Allen
Secretary.....	Cathy Queeno-Wall
Treasurer.....	Sheri Croll
Programs.....	OPEN
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Field Trip Chair.....	OPEN
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Board Member-at-Large.....	Dave Krause
Board Member-at-Large.....	Kathy Obersinner
Christmas Bird Count North Chair.....	Jay Adams
Christmas Bird Count South Chair.....	Govinda Holtby
Birdathon.....	Kathy Obersinner
Scholarship Committee.....	Ann Sullivan
Hospitality Chair.....	OPEN
Newsletter Mailing.....	Marcia Lazoff
Specimen Library.....	Robin Llewellyn

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Thursday, January 14

7 to 8:30 p.m. via Zoom

## Hummingbirds: Masters of the Air with Connie Sidles

Wednesday, January 27

New Book Group

## Page Peepers begins reading

*The Genius of Birds*  
by Jennifer Ackermann

Whidbey Audubon Society

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Oak Harbor, WA 98277