



Washington Ornithological Society

WOSNews No. 192 August - September 2021

From the Board

WOS Conference Prep & Board Race Along

Kim Thorburn

The board is on a summer hiatus from meetings but not from keeping WOS chugging. Under the leadership of President Jennifer Kauffman with support from an engaged board, we continue to implement organizational practices to strengthen WOS, everything from ensuring there are requisite policies to advancing our presence on social media. Of course, the exciting, upcoming joint state conference with Oregon and preparing an outstanding slate of nominees for the fall election have consumed much time.

The much-awaited bi-state conference is on for COVID-vaccinated members from September 16 to

19, 2021 in Astoria, Oregon. As of this writing, 85 WOS members were registered and Friday field trips were nearly full. WOS members are encouraged to come to the Friday, September 17, evening general membership meeting for an update on your organization and to recognize outstanding contributions to Washington birding in the presentation of Zella M. Schultz Lifetime Achievement and Patrick Sullivan Young Birder Awards.

The conference keynote speaker is Dr. John Fitzgerald, Director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. His talk is entitled "Wild Birds Are Now the

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Tracking Expansion of the California Scrub-Jay Into the Pacific Northwest

Steve Hampton

The California Scrub-Jay is generally associated with dry oak woodlands, where it is prolific in caching acorns. It is adaptable, and small sub-populations occur away from oaks in habitats dominated by pinyon, mountain mahogany, pine-spruce forests, and even mangroves. The jay, of course, also thrives in human-altered landscapes, such as residential areas, where some of its highest densities in California have been documented (Curry et al 2020).

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The Washington Ornithological Society was chartered in 1988 to increase knowledge of the birds of Washington and to enhance communication among all persons interested in those birds. WOS is a nonprofit educational organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code.

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Board, Conference Prep Race Along (cont.)

Canaries and Our Planet Is the Coal Mine:” Bird populations are barometers of our planet’s health and birders play a huge role in measuring the changes.”

The board reminds all WOS members to vote in our upcoming election for officers and board members. All officer positions have one-year terms and are on the ballot. Three board positions (two-year terms) are on the ballot. Information about candidates is on the website and on the next several pages in this newsletter. Online voting will commence on September 6, 2021. Terms begin in October of this year.

Treasurer Grace Oliver is not running for a third term. She will be missed for her keen eye on the organization’s finances and the improvement of their administration and oversight. As a departing bonus to WOS members, Grace spearheaded a new benefit: subscription access to Cornell’s *Birds of the World*. At an anticipated start date of October 1, 2021, there will be a WOS portal on the *Birds of the World* website. Members’ emails will be their user id. When the portal is live, WOS will send the link and password for access. Members may opt out of the access. It is not Cornell’s policy to share email addresses. The only application is user id log-in access and updates notifications.

The board has been attentive to progressing diversity, equity, and inclusion within WOS and the birding community. Recently, a potential member pointed out that our website did not seem wel-

coming to people from outside the typical birding community, i.e., mostly white, many closer to or in retirement than at career beginnings. We took a small step and prepared a statement about inclusivity for our website.

The board has also decided that it is time for the organization to become more engaged in the Patrick Sullivan Young Birders’ Award whose purpose is to advance our efforts toward greater inclusivity by encouraging and recognizing young birders. Initiated with an endowment from Andy and Ellen Stepniewski and Tom Mansfield who have dedicated years to managing the program, the founders have sought others to step in. A group of board members and other volunteers has set up a blueprint to broaden access to the Young Birders’ Award to a variety of communities and enhance the visibility of the opportunity. We have also decided to devote a portion of the organization’s reserves to the effort.

If the report has your head spinning a bit, it’s always important to note that WOS operations are dependent on all volunteers who include far more than the officers and board members. Without tireless member contributions, we would not have monthly meetings and presentations, a newsletter, a website, ad hoc committees, bird records, field trips, conferences, and a reputable presence of birders in Washington. I think that I can safely say that our board and officers are honored to serve.

Oregon Pelagic Tour Registration Is Now Open

Spend a day on the Pacific Ocean searching for many species seldom seen from the shore. Oregon Pelagic Tours will offer a seagoing trip out of Ilwaco, on both Saturday Sept. 18 and Sunday Sept. 19 (time TBD), in coordination with the Washington Ornithological Society and Oregon Birding Association annual conference.

Registration will be handled by Oregon Pelagic Tours separately from conference registration, with the \$200 fee to be paid directly to Oregon Pelagic Tours. Trip capacity is 18 participants. Target species (likely, but not guaranteed) include Black-footed Albatross; Sooty, Pink-footed and Buller’s Shearwaters; Northern Fulmar; Sabine’s Gull and other gulls; Arctic Tern; Tufted Puffin; Rhinoceros and Cassin’s Auklets; Red and Red-

Registration information is on the Oregon Pelagic Tours website: <http://www.oregonpelagictours.com/>

necked Phalaropes; and up to three cormorant species. Marine mammal possibilities include Harbor Porpoise, Dall’s Porpoise, Pacific White-sided Dolphin, Humpback and other whales; and Steller’s Sea Lion. These trips will do their best to spend time in both Oregon and Washington waters. Registration information is on the Oregon Pelagic Tours website; check there for the latest updates.

Meet the Candidates for the WOS Board

Voting for new board officers and at-large members will open at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, September 6 and will close on Monday, September 27 at midnight. A link to the ballot will be provided on the WOS web site beginning September 6.

The candidates are as follows:

President – Jennifer Kauffman
Vice President – David Armstrong
Secretary – Jon Houghton
Treasurer – Bob Schmidt
Board Member – Ed Pullen
Board Member – Matt Yawney
Board Member – David Kreft

President Jennifer Kauffman, Vice President David Armstrong and Secretary Jon Houghton are running for second one-year terms. Grace Oliver served two years as treasurer and is departing. Bob Schmidt is running for that position. Continuing Board Members Kim Thorburn and Jason Fidorra will be starting the second year of their two-year-terms so won't be included in this election. Bob Flores has served two terms and will leave the board. David Kreft is a candidate for that position. Ed Pullen is running for a second term. Matt Yawney has completed the last year of Will Brooks' term and now will run for a two-year term.

On the ballot page, you will have a chance to either vote for the candidates listed on this page or enter another person's name.

Jennifer Kauffman – President

Jennifer has served as WOS president for the past year and is running for a second term. She is looking forward to continuing work with fellow Board members on conference planning and building membership in eastern Washington. Jennifer served as WOS Vice President for two years before becoming president last



year, and has worked on the independent financial review, organizational procedures and volunteer recruitment. She has been a member of WOS for more than six years and has thoroughly enjoyed many field trips and annual conferences across the state. She appreciates the opportunity to contribute her organizational and leadership skills to the organization.

Jennifer grew up in Ohio exploring birds and nature. She studied environmental science and water resources management in college and graduate school. She was an environmental and public outreach consultant for more than 20 years, and then spent 15 years with King County managing wastewater capital projects. She retired from King County in 2016. Jennifer completed the Seattle Audubon Master Birder class in 2017. She is a past Seattle Audubon board member, and continues to support its outreach, operations and science programs. She also served on the Vestry (board) at her church and volunteers at programs to feed the hungry. Jennifer and her husband Jerry live in Seattle.

David Armstrong – Vice President

Hello WOS membership: I am honored to be considered for a second term as vice-president of WOS. I have a long background in natural history as a fishery biol-



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Meet the Candidates for the WOS Board (cont.)

ogist from undergraduate days at UC Irvine to PhD at UC Davis. Since 1978, I was a tenured professor in the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, UW, and served as Director the last 14 years until retirement in 2014. My research and teaching specialties primarily covered invertebrate taxa, which led to many projects along the Pacific Coast from CA into the Bering Sea.

Deep interest in birds began about 20 years ago when my wife and I began extensive sea kayaking and realized it was a fantastic way to see birds up close. Since then, we have traveled from Alaska through South America, on to Antarctica to view the amazing diversity of birds, their ecology, and habitats. I thought I was a good birder, and then took Dennis Paulson's Master Birding class two years ago. I learned so much from him; maybe now I am a better birder but realize how much there is to still learn. WOS is a wonderful format for ongoing education that's provided, in part, by the great monthly speakers.

Bob Schmidt – Treasurer

Greetings from Hansville, Washington. My name is Bob Schmidt, and I am a nominee for WOS Treasurer. My good friends Grace and Ollie Oliver think that my software engineering experience will let me shine in this position, though I must admit that my last treasurer position was in Boy Scouts. I do have some experience with QuickBooks, Excel, and financial reporting so I think I will be OK.



While I have been a WOS member off and on since about 2005, I was not always active due family and work commitments. However, I have never stopped enjoying birds since my Ornithology class at Ohio University in 1976 and even earlier casually birding with my sister when there were no snakes, lizards, turtles, or frogs around. I have also been active in various Audubon organizations dating back to a

memorable CBC in Stuart, Florida around 1977 when I spotted some Smooth-billed Anis.

Now that I am retired, vaccinated, and revived, I hope to be more active with WOS activities and contribute to the organization, especially if I can work remotely from home and while travelling. I plan to attend the WOS/OBA Joint Annual Conference in September and look forward to seeing old and new friends.

Jon Houghton – Secretary

I have recently (mostly) retired after over 45 years as a consulting marine biologist in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. During this time, I had the great privilege of studying aquatic and marine life (including birds) in some of the most gorgeous places on the planet. I began birding at the age of about 3 when my mother took me on Audubon bird trips in Vermont and began my introduction to amazing naturalists and birds. (I still have my 1956 checklist of 97 birds in the state of Vermont) Since the kids went off on their own, my wife and I have spent a lot of our leisure time birding in the US and around the world. I was fortunate to be accepted to and complete the Master Birder program with the 2013 class and transitioned from being a bird watcher, to becoming a birder. Over the last 7 years I've enjoyed leading field trips for Seattle Audubon and working on the SAS Conservation Committee.



Ed Pullen – Returning Board Member

Candidate Ed Pullen is a long-time WOS member and Puyallup/Tacoma area birder. He is a semi-retired family physician and now has time to serve on



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Meet the Candidates for the WOS Board (cont.)

the WOS board of trustees if elected. He is active in the Tahoma Audubon Society and the Tacoma area ABC Birding Club, as well as in the South Hill Rotary. He has trustee experience with the Good Samaritan Hospital board of trustees as well as serving as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sound Family Medicine for over a decade.

Matt Yawney – Returning Board Member

Sixteen years ago, I was living in Michigan and got some binoculars for Christmas, intended for star-gazing. By February I had turned my binoculars to the birds and had mostly forgotten about the stars. I wasn't always busy at work and spent my downtime studying my field guides and then I would go birding whenever I had a chance. A few birders back in Michigan also helped me along.



In 2009 our family moved to Ephrata, WA. I remember looking at my field guides back in Michigan and noticing how many of the Washington bird's ranges made a little circle around central Washington, and it felt like I was moving to a birding dead-zone. Thankfully, that was not the case, and Grant County has turned out to be a pretty neat place to be a birder. I've been in Ephrata for about 11 years now and have found some favorite spots to go birding and spend most of my time birding locally. I'm currently undertaking my third county big year for Grant County, and hoping to break my last record of 244 species (back in 2018). I do love our amazing state though and really enjoy visiting other areas and often combine birding with backpacking. I've made birding trips to several US states, and Canadian provinces and have also gone birding in Costa Rica, Ecuador and Thailand.

David Kreft – Board Member Candidate

Greetings from beautiful northeast Washington. My name is Dave Kreft, and I am a nominee for a Director position on the WOS Board. I have been a member of WOS for only a few years and greatly

respect those members who have been around far longer, some since the beginning of the organization. I commend their foresight and resolve to form and sustain this organization through the years.



I am recently retired from a 39-year career with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

I worked with farmers, ranchers, small forestland owners, American Indian Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and various local, state, and federal agencies to promote and implement sound conservation practices on private and tribal lands. I worked primarily in eastern Washington but spent the last seven and a half years coordinating the agency's conservation easement programs across the entire state. Though originally an Iowa farm boy I did my growing up years in the Puget Sound area. The Edmonds marsh was my first introduction to birding when I attended high school at the then Woodway Senior High School. I went on to attend Washington State University and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Range Management ('80). Go Cougs!

I have attended exactly one in-person meeting of WOS at the Center for Urban Horticulture. Dennis Paulson was speaking, and it was packed. Due to my location in the far-flung reaches of the state I became one of the early adopters of the remote viewing options through the GoToMeeting platform (kudos to Elaine!). I see the growth and future viability of the organization in our ability to adapt to the changing times, to effectively recruit new members from across the state, and to bring on the next two generations of birders, conservationists, and aspiring ornithologists.

I am on the planning team for the 2022 WOS annual meeting in Spokane and look forward to showing many of you my corner of the state. All of that being said, it would be my great honor to serve on the WOS Board as a Director from Eastern Washington.

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Birding Douglas County in 2021

By Tim Brennan

Douglas County Birding

I chose to do a modest Big Year in Douglas County during 2021. Modest, because the record for a county year-list in Douglas is a fairly staggering 259 species, and I will likely be pretty satisfied with 200 to 210 species during the year.

Still, monthly trips out to the county have at least built some familiarity. I made a trip out to the county in June, and was able to find 120 species during the trip. This is a summary of some of the stops I made, and thoughts on some of the possibilities in Douglas during the summer.

Rock Island, East Wenatchee – Point of Entry

It's not quicker to get into Douglas from Grant County. Nonetheless, I have been taking this route – up through Grant County and Quincy to start at the Columbia. For my trip this time around, I stopped at a new spot for me – the Apricot Orchard Boat Launch.

These little county line spots are not uncommon places for us to find things that we'd normally expect in the adjacent county. For me on this trip, it was Forster's Tern and Black-crowned Night Heron that had my hopes up. Forster's Tern breeds at Potholes Reservoir, and can be seen along the Columbia any time from May to July; Black-crowned Night-Heron similarly is pretty common down in Grant (a code 1 bird) and drops to a 3 in Douglas.

I found neither! As far as close calls go, there was a Forster's Tern seen in late May between Rock Island and East Wenatchee on the Columbia, and for my visit, I did come across a Great Blue Heron hiding in the lush trees lining the Columbia. I could also see Crescent Bar from the launch, a spot where eBird shows 9 different species of gulls and terns – birds that are hard to come by in Douglas.

Abundance codes	Grant	Kittitas	Douglas
Red-breasted Merganser	3	3	4
White-winged Scoter	3	3	4
Glaucous-winged Gull	3	2	4
Great Egret	2	3	3

Any of the birds would be a stretch, but this would be a good place to visit during the long fall migration to look for birds that might sneak up the Columbia farther north than usual.

Rock-Island, East Wenatchee, and Badger Mountain

For my trip, I also poked around stops closer to East Wenatchee, but with different birds in mind. Some of the birds expected in the Cascades will sometimes pop up on Badger Mountain – generally woodpeckers, such as Williamson's Sapsucker and White-headed Woodpecker would be the surprises that would be most likely. Others can show up

Tim's Douglas County blog is here:

www.douglascountymbirding.blogspot.com

downslope at some of the tree-lined parks – Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Red-breasted Sapsucker are some recent examples.

Still other birds are simply having East to West expansions. There are a few city park/feeder birds that have been on a collision course with East Wenatchee. Bewick's Wren is still listed as a code 3 in Douglas, and many adjacent counties, but has been marching East for some time now. California Scrub-Jay (my target bird in at least one neighborhood here) and Bushtit have gone from extremely rare to uncommon in the past decade, with sightings marching east from Leavenworth to Wenatchee over time.

Evening to Morning on Badger

Badger Mountain has been a good source of birds, with over 20 species seen there that I have *only* seen on Badger this year. Fitting with earlier threads, I had Barred Owl as a target, and tried for them at twilight on Redfield and Melvin Roads.

Redfield had been a bonanza for me in March. I picked up a boatload of finches (Cassin's Finch, Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, and Pine Grosbeak!) and owls, (Northern Pygmy, Great Horned, and Long-eared). Long-eared Owl had been a surprise for me at the time. I knew that they were Tour Bus Birds on the plateau in the winter, with some reliable spots to get out of the car, scope some trees, and get some

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Birding Douglas County in 2021 (continued)

pictures. I think this skewed my picture of what the owls do with the rest of their time!

On this particular evening, I popped out of my car on Redfield Road, and gave a Barred call to see what I might find. I immediately ended up with two Long-eared Owls circling above the road, one of them landing in a tree nearby. Light was fading, but with binoculars, it was still by far the best view I've had of the species. The habitat got less and less promising for Barred as I drove, and I did have one more owl cross in front of the car – too brief to identify, but medium to large. Great Horned Owls and Common Poorwills called during the night as I parked the car on a little patch of BLM land on Melvin Road for the night.

The morning was productive, including one of my other targets in this area - a singing Swainson's Thrush. Other typical forest birds were here as well, including Pine Siskins, Red Crossbill, MacGillivray's Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Cassin's Vireo, Wester Tanager, Spotted Towhee, and Mountain Chickadee. While I had no nuthatches the entire morning on Badger, they've been pretty common there during the year.

I made a trip down Q Road (2 Road? Ruud Canyon Road?) - they are all the same, from my read of the maps - picking up an Olive-sided Flycatcher (code 3) at higher elevations, and Veery (code 3) near the bottom. This road drops you off in some native grasslands that are good for Savannah, Vesper, and possibly Grasshopper Sparrow. It also is a short drive from here to the Waterville STP.

The Waterville STP had been a point of confusion for me earlier in the year, as I saw many signs discouraging trespassers. Upon checking with local birders, it's clearly open for visits from birdwatchers, so June was my first trip there. Ruddy Ducks were performing their crazy mating dances, and the ponds also had Wilson's Phalarope, Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teals, a mess of swallows, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. An American Bittern was seen earlier in the season, and there will certainly be more shorebirds down the road.

I looped back up through Badger Mountain, hitting different spots and different habitat. Titchenal Can-

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Birding Douglas County in 2021 (continued)

yon has some very nice riparian habitat, and I actually found another nice surprise – a Red-eyed Vireo – on this stretch. This runs up and meets Indian Camp Road, which continued to have plenty of Gray Flycatchers and Brewer's Sparrows at the top.

Dry plateau

The plateau itself was pretty dry. I actually made my way east via Jameson Lake. Jack's Resort was burned down in the Labor Day fires of 2020, but the owners are there trying to rebuild. There were plenty of ducks on the lake, and I've now had Sagebrush Sparrow and Lark Sparrow almost immediately upon leaving on the East Access Road. I've become a fan of this route, over simply taking Highway 2 to reach the east end of the county.



Big Bend Wildlife Area, WDFW photo

The plateau itself, as noted, is dry. It's been a light spring in terms of rainfall, and most of the alkali lakes where one would hope to find American Avocets (and other goodies) are either planted with crops, or just big dried up fields of... well, baking soda. It's been interesting at least to be able to see the minerals that make the lakes so appealing to so many living things. Just add water.

Big Bend Wildlife Area

This, most likely, is a place where you have not gone exploring. I think you need to get there. It's a newly minted wildlife area, and doesn't even show up on Google Maps yet. Up in the northeast corner of the county – heading towards Grand Coulee and taking a left – there's an amazing bit of habitat.

The primary purpose of the designation is to protect a population of Sharp-tailed Grouse. The patchwork of grasslands and sage, together with the rolling hills, make for a place where (fingers crossed) the birds will start to thrive. It's also worth noting that this area, unlike the area around Bridgeport, was nearly untouched by fires in 2020.

I did some dispersed camping on BLM land on the north side of the Wildlife Area, accessed from China Creek Road. This stretch was a riparian corridor flanked by talus slopes to the north, and basalt cliffs to the south. There is even a nice bit of coniferous woods between the creek and the cliffs in places. At night, I had Great Horned Owl, Common Poorwill, and Common Nighthawk. During the morning, I had Prairie Falcon, Ruffed Grouse, Red Crossbills, Western Tanager, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, Bullock's Oriole, Warbling Vireo, Rock and House Wrens, Chukar, and Lewis's Woodpecker.

The southern of the two entrances is at Rock Lake. This lake is one I'd birded back in May, and it continued to hold some of the expected ducks, as well as Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Marsh Wrens. "Deceptively productive" seems to fit a morning where I had 50 species, most of it walking along an expanse of native grasses and wildflowers. Most of the species above were present, although the Ruffed Grouse were replaced by Dusky, booming about a mile or so in on the trail. The trail eventually reaches School Creek, which begins with typical deciduous growth, and accompanying birds (including another new bird for the year for me – an Orange-crowned Warbler). The creek then drops down a deeper cut, and is lined with conifers for a stretch. This was an amazing little spot where I had singing Hermit Thrush, Hammond's Flycatcher, and Wilson's Warbler.

The path is hemmed in on the north side by shrubby/rocky slopes that gave me Rock Wrens and a Black-chinned Hummingbird sipping nectar from some thistle.

Below this stretch, it gets into habitat that really seemed good for Sharp-tailed Grouse, although the only thing that flushed from the grassy, flowery slope was a pair of Gray Partridge. Grasshopper Sparrows and Western Meadowlarks were found throughout this section as well. A lake near the bottom of this little descent had some nice birds for June – a Green-winged Teal, and a pair of American Wigeon! While the path continues from there to points closer to the Columbia, I did not get that far on this particular day. It is definitely an area I'm hoping to explore more as I finish out the year!

Tracking the Expansion of California Scrub-Jays

Range expansion

The range of the California Scrub-Jay has expanded north through Oregon and into Washington in recent decades. It is now established in British Columbia and reaches Idaho regularly.

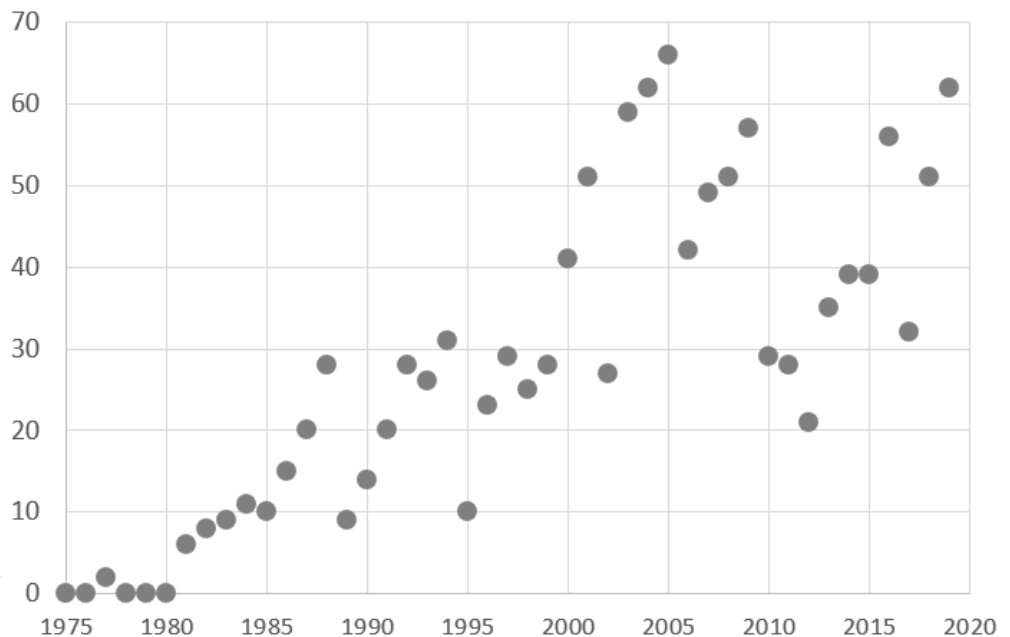
In 1929, the jay was described as “not at all abundant” north of Salem, Oregon. By 1940 it was established on Sauvie Island near Portland (Wahl et al 2005). In 1953, it was described as a “rare permanent resident in extreme southwest Washington”. In 1967, birders would drive to Woodland to find one (Paulson, pers comm). The jay began its push into the southern Puget Trough in the 1970s and was breeding in Puget Sound by the 1990s (Wahl et al 2005). Its status in southwest Washington was revised to “fairly common” by 1997 (Altman 2011). By the early 2000s, records proliferated northward into the Salish Sea lowlands, as well as eastward along the Columbia River. As it expanded north and east, it infilled areas in its wake (Wahl et al 2005). The jay reached Marysville, north of Seattle, in the fall of 2014 and was reported widely there within a few years. A few birds have been reported from Bellingham each year since 2013 (eBird). It remains uncommon on the outer coast, where it is largely limited to towns in the south. Many birders note that pioneering birds and local first breeding records are often associated with feeders in suburban areas.

Breeding Bird Survey data

Breeding Bird Surveys did not record California Scrub-Jay in Washington until 1977, when two birds were noted. None were recorded in the following years until 1981, when six were documented. Since then, the number increased to 66 in 2005. Since then, the statewide BBS total has oscillated but not topped that number, perhaps because

most routes are away from human habitations.

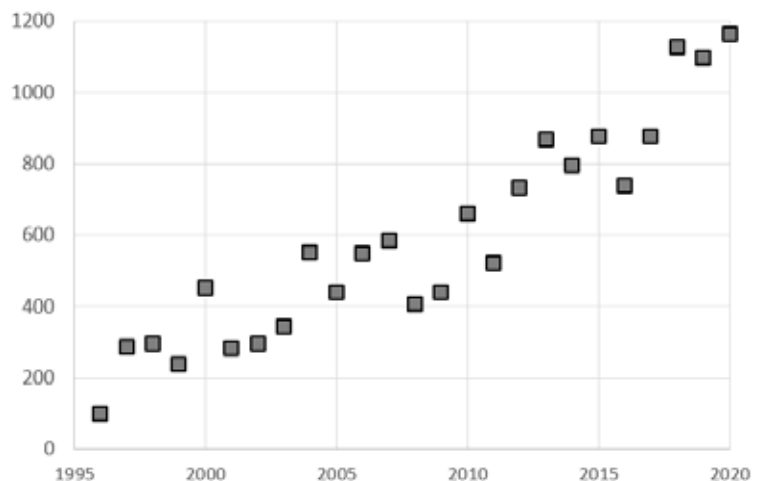
Figure 1: Total number of California Scrub-Jays from all Breeding Bird Surveys in Washington



Christmas Bird Count data

Due to problems with the Christmas Bird Count on-line data portal, data for the jay (called Western Scrub-Jay) is not available prior to the 97th count (the winter of 1996-97). Limited as it is, those data show a steady increase from 97 individuals statewide on the 97th count to nearly 1,200 this past winter.

Figure 2: Total number of California Scrub-Jays from all Christmas Bird Counts in Washington

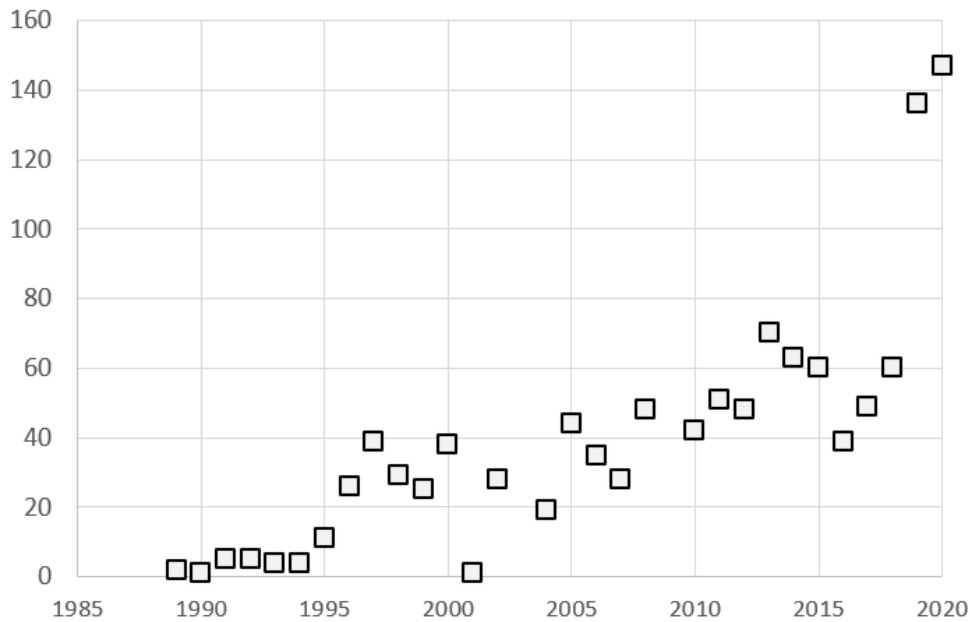


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Expansion of California Scrub-Jays (continued)

Focusing on the Olympia Christmas Bird Count, the jay was first detected in 1989 (Wahl et al 2005) and has exceeded over a hundred individuals the past two years.

Figure 3: Total number of California Scrub-Jays from the Olympia Christmas Bird Count

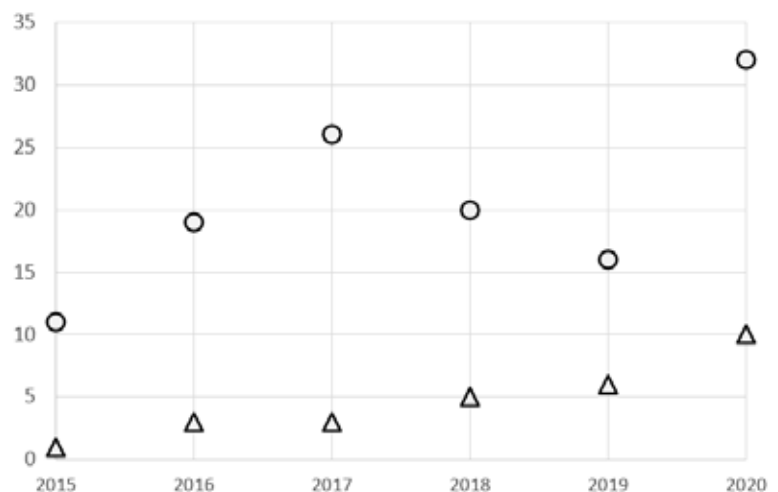


Scrub-jays on the Seattle CBC did not break double-digits until December 2009. The species has since achieved that six of the past seven years, with a high of 27 individuals in 2017.

eBird data

A review of eBird data was limited to 2015 forward due to limited use of eBird prior to that year. To avoid double-counting, the review only enumerated distinct locations where at least one individual was reported. The results illustrate recent spread both north and east between 2015 and 2020.

Figure 4 (at right): California Scrub-Jay eBird reports. Circles represent the number of distinctly different locations north of Marysville. Triangles represent the number of distinctly different locations north and east of Prosser and Umatilla.



Western Washington and British Columbia

In western Washington in 2015, there were 11 eBird reports north of Marysville, stretching in an arc from Port Angeles, thru Whidbey Island, to Bellingham and Vancouver, BC. This represented the frontier of the scrub-jay range. By 2020, there were 32 reports from much the same arc, with one report from Concrete, well up the Skagit River.

Aside from isolated records in 1981 and 1993, British Columbia has hosted scrub-jays almost annually since winter 2001-2. There have been multiple records in the Vancouver/Fraser River Basin area every year since 2010. Canada's first breeding record was in 2014 at Maple Ridge (just north of Langley) (Toochin 2014). The northernmost record for the species is from Squamish, British Columbia, 25 miles

north of the Fraser River Basin, which has an isolated record from 2004 and multiple records since 2019.

While eBird reports exist from San Juan Island (2014) and Neah Bay (2014, 2017, 2019), there are no records from Vancouver Island. The species is

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Expansion of California Scrub-Jays (continued)

regular in Port Townsend and Sequim, though is probably more likely to reach Vancouver Island via the San Juan Islands or even, eventually, Campbell River.

Eastern Washington and Idaho

East of the Cascades in 2015, California Scrub-Jays were established in the Yakima area, as well as in Prosser and east to Umatilla along the Columbia River. Except for a single report from Ellensburg, there were no eBird records north or east of these locations. In 2016, there were reports from Wenatchee, Coulee City, and Pendleton, Oregon. Kennewick's first report was in 2017. By 2018, the jay appeared well-established, and spreading from, the Wenatchee and Umatilla areas. 2020 produced reports from Spokane and Walla Walla. There are no records in the Okanagan River valley.

In Oregon during these six years, the species spread east from the highway 395 corridor (Pendleton – John Day – Burns) east to La Grande, Baker City, and to Boise, Idaho.

The first record for Idaho occurred in 2005 in the northwest part of the state. Since 2010, there have been about a dozen records, nearly all from the Boise and Snake River regions near the Washington border. There are only three eBird reports from east of Boise; two of these come from the Sawtooth Range northeast of Boise this spring. There are two records from Montana: Great Falls in 2000 and Thompson Falls in 2010 (Marks et al 2016).

With these records, the range of California Scrub-Jay has begun to encircle Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, which is regular in the southeast portion of Idaho, including the Snake River Valley from Twin Falls eastward. Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay does not show signs of northward range expansion.

Discussion

While juvenile California Scrub-Jays typically disperse only a few miles, fall dispersals and irruptions have been noted (Dunn and Garrett 2001). This proclivity no doubt accounts for some of the larger jumps the species seems to make on the frontiers of

its range. The use of eBird by birders is an excellent way to document new hubs of establishment on their expanding frontier.

The rate of expansion appears to be increasing. Roughly, the jay spread from the Portland area to Olympia between 1975 and 2000, covering about 100 miles in 25 years, and from Olympia to Vancouver, BC, from 2000 to 2010, covering about 150 miles in 10 years. At this point, however, the species may be running out of suitable habitat along the coast, at least for now. Elevation may prove to be a significant barrier both to the north and east.

Range expansions by non-migratory and partially migratory species and by short-distance migrants are already well-documented and predicted as a result of climate change (NAS). In fact, they appear to be more adaptable than long-distance migrants (Rubolini et al 2010). Significant increases in the Pacific Northwest, exponential in many cases, have also occurred with Anna's Hummingbird, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Black Phoebe, Lesser Goldfinch, and Townsend's Warbler (Hampton 2020). Hutton's Vireo, Bushtit, and Bewick's Wren have expanded east. Most of these showed some expansion prior to the 1980s, but most grew most significantly after 1985. This is consistent with a natural regime shift driven by climate change, where effects are first detected in the 1980s and then increase rapidly (Reid et al 2016). Additionally, the range expansions closely match those projected under a 1.5 to 3.0 degree Celsius increase in average global temperature (NAS). The California Scrub-Jay, which, under a 3.0 Celsius scenario, was projected to expand to Puget Sound from Port Angeles to Bellingham, but not further north nor east, has already exceeded this prediction.

A warming climate is only one factor in enabling birds to climb the latitudinal ladder. Ultimately, the rungs of the metaphorical ladder of range expansion are appropriate habitat and food resources. Oak dependent species, such as Nuttall's Woodpecker and Oak Titmouse, have shown little northward move-

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Expansion of California Scrub-Jays (continued)

ment. Because oaks grow so slowly, these species have no rungs upon which to climb. For adaptable omnivores like the California Scrub-Jay, which can thrive in human-altered landscapes with bird feeders and other food sources, the climb has been possible. Given a warming climate, it seems likely the species will become established and common throughout the Puget Trough and beyond, especially in towns and farms, and will ultimately reach Victoria, the Okanagan Valley, Kamloops, and become established in Boise and beyond.

Contact with Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay will be inevitable in southern Idaho. Birders should be cognizant of the identification challenges and the possibility of hybrids.

Finally, because the jay is a common predator of other species' eggs and chicks (Curry et al 2020), it may impact some local species, especially in suburban areas. Baseline data of open cup nesters in residential areas, such as American Robin, will be useful to compare the present with a future that will have a greater density of California Scrub-Jays.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Bill Tweit, Brad Waggoner, and Dennis Paulson for their helpful comments. Any mistakes are my own.

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*

Encounter

Story and Photo by Tom Bancroft

I cupped my hands around my ears. The sweet evening song of a Swainson's Thrush drowned out all but the faint babble of the creek down the short draw. A distant second one made an echo of the first. Their opening whistles and spiral flourishes were spectacular. At any other time, I would have stopped and listened, but there was another sound I was straining to hear.

The previous evening, Julie, Craig, and I had come along this trail in Okanogan National Forest just as final twilight had been fading. The "sher-rick" call that repeated every few seconds came from a patch of Douglas firs and lodgepole pines across a small creek. We searched for thirty minutes for the source of the sound, but the light was mostly gone, and we could detect no movement. Craig and I had come back, but right then all I could hear was the thrushes.

This was prime habitat for the gray ghost of the northern boreal forest. Great Gray Owls are large birds, looking bigger than a Great Horned Owl, although actually weighing a little less. A female may approach three pounds, and a male a little over two. They prefer mature forests that have numerous meadows, bogs, and small openings spread through the trees. This species breeds throughout Alaska, Canada and across Northern Europe and Asia, but only in some high elevation dry forests in the Western United States. These rodent eaters are often quite elusive, making them difficult to find. In winter, they occasionally fly out of their remote homes, but my searches had always failed to find one.

After moving in the direction of the previous night's screech, I put a pair of headsets over my ears and pointed my microphone into the woods. Its para-



bolic reflector would amplify any sound. There it was, the "sher-rick" call of an owlet, persistent but faint, and a little off to our left, and then it stopped. We crept in that direction, scanning up and down trees, looking for a shadow or blob that might be a roosting owlet. Young Great Grays will jump out of their nests when only a few weeks old. Much like a rambunctious teenager, they strive for independence well before they can fly or care for themselves. After tumbling to the earth, the young owls will climb leaning trees to get off the ground and then hop from branch to branch back into the canopy. Usually, they sit right against the trunk on a horizontal branch waiting for their parents to feed them.

Twice more over the next half hour, I put the headsets on to refine the direction toward the begging. Finally, after moving several hundred yards back into the forest, we heard the whining child without the aid of the parabolic reflector. Craig and I eased

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Encounter (continued)

toward a small meadow with a clump of larches, firs, and pines surrounding it. I stepped around a six-inch lodgepole pine and scanned every tree in front of me, up and down the trunks. Craig, who stood tight by my left shoulder, tapped my arm and pointed almost straight up. There, forty feet up a pine sat a downy owlet on a small side branch. It was right against the trunk as expected, his clawed talons curling over the branch, and his eyes looking straight down at us. I started the sound recorder, setting the microphone down pointing into the coppice and focused my long lens on the owlet. As my camera started to capture pictures, Craig, again, tapped my shoulder pointing this time across in front of me.

Two owlets, both with slightly longer wing and tail feathers than the first, sat about two feet apart on a horizontal branch nearly forty feet up and one gave that “sher-rick” call while they both stared right at us. Their dark eyes gave the impression of curiosity and amazement in seeing these strange two-legged creatures that had walked into their home. All three seemed totally unafraid of us. As I focused my camera, an adult flew silently into the frame, gliding up to land beside the screeching owlet where it passed a vole from its mouth to the young, and then dropped off the branch flying back through the forest. The ghost had come and gone.

The breath slowly left my lungs as I continued to stare at the one with a vole hanging from its mouth like a long piece of thick brown licorice. These owls are not rare in their prime habitat, but because these dry interior montane forests are remote and inaccessible, few people have the chance to see one. Adults hunt from perches, and a perfect hunting site is a short tree on the edge of a meadow where the bird can scan for rodents. The facial feather disk on their

oversized head directs sound to their acute ears, and they hunt almost entirely by hearing the prey. In winter, these owls can plunge through a foot or more of snow to snare a mouse or vole. Pocket gophers burrow through the soil and are another favorite food.

After a minute, the owlet wolfed down the vole in one giant swallow, and then flew behind trees to land precariously on the top of a subalpine fir where it swayed back and forth in the breeze. Its sibling followed it back into the forest. The adult came in again, landing in the middle of the thicket where it glared right at me while another vole hung from its mouth. Then the second adult arrived also with something in its mouth. It was as if these two predators had flown down to the local corner store for a snack of fresh live meat for the children.

For 30 minutes, I stood watching silently while Craig snuck to my right to see if he could spot where the other two had gone. An adult came in at least twice more but never to the one above my head. That baby yawned a few times, stretched its wings, flexed one or the other foot, but never moved. Occasionally, it became bored of us and stared into the forest. It never begged or seemed distressed that a parent didn’t come visit.

The light was fading, and we decided to back out of this place and leave the owls to their own. As we strolled through the forest, the occasional screeches from the owlet pushed us along, and a cloud of mosquitoes buzzed around our heads. Neither of us thought to swat at those that feasted on our blood.

Local Author Maria Mudd Ruth to Kick Off Puget Sound Bird Fest

Award-winning author Maria Mudd Ruth has been selected as the 2021 keynote presenter for the **17th Annual Puget Sound Bird Fest taking place September 11-12, 2021**. Maria will kick off the festivities on Saturday morning at 10 a.m. with her presentation, “The Not-so Awkward Auks.” Other presentations and activities will follow throughout the weekend.



The Salish Sea is home to a fascinating family of diving seabirds known as auks, or alcids. Though often described as “awkward” or “clumsy” in field guides, these web-footed birds are amazingly well adapted to life in the air, on land, and especially at sea. Maria will talk about two of her favorite auks -- the shy, cryptic, secretive, tree-nesting Marbled Murrelet and its clownish, extroverted, burrow-nesting cousin, the Pigeon Guillemot. “Auks are an exciting family of birds and there are a surprising number of them, including puffins, that can be found in the Salish Sea” said Jennifer Leach, coordinator of the annual event. Maria is the author of more than a dozen books on natural history topics for children and adults, *Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet*, a narrative natural history of an endearing and endangered seabird. Her most recent book of non-fiction, *A Sideways Look at Clouds*, was awarded the Nautilus Silver Medal in 2017.

Other weekend activities include presentations throughout the day on Saturday, and traditional favorites such as the Kid’s Corner and the People’s Choice Photography Contest – be sure to vote for your favorite! Guided tours of local birding hotspots will be offered throughout the weekend by the Pilchuck Audubon Society, which also plans to host a native plant sale. *Auks of Puget Sound* is the theme of this year’s Poster Art Contest.

The Bird Fest Planning Committee is hard at work planning the 2021 event and will continue to update the [Bird Fest website](http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com/) as the festival schedule develops. Please note that due to uncertainties associated with the COVID- 19 pandemic, indoor activities such as presentations and workshops may be delivered online, while field activities will be offered in person with limited group sizes. For the latest information, please visit <http://www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com/> or email Jennifer.leach@edmondswa.gov.

Wings Over Willapa Festival Set for Sept. 24-26

This annual birding and nature festival is a celebration of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge’s many species and diverse habitats. The public is invited to take part in tours, workshops and other events happening all around the Long Beach Peninsula and Willapa Bay. For more information, go to: wingsoverwillapa.org



A Mason County Big Day, May 4, 2021

By Ed Pullen

Ken Brown, Jacob Miller and I undertook a Mason County Big Day on Tuesday, May 4th. This is something that to the best of our knowledge has not really been attempted, though on [WABirder](#) there are big day reports for Oct (66), Nov (57), and Dec (57) reported; those are months where realistically a big-day record could not hold up against a peak spring migration attempt.

Ken and Jacob did all the planning, and I was along for fun and good birding. Ken and I decided to camp out at Jacob's family's [Skokomish Valley Farms](#) where we planned to begin the day. We were delighted to discover on arrival that we could sleep under cover in the home that they are building, and that Jacob had several nice, comfortable sleeping pads we could add to our camping gear, so after arriving about 8:30 PM we quickly crashed on the floor there. I was especially ready for sleep after my Pierce County Big Day the day (Sunday) prior and working Monday. So Monday night passed quickly, and at 4:30 AM Ken's alarm went off and we were birding by 4:50 AM.

The hoped for Barn Owl did not cooperate. Barn Owl was our only stake-out owl, so without this we faced a possible big day without any owls. Still the Skokomish Valley Farm and surrounding properties came through big-time with birds. Jacob led the way, as it is his near-daily birding turf, and despite fog and drizzle we had a list of 57 species before we left the farm at about 8:25

AM after 3 ½ hours and per eBird 4.89 miles of mostly walking. Highlights were a drumming Ruffed Grouse, a Sooty Grouse both calling and seen perched high in a distant snag. Western Bluebirds, Evening Grosbeaks at Jacob's feeders, many singing House Wrens and Mac-

Gillivray's Warblers, Chipping Sparrows, and most of the early-arriving migrants were found.

Leaving the farm I spotted a Varied Thrush flush from the roadside, and when we stopped for the other guys to find it we added our first Pacific Wren. Near the river Vaux Swifts zoomed overhead, and many Common Mergansers swam and flew around. Our first Warbling Vireo was singing, but the hoped for Cassin's Vireo was not located.

With 60+ land birds listed, we headed for salt water. Our first stop was at Potlatch State Park, where despite being pretty dispersed and mostly distant scope views we managed 11 Common and one Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Goldeneye, Surf Scoter, and a fly-by Whimbrel.

At the Hwy 106 overlook. One of the low-points of the day was a grumpy worker/resident across the street who shooed us off the parking pullout (private property) so much of the viewing was from the side of the road. Still we managed another Whimbrel and a few ducks and gulls.

At Union we added a Red-breasted Merganser, three Purple Martins that we heard for a long time, scanning the sky before realizing that they were nesting in a utility pole and calling from a perch there, our only Western Grebe of the day, and across the road a perched distant FOY for most of us Western Tanager.

Twanoh State Park yielded Red Crossbill, and we managed a small group of 3 each Common and Barrows Goldeneye at a stop when they were spotted from the car. On the way back we stopped just shy of the usual Hwy 106 pull-out to avoid the grumpy guy, and a receding tide



Cassin's Vireo, Jamie Chavez photo

Cont. on next page

Mason County Big Day in May, 2021 (continued)

yielded more shorebirds, adding Western and Least Sandpipers, along with N Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, and a nice flock of Ring-billed Gulls. Another stop off Hwy 106 gave us Green-winged Teal.

Hunter Farms was our last big-haul of birds for the day stop. It came through nicely. The best bird of the day in our collective opinion was spotted by Jacob on a fenceline. A Western Kingbird was a county lifer for Ken (and of course for me too), and FOY for all of us. Jacob had spotted American Pipits in a plowed field from the initial scan, and we all located about 3 sneaking around the plowed furrows after



Black-throated Gray Warbler, Aaron Matzlish photo

some looking.

Of course, after we saw them and relaxed a flock estimated for the eBird list at 25 birds took flight calling. Ken promised Wilson's Snipe in a certain area of moist field on our way out, and sure enough two flushed about 10 steps into the field. A Lincoln's Sparrow atop a bramble was our only one of the day.

The biggest miss of the day, possibly excluding the Barn Owl, was the hoped-for shorebirds at the Kennedy Creek Estuary along Hwy 101. It was one of the most out-of-the-way stops, and we hoped for at least Greater Yellowlegs and hopefully Black-bellied Plover. On arrival the tides seemed good, but a single Killdeer was the only shorebird in sight. Nearby we did add House Sparrow and California Scrub Jay in Shelton though.

A stop in Shelton at Goose Lake gave us one of the highlights of the trip. As we looked around for ducks, adding Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Duck

to our list, Jacob heard a Bushtit. It was a species we needed, but he was hearing it across the lake, maybe 150 yards away. I hear pretty well for an old guy, but had no chance of hearing this bird. Ken looked for a minute and walked towards the car giving up, but I studied the far side of the lake bushed in the scope, and amazingly a single Bushtit was flitting around. I yelled to Ken, he jogged back, and got on the bird also. Jacob never could see the bird, so for him a heard only species, though he was the talent that found it. Woodpeckers were in abundance there too, with Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hairy and Downy all present.

We tried for Vesper Sparrow and Horned Lark at the Shelton Airport, without luck, and headed for Still Waters Farm. Mark and Beth Biser, acquaintances of Ken and friends of Jacob, have developed a large wetlands property into a fabulous nature area, with wooded wetlands, surrounding vegetation, and incredible numbers of Wood Ducks using nest boxes that they maintain. We listed 33 Wood Ducks, but they get even bigger numbers. We also took a break there, sitting on their back porch and marveling at the place for a few minutes before adding Pileated Woodpecker on the walk out.

Mark suggested that we try for Mountain Quail on E. Eagle Point Drive nearby, and we didn't find any, but did find a singing Cassin's Vireo while looking around. We headed back to Jacob's place via E Eell's Hill Road from Shelton, and took our time hoping for raptors, Pygmy Owl or anything new.

We did come into nice numbers of calling warblers, including Black-throated Gray and Townsend's (our only ones of the day) before we headed back. Our plan was to wait for dark and hope to add the Barn Owl, but Ken and especially I were spent. We called it a day about 8:30, too early to hope for the owl over the fields and headed for home.

Our list for the day was 118 species, 116 ID'ed by all. Ken missed a couple of distant or faint heard-only birds, Jacob came through with his talented young ears and eyes, and we all had a great day. I added two Mason County firsts, the kingbird and American

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Washington Field Notes 3/2019 to 5/2019

Compiled by Ryan Merrill

Birds listed in bold or capital letters represent birds on the state review list which requires documentation to be submitted to the Washington Bird Records Committee. This column strives to present the most unusual and interesting bird records of this reporting period along with a sampling of the more regular but still unusual species. For those looking for the most complete picture of birds reported during this season, one should check the online database eBird (www.eBird.org) in addition to this column.

Rare hybrid waterfowl this spring included a Gadwall x Green-winged Teal in *Asotin* in early April and a Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler in *Douglas* in mid May. A Band-tailed Pigeon in *Walla Walla* in mid May was unusually far east for the species. A Pacific Golden-Plover in *Douglas* in late April adds to only about half a dozen records on the eastside. A Whimbrel in *Douglas* in mid May was a less than annual sighting for the east side of the state. More rare eastside shorebirds included two Ruddy Turnstones and a Red Knot in *Grant* in mid May. A Ruff spent several days in early May in *Island*. Unusual at any time but especially in spring, a flock of 93 Sabine's Gulls was in *Whatcom* in late May. A tally of 64 Franklin's Gulls in *Walla Walla* in late May was the highest total ever recorded in the state.

Two Short-tailed Albatrosses were found on a mid March pelagic trip off *Grays Harbor*. Birders on cruise ships did well with gadfly petrels this spring, including 38 Murphy's Petrels across the four offshore counties in early May and the state's 3rd **Hawaiian Petrel** off *Pacific* in mid May. The *Clark Snowy Egret* lingered into late March. At least 14 westside Swainson's Hawks was an excellent total.

An Acorn Woodpecker in mid May was the second for *Mason*. Five westside Gray Flycatchers was a healthy tally. Black Phoebes bred in *Skagit* which represents the farthest north breeding record so far for this expanding species. Five Loggerhead Shrikes on the westside were all in mid to late March. Sage Thrashers in *King* and *San Juan* were the two found in western Washington this spring.

Eight westside Brewer's Sparrows included three at a single

location in *Skagit* in late May. Lark Sparrows had an exceptional spring in western Washington with a dozen found, including three at a single location in *King* in mid May. Sagebrush Sparrows also had their best-ever showing on the westside with at least six birds, including a late May record in *Skagit*. Seattle's first Grasshopper Sparrow showed up in mid May, while the same day the state's 7th **LeConte's Sparrow** was in *Whatcom*.

A **Hooded Oriole** in *Snohomish* in late April was the state's 12th. Black-and-white Warblers had a good spring with birds found in *King*, *Skagit*, and *Yakima*. A Hermit Warbler in *Grant* in mid May was well out of its normal range. An **Indigo Bunting** in *Benton* was approximately the state's 41st.

Snow Goose High count: 18000 at Potholes *Grant* 3/29 (eBird)

Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal Reports included: 1 at Montlake Fill *King* 5/5 (eBird)

Blue-wing Teal x Northern Shoveller Reports included: 1 at Atkins Lake *Douglas* 5/11 to 5/26 (eBird)

Eurasian Wigeon Reports included: 7 at Calispell Lake *Pend Oreille* 4/6 (TLi)

Gadwall x American Wigeon Reports included: 1 at Montlake Fill *King* 5/10 to 5/25 (eBird)

"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal Reports included: 1 at Kiket Island *Skagit* 3/10 (GB)

Gadwall x Green-winged Teal Reports included: 1 at Clarkston *Asotin* 4/7 (KeC)

Tufted Duck Uncommon in WA: 1 at Vancouver *Clark* 3/9 (eBird), 1 at Point Roberts *Whatcom* 4/25 to 5/11 (eBird)

Tufted Duck x Scaup Uncommon in WA: 1 at Woodland *Cowlitz* 3/2 (eBird)

Surf Scoter Reports included: 1 at Centralia *Lewis* 3/12 (RHu,DSp)

Long-tailed Duck Reports from e WA included: 1 east of Wapato *Yakima* 3/3 (KvL)

Mountain Quail Rare locally: 1 south of Yacolt *Clark* 5/27 (eBird)

Clark's Grebe Reports from w WA included: 3 at Vancouver Lake *Clark* 5/21 (eBird)

Band-tailed Pigeon Rare locally: 1 at Coppei Creek *Walla Walla* 5/19 (eBird)



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Washington Field Notes (cont.)

Calliope Hummingbird Uncommon in w WA: 2 at Mount Pleasant *Skamania* 4/29 (WC), 1 at North Bend *King* 4/30 (Denise LaPerriere), 1 at Woodland *Cowlitz* 4/30 (eBird)

Sandhill Crane Reports included: 1 at Lynnwood *Snohomish* 3/8 (AMW), 38 at Tumwater *Thurston* 4/21 (BT)

Black-necked Stilt Uncommon in w WA: 2 at Hayton Preserve *Skagit* 5/22 (eBird)

Black Oystercatcher Uncommon locally: 3 at Carkeek Park *King* 4/2 (RyM) and 1 there 5/2 (SPd)

Pacific Golden-Plover Rare in e WA: 1 at Atkins Lake *Douglas* 4/25 (eBird). Reports included: 1 at Dungeness *Clallam* 4/2 (eBird)

Snowy Plover Uncommon locally: 1 at Tsoo-Yess *Clallam* 5/22 (eBird)

Semipalmated Plover Reports included: 1 at Twin Lakes *Okanogan* 5/15 (eBird)

Whimbrel Rare in e WA: 1 at Atkins Lake *Douglas* 5/18 to 5/26 (eBird). 1 at Atkins Lake *Douglas* 5/26 (eBird)

Marbled Godwit Uncommon in e WA: 1 at Sprague Lake *Adams* 4/26 (eBird), 1 at Clarkston *Asotin* 4/29 (eBird)

Ruddy Turnstone Rare in e WA: 2 at Potholes *Grant* 5/16 (eBird)

Red Knot Rare in e WA: 1 at Potholes *Grant* 5/16 (eBird)

Ruff Rare in spring: 1 at Crockett Lake *Island* 5/3 to 5/6 (eBird)

Sanderling Reports included: 4 at Hatton *Adams* 5/21 (eBird)

Baird's Sandpiper Reports included: 1 at Dodd Road *Walla Walla* 4/28 (eBird), 1 at Fairhaven *Whatcom* 4/30 (eBird), 1 at Grayland *Grays Harbor* 5/5 (eBird)

Semipalmated Sandpiper Reports included: 1 at Strawberry Island *Skamania* 5/9 (eBird), 2 at Swanson Lakes *Lincoln* 5/15 (eBird)

Willet Uncommon in e WA: 1 at Walla Walla RD *Walla Walla* 4/21 (MtB), 2 at Alpowa Creek *Asotin* 4/27 (KeC)

Pomarine Jaeger Rare locally in spring: 1 at Discovery Park *King* 5/25 (SpH)

Parasitic Jaeger Reports included: 1 at Julia Butler Hansen NWR *Wabkiakum* 4/14 (eBird)

8 at Discovery Park *King* 5/25 (SpH)

Parakeet Auklet Reports included: 2 west of Point Grenville *Grays Harbor* 3/2 (CWr)

Sabine's Gull High count and rare locally: 93 west of Birch Bay *Whatcom* 5/27 (EEL)

Franklin's Gull High count: 64 at Wallula *Walla Walla* 5/22 (eBird). Reports included: 5 at Discovery Park *King* 5/22 (JGn), 2 at Hayton Preserve *Skagit* 5/23 (eBird), 1 at Os-oyoos Lake *Okanogan* 5/28 (eBird), 1 at Calispell Lake *Pend Oreille* 5/31 (eBird)

Heermann's Gull Early report: 1 at Dungeness *Clallam*



5/22 (eBird)

Mew Gull Reports from e WA included: 1 at Buchanan Lake *Yakima* 3/7 (KvL), 1 at Wenatchee *Chelan* 5/1 (eBird)

Glaucous Gull Reports included: 1 at Dungeness *Clallam* 5/8 (eBird)

Black Tern Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Everett *Snohomish* 5/22 (JAm)

Yellow-billed Loon Reports included: 5 near Protection Island *Clallam* 3/29 (eBird), 1 at Salmon Bank *San Juan* 5/8 (eBird)

Laysan Albatross High count: 8 south of Grays Canyon *Grays Harbor* 3/16 (GRe,BS)

Short-tailed Albatross Uncommon in WA: 2 south of Grays Canyon *Grays Harbor* 3/16 (GRe,BS)

MURPHY'S PETREL Uncommon in WA: 38 at off-shore *Pacific/Grays Harbor/Jefferson/Clallam* 5/2 (eBird), 2 at offshore *Pacific* 5/11 (MtD), 3 at offshore *Grays Harbor* 5/11 (MtD)

HAWAIIAN PETREL Rare in WA: 1 at Pacific Co. *Pacific* 5/11 (eBird)

Manx Shearwater Reports included: 1 at Westport Pelagic *Grays Harbor* 3/16 (GRe,BS)

Brown Booby Uncommon in WA: 1 at Neah Bay *Clallam* 4/15 (eBird), 1 at offshore *Clallam* 5/29 (JBP)

American White Pelican Reports included: 22 at Edmonds *Snohomish* 4/25 (Julia Weise)

SNOWY EGRET Rare in WA: 1 at Vancouver Lowlands *Clark* to 3/24 (eBird)

Black-crowned Night-Heron Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Woodland *Cowlitz* 3/2 (fide RKo) and 4/5 (eBird)

Golden Eagle Reports from w WA included: 1 at Port Susan Bay *Snohomish* 3/5 (eBird), 1 at Fir Island *Skagit* 3/19 (RL), 1 at Drayton Harbor *Whatcom* 4/15 (eBird), 1 at Nisqually NWR *Thurston* 5/1 (eBird), 1 at Kent *King* 5/4

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Washington Field Notes (cont.)

(eBird), 2 at Bahokus Peak *Clallam* 5/6 (eBird)

Broad-winged Hawk Uncommon in WA: 1 at Spokane *Spokane* 4/28 (MWO), 1 at Yakima Canyon *Kittitas* 5/5 (eBird), 4 at Bahokus Peak *Clallam* 5/5 with 5 there 5/9 (eBird), 1 at Dungeness *Clallam* 5/11 (eBird), 1 at Kamiak Butte *Whitman* 5/25 (eBird)

Swainson's Hawk Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Montlake Fill *King* 4/15 (CSi), 1 at Battle Ground *Clark* 4/16 (JDz), 1 at Pacific *King* 4/20 (ST), 1 at Point No Point *Kitsap* 4/25, 4/30 and 5/6 (eBird), 1 at Vancouver *Clark* 4/26 (eBird), 1 at Shillapoo WMA *Clark* 4/30 (eBird), 3 at Bahokus Peak *Clallam* 5/9 (eBird), 1 at Tacoma *Pierce* 5/14 (WiB), 2 at Skagit WMA *Skagit* 5/15 (RyM)

Snowy Owl Reports included: 1 at Orcas Island *San Juan* 4/15 (fide Kim L Middleton)

Burrowing Owl Rare in w WA: 1 at Enumclaw *King* 3/27 (fide Featherhaven), 1 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 3/28 (eBird). Rare locally: 1 near Ayer *Walla Walla* 3/26 (MID)

Long-eared Owl Reports from w WA included: 1 at Marymoor Park *King* 3/21 (MiH)

Red-naped Sapsucker Rare locally: 1 at Port Angeles *Clallam* 4/3 (eBird), 1 at San Juan Island *San Juan* 4/22 (eBird)

Acorn Woodpecker Rare in w WA: 1 at Mason Lake *Mason* 5/16 (Ron Smith)

Gray Flycatcher Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Mount Pleasant *Skamania* 4/29 (WC), 1 at Vancouver *Clark* 4/29 (eBird), 1 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 5/2 (eBird), 1 at Discovery Park *King* 5/6 (JGn), 1 at Bellingham *Whatcom* 5/9 (IN)

Dusky Flycatcher Reports from w WA included: 3 at Discovery Park *King* 5/4 (eBird), 1 at Bainbridge Island *Kitsap* 5/4 (BWg)

Black Phoebe Nesting report: pair with 3 juveniles in nest at Skagit WMA *Skagit* 5/18 (eBird). Reports from expanding range included: 1 at Dungeness *Clallam* 5/28 (eBird)

Say's Phoebe Reports from w WA included: 1 at Vancouver *Clark* 3/17 (Michelle Maani), 1 at Discovery Park *King* 3/18 (MtD), 1 at Yelm *Thurston* 3/18 (Doug Martin), 3 at Strawberry Island *Skamania* 3/19 (WC,BWf), 2 at Adna *Lewis* 3/19 (eBird), 5 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 3/21 (eBird), 1 at San Juan *San Juan* 3/23 (eBird)

Ash-throated Flycatcher Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 5/18 (eBird)



Loggerhead Shrike Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Stevenson *Skamania* 3/19 (WC,BWf), 1 at Strawberry Island *Skamania* 3/19 (WC,BWf), 1 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 3/21 (eBird), 1 at Riffe Lake *Lewis* 3/24 (DSp), 1 at Big Ditch *Snobomish* 3/29 (eBird)

Blue Jay Reports included: 1 at Yakima *Yakima* 4/12 (eBird), 1 at Quincy *Grant* 4/14 (eBird), 1 at Spokane *Spokane* 4/22 (eBird)

Black-billed Magpie Uncommon in w WA: 1 continued at Seattle *King* 4/28 (eBird)

Horned Lark High count: 100 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 3/1 (JDz)

Purple Martin Early report: 2 at Theler Wetland *Mason* 3/14 (eBird)

Bank Swallow Uncommon locally: 17 at Rice Island *Wahkiakum* 5/29 (eBird)

Rock Wren Uncommon locally: 1 at Rockport *Skagit* 5/4 (GB)

House Wren Reports included: 3 at Discovery Park *King* 5/11 (eBird)

Western Bluebird Reports included: 1 at Sauk Valley *Skagit* 3/23 (RKn)

Mountain Bluebird Reports included: 19 west of Darrington *Snobomish* 4/19 (eBird), 4 at Dungeness *Clallam* 4/21 (eBird)

Sage Thrasher Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Montlake Fill *King* 4/20 (eBird), 1 at American Camp *San Juan* 5/10 (eBird)

Northern Mockingbird Reports included: 1 at Anacortes *Skagit* 3/23 (eBird), 1 at Puget Island *Wahkiakum* 5/10 (eBird), 1 at Montlake Fill *King* 5/21 (eBird)

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Washington Field Notes (cont.)



Cassin's Finch Uncommon locally: 1 at Sauk Valley *Skagit* 3/23 (RKn)

White-winged Crossbill Reports included: 5 at Washington Pass *Chelan/Okanogan* 4/20 (RKn) with 2 there 5/27 (eBird)

Lesser Goldfinch Reports from expanding range included: 1 at Bainbridge Island *Kitsap* 4/24 (eBird), 6 at Washtucna *Adams* 5/12 (eBird), 1 at Enumclaw *King* 5/19 (eBird)

Lapland Longspur Reports included: 2 at Fort Ebey Island 4/19 (eBird), 1 at Hobuck Beach *Clallam* 5/9 (eBird)

Snow Bunting Reports included: 1 at Bellingham *Whatcom* 3/19 (eBird), 1 at Port Angeles *Clallam* 3/19 (eBird)

Grasshopper Sparrow Rare in w WA: 1 at Discovery Park *King* 5/19 (TSl)

Chipping Sparrow Rare as a wintering bird: 1 remained at Deer Park *Stevens* to 3/24 (eBird)

Clay-colored Sparrow Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Vancouver Lowlands *Clark* 3/2 (DI), 1 at Sauk Valley *Skagit* 5/25 (DSg)

Brewer's Sparrow Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Montlake Fill *King* 4/21 (eBird), 1 at Crescent Lake WMA *Snohomish* 4/28 (eBird), 1 at Mud Mountain *King* 5/17 (WiB), 1 at Renton *King* 5/18 (ST), 1 at Carkeek Park *King* 5/21 (RyM), 3 at Corkindale *Skagit* 5/25 (RKn)

Lark Sparrow Uncommon in w WA: 1 at Marblemount *Skagit* 4/29 (DPo), 1 at Vancouver *Clark* 4/30 (eBird), 1 at Kalama *Cowlitz* 5/16 (eBird), 1 at Sauk Prairie *Skagit* 5/16 (DPo), 3 at Mud Mountain *King* 5/17 (WiB), 1 at Stillwater *King* 5/17 (eBird), 1 at Pierce Co. *Pierce* 5/17 (WiB), 2 at Strawberry Island *Skamania* 5/19 (eBird), 1 at Enumclaw *King* 5/20 (eBird)

Golden-crowned Sparrow Rare locally: 1 at Spokane *Spokane* 5/4 (MWO)

Golden-crowned x White Crowned Sparrow Reports included: 1 at Diablo *Whatcom* 5/15 (RyM)

Harris's Sparrow Late report: 1 at Mount Vernon *Skagit* to 5/31 (eBird). Reports included: 1 at Bottle Beach *Grays*

Harbor 5/5 (eBird), 1 at Freeland Island 5/7 (eBird), 1 at Discovery Park *King* 5/7 (eBird)

White-throated Sparrow Reports included: 1 at Calispell Lake *Pend Oreille* 3/2 (TLi)

Sagebrush Sparrow Rare in w WA: 1 at Ridgefield NWR *Clark* 3/8 (Michelle Maani), 1 at Wind River *Skamania* 3/9 (JhB), 1 at Bonneville Dam *Skamania* 3/9 (MtB) with 2 there 3/10 (Les Carlson), 1 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 3/10 (RKo) to 3/11 (Les Carlson), 1 at Marblemount *Skagit* 5/25 (RKn). Rare locally: 1 at Dodd Road *Walla Walla* 3/2 (eBird)

Vesper Sparrow Reports from w WA included: 1 at Corkindale *Skagit* 5/25 (RKn)

LECONTE'S SPARROW Rare in WA: 1 at Diablo *Whatcom* 5/19 (RyM)

Swamp Sparrow Reports included: 1 at Eastsound *San Juan* 4/10 (eBird), 2 at Stillwater *King* 4/12 (eBird)

Yellow-breasted Chat Uncommon locally: 2 at Lake Whatcom *Whatcom* 5/11 (eBird), 1 at Marymoor Park *King* 5/15 (eBird), 1 at Butler Flats *Skagit* 5/27 (eBird)

Bobolink Uncommon locally: 1 at Ephrata *Grant* 5/9 (eBird)

HOODED ORIOLE Rare in WA: 1 at Arlington *Snohomish* 4/30 (DPo)

Tricolored Blackbird Reports included: 75 at Kahlots Lake *Franklin* 4/12 (eBird), 253 at Sprague Lake *Adams* 5/8 (eBird)

Rusty Blackbird Reports included: 1 at Selah *Yakima* 3/1 (eBird)

Black-and-White Warbler Uncommon in WA: 1 at Shoreline *King* 4/21 (eBird), 1 at Marblemount *Skagit* 5/12 (DBs), 1 at Wenas *Yakima* 5/25 (JGl)

Nashville Warbler Uncommon locally: 1 at Naselle *Pacific* 4/20 (AR)

American Redstart Uncommon locally: 1 at Saltese Flats *Spokane* 5/16 (eBird), 1 at Steigerwald Lake NWR *Clark* 5/26 (eBird)

Palm Warbler Reports included: 1 at Tokeland *Pacific* 3/18 (eBird), 1 at Longview *Cowlitz* 4/6 (eBird), 1 at Ocean City *Grays Harbor* 4/18 (eBird)

Yellow-rumped Warbler High count: 1000 at Cle Elum *Kittitas* 5/3 (CWr)

Black-throated Gray Warbler Early report: 1 at Discovery Park *King* 3/29 (eBird). Uncommon locally: 1 at Cassimer Bar *Okanogan* 5/25 (eBird)

Hermit Warbler Rare locally: 1 at Northrup Canyon *Grant* 5/11 (MY)

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Washington Field Notes (cont.)

Western Tanager Early reports: 1 at West Seattle *King* 3/6 (Mark Wangerin), 1 at Seattle *King* 4/1 (Nancy Kirkner)

Lazuli Bunting Early report: 1 at College Place *Walla Walla* 4/22 (MID). Reports included: 1 at Naselle *Pacific* 5/19 (AR)

INDIGO BUNTING Rare in WA: 1 at Kennewick *Benton* 5/28 to 5/30 (Margie Egger)

Observers

AMW Ann Marie Wood

AR Alan Richards

BS Bill Shelmerdine

BT Bill Tweit

BWf Barry Woodruff

BWg Brad Waggoner

CSi Constance Sidles

CWr Charlie Wright

DBs Diane Birsner

DI David Irons

DPo David Poortinga

DSg Dave Slager

DSP Dalton Spencer

eBird eBird.org

EEI Eric Ellingson

GB Gary Bletsch

GRe Gene Revelas

IN Isaiah Nugent

JAm Josh Adams

JBP Joel Brady-Power

JDz Jim Danzenbaker

JGI Joshua Glant

JGn Jordan Gunn

JhB John Bishop

KeC Keith Carlson

KvL Kevin Lucas

MiH Michael Hobbs

MID MerryLynn Denny

MtB Matt Bartels

MtD Matt Dufort

MWo Michael Woodruff

MY Matt Yawney

RHu Rachel Hudson

RKn Randy Knapp

RKo Russell Koppendrayser

RL Rachel Lawson

RyM Ryan Merrill

SPd Sarah Peden

SpH Spencer Hildie

ST Sam Terry

TLi Terry Little

TSI Todd Sahl

WC Wilson Cady



Darren Kirby photo

Soliciting Information on Bank Swallow Colonies

Kelly McAllister and I are continuing our inventory of nesting colonies of Bank Swallows in Western Washington again this year. We're interested in obtaining breeding colony records in this half of the state from birders who haven't already posted their observations on eBird.

We'd like to receive information on the locations of colonies (as exact as possible so that we can visit the sites), as well as dates visited and numbers of burrows counted for 2021 or any past years. Data from past years will help inform us of how long specific sites have been occupied. So far, nearly all of our known colonies are located in the counties flanking the western Cascades, thus we're especially interested in hearing about sites present in Pacific, Wahkiakum, Grays Harbor, Mason, Kitsap, Jefferson, Clallam, Island, and San Juan counties.

Please contact me with your information at wilesharkey@yahoo.com Thanks for your help.

- Gary Wiles
Olympia, WA



J. Maughn photo

Mason County Big Day in May, 2021 (continued)

Pipit. My WA year list got up to 250, adding 10 FOY birds, mostly recently arriving neotropic migrants.

We traveled 99 miles by car, about 8.5 miles on foot, spent about 16 hours birding. The bar has been set for a Mason County Big Day, and a really enjoyable day for all three of us.

Another year: timing seems just about right, we managed really all of the expected returning and remaining passerines. Misses were shorebirds, accipiters, and owls. We might be able to have a stakeout GHOW or BARO, and should be able to get the Barn Owl at Jacob's place with some luck and maybe starting a few minutes earlier. Scouting the day prior for shorebirds might help. A nesting Cooper's Hawk would be great.

Always good to have a wish list.

(Editor's note: this report was first published in the Notes section of Ed Pullen's Bird Banter podcast series on May 6, 2021)



Mark Kent photo



View from Twanoh State Park in Mason County, David Siebold photo

Does Smoke in the Air Obscure Birders' Views or Can it Make Them Better? Depends Somewhat on the Species

By Michelle Ma

As smoky air becomes more common during Washington's wildfire season, many wildlife enthusiasts wonder: What happens to the birds?

Few studies have looked at wildfire smoke impacts on animals, let alone birds. And as Washington and the larger West Coast continue to experience more massive wildfires and smoke-filled air, understanding how birds are affected by smoke - and how air pollution may influence our ability to detect birds - are important factors for bird conservation.

Researchers from the University of Washington now provide a first look at the probability of observing common birds as air pollution worsens during wildfire seasons. They found that smoke affected the ability to detect more than a third of the bird species studied in Washington state over a four-year period. Sometimes smoke made it harder to observe birds, while other species were actually easier to detect when smoke was present. The [results were published](#) June 29 in the journal *Ornithological Applications*.

"We want to know how wildfire smoke affects birds and other wildlife, and this study is a great place to start," said lead author [Olivia Sanderfoot](#), a doctoral candidate in the UW School of Environmental and Forest Sciences. "Smoke clearly has an impact on detection of wildlife, and that hasn't been adequately explored in the literature to date. Now we know that smoke pollution specifically affects our observations of birds and our ability to detect them."

The researchers combined data from [eBird](#), an online citizen-science program managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with publicly available data from an extensive network of air quality monitors across Washington state. They were able to analyze how fine particulate matter, known as PM2.5 and a marker of smoke pollution, affected the probability of observing 71 common bird species during the wildfire seasons of 2015 to 2018. Higher concentrations of smoke affected the chances of observing 37%, or 26, of the bird species included in the study.

Sixteen of the bird species were harder to observe with more wildfire smoke, the study found. These include turkey vultures, Canada geese, two gull species, bald eagles and several other birds of prey.



Screen capture of KIRO TV news video, July 7, 2021

Many of these birds are observed circling high above the ground, so it's not surprising that people would have a harder time detecting them on smoky days, the authors said. However, 10 additional species were easier to observe when smoke concentrations were higher. These include three types of warblers, Cedar Waxwing, Spotted Towhee, and California Quail.

The reasons for this aren't clear and are outside of the scope of this study, but the authors lay out some hypotheses for future exploration. It could be that reduced visibility due to smoke pushes some birds lower to the ground where they can be more easily seen and heard. Or, as smoke prompts birds of prey to relocate, that could alleviate pressure on some songbirds and cause them to be more active - and thus more detectable by people.

"These behavioral changes are all hypotheticals, and we very much hope that researchers follow up on them because we have a lot to learn about how smoke affects wildlife," Sanderfoot said.

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Does Smoke in the Air Obscure Birders' Views or Can it Make Them Better? Depends Somewhat on the Species (cont.)

Conservation and management efforts rely on the ability to observe animals in the wild, and it's no different for birds. Air pollution clearly plays a role in detecting animals, and this paper makes the case that it should be considered alongside other factors like time of day, temperature and precipitation that all can influence observations of animals.

"If we see or hear birds more or less frequently because of smoke, that also impacts bigger inferences we make in terms of how certain bird populations are doing," said senior author [Beth Gardner](#), an associate professor in the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences. "We want to get that part right, so we first need to understand the effect of air pollution on how we're seeing birds in the wild."

The researchers chose a four-year study period that included some summers where wildfire smoke was heavy in parts of the state, and other summers where smoke was negligible. All of the species included in the study had to have had at least 750 observations

recorded for the first year (2015), and all observations used were within about 20 miles (32 kilometers) of an air quality monitor in Washington.

Data from the catastrophic 2020 wildfire season was not part of this analysis, although air quality during that period was worse than in any of the years in the study. As extreme wildfire seasons like 2020 become more common, it's important to consider the influence of events like these in future studies, the researchers said.

This research was funded by the National Science Foundation and the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Program from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

For more information, contact Sanderfoot at oliviavs@uw.edu and Gardner at bg43@uw.edu.

Editor's note: This article first appeared on the UW News web site in June, 2021. Reprinted with permission.



California wildfire smoke, David Prasad photo