

WOS News



LEFT TO RIGHT - Jon Houghton, Elaine Chuang, Dennis Paulson, Andy Stepniewski, Fred Bird, Nancy Ashley, David Hutchinson

CONTENTS

- 2 2024 Elections and Social Media News
- 3 A Word from the President
- 4 35th Anniversary Founder's Luncheon (cont.)
- 5 May 2023 Yakima County Field Trip
- 7 A Fresh(man) Perspective on Birding in Pullman

35th Anniversary Founder's Luncheon

A Remarkable Milestone in Honoring Visionary Leadership

JON HOUGHTON, TACOMA
WOS SECRETARY

ELAINE CHUANG, SEATTLE
WOS FACILITATOR

In August 2023, the Board was contacted by Nancy Ashley, the former wife of Fred Bird, the first President of WOS who reminded us that 2023 is the 35th anniversary of the organization! She suggested that Fred, who is suffering some progressive health issues, would greatly appreciate a get together to reminisce with some of the other founders. Jon Houghton, WOS Secretary, reached out to members of that first Board and was grateful to find both Dennis Paulson and Andy Stepniewski more than happy to reconnect with Fred. Subsequent outreach failed to reach other members of the original Board: Phil Mattocks, Secretary; Ken Brunner, Treasurer; Ben Feltner (now living in Arizona) and Bob Sundstrom (deceased in 2021); Board of Directors. The luncheon took place on October 27, 2023 at Chinook's on Salmon Bay and was a warm celebration honoring Fred and the other founders. In addition to those mentioned above, the event was attended by Elaine Chuang and David Hutchinson, two others active in WOS for a very long time.

To get things going, Jon read a letter of appreciation and recognition from the current President, Dave Kreft. In the letter, Dave thanked Fred and the other founders for their vision, dedication, and effort in getting the organization started. A copy of the first WOS Newsletter (Nov. 1988, edited by one Dennis Paulson) was presented to Fred with the letter ...*Continued on page 4*



The **Washington Ornithological Society** (WOS) was chartered in 1988 to increase knowledge of the birds of Washington and to enhance communication among all persons interested in those birds. It provides a forum to meet and share information on bird identification, biology, population status, and birding sites.

Membership is open to all persons interested in birds and birding. Individual plans are \$25/year. Student, family, and lifetime plans are available. For details, visit <https://wos.org/membership/> or contact membership chair Sarah Safranek at membership@wos.org.

WOS News has been published since 1988.

This Issue #202: Winter 2024.

Submissions, photos, letters are welcome.

The editor wants to hear from you!

President David Kreft	president@wos.org
Vice President Currently Vacant	
Secretary Jon Houghton	secretary@wos.org
Treasurer Bob Schmidt	treasurer@wos.org
Board Member Maureen Traxler	maureen@wos.org
Board Member Ed Pullen	edp@wos.org
Board Member Laurie Ness	laurie@wos.org
Board Member Matt Yawney	yawney@wos.org
Board Member Jody Hess	jody@wos.org

Committees and Chairs

Meetings Chair Currently Vacant	
Program Support Elaine Chuang	
Field Notes Compiler Ryan Merrill	fieldnotes@wos.org
Newsletter Editor Sophia Krupsha	editor@wos.org
Webmaster Jane Hadley	webmaster@wos.org
Field Trips Jen Kunitsugu and Matt Yawney	fieldtrips@wos.org
Hospitality Currently Vacant	
Membership Chair Sarah Safranek	membership@wos.org
Records Committee Chair Brad Waggoner	wbrc@wos.org
<i>Patrick Sullivan Young Birders Fund</i> Chair (PSYBF) Currently Vacant	psybf@wos.org
Information Chris Kessler	information@wos.org

www.wos.org
information@wos.org

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WOS 2024 Election News & an Update on our Social Media

Voting begins on 1/28 and runs through 2/10.

SOPHIA KRUPSHA, SEATTLE
EDITOR

The Washington Ornithological Society eagerly anticipates the upcoming officer election period scheduled to open on January 28 and extend through February 10. As a society dedicated to the study and appreciation of birds, these elections hold significant importance in shaping the leadership that will guide our organization in its pursuit of the knowledge and conservation of birds. Please refer to the WOS.org website for profiles on new and returning candidates as well as the ballot page where you will be able to cast your vote starting Sunday, January 28 at 12:01am PST. These elections are crucial for members to engage in this democratic exercise and contribute to the continued success and growth of the Washington Ornithological Society.

We are also thrilled to announce the launch of our new Instagram and Facebook accounts. Follow @wosbirding on Instagram and the Washington Ornithological Society on Facebook for field trip and event announcements, educational content on the perks of being a WOS member, and updates on our monthly meetings. We hope that these new additions to our social media outreach will create vibrant online spaces for our community to connect and celebrate the birds of Washington State.

For those viewing this newsletter in PDF, click on any of the icons below to open our corresponding social media account.



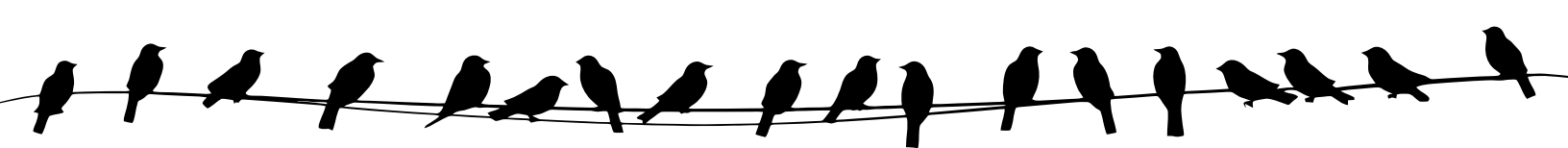
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A Word from the President

DAVID KREFT, KETTLE FALLS
WOS PRESIDENT

Greetings to all WOS members. It has been too long, and sadly remiss on my part, in bringing you updates on WOS happenings. There is plenty of good news. No bad news, per se, but some issues that need to be resolved and some needs to be met within the organization. Let's start with the good news.

WOS has a healthy membership, currently at 443. Financially we're very solid. Our Treasurer, Bob Schmidt, will be putting together our year-end report soon and I will share that with you. Monthly membership meetings have started up again with the dedicated efforts of Elaine Chuang. These meetings are held online through Zoom. We are planning another face-to-face meeting for the May 2024 meeting (it will run concurrently on Zoom, too). Look for more on that in the coming weeks. WOS volunteers have recently been more involved with assisting young birders through the YMCA Earth Service Corps in the Seattle area. We will announce volunteer opportunities in this effort as they come along.

The annual conference is on! It will be held April 25-28, 2024, in Long Beach, WA. We will be announcing the availability of a block of rooms at a couple of different hotels. The planning team is working on a full slate of field trips for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We hope to include two pelagic trips if we can get that arranged. Thank you to all the folks who stepped up to be field trip leaders. We will have evening events on Friday and Saturday. Friday will feature a dinner buffet and the return of the Stump the Experts challenge, hosted by Shep Thorp and Dennis Paulson. Saturday evening will feature another dinner buffet and a special guest speaker. We are very pleased to announce that Gerrit Vyn will be our keynote speaker that evening. Gerrit is well known for his photography and films that have been featured with National Geographic, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon, Living Bird, and BBC Wildlife, to name just a few. His topic will be global shorebirds that nest in the North American arctic. Registration will likely open in February. Look for upcoming announcements.

Now for my confessed shortcomings. Besides not having a 2023 annual conference (a big miss) I failed to hold our annual election of WOS Officers and Directors at the prescribed time. We do have a slate of candidates now (except Vice President) and will be publishing them on the WOS web page sixty days ahead of the election period. The sixty days is required in our bylaws. We will also put before the membership a proposed change to the bylaws to reduce the election announcement period to thirty days (the sixty-day figure is a holdover from pre-internet days when everything was done through snail mail).

In other news, there are several opportunities to volunteer. We have several key positions that are currently vacant and in need of ordinary folks with a desire to serve the organization. Currently open are the WOS Vice President position (no candidate at this time), the Monthly Meetings Chair (Elaine is valiantly filling in with double duty), the Hospitality Chair (for face-to-face meetings), and the Patrick Sullivan Young Birder Fund Chair (Faye McAdams Hands is stepping down). Let me know (or one of the other Board members) if you have an interest in either of these opportunities!

I hope many of you were able to participate in local Christmas Bird Counts. In my snowy corner of the state, these have been a welcome time to meet with other birders and share our passion for birds.

Good Birding,
Dave

35th Anniversary Founder's Luncheon

Continued from page 1

That began a fascinating conversation, stimulated mostly by Dennis and Andy, and thoroughly enjoyed by all present! For starters, Dennis noted that, as one of the founders and first editor of the WOS Newsletter, he had pitched for using the name “ornithological” as opposed to the “Washington Bird Club.” A question arose about the earliest days of the society: memories were a bit rusty. Dennis (who has actually collected and preserved the whole paper WOS Newsletter series!) did some digging and read a quote from President Bird’s message in that first WOS News: “It all started on a sweltering evening this past summer in Seattle Audubon’s less-than-air-conditioned offices. Did we want to form an ornithological society for Washington State? The obvious answer was ‘yes.’ A month later we met at the UW’s Burke Museum with a Gary Larson cartoon exhibit going on next door—through thin walls. It seemed appropriate. We have continued to meet informally at the Burke, and we plan to keep to this monthly schedule of meetings, although we will soon outgrow our early meeting places.”

The next meeting listed in the first newsletter (Nov 1988) was at the Graham Visitor Center in Washington Park Arboretum. The speaker was one Dennis Paulson showing slides from his recent trip to Australia. From subsequent newsletters, the Board met at the Bush School and at Camp Long in the early 90s. The first annual meeting was at Moses Lake in May 1989. The next year, WOS met at Grays Harbor, the following year in Okanogan, etc., beginning the sequence of alternation between east- and west-side venues for our annual gatherings.

Linda Feltner, who with Dennis comprised the first WOS Editorial Committee, is an artist and good friend of Dennis and Andy.



Jon reading a letter of appreciation and recognition to our first President, Fred Bird

At the inception of WOS, Dennis asked her to contribute an original drawing for use as the organization’s logo. “She was doing some drawings of corvids, so we decided a Common Raven might be good: Smart, curious, and noisy... sort of like people.” -DP

And thus, the iconic logo was born.



WOS' Raven logo designed by Linda Feltner

Andy and Fred recalled a remarkable day back in the 80's atop a high point at the Yakima training center, where they were astounded to witness a wave of migrating Black Swifts. Andy reminisced further about the high species counts along Dodson Road many years ago. This triggered Dennis to remember when three of them (Dennis, Andy, and Fred) did a Big Day in May, 1986 that broke the previous state record; they started the day on Dodson Road, where they knew they could find many shrub-steppe and wetland birds.

35th Anniversary Founder's Luncheon

Continued from page 4

This happy reflection led into a group lament about the general loss of habitat richness and birds in the Columbia Basin over ensuing years that is particularly evident along Dodson Road. This widespread decline in shrub-steppe habitats and species can be attributed to effects of agricultural expansion, widespread use of pesticides, invasions of purple loosestrife (in wetlands) and other invasives, along with landscape-scale fire..

In the first Newsletter, there was a notice of the intent to revise the original Guide to Bird Finding in Washington, 1971, authored by Terry Wahl and Dennis Paulson, and a request to all for updates and edits to the information therein. This effort evolved into the first edition of the Birder's Guide to Washington, published in 2003 and edited by Hal Opperman. This major opus, published in cooperation with the American Birding Association, included contributions of expert local knowledge of the state's birding venues from well over 100 WOS members. It, and the 2015 revised edition, now available online, provided detailed guidance (including maps) of prime birding areas throughout the state and has been invaluable to many birders (including the authors) for planning productive trips to unfamiliar areas. We're sure that the discussions and memories could have gone on for many more hours, but the waiters were getting a little antsy, and nap time was approaching for some of us, so we called it a wrap, having enjoyed some great stories from these founders of the organization.



Exploring The Beauty of Yakima County

May 2023 Field Trip promised adventure, discovery, and an unforgettable experience.

SCOTT DOWNES, YAKIMA

During the weekend of May 20th to the 21st, a great group of WOS members joined us for a weekend of birding Yakima County. On Saturday we traversed the Highway 12 corridor from Clear Lake to Oak Creek and then finished up the day in the Wenas Creek basin. Highlights along this corridor are the many varied habitats, with nearly 90 species observed for the day. The afternoon was marked by some strong thunderstorms, but participants still enjoyed such treats as a Golden Eagle on a nest, White-throated Swifts flying right over our heads, many Lewis's Woodpecker in all their finery, Lazuli Buntings and Canyon Wrens.

Exploring The Beauty of Yakima County

Continued from page 4

In the Wenas, Ponderosa Pine birds such as White-headed Woodpecker, Gray Flycatcher, and Western Bluebird. Sunday brought abundant sunshine as we headed for the lower valley. The marshes of Toppenish provided a stark contrast to the wooded east slope of the Cascades that we had experienced on Saturday. Calling Black-necked Stilts and Wilson's Snipe were treats and a few American Avocets and Wilson's Phalaropes were seen. The group was also treated to several Black-crowned Night Herons, normally an uncommon species in the area. Calling Sora's, Virginia Rail, and American Bitterns were a treat as was breeding Redhead, Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal. By mid-morning, the marshes of Toppenish were starting to quiet, so the group headed west to Fort Simcoe.

At Fort Simcoe we were treated to many breeding Lewis's Woodpeckers and wonderful looks at Ash-throated Flycatcher. An Acorn Woodpecker had been present for several weeks and the group was able to observe this rare visitor to the county as we enjoyed lunch under the massive Garry Oaks. For the weekend, the group recorded 126 species. Thank you to the participants for the great company and good eyes, it made for a memorable weekend.



ABOVE - Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

BELOW - Fledgling Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*)



A Fresh(man) Perspective on Birding in Pullman, WA

A college freshman's adventures exploring new avian territories

JACOB MILLER, PULLMAN

A lot has happened in the past year. I moved out to Pullman, for my freshman year of college at WSU. Along with it, my first ever fall birding in eastern Washington, and migration didn't disappoint. Fortunately for me, Alexander Sowers also had the same idea, moving out to Pullman and majoring in wildlife ecology, which meant that I wasn't the only birder out here. On the birding front, it has been even better than I had expected. While the majority of our birding time was spent around WSU campus and anywhere we could take the bus to in Pullman (neither Alex nor I have a car), we were lucky

enough to meet several local Whitman County birders, including Casey Lowder and RJ Baltierra. With them we were often out birding Whitman County hotspots on weekends. With migrant traps all around, we found all the expected species, several great county birds and a couple vagrants. One of the highlights was trying to keep a weekend streak of adding one new county bird to RJ's list each week - a daunting task considering he has seen 262 species now for Whitman County. An impressive list for any county, especially one that's land locked.



ABOVE - Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*)

BELOW - Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)



BELOW - Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)



A Fresh(man) Perspective on Birding in Pullman, WA

Continued from page 6

We managed it for three weekends in a row, I believe, with a female Williamson's Sapsucker on August 26th at Central Ferry HMU (second county record), Band-Tailed Pigeon on September 2nd at Hooper (first eBird record, but they used to breed in the county), and a Tennessee Warbler on September 9th also at Hooper (second county record)! Overall, I would say this has been the most successful fall birding I've ever experienced in my life. I added several new state birds to my list, and within a few short months I am at 206 species for Whitman County, with the vast majority of those being seen since August 11th when I arrived in Pullman! I look forward to the next couple of years, continuing birding a new area, learning a lot (and studying even more), and hopefully getting involved with research as well!

Jacob Miller was the 2020 recipient of the Patrick Sullivan Young Birders Award. All photos on this page were taken by Jacob Miller.



ABOVE - Tennessee Warbler (*Leiothlypis peregrina*)