

MARCH 2024

Kitsap Audubon Society – Since 1972



THE Kingfisher

March 14th Program (6:30-8:00 p.m. via Zoom)

Birds of the SE Peruvian Amazon

Dr. Ursula Valdez will appear in person at March meeting.

The Peruvian Amazonia is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, and thousands of species are distributed in this region. Unfortunately, many bird species and their habitats in the region have been affected by deforestation, agriculture expansion, and illegal mining. Dr. Ursula Valdez and her colleagues assess populations of resident and migratory species, their distribution among available habitats, and the related impacts of human activities. Dr. Valdez will share some of her research findings, and she will explain how these studies are also helping to train younger generations and engaging people from Peru and other regions in science, conservation, education, and sustainability.



Dr. Valdez is a Peruvian-American Avian tropical ecologist and conservationist. She focuses on studies of bird community ecology; habitat use and works in conservation programs in the SE Peruvian Amazon. She collaborates with other scientists and professionals and local communities of Madre de Dios to develop conservation programs. Dr. Valdez is on the faculty of UW Bothell, where she teaches about natural history, birds, ecology, and conservation. Through her courses, and field study abroad to Peru, she offers opportunities for field ecology research for students and also connects them with a body of local and international researchers, conservation organizations and students. Dr. Ursula Valdez is also affiliated with CECCOT (Centro de Educación, Ciencia y Conservación Tambopata).

Zoom Program, Thursday, March 14th at 6:30 p.m.

To join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/91811374785?pwd=Tm12VIBHWGhRYnRQUmg2RIUrMkJpdz09>

Meeting ID: 918 1137 4785 ; Passcode: 935230

To join by telephone: 1 253 215 8782

Meeting ID: 918 1137 4785; Passcode: 935230

**Kitsap Audubon now accepting applications
for 2024 scholarships**

Details on page 2 and at <https://KitsapAudubon.org/Scholarships>

President's Letter - Kevin Eger

Shortly before Martha Jordan's excellent presentation in February, I received a message from a colleague with a picture of a pair of swans in Liberty Bay. The swans were so far out and the picture so pixelated that it was near impossible to tell what species they might be (my vote is Trumpeter Swan). But I absolutely loved the guessing game. How many of us have puzzled over a picture or speculated over a story of a mystery animal and thought "I just don't know!"? We can all appreciate nature and its mysteries, whether we are brand new to birding and couldn't tell one little brown bird from another, or a seasoned expert trying to understand why a lifer turned up in a new spot. The fun, I am sure you will agree, is in the wondering.



We are an organization dedicated to keeping that nature around and inviting all of our community to join us in the wonder and the work. We are supporting the next generation of conservationists with scholarships for both graduating seniors and college students (see scholarship announcement below). We are working through our Conservation Committee to help organizations such as Great Peninsula Conservancy acquire forest and wetland and monitor its wildlife (see **GPC Walk & Talk** on p. 4). We continue to give presentations to community groups throughout Kitsap through the great work of our Education Committee. We will need volunteer help in the spring on this Committee, especially around Earth Day in April. Our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee is actively looking for ways to celebrate and advocate for people of all backgrounds to get out in nature and enjoy birding. It is really a great group to be with.

A few important notes on this issue: Our Nomination Committee is seeking candidates for our upcoming April election of next year's officers. If you are interested in getting more actively involved in leadership or volunteering in any capacity, please reach out to us through our webpage "Volunteer Opportunities." We are also asking for your input on changing or keeping "Audubon" in our organization's name (see letter on p. 10). I encourage you to read our letter and submit your feedback if you have not yet, through our website's "Contact Us."

We hope to see you at the general meeting on March 14th at the North Kitsap High School Library. Washington State Representative Greg Nance (23rd Legislative District) will be joining us in person, as will our guest speaker Ursula Valdez. You can still attend by using the Zoom link on page 1.



North Kitsap High School Wildlife Club conducts Climate Watch at the Bloedel Reserve. Left to right: Talon Grant, William Burgh, Cassidy Benton, Annika Nulton, and Kevin Eger.

Kitsap Audubon Society now accepting applications for 2024 Scholarships

If your home base is Kitsap County and you are considering a career in a field related to Kitsap Audubon's mission, such as environmental science, forestry, wildlife management, wildlife or marine biology, Kitsap Audubon is now accepting applications for our 2024 scholarships. You can apply online at <https://www.kitsapaudobon.org/scholarships>. The deadline to apply is March 30th.

This year Kitsap Audubon will award up to six \$1,000 scholarships to graduating seniors from Kitsap County high schools. An additional three \$3,000 scholarships will be awarded to students who have already successfully completed a year or more in a related academic degree program.

Kitsap Audubon Society has awarded some \$95,500 in scholarships to Kitsap area students since the program began.

KID'S CORNER

Robin or Towhee?

When you are out bird watching it can be hard to tell what species, or kind of bird, you are looking at. Some are small and fast, some never get very close, and others might be easy to see ... but they look very similar to another species!

In Kitsap County it's pretty easy to spot robins and towhees as spring gets closer. Both of them have darker wings and heads, bellies that look orange, and are close to the same size. So how do you tell which bird you are seeing?



American Robin

Their heads, backs, and wings are a dark gray/brown.

Their belly is orange.

They have white feathers that go from their legs back underneath their tails. It's easier to see if they're flying or up on a branch.

They are not at all shy, and are often seen looking for worms on front lawns.

So what's one thing you can look for when you're trying to tell if the orange sided bird is a robin or towhee? A white belly! If it has a white belly and speckles on the wings you've spotted a towhee. If it doesn't, you've got a robin.

This month be on the lookout for our orange belly bird friends. How many can you find?

Extra robin fun fact: if you could hold one, you would notice that it weighs a little less than 4 AA batteries.



Spotted Towhee

Their heads, backs, and wings are black (male) or dark gray/brown (female). Their wings also have white spots!

Their belly is white with orange sides.

They are shy and like to hide in the bushes where they scratch in the leaves for food.

They have red eyes.

Photos courtesy of Jay Wiggs

Field Trips & Festivals - Al Westphal, Field Trip Chair

Liability Waiver Policy: KAS requires field trip participants to complete a liability waiver. This simple online form is on our website at:

<https://www.kitsapaudubon.org/fieldtrips>

Once a waiver has been signed it will be valid for the remainder of the KAS operating year (September – June).

HEALTH PRECAUTIONS: We ask the following:

(1) Each household must sign up by email in advance with trip leaders; (2) Be prepared

to adhere to directives and advice from our public health departments; and (3) Be courteous toward others: If you are not well, especially coughing, sneezing, or wheezing, please stay home.

Birding Festivals and Events:

A complete summary of events statewide may be found at the Washington State Audubon site:

<http://wa.audubon.org/bird-festivals-0>

Field Trips

Fort Flagler and Marrowstone Island (Jefferson County) Saturday, March 2nd (full day). Having been posted in last month's issue, this trip is already fully subscribed, but I'll be happy to run a wait list, and cancelations do happen. Contact Al Westphal: westphalac@aol.com

Trip Report

Port Washington Narrows-Kitsap Lake, February 10th. The annual field trip around Washington Narrows in Bremerton was fortunate to have the sun join the trip this year. His brightness was treated to a display of well-lit winter species riding the tidal flow and jostling with each other as they dove, dabbled, and pecked around for their breakfast. The sprightly crew of thirteen observers was fortunate to see a satisfying number of Surf Scoters riding the currents and the Pelagic Cormorants nestling under the Warren Avenue

edge at Lower Roto Vista Park. A few Long-tailed Ducks and Harlequin Ducks visited along the way. A final stop at Kitsap Lake Park caught a variety of fresh water species including the rafting Common Coots, Ring-necked Ducks, and Lesser Scaup. In all, over 1300 individuals were spotted comprising 46 species. For the first time in memory, we basked in sunshine while birding.

Photo by John Bouck of Kitsap Audubon birders at Kitsap Lake.



Bogs and Birds! at Grovers Creek Preserve



with Kevin Eyer
Kitsap Audubon
Board President



 Great Peninsula
Conservancy

Saturday, March 23rd

[RSVP at greatpeninsula.org/events](https://greatpeninsula.org/events)

Wildlife Sightings - Janine Schutt

On Feb. 11th, Jolly Sienda of Tracyton reported a male varied thrush perched on the branch of an ornamental tree in her backyard.

Notable Kitsap Bird Sightings from www.eBird.org:

Jan. 15 near Indianola: 1 yellow-billed loon
Jan. 16 in Kingston: 1 common redpoll
Jan. 20 near Hansville: 2 savannah sparrows
Jan. 22 in Kingston: 1 snow goose
Jan. 30 near Port Orchard: 1 northern shrike
Feb. 1 near Kingston: 2 American kestrels
Feb. 4 near Seabeck: 1 band-tailed pigeon
Feb. 8 at Point Julia (Port Gamble): 6 black oystercatchers, 1 western gull
Feb. 9 at Hawley Cove Park (Bainbridge Island): 1 merlin
Feb. 9 near Port Orchard: 1 white-throated sparrow
Feb. 10 near Bremerton: 1 American dipper
Feb. 10 near Port Orchard: 8 cackling geese, 2 Virginia rails

Feb. 10 on Kitsap Lake: 3 ruddy ducks, 200 American coots
Feb. 10 near Seabeck: 1 northern pygmy-owl
Feb. 10 on Long Lake (Port Orchard): 5 wood ducks, 12 lesser scaups
Feb. 11 in Port Gamble: 6 black scoters, 4 long-tailed ducks, 1 peregrine falcon
Feb. 11 in Seabeck: 5 greater white-fronted geese
Feb. 11 at Manchester State Park: 1 herring gull
Feb. 12 at Restoration Point (SE Bainbridge Island): 18 harlequin ducks, 7 black scoters, 2 black oystercatchers, 120 black turnstones, 32 surfbirds, 230 common murrelets, 98 ancient murrelets
Feb. 13 near Hansville: 1 black phoebe
Feb. 14 near Kingston: 2 trumpeter swans

Snow-covered bird baths and singing Varied Thrushes send mixed messages about the approach of spring. Photos by Carrie Griffis



Bird of the Month: Yellow-rumped Warbler

by Janine Schutt

One of Kitsap's harbingers of spring is the energetic yellow-rumped warbler. Males in crisp breeding plumage are unmistakable. Often called "butter butts," the trademark yellow rump is a distinguishing field mark on both males and females. It is one of eight breeding warblers of the Puget Sound region. Along with the orange-crowned and Townsend's warblers, some individuals are also local winter residents.

Here are some fascinating facts about the yellow-rumped warbler:

- One of the most widespread warblers of North America with a breeding range extending from Alaska to Nova Scotia and throughout much of the western United States.
- Some migrate short distances for the winter, from the mountains to the coast.
- Northern breeders are long-distance migrants that winter in the eastern and southern U.S. and Mexico, with some going as far as the Caribbean and Central America.
- In western Washington, two subspecies are present. Throat color is the easiest way to tell them apart. The common Audubon's subspecies has a yellow throat and the less common Myrtle subspecies has a white throat.
- Utilizes a variety of habitats, depending on the region where it lives.
- Usually breeds in mature conifers and mixed woodlands, often in the mountains. In the Pacific Northwest, breeds in any coniferous forest, from mountains to sea level.
- Preferred U.S. wintering habitat is open woodlands with berry bushes.
- Perhaps the most versatile warbler, it forages virtually anywhere. Relies on insects for most of the year, gleaning them from almost any place: the air, plants, the ground, and even the surface of water.
- Unlike other warblers, it has the ability to digest bayberry, wax myrtle, and other berries. Adding seed to this diet allows it to winter farther north than any other warbler.
- Males usually forage higher in the trees than females.
- Sometimes joins mixed flocks of wintering songbirds. In early spring can be found around forest edges and wetlands, such as the Clear Creek Trail in Silverdale.
- Often nests in fir trees, building a small cup of plant material on a horizontal branch between 4 and 50 feet off the ground.
- Both parents care for the brood of 4 or 5 chicks, with the male continuing to look after them for a couple of weeks after they have fledged.



Photos from top: Yellow-rumped Warbler subspecies: Male Audubon's (Western subspecies) Warbler. Female Audubon's Warbler. Myrtle (Eastern subspecies) Warbler. Photos by Janine Schutt

Bird I.D. Tips - Gene Bullock

This is the first in a continuing column with helpful hints on identifying common bird species. The author has birded extensively in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Belize and Costa Rica over the last 45 years, and participated in Christmas Bird Counts and bird banding in Washington, Massachusetts, Texas and Arizona. The author also taught well-attended birdwatching classes for the Poulsbo Recreation Center for several years.

In future issues we'll talk about many of the common problems confronting novice birders in identifying sparrows, swallows, waterfowl, shorebirds and more. The lessons will be illustrated with spectacular photos by such talented local photographers as Jay Wiggs, Janine Schutt and Don Willott who generously donate their photos for use in Kitsap Audubon educational programs.

Barrows vs Common Goldeneye

The male Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes are easy to identify by the white patch on their cheeks. The Barrow's cheek patch is usually crescent and that of the Common is round. The Barrow's is also predominantly black and the Common predominantly white. Female Barrow's are readily distinguished from female Commons by their yellow bills. The bills of female Commons tend to be gray.

Photos of Barrow's (left) and Common (right) Goldeneyes by Jay Wiggs.



Eurasian vs American Wigeon

Old-time duck hunters used to call American Wigeons "baldpates" because of their white-streaked domes. American Wigeons winter by the thousands in Washington estuaries, where they feed on succulent water plants. Typically, every large flock of American Wigeons includes one or more Eurasian Wigeons, noted for their distinctive russet-colored heads.

Photos of Eurasian Wigeon (left) and American Wigeons (right) by Jay Wiggs.



Woodpeckers - Nature's Tireless Homebuilders

By Gene Bullock

Woodpeckers are some of nature's busiest home builders. These woodland carpenters never tire of pecking holes in dead trees to find food. The natural cavities they carve serve as nesting sites for some 75 species of birds and small mammals.

There are more than 300 kinds of woodpeckers in the world. 22 live in the U.S. Here are the five that live in Western Washington.

The Northern Flicker upper right is the one seen and heard most often in residential neighborhoods. They are known for hammering loudly on wood to impress females and rivals. *Photo*

Jay Wiggs

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers below closely resemble each other, but the Hairy is bigger. The best way to tell them apart, however, is by the size of their bills. The Downy's is short and stubby, and the Hairy's is nearly as long as the head is wide.

Photos Jay Wiggs

Pileated Woodpeckers (center right) are crow-sized and noted for the prominent red crest that gives them their odd name. The elongated holes they excavate in dead trees are as supersized as they are. *Photo by Carrie Griffis*

Red-breasted Sapsuckers (lower right) are seldom seen at feeders. Sapsuckers are named for the unusual way they trap insects for food. They drill a ring of sap wells around a tree so the oozing sap will attract insects. *Photo by Don Willott.*

People can help woodpeckers make more homes for cavity nesting birds and small mammals by leaving dead trees standing.



A third of Americans are now birdwatchers

Around 96 million people in the U.S. closely watched, fed, or photographed birds, visited public parks to view birds; or maintained plantings and natural areas around the home for the benefit of birds in 2022. That's more than 35% of the nation's population aged 16 and over.

These figures are from the latest surveys by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which conducts detailed surveys every five years on the U.S. economic impact of outdoor recreation. Altogether, wildlife watchers spent more than \$250 billion in 2022 to engage in their hobby -- including more than \$24 billion on equipment such as binoculars, cameras and bird food. This underscores how wildlife, and especially birds, are economic engines that sustain local, regional, and national economies.

The figures reflect a worldwide birding boom in the years since the outbreak of Covid in 2020. The heightened interest also reflects the rapidly growing popularity of such Cornell Lab of Ornithology innovations as the Merlin Bird ID app and eBird. There are now more than 1.5 million Merlin users in the U.S. and more than 1.3 million eBird users.

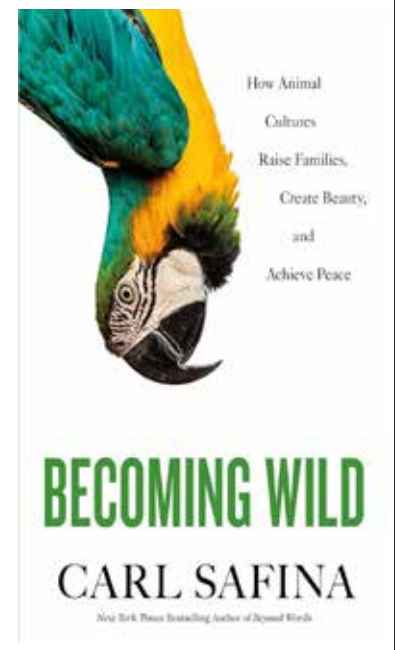
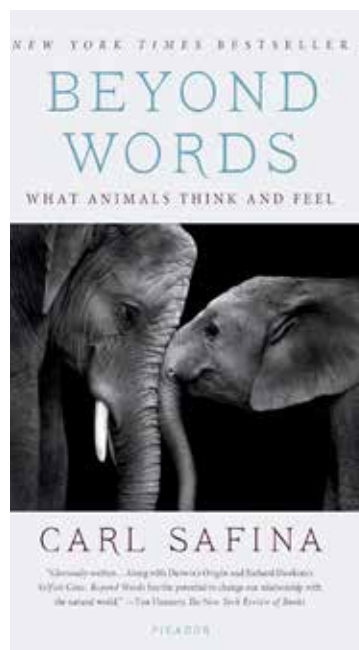
Audubon encourages backyard bird feeding if it is done responsibly because it is such a great way to connect families and the young with birds and nature. Responsible bird feeding means keeping feeders clean and seed and suet fresh and uncontaminated. We believe backyard bird feeding can benefit birds because the more people know about birds, the more they care about birds, the more they want to help protect birds. People want to save what they know and love.

“Beyond Words” and “Becoming Wild” by Carl Safina

Each of these two books is well worth reading alone, but the two are continuations of the same monumental studies. Both were *New York Times* Best Sellers. Carl Safina is an award-winning author and famed naturalist whose lyrical writing about animal behavior is deeply sensitive, startlingly insightful, and grounded in the latest science and research. Based on his immersion in the social lives of free-living animals, he argues compellingly against the dogmatic insistence on avoiding “anthropomorphizing” animal behavior. He contends that this “objective distancing” in interpreting animal behavior keeps researchers from empathizing and seeing their individuality and complex social lives. Instead of contriving artificial experiments to measure whether animals are capable of “thinking” and “feeling,” he says researchers need to come out of their insular laboratories and spend time intimately observing free-living animals in the wild. If they did, it would become obvious that the intelligence and emotional lives of animals are not as different from ours as we have imagined. Their “cultural diversity” is every bit as important to their social and behavioral lives as ours are to us.

Safina's two books, “Beyond Words” and “Becoming Wild,” are a continuation of the same immersive first-hand studies of free-living animals in the wild. The first focuses on elephants, wolves and orcas, and the second on sperm whales, Scarlet Macaws and chimpanzees. The first book dwells more on science, but both soar in lyrical eloquence. The chapters on orcas are especially touching and meaningful to those living in Western Washington. Carl Safina blends impeccable science and compelling insight with luminous prose to make a case for the underappreciated importance of cultural diversity in animal lives.

by Gene Bullock



Help Kitsap Audubon Society Board Deliberations Regarding Our Name

This is a second invitation from our KAS Board for members to share your thoughts on keeping or changing our "Kitsap Audubon Society" name, building on the article in our previous Kingfisher newsletter and comments received to date. Several letters of comment helped the Board get some sense of range of thought, generated some modified framing, and we now seek to expand discussion.

Kitsap Audubon has a 50-year legacy of impactful advocacy for birds, wildlife habitat and the environment. Our value to the community is reflected in the amazing generosity and support of our members and friends over so many years. Regardless of what name we use, we are committed to having our organization engage all people in our community. Please help us realize that reality!

John James Audubon is credited with creating beautiful and technically accurate depictions of birds in their natural environments which inspires science, conservation and enjoyment of birds. However, we also recognize that our namesake was a slave owner who harbored deeply racist views against both black and indigenous members of society. This raises some ethical and moral questions about our identity and values as an organization. We are not alone in facing this dilemma. Many other Audubon chapters and affiliates across the country are grappling with the same issue. Some have decided to keep their name, some to change their names, and others are deliberating. Our chapter's decision, whether keeping or changing the name, will not affect our affiliation with the National Audubon Society. If you would like to know more about the decisions being made by National and some local chapters, you can read more here:

National Audubon: <https://www.audubon.org/news/frequently-asked-questions-about-audubon-name>
Seattle Chapter :

<https://birdsconnectsea.org/2023/06/20/faq-for-name-change/>

Tahoma Chapter

<https://www.tahomaudubon.org/our-name>

*Recently Tahoma, Vashon, and Portland have chosen "Bird Alliance" as part of their official or proposed new names, reflecting a naming convention chosen by other chapters nationally (e.g. Tahoma Bird Alliance and the Bird Alliance of Oregon)).

We want to hear from you, before we make related decisions. We want to know your thoughts about continuing to use or change the name "Audubon" for our local organization. Here are a few thoughts favoring keeping the name "Kitsap Audubon Society," and a few favoring changing the name of our local organization. These are not exhaustive, but they represent some of the thoughts we have encountered in our research and discussions.

Thoughts on continuing as "Kitsap Audubon Society":

- Continuing as "Kitsap Audubon Society" would allow us to build on our history of supporting the science-based study and enjoyment of birds in Kitsap and beyond, while changing the name could generate confusion about whether this is a new organization without a track record.
- Changing the name could entail a significant amount of time, effort, and resources to implement, which could divert our attention from our core programs and activities. It would require us to update our website, logo, signage, publications, and other materials.
- Changing the name would not necessarily address or solve the deeper and broader issues of racism and discrimination that pervade our society and our sector. It could be seen as a superficial or symbolic gesture that does not reflect our actual actions and impacts as an organization, or that does not acknowledge the positive contributions and achievements of John James Audubon as a naturalist and artist.

Thoughts on changing our name:

- Changing the name could demonstrate our commitment to social justice, inclusiveness, and accessibility, which are core values of our organization and our community. It would signal that we are willing to acknowledge and address the historical and present-day injustices and inequalities that affect people of color and indigenous people in our society and in the environmental movement.

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- Changing the name could remove a barrier or deterrent for people of color and indigenous people might otherwise be interested in joining or supporting our organization, but who would feel unwelcome or uncomfortable with the name "Audubon". It might also create an opportunity for us to reach out and collaborate with diverse and underrepresented groups and communities in our area, and to foster a more inclusive and diverse membership and leadership.
- Changing the name would allow us to choose a new name that reflects our unique identity, vision, and goals as an organization, and which might resonate better with our members and our community. It might also revitalize our image and recognition in the public eye, and attract new supporters and partners.

We hope that this background will help you to weigh in on this discussion about the name of our organization. We value your thoughts, and invite you to share them with us via our website (**Contact Us**) or mailing in your response. All thoughts are valued and will inform our thoughtful consideration. The request will be open until March 31, 2024, and we will share the results at our monthly board meeting on April 2nd. We will consider possible next steps at that time.

Thank you for your time and your support. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kitsap Audubon Board of Directors

Photo of Northern Flicker by Carrie Griffis.



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<https://www.kitsapaudubon.org/video>

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Kitsap Audubon Society

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To receive your Kingfisher via email and save us the expense of printing and mailing, send your request to genebullock@comcast.net.

Kitsap Audubon Society - Membership Renewal

Join/Renew online at <http://www.kitsapaudubon.org/membership>

or make check payable to KAS and mail to KAS, PO Box 961, Poulsbo, WA 98370

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- Check here to receive your Kingfisher via Email and save us the expense of printing and mailing. Members receive ten issues of the Kingfisher newsletter each year.

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The mission of the Kitsap Audubon Society is to preserve the natural world through education, environmental study and habitat protection, and to promote awareness and enjoyment of local and regional natural areas.

Visit our website at <https://www.kitsapaudubon.org>

