

MAY 2024

Kitsap Audubon Society – Since 1972



THE Kingfisher

May 9th Program (6:30-8:00 p.m. via Zoom or in person)

Special Birds of Mount Rainier

To most residents of the region, Mount Rainier holds opportunities for camping, hiking, climbing and other outdoor pursuits. But what about its wildlife? Did you know that Mount Rainier National Park hosts three bird species protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act? Jeff Antonelis-Lapp will share fascinating stories and discuss the current status of the Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, and Streaked Horned Lark. This is his third presentation to Kitsap Audubon.

After graduating from Huxley College/Western Washington University in 1978, Jeff Antonelis-Lapp worked two summers at Mount Rainier National Park, igniting a connection to the mountain that endures today. He has summited the mountain, hiked all of its mapped trails, and completed the 93-mile Wonderland Trail five times.

Jeff began writing *Tahoma and Its People* after being unable to find a current natural history for a course he planned to teach at Evergreen State College in Olympia. He conducted over 250 days of fieldwork for the book, many of them in the company of park archaeologists, biologists, and geologists. While at Evergreen, he taught Native American Studies, natural history, environmental education, and served as the Library Dean before retiring in 2015.



The Kitsap Audubon Society meets the second Thursday of each month from September to May. You can join via Zoom or attend in person at North Kitsap High School Library, 1780 NE Hostmark, Poulsbo, WA. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the program starts at 6:30 pm.

To join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/91811374785?pwd=Tm12VlBHWGhRYnRQUmg2RIUrMkJpdz09>

Meeting ID: 918 1137 4785; Passcode: 935230

To join by telephone: 1 253 215 8782

Meeting ID: 918 1137 4785; Passcode: 935230

Election of Officers for 2024-2025

Kitsap Audubon held its annual April election of officers to serve from July 1st, 2024 to June 30th, 2025. Elected by unanimous vote: Kevin Eyer and Lynn Willmott - Co-Presidents; Gene Bullock-Vice President; Crystal McMahon-Treasurer; Justin Carrington-Secretary.

President's Letter - Kevin Eger

Yesterday I went up to Hurricane Ridge in the Olympic National Park. The place has special significance to me, particularly after spending a summer doing research in the area as an undergraduate. Each morning I would climb the switchback trail to my destination, sit back, and take it all in. And each morning at approximately 9:00 a.m. the same Anna's Hummingbird would zoom over to check me out, determine me not a threat, and zoom off.

It is in our nature, humans and wildlife alike, to relish routines. After spending April celebrating conservation at many Earth Day and Earth Month events with members of our Education Committee, I've thought quite a bit about the parts of our routines that affect wildlife. What are small things we can change to benefit the birds that we love? Drinking shade-grown coffee and reducing plastic use are a few of the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology's seven actions to take. (<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds/>).

As part of the Kitsap Audubon Society's spring routine, we have a busy spring month ahead. Scholarships will be awarded to candidates seeking college degrees related to our KAS mission. Regional chapter leaders from Kitsap, Olympic, and Admiralty will be meeting to review the year and discuss future work to benefit birds and their habitats. Our Education, EDI, and Conservation Committees will all meet to begin planning summer and fall activities. Please reach out if you have interest in helping out at <https://www.kitsapaudubon.org/volunteer>.

Bogs and Birds!

On March 23rd, Kitsap Audubon members joined the Great Peninsula Conservancy in a co-led "Walk & Talk" through a portion of Grover's Creek Preserve. Kitsap Audubon helped fund GPC's initial purchase of this special property, which contains a stand of "old" Sitka spruce considered potential habitat for endangered Marbled Murrelets. Our walk ended at the "Troll Tree," an old Western Red Cedar with a wide mossy bough like those preferred as nest sites by Marbled Murrelets (see photo, right, by Kevin Eger).

The rugged nature of the path was not for the faint of heart. The trip was appropriately named "Bogs and Birds." Several of us found themselves occasionally stuck in the mud along the way. It was wonderful to see members of GPC and KAS walking together, sharing stories, and appreciating our long-time partnership, which has benefited birds and their habitat throughout Kitsap County.

Name Change Update

The board of directors asked our membership across several months for input on whether to rename our chapter and remove the name "Audubon" from our title. 57 survey results and Board input were divided roughly down the middle. The Board is open to revisiting this topic but will close this discussion for now.



KID'S CORNER

Crow or Raven?

Our jet black raven and crow neighbors often show up on lists of the world's smartest animals. Scientists who study them have found that both kinds of birds can do many things, like remember faces and use tools to solve puzzles! But even though they have similar color and brains, we can still learn to tell them apart.



The American Crow (left) is smaller than the Raven (right). Crows are very social and usually hang out together in noisy flocks. Ravens are almost always by themselves, and stay away from crows even though they are bigger. Photos courtesy of Jay Wiggs

Crow	Raven
16-21 inches long 0.7 - 1.3 pounds Flaps their wings more often when flying, but has quiet wing flaps Has a gentle fan-shaped curve to their tail when they fly Makes a "caw caw" sound Likes to live near towns, cities, fields, and forests	21-27 inches long 1.5 - 3.5 pounds Glides more often when flying, but has swishy sounding wing flaps Has a soft wedge or diamond point to their tail when they fly Makes a "croak" that's deeper than a crow's caw Likes to live near forests, mountains, and towns

No matter which bird you've spotted, you can try and make a friend by tossing a few peanuts! Leave the shells on and watch how these smart birds decide to open up their snack.

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>

May 3-5: [Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival](#)

May 10-11: [Wings Over Whidbey Festival](#)

May 10-12: [Yakima River Canyon Bird Fest](#)

May 11: Global Big Day. Go birding and complete an eBird report!

May 11: [World Migratory Bird Day](#)

May 16-19: [Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest](#)

May 30-June 2: [Yakutat Annual Tern Festival, Yakutat, Alaska](#)

May 31-June 2: [Wenas Audubon Campout](#)

Field Trips:

Theler Wetlands and Trails (Belfair); Saturday, May 11th. (Half-day); Al & Carolyn Westphal, leaders. An annual spring favorite! We will walk the boardwalk and trails for several hours in the morning to greet the spring arrivals including swallows, sparrows, and hopefully a few warblers and vireos, along with the year-round residents. Event involves several miles of walking on good trails including one short but moderately steep stretch down and back. Contact trips leaders for sign-up (westphalac@aol.com).

Photos show Kitsap Audubon volunteer Cathy Cohoon teaching 3rd and 4th graders about birds at the annual Kitsap Water Festival. Kitsap Audubon's booth was also staffed by Lynn Willmott and Sandy and Gene Bullock. Photos by Gene Bullock



Wildlife Sightings *by Janine Schutt*

On April 3rd, John Cohoon reported a chipping sparrow at his backyard feeder. It was Kitsap's first confirmed chipping sparrow sighting of the year. For four days straight during the first week of April, Janine Schutt enjoyed watching a male orange-crowned warbler repeatedly visit a shrub by the kitchen window where it sipped nectar from the tiny flowers.

Send your interesting sightings to wildlifesightings@kitsapaudubon.org.

Notable Kitsap Bird Sightings from www.eBird.org:

Feb. 27 near Hansville: 1 black phoebe
March 4 on Gold Mountain (near Kitsap/Mason County line): 2 sooty grouse
March 4 on Kitsap Lake (Bremerton): 1 redhead
March 8 at Dickerson Creek (Bremerton): 1 American dipper
March 14 at Port Gamble: 1 ruddy turnstone
March 15 near Hansville: 1 western meadowlark
March 18 near Hansville: 2 tundra swans
March 20 on Green Mountain (near Seabeck): 1 northern pygmy-owl
March 23 on SE Bainbridge Island: 45 snow geese flying over
March 24 on SE Bainbridge Island: 22 trumpeter swans flying over
April 1 at Restoration Point (SE Bainbridge Island):

18 harlequin ducks, 6 black scoters, 2 Virginia rails, 12 surfbirds, **1 ferruginous hawk flying over—first Kitsap record!**

April 2 on Gold Mountain: 2 western bluebirds
April 3 at Old Mill Park (Silverdale): 2 sandhill cranes flying over

April 5 near Hansville: 1 whimbrel

April 6 at Wicks Lake (south of Port Orchard): 2 mountain quails

April 6 near Burley: 1 American pipit

April 7 at Point No Point (Hansville): 1 long-tailed duck, 2 Wilson's snipe

April 8 at Port Gamble: 1 black oystercatcher

April 8 near Hansville: 1 solitary sandpiper

April 9 on Clear Creek Trail (Silverdale): 1 chipping sparrow

April 10 at Foulweather Bluff near Hansville: 1 mountain bluebird

April 12 in Poulsbo: 1 evening grosbeak

April 12 on Long Lake (Port Orchard): 20 cackling geese, 2 canvasback

April 12 at Kitsap Lake: 1 Townsend's solitaire

April 13 near Kingston: 5 greater white-fronted geese

April 13 near Hansville: 1 hermit thrush

Photos: Golden-crowned Warbler by Janine Schutt and Chipping Sparrow by John Cohoon.



Bird of the Month: Brewer's Backbirds

by Janine Schutt

A striking, yet underrated bird is the Brewer's blackbird. While its lifestyle may not have much wow factor, its iridescent feathers shine in direct light with surprising beauty. Here are some fascinating facts about the Brewer's blackbird:

- Year-round in the West and migratory in the plains states and Midwest.
- Range extends from southern Canada to southern Mexico. "Locally, it is most often seen at the north end of Kitsap County from spring to fall.
- The eastern portion of its range overlaps with the range of the similar common grackle. In such areas, the Brewer's blackbird inhabits grasslands and fields, leaving neighborhood and suburban habitat to the common grackle.
- The male appears to be all black, the female appears to be all brown. Direct light reveals stunning iridescent shades of metallic green and dark blue on the male, which are more subtle on the female.
- The male has piercing yellow eyes, the female has dark eyes.
- Agriculture has expanded its range and preferred habitat.

- Despite adjusting well to human altered landscapes, it is considered a common species in steep decline, largely due to misguided perceived threats to agriculture which have resulted in unnecessary poisoning, trapping and shooting.
- Forages on the ground for grain seeds, insects, and berries.
- Eats numerous insects in summer, including many pests, making it more of a friend to agriculture than an enemy.
- Joins with other blackbird species, cowbirds, and starlings in the non-breeding season, forming flocks with hundreds of individual birds.
- Males act as sentinels, sending out alarm calls and attacking predators, such as raptors, that threaten the flock.
- Monogamous pairs nest in colonies of anywhere from a few to 100 pairs. Cup nests of plant material are built in trees or shrubs.
- Eggs are a variety of colors and speckle patterns, perhaps for camouflage.
- Usually raises two broods of 4-6 eggs per year.

Brewer's Blackbird photos by Janine Schutt. Male left and female right.



Sparrow I.D.

Gene Bullock (Photos by Jay Wiggs)

Sparrows are notoriously hard to identify because they look so much alike and skulk furtively in the bushes. Frustrated birders sometimes referred to them collectively as “LBJs” (Little Brown Jobs). But they are among our most common birds in backyards, hedgerows and thickets everywhere.

The Song Sparrow (photo lower left) is one of the most abundantly widespread and vocal birds in the U.S. and Canada. Its vivacious trills are among the most frequently heard bird songs in backyards everywhere.

The White-crowned Sparrow (photo top right) is a Pacific West Coast sparrow that nearly rivals the Song Sparrow locally in abundance and vocal persistence. It’s somnolent call lacks the musical verve of the Song Sparrow, but once it starts singing in April, it will continue calling nearly all day every day for the next two months from any available bush, including lone shrubs in commercial parking areas.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow (photo right) is a common winter visitor in Western Washington, where it is often seen foraging on the ground with flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos and other sparrows. Often lingering until late spring, they migrate further north to breed. In Alaska, its lazy call earned it the nickname “weary willy.”

House Sparrow (photo lower right) was introduced in the 19th century and has since multiplied out of control and become a major threat to such native species as swallows and bluebirds. House Sparrows thrive in cities on human litter. Traveling in flocks, they aggressively outcompete native species for the scarce supply of natural nest cavities.



Great Blue Heron Rookery on Bainbridge Island - Photos by Jay Wiggs



Transfer of Eglon 700 acres approved by DNR

The Washington State Board of Natural Resources approved the transfer of 705.8 acres of land to Kitsap County through the Trust Land Transfer program during its monthly meeting in March. The Washington State Legislature allocated \$8.8 million to DNR to fund the transfer. Once the transfer is complete, the county's park and open space inventory will increase to more than 11,500 acres. The transaction will provide more than 700 acres of land north of Kingston for public access and conservation.

"We are thrilled to add this sizable parcel to our portfolio of conservation lands in north Kitsap County," said Kitsap County Commissioner Christine Rolfes. "Its trails are already well-loved, the forest is beautiful, and the people of the area will be thoughtful, long-term stewards."

The lands hold high ecological value, and transfer of the parcels to Kitsap County will present further opportunity for habitat protection and passive recreation opportunities for the public in the area.

For more information on the transfer, including photos and a map of the parcels, go to dnr.wa.gov/about/boards-and-councils/board-

Kitsap Audubon Society

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The Kingfisher is printed on

recycled paper by Blue Sky

Printing and mailed by Olympic

Presort, both family-owned local

businesses.

Eglon TLT Resolution 1631-A

Parcel Information



- 705.80 acres total
- 224.79 acres of Common School Trust Property
- 481.01 Acres of University Trust land
- Total of five tax parcels

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Kitsap Audubon Society

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The Kingfisher is the newsletter of the Kitsap Audubon Society, P.O. Box 961, Poulsbo, WA 98370. It is published ten times a year, September to June. Submissions from readers are welcome. We reserve the right to edit for space, grammar or legal reasons. Email text or photographs to genebullock@comcast.net or mail to Gene Bullock, 1754 NE Mesford Rd., Unit 5, Poulsbo WA 98370. Our deadline is the 15th of the preceding month.

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

Name _____ Phone _____

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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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Additional donation: \$ _____

The Kitsap Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible.

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The mission of Kitsap Audubon Society is to promote the understanding and appreciation of birds, wildlife habitat and the environment through education, stewardship, community science and advocacy, and to help conserve and restore the ecosystems that birds need now and in the future. Visit our website at <https://www.kitsapaudubon.org>

