JUNE 2022
Kitsap Audubon Society – Since 1972

THE Kingfisher

Kitsap Audubon does not meet during June, July or August. Monthly programs (either virtual or hybrid) will resume in September.

Wildlife Sightings - Janine Schutt

Send your interesting summer sightings to wildlifesightings@kitsapaudubon.org.

Notable Kitsap Bird Sightings from www.eBird.org:

April 16 at Otto Jarstad Park (Gorst): 1 American dipper
April 17 in Winslow: 1 ring-necked pheasant
April 20 at Clear Creek Trail (Silverdale): 1 western meadowlark
April 21 at Clear Creek Trail: 1 mountain bluebird
April 22 on Bainbridge Island: 1 barn owl
April 22 at Lower Roto Vista Park (Bremerton): 3 snow geese
April 23 near Hansville: 1 long-billed dowitcher
April 23 at Foulweather Bluff (Hansville) 2 ruddy ducks
April 26 near Kingston: 1 cinnamon teal
April 27 at Etta Turner Park (Port Orchard): 1 Iceland gull
April 30 near Hansville: 1 lesser yellowlegs
May 1 at Blackjack Valley (south of Port Orchard): 9 whimbrels
May 2 at Fay Bainbridge Park: 5 spotted sandpipers, 2 herring gulls, 11 American pipits
May 4 at Port Gamble: 1 bank swallow
May 4 near Kingston: 3 greater white-fronted geese
May 5 near Hansville: 2 Wilson's snipes
May 6 on Bainbridge Island: 1 merlin
May 7 at Restoration Point (SE Bainbridge Island): 1 cackling goose, 38 Harlequin ducks, 1 Virginia rail, 2 Sandhill cranes flying over, 2 black oystercatchers, 2 Swainson's hawks flying over, 1 western wood-pewee, 1 western kingbird, 1 house wren, 1 chipping sparrow
May 8 on SE Bainbridge Island: 1 Nashville warbler
May 8 near Kingston: 1 white-throated sparrow
May 9 at Chico Creek (near Bremerton): 1 semipalmated plover
May 10 SE of Port Gamble: 1 hermit thrush
May 10 at Point No Point County Park (Hansville): 1 northern harrier
May 13 at Gold Mountain (near Mason County): 1 mountain quail, 2 sooty grouse, 1 northern pygmy-owl, 1 Cassin's vireo, 1 Townsend's solitaire, 3 evening grosbeaks, 18 MacGillivray's warblers,
May 14 near Kingston ferry terminal: 1 black scoter
May 14 on Bainbridge Island: 2 Lazuli buntings

Photos by Jay Wiggs of Ring-necked Pheasant and Black Oystercatcher.

President's Letter - Lynn Willmott

Spring is a wonderful time to get out and view the migrating, nesting, and newly fledging birds. Kitsap Audubon has accomplished so much over this past year. Thank you to an outstanding team. Executive Board members include Vice President Gene Bullock, who edits our monthly Kingfisher Newsletter, Co-Treasurers Sandy Bullock and Jennifer Standish, and Secretary Judy Willott who records our monthly Board Meetings. Our At-Large Board members include Grant Winther, Janine Schutt, Kevin Eyer, Annie Bui, Kathryn Owen, Pearl Kerber (also Education Chair), and our newest Board member Josh Oliver. Janine Schutt and Jennifer Standish organize our two annual Christmas Bird Counts as compilers, and Jennifer chairs our Climate Watch Red-breasted Nuthatch monitoring program.

Our thanks to Michael Szerlog and Annie Bui for their skillful hosting of our virtual membership and Board meetngs. Michael has been our amazing webmaster for more than 20 years, and Jennifer Szerlog now serves as our membersip administrator, a huge and demanding job. As our social media chair, Annie Bui also provides engaging input for our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter social media. Don Willott, Conservation Chair, and Judy Willott have ably represented Kitsap Audubon on planning and advisory committees for the Port Gamble Heritage Forest Park and the Sound to Olympics Trails. Vic Ulsh continues to bring us fascinating speakers each month, and Al Westphal provides us with outstanding field trips every month.

A special thank you to all who donated generously to Kitsap Audubon from the Bainbrdge One Call For All and during the Kitsap Great Give.

Jennifer Standish receives Kingfisher Award

Jennifer Standish was presented with the Kingfisher Award at the May, 2022, meeting of the Kitsap Audubon Society. This is Kitsap Audubon's highest award, and is given annually to an individual or couple who has given outstanding service to Kitsap Audubon for a period of five or more years. The award was presented by Lynn Willmott, who was last year's recipient.

Jennifer joined Kitsap Audubon nine years ago, and has served as one of our official Christmas Bird Count compilers for the past five years. She has been on the Kitsap Audubon Board for four years, three of them as either Treasurer or Co-Treasurer. She has been especially active in recruiting and training volunteers to participate in Climate Watch and other community science programs. Jennifer is known for her personal warmth and dedication, as well as her wise and insightful contributions to the Board's decision-making process.

Jennifer first volunteered for Kitsap Aububon's Christmas Bird Count in 2013, and quickly became a big fan of citizen science. She has participated every year since then, and is the compiler for the Port Gamble count circle which was reinstated in 2017.

In 2016, Jennifer joined Seattle Audubon's Puget Sound Seabird Survey. Volunteers for the survey go out once a month (October through April) and record any birds seen on the water using the distance sampling method.

Another of Jennifer's favorite spring activity is participating in Alaska Audubon's Great American Arctic Birding Challenge. This challenge runs for three months, and encourages participants to find species of birds that summer in the arctic. Jennifer and her 5 teammates had the honor of placing first in the Lower 48 category in 2017 and 2018. She has also been a volunteer Long-billed Curlew data checker for the Intermountain Bird Observatory in Idaho since 2019.

Jennifer lives on Bainbridge Island wih her husband and son.

Photo by Gene Bullock

Kitsap Audubon Awards $14,000 in 2022 Scholarships to area students

Recipients of Kitsap Audubon's 2022 scholarship awards were announced at the May meeting of Kitsap Audubon by Sandy Bullock, Chair of the Scholarship Committee. Kitsap Audubon has awarded more than $85,000 in scholarships to-date to Kitsap County students planning to pursue academic degrees in fields related to Kitsap Audubon's mission of protecting birds, wildlife habitat and the environment. Sandy has been Chair of the Scholarship Committee since she cofounded it with Sara Kane 16 years ago.

First-year college students awarded $3,000 Ann Sleight Scholarships:

Faith Halko, Bainbridge Island - studying envionrmental science at Western Washington University

Gabrielle Lund, Port Orchard - studying environmental science and forestry at Washington State University

Montana Thoroughman, Kingston - studying environmental science at the University of Washington.

Faith Halko

Gabrielle Lund

Montana Thoroughman

Graduating high school seniors awarded $1,000 Scholarships:

Evan Gray, Bainbridge High School - Environmental science at University of Washington
Megan Miller, South Kitsap High School - Marine science at Eckert College
Claire Moe, Kingston High School - Environmental sudies at Colorado College
Kina Painter, South Kitsap High School - Environmental studies at University of Washington
Rebecca Smyth, Kingston High School - Forestry/wildland fire science at University of Montana

Field Trips & Festivals - Al Westphal, Field Trip Chair

COVID 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 summary of events statewide may be found at ***http://wa.audubon.org/bird-festivals-0***

Billy Frank-Nisqually NWR (near Olympia); Saturday, June 11th. Al & Carolyn Westphal, leaders. A long half-day trip, but there are few places in the region better for observing a good variety of nesting bird species, and they should all be here by mid-June. We will walk the forest and barn trails and as far out on the boardwalk as we care to go. This event involves several hours/miles of walking on good flat trails with restroom opportunities at the start and mid-way. Contact trip leaders to sign up (***westphalac@aol.com***).

Bird of the Month: Brown-headed Cowbird

by Janine Schutt

The brown-headed cowbird may be the most disliked of all native birds. As parasitic nesters, they are known for having other birds raise their young, instead of doing that themselves. Here are some fascinating facts about the brown-headed cowbird:

- A member of the blackbird family, considered by many to be a nuisance bird.
- Year-round in the southern and eastern U.S and along parts of the Pacific Coast. Common summer resident in the rest of the U.S. and southern Canada.
- Favors open habitat, particularly grasslands; has benefited from development and forest fragmentation.
- Range is now widespread across the continent, but was historically limited to the grasslands of the Midwest.
- Feeds on various grass seeds and sometimes gleans insects off the bodies of pasture animals.
- A female may lay over 30 eggs in a single season, but never builds her own nest.
- Females require high amounts of calcium to lay so many eggs, which they obtain by consuming snail shells and egg shells from other birds' nests.
- North America's most common "brood parasite," laying its eggs in the nests of more than 220 bird species.
- Nests of other species placed on the ground, in shrubs, trees, and even cavities are utilized, from those of tiny kinglets to large meadowlarks.
- Some species recognize the unwelcome egg and either puncture it or remove it from the nest.
- Hatching first and developing quickly, growing cowbird chicks can outcompete their "brothers and sisters" for food from their foster parents and sometimes rid themselves of competition by tossing the eggs and chicks of the host from the nest.
- The male has a shiny, black body with a brown head; the female is light brown.
- Juvenile resembles the adult female and has a streaked chest. It is often considerably larger than the host species.

Photos by Janine Schutt show adult male Brown-headed Cowbird, left, and Dark-eyed Junco feeding a cowbird chick (right).

Where have all the Coots gone? - Ron Hirsaci

I grew up in Port Gamble and learned to identify birds from a book my Gramma gave me when I was maybe ten. I loved getting to know my favorites better, the pigeon guillemots nesting in bluffs between my home and my Aunt Edith's to the south. Then there were murrelets. Beautiful little birds who occasionally made the mistake of hooking themselves onto a herring I trolled for salmon behind my rowboat. At least it allowed me to hold them. For a moment.

I noticed them when old enough to hunt wigeon on the west side of Port Gamble Bay, but it wasn't until I finished school at the UW and worked as a fish and wildlife biologist that I really noticed the abundance of coots in Port Gamble and all along Hood Canal.

From about 1976 to 1980, I began routine bird counts as part of a project to map habitat along the entire coast of Washington. It was at a time when people in power actually cared about the environment and the few lucky ones got to use our youthful optimism to try to save the earth. We tried best as we could to stop the war and to make environmental changes. We believed people would protect the world.

I counted birds from ferries, from shoreline places, and from our home on Hood Canal. Just a few numbers from counts give you an idea of changes. American Coots are water birds. Rails, not ducks. They are plump dark birds who feed here at mouths of rivers and streams. I would count well over one hundred at river mouths, such as the Hamma Hamma and two dozen or more at tiny stream mouths along Port Gamble Bay.

At the same time, I was seeing big flocks of Western Grebes pretty much up and down the Canal and in Port Gamble Bay. Red-necked Grebes were also common, and huge flocks of Long-tailed Ducks arrived as soon as the herring were spawning just north of the channel between the mill and Little Boston. The ducks were after herring eggs. Minke whales were also arriving to feed on the adult herring.

The Coots are gone

Today there are zero American Coots – none -- in Hood Canal. My thought is that eagles have eliminated their population. You see, coots are plump and might dive if an eagle comes around, but they have no ability to stay under water long like a grebe or other diver. And so, it is likely the coots vanished from predation.

My story holds that no eagles were around when I was a kid. The well-known story of their demise and return reflects a change in balance. When there were no eagles, their prey thrived. Eagles return and some but not all of their food disappears.

Like the wolves of the Rockies, we have first upset balances, then returned a predator into an unnatural landscape. I championed the return of wolves in the Rockies, but hope that people stop moving into the region in such numbers.

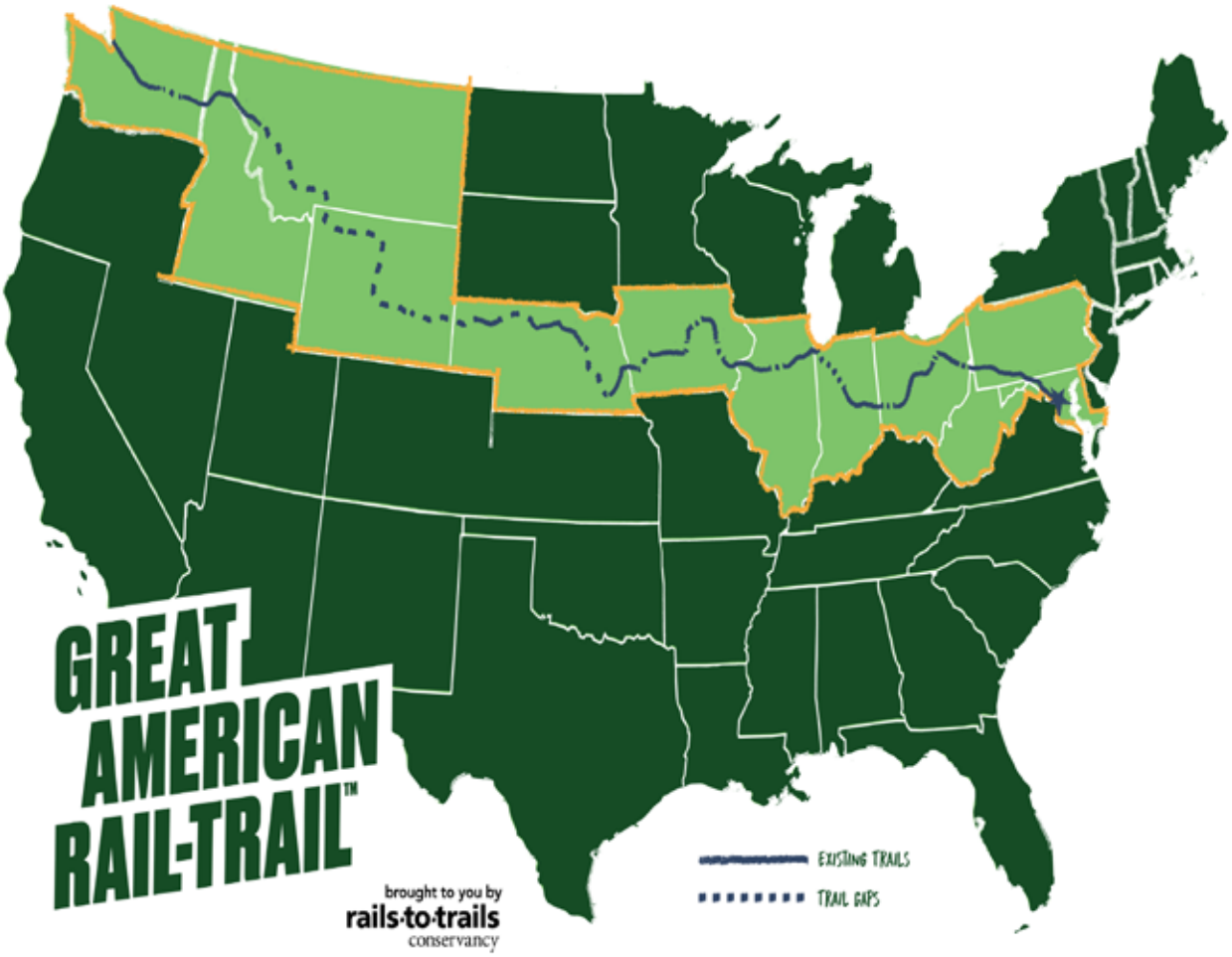
Ron Herschi is a prolific author of children's books on nature and wildlife. He has been a biologist for the Washington Game Department, a counselor and educator for the North Kitsap Schools, and a consulting biologist for Northwest Coast Indian Tribes. He grew up in Port Gamble, where his father was a mechanic for the lumber mill. Ron has given previous talks for Kitsap Audubon on marine life.

Photos of American Coot by Jay Wiggs.

Washington STO an extension of Great American Rail-Trail

The Washington Sound to Olympics Trail (STO) crosses Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties, providing the Washington extension of the Great American Rail-Trail (GART). The cross-continent GART links Washington D. C. and the Washington Coast.

Kevin Belanger and Marianne Fowler (photo below left), staff members of the GART national coalition, recently toured the Washington STO and met with area tribes and others involved with the STO. Don and Judy Willott (photos below) of Kitsap Audubon helped escort the tour group. Don is Conservation Chair for Kitsap Audubon, and has been a leading voice and planner for the Kitsap County portion of the STO. Judy serves on the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park Advisory Committee. The park is expected to include a segment of the STO.



Education Committee Outreach

The newly expanded Education Committee, Chaired by Pearl Kerber, is exploring ways to engage children and families with birds, nature and environmental education. Committee members bring a wealth of related professional and volunteer experience.

Members have engaged children, families and others in exhibit displays at such events as the annual Kitsap County Salmon Tours (photo lower right), the 2022 Pathways Conference (photo lower left), and the Bainbridge Earth Day celebration (upper photos).

Photo lower left: From left, Kevin Eyer, Kathryn Owen, Sandy Bullock, and Gene Bullock.
Photo lower right: From left, Pearl Kerber, Kevin Eyer, Gene Bullock.

Hansville Greenway Association receives Kitsap Earth Day Award

Kitsap Audubon is especially proud of helping fund the purchase of 100 acres for the Hansville Greenway by Great Peninsula Conservancy (GPC). The Hansville Greenway Association received the 2022 Kitsap Earth Day Award for its leading role in this community-driven effort.

Michael Szerlog, President of the Hansville Greenway Association, has been Kitsap Audubon's webmaster for more than 20 years.

A core group of Hansville community volunteers oversaw the project and fundraising efforts: Darcy Herrett, Michael Szerlog, BryAnn Bingham, Ryan Ross, and Jane Jacobs. They worked closely with Nate Daniel and Katherine Tacke with GPC and numerous community members, including Julia Atwood, Manya O'Shea, and Howie O'Brien.

Sunset celebration, left to right: Michael Szerlog, Ryan Ross, BryAnn Bingham, Darcy Herrett, and Jane Jacobs. Photo by Michael Szelog

Making safe homes for Poulsbo Ospreys

Eight years ago, Kitsap Audubon led successful efforts to relocate a pair of Ospreys that had been nesting on a light tower in Poulsbo's Strawberry Field. Now Kitsap Audubon is working with the Poulsbo Rotary, the North Kitsap School District, and osprey expert consultant Jim Kaiser to help fund a similar solution for a pair that have nested for the last seven years on a light tower in the North Kitsap High School athletic field.

Both pairs have been successfully raising families every year -- and adding nest material! As a result, both nests are now so heavy they threaten to collapse the structures supporting them. Human intervention is needed to reduce the size of those nests before they cause costly damage. One of the problems is that specialized skills and equipment are needed to maintain these nests. Another big problem is that workers are prohibited from disturbing nests while they are in active use. Related maintenance can only occur before May 1st or after September 30th.

Both nests are on property owned by the North Kitsap School District. Both pairs also benefit greatly from their proximity to the pond behind the NK School District's horticulture building. The Poulsbo Lions Club keeps the pond stocked with trout for its annual children's fishing derby. Lions Club members enjoy knowing that they are helping support these two Osprey families.

Photos by Jay Wiggs and Jim Kaiser.

Storywalks sponsored by Kitsap children's librarians

Youth services librarians at the Manchester and Poulsbo libraries will be sponsoring storywalks in June for hundreds of children and their familes. The storywalks will feature as many as 21 stations, each displaying a photograph and brief description of a common local bird. The photographs and descriptions were provided by Kitsap Audubon and its many talented bird photograpahers.

Example: Station #1 - Sapsuckers drill a ring of wells around tree trunks that ooze sap, attracting insects for food.
Photo of Red-breasted Sapsucker by Don Willott.

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Watch videos of previous programs

https://www.KitsapAububon.org/video

Audubon Adventures for 3rd and 4th grade classrooms

If you are a Kitsap County 3rd or 4th grade classroom teacher, or know someone who is, you should know about this donation program. Some two dozen Kitsap classroom teachers are already using it **-- and rave about it!** Kitsap Audubon pays for each curriculum kit and has them mailed directly to the teacher subscriber. The classroom version includes 32 handouts of each full-color magazine on three different topics, plus an online teacher's guide. There is also a single-copy version for homeschoolers or small classrooms..

Audubon Adventures was developed by professional environmental educators at the National Audubon Society. It is an NSES standards-based science curriculum that is easily integrated into existing curriculum areas of science, social studies, mathematics, language arts, and creative arts.

Over 7 million youngsters have participated in the program. It is easy to use and makes learning fun. Audubon Adventures is used in classrooms, home schools, after-school programs, camp programs, ESL classes, and more.

The Audubon Adventures content-rich website www.audubonadventures.org provides interactive games, puzzles, and quizzes, and topic-related resources for teachers and students.

Each kit includes 32 handouts of colorful magazines on three different topics, plus a teacher's guide.

The Killdeer is known for its "broken-wing" act, designed to lure predators away from its nest. Photo by Jay Wiggs.

Kitsap Audubon Society

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www.kitsapaudubon.org

Kingfisher Editor: Gene Bullock, GeneBullock@comcast.net, 360-394-5635

The Kingfisher is printed on recycled paper by Blue Sky Printing and mailed by Olympic Presort, both family-owned local businesses.

Kitsap Audubon Society

P.O. Box 961, Poulsbo, WA 98370

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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

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Additional donation: Scholarships $_____ Audubon Adventures $ _____ Other $_____

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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