



Eastside Audubon
your connection to nature

The Corvid Crier

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

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DECEMBER 2019

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Eastside Audubon Society is to protect, preserve and enhance natural ecosystems and our communities for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and people.

OUR STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Just as biodiversity is essential to the health of any ecosystem, the Eastside Audubon Society recognizes that diversity of values, experiences, and perspectives are essential to the health of our organization and the community at large. We strive to grow and magnify the voices that people of diverse backgrounds have in the Eastside Audubon Society.

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President's Letter

By Lori Danielson

I have several neighbors who are snowbirds, leaving their homes each November and spending the winter in the sunnier and warmer climates of Arizona. Their absence makes me reflect on the similar absence of some of our summer birds, who I visualize in the warmth of Mexico or Central America while I shiver here. Not only do I miss my neighbors, but I miss birds like Yellow Warblers, Rufous Hummingbirds, and Common Yellowthroats. I look at range maps on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *All About Birds* website (allaboutbirds.org) to see in general where they spend their winters.

But I know that migration is dangerous for birds, and the home that awaits is not always a tropical paradise. Factors like loss of habitat due to development and climate change may make their destinations not such welcoming places at the end of their long trips, either in winter or summer.

I heard National Audubon's Jill Deppe speak at the Audubon

Council of Washington meeting in September about Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative. In this very large project, an Audubon team is compiling data from many sources, including eBird and the Christmas Bird Count, for the purpose of securing "the future of migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere by reducing direct threats and protecting key places across the Americas..." They plan to better describe migration paths and summer and winter locations for each species of migrating bird in the Americas so they can protect habitat, working with partners in other countries if needed. There is more about the project at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/migratory-bird-initiative>. Ms. Deppe said they expect to start providing online visual depictions of the data in 2021 on the Audubon website. I appreciate this scientific conservation effort by Audubon to improve the chances that our migrating birds, our "snowbirds," will keep coming back each spring. ■

Recognizing Our Volunteers: January 23

The Eastside Audubon board will recognize our volunteers at a potluck dinner on Thursday, January 23, 2020. We will enjoy a presentation given by members of our photography group and

celebrate the many ways that our volunteers have supported the birds, environment, and our community in 2019. More details will be coming out soon. ■

CHAPTER MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings take place at Northlake Unitarian Universalist Church. Use the downstairs entrance on State Street.

Youth Education Committee Jan 7, 7:00 to 8:30pm

Meets the first Tuesday of every month except December and August. Open to anyone who likes to share nature with youth. Email education@eastsideaudubon.org for more info.

Conservation Committee Jan 8, 7:00 to 9:00pm

Meets second Wednesday of the month, engaged in activism and hands-on conservation projects. For more info email Tim McGruder at tmcgruder@gmail.com.

Photo Group

Jan 9, 7:00 to 9:00pm

Meets the second Thursday of every month in the church sanctuary. All levels welcome. If you like, bring photos on a flash drive to share. Email Larry Engles engles@ridesoft.com for more info.

EAS Book Club

Jan 21, 7:00 to 8:30pm

Meets the third Tuesday of every month at the EAS office. RSVP required; email Becky Serabrin wingsinapril@gmail.com.

MATERIAL SUBMISSION FOR THE CORVID CRIER

The deadlines for material submission are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1 for printing in the following month's issue.

Email material to newsletter@eastsideaudubon.org with "Corvid Crier Quarterly" in the subject heading.

2019 Christmas Bird Count Preliminary Report

By *Andy McCormick*

On December 14 Eastside Audubon sponsored its 37th Christmas Bird Count joining hundreds of other Audubon chapters around North America for a one-day count of all birds seen and/or heard within the 15-mile diameter circle centered at Beaver Lake in Sammamish. The chapter sent 15 teams into the field and then hosted a dinner for counters and their supporters where they reviewed the 94 species of birds counted during the day.

Lake Sammamish was the site of special birds for the Eastside Audubon CBC. A rare Pacific Loon was seen at the boat launch area of Lake Sammamish State Park, and on the other side of the park a Surf Scoter, another seabird, was observed, and was one of 14 species of ducks tallied.



Great Horned Owl.

Photo by Brian Kushner

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/great-horned-owl#photo1>

Three owls were seen. On Count Day the Barn Owl, Western Screech-Owl, and Great Horned Owl were all seen at Marymoor Park. In addition, two days before the count a Short-eared Owl was seen at Marymoor and this will be added as a Count Week bird.

On the East Lake Sammamish Trail Yellow-rumped, Townsend's, and

Orange-crowned Warblers were seen. In the Snoqualmie Valley two Tundra Swans were observed among a flock of Trumpeter Swans. All five possible woodpeckers were seen on the count: Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, and Red-breasted Sapsucker.

Our 15 teams (Team leader's names are in parentheses.) found birds over a wide area. Lake Sammamish was well-covered by five teams counting birds in Marymoor Park (Brian Bell), west Lake Sammamish parks (Dawn Huss), the East Lake Sammamish Trail (North - Lori Danielson and Antonio Montanana, South - Tim McGruder), and Lake Sammamish State Park (Scott Ramos).

In the eastern valleys birders covered Evans Creek and Ames Lake (Jordan Roderick), the Snoqualmie Valley (East – Joyce Meyer and Mike West, Northwest – Kate Conant, Southwest – Rusty Hazzard), Preston and Fall City (Brien Milleur), and the Sammamish Plateau (Stan Wood).

Issaquah had three teams covering the city including: The Issaquah Creek Corridor (Doug Bonham), the Issaquah Alps Parks (Andy McCormick), and the Fish Hatchery (Veda DePaepe). In east Bellevue a team covered Phantom Lake and the Lake Hills Greenbelt (Tricia Kishel).

Thank you to our team leaders and all the volunteers who joined them to count birds, and a special thank you to the team that organized the wonderful food and drink for the dinner to cap off the day. ■

Bird of the Month | Western Screech-Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*)

Length: 8.5 inches
Wingspan: 20 inches
Weight: 5 oz (150 grams)
AOU Alpha Code: WESO

By Andy McCormick

The owl with the “bouncing ball” call, the Western Screech-Owl is a true night owl becoming active only after sunset.

The Western Screech-Owl is common in many types of woodland but difficult to find because of its up-all-night lifestyle. They begin calling in January and February and are most vocal at dusk and more commonly later in the breeding season. It's bouncing ball type call is a distinctive series of toots that “begins slowly and then accelerates such as too too tootootootootoo” (Dunne). You can hear this call and see photos at the Macaulay Library.

The Western Screech-Owl is very similar to the Eastern Screech Owl (*M. asio*), but is nearly always gray and does not have a red morph. However, these owls in the wet and humid Pacific Northwest often display brown coloration. In both colors this owl has strong vertical frontal streaks marked by finer dark crossing bars. It has yellow eyes and a black or dark gray bill with a pale tip.

An Opportunistic Hunter

The Western Screech has a varied diet and will eat beetles, moths, and other insects, and in addition it forages for small rodents, pocket gophers, small birds, lizards, frogs, and fish. It typically hunts from a perch and catches prey on the ground or in the water. (Kaufman).

Screech-owls are typical owls of the Western Hemisphere and all 25 species belong to the genus *Megascops*, which was separated in 2003 from the genus *Otus*, which is



Western Screech-Owl. Photo by Tim Boyer

now reserved for Old World owls. “Scops” is from the Greek, *scopus* for watcher (Wikipedia). This owl is named for Robert Kennecott (1835-1866), a founder of the Chicago Academy of Sciences (Holloway). “Kennecott was a man who discovered no new birds and published little about them but was one of the most enthusiastic zoological field collectors of his time” (Mearns and Mearns).

Enjoys the Company of Woodpeckers

The Western Screech usually nests in a tree hollow or an old woodpecker nest hole. In the Pacific Northwest they rely primarily on holes excavated by Northern Flickers and Pileated Woodpeckers and share the mixed woodland environment with them. Big-leaf maple seems to be one of their favorite trees in which to nest. The Western Screech-Owls are non-migratory, but in winter they will move to roost in conifers after deciduous trees have dropped their leaves (Bannick).

The female incubates between two and five white eggs for almost four weeks. During this time, the male brings food to the female. The

young are fed by both parents for about a month after hatching, and the young remain with the parents for a while after they leave the nest.

Distribution and Conservation

The Western Screech-Owl inhabits woodland at lower elevations over a range that extends from along coastal habitat from Southeast Alaska though British Columbia, the western United States to Baja California and the central mountains of Mexico. In Washington the range extends from the western slope of the Cascades to the Pacific Coast where it enjoys moist woodland and riparian habitat.

There are no continent-wide conservation measures in place for this owl. However, local disturbance in habitat can be caused by selective cutting or clearcutting areas containing potential nesting sites in snags. Expansion of the range of the Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) along the Pacific Coast may be the most important factor contributing to a decline in population of the Western Screech-Owl (Cannings, et al).

References available upon request from amccormick@east-sideaudubon.org. ■

FIELD TRIP MEETING PLACES

Kingsgate Park & Ride

13001 116th Way NE, Kingsgate
Meet in the southeast corner.

Wilburton Park & Ride

720 114th Ave. SE, Bellevue
I-405, Exit 12

Newport Hills Park & Ride

5115 113th Place SE, Bellevue
I-405, Exit 9

South Kirkland Park & Ride

10610 NE 38th Place, Kirkland

Tibbetts Lot

1675 Newport Way NW, Issaquah
Meet across the street from
the large parking garage at the
west end.

FIELD TRIP LEADER CONTACT INFO

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the large parking garage at the
west end.

MONTHLY WORK PARTY AT MARYMOOR PARK

The habitat restoration work party meets the first Saturday of every month from 9:00am to noon. Meet at the kiosk of the Audubon BirdLoop at Marymoor Park, Lot G. Parking pass provided. Bring water, snack, gloves, a shovel and/or a rake. Call the EAS office 425-576-8805 for more info.

Upcoming Field Trips & Events

Please be sure to visit eastsideaudubon.org for complete information on these field trips and any recent additions. The website will have more detailed descriptions of each trip, the meet-up location, and cost.

Juanita Bay Park Interpretive Tour • Sun, Jan 5 - 1:00pm to 2:00pm

Songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, amphibians, turtles, beavers, and other small mammals make Juanita Bay Park their home. Interpretive tours of this wildlife habitat are conducted by Eastside Audubon's volunteer Park Rangers on the first Sunday of every month. Tours start in the parking lot. Bring binoculars if you have them. Children aged 6 and above, accompanied by an adult, are welcome. No registration required.

Lake Sammamish State Park • Fri, Jan 10 - 8:00am to 12:00pm

This urban park offers a wide assortment of birds and habitats due to its varied ecosystems. The trip will involve walking approximately 2-3 miles. Meet just inside the main entrance; take the first left into the large parking lot and meet at the northeast end. A Discover Pass is required to park. No registration required. Co-led by Sharon Aagaard and Stan Wood.

Samish & Skagit Flats • Mon, Jan 13 - 6:45am to 4:30pm

The Samish and Skagit Flats are outstanding locations in winter for hawks, eagles, falcons, as well as waterfowl and swans. Join us as we look for Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons and American Kestrels (and hopefully more unusual ones.) We will also check out the various waterfowl and Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. Registration is required. Led by Brian Bell.

Juanita Bay Park Bird Walk • Tues, Jan 21 - 8:00am to 12:00pm

A relaxed walk in the Park, seeing what birds are in the area. Meets the third Tuesday of each month. This can be an enjoyable walk for teens as well as adults. Walk begins at 8:00am, April - September. Bring binoculars and meet in the parking lot. No registration required. Led by Mary Frances Mathis.

Birding Hot Spots of King County • Mon, Jan 27 - 9:00am to 12:00pm

Monthly field trip to wherever the birds are. Meet before 9:00am at the north end of the Newport Hills Park and Ride (I-405, exit 9) and plan to be back by noon. Carpool cost per passenger \$2 - \$4 depending on the destination. No registration required. Led by Rusty Hazzard.

Juanita Bay Park Interpretive Tour • Sun, Feb 2 - 1:00pm to 2:00pm

Songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, amphibians, turtles, beavers, and other small mammals make Juanita Bay Park their home. Interpretive tours of this wildlife habitat are conducted by Eastside Audubon's volunteer Park Rangers on the first Sunday of every month. Tours start in the parking lot. Bring binoculars if you have them. Children aged 6 and above, accompanied by an adult, are welcome. No registration required.

Adult Education Classes

For the first half of 2020, Eastside Audubon has arranged for three adult education classes, all relating to birding!

Waterfowl of North America

Includes all regularly occurring waterfowl throughout the United States and Canada. Thus, the class will be educational for local birding, as well as for birding trips throughout North America. This class will have 4 sessions to be held in January/early February (Jan. 14, 21, 28; Feb. 4) with 4 additional field classes in January and February. Registration is currently open.

Gardening For Birds

In April, in partnership with the Native Plant Society, we are offering Gardening for Birds and Wildlife to help you select optimum plants to attract birds and other wildlife (such as butterflies) to your personal home, yard, and landscape, and to help you keep the plants alive and birds attracted to your yard continually. Included will be one field trip for this two session class that will be held in April (7 and 14 with field trip on 11). Registration will open approximately two months prior to the first day of class.

Birding By Ear

This class will take place in May with several field trips. More details to come. Registration will open approximately two months prior to the first day of classes.

Please sign up early for these classes since they can fill up quickly. To sign up, please go to the Eastside Audubon Society website Education tab, then go to the Classes tab, and register!

There is considerable opportunity for you to increase your birding skills and enjoy the company of fellow birders. See you there! ■

Conservation Committee Updates

By Emily Kistler

The Fall Quarter has been a busy time for the Conservation Committee. We've got a several community science projects in the works including the Chickadee Nest Watch project, beaver cams, and National Audubon Climate Watch. The Conservation Committee has also been active in advocating for community changes through attending the Bellevue Environmental Strategic Initiative and opposing the Adult Beverage Ordinance in Sammamish Valley. The Conservation Committee would like to take this opportunity to encourage all members to get involved and help us preserve our local environment and reverse damages done. Participation doesn't take much time and all your help is greatly appreciated!

Eastside Audubon is participating with Cornell Lab of Ornithology in their community science program, Nest Watch, with a twist. Not only are we monitoring chickadee nests the Cornell way (peeking into the nest box) but Eastside Audubon

is adding eNest, which is an electronic tracking device developed by local engineer, Doug Bonham. We've been hard at work building and assembling 40 chickadee nest boxes for volunteers to take home. If you're interested in participating, contact nkacoroski@gmail.com.

National Audubon Climate Watch is a bird survey occurring in January 15 - February and again in May 15 – June 15. This survey focuses on bluebirds and nuthatches and allows the National Audubon Society to determine if bird movements fall in-line with projections based on climate models. Andy McCormick is our local coordinator. People interested in volunteering can reach out to Andy amccormick@eastside-audubon.org or can visit audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch.

Beaver cams are coming soon to a lodge near you. Jeremy Lucas of the Conservation Committee is working to get cameras installed in beaver dams located in the transition zone in order to monitor the

number, activity of beavers in our area, and how this is impacting bird habitats. Beavers are an important factor in our local environment. Although they often get cast in a negative light, beavers help preserve our wetlands and natural water resources.

In November, several Eastside Audubon members attended the Bellevue Environmental Strategic Initiative meeting. The Audubon Society, members of the community, and several high school students used this meeting as an opportunity to encourage Bellevue City Council members to reduce greenhouse emissions more aggressively than in previous years. Some of the takeaways from this meeting include the amount of reduced emissions and planned future goals. Currently, Bellevue has only reduced emissions community wide by 9% from 2011 to 2018 and only 22% in municipal operations. The recommended reduction targets noted on the executive summary is 80% communitywide (*continued on pg 6*)

(continued from pg 5) in 2050 as compared to 2011 and 80% in municipal operations by 2040 as compared to 2011. For more information on this initiative visit: bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/community-development/environmental-stewardship/esi-strategic-plan.

The Adult Beverage Ordinance (King County Beverage Ordinance #2018-0241) was proposed in April 2018. This ordinance proposes to changes to commercial development, which would allow commercial and retail businesses to operate in the farmlands and protected areas of Sammamish Valley. Friends of

Sammamish Valley provides an excellent summary of the impact this ordinance would have on the environment, residents, and farmers in these rural areas. Visit friendsofsammamishvalley.org to find out how you can voice your concerns regarding urban sprawl and protect our rural areas. ■

Looking Ahead With the Youth Education Committee

By Mary Britton-Simmons

Recently the Youth Education Committee (YEC) set goals for 2020. It will be a busy year as usual for the committee members. We want to share our vision for the coming year with you.

Expand Our Outreach to Middle and High School Students

- Create informational handouts on topics such as careers in science and college majors
- Create a presentation with PowerPoint on careers and majors
- Host a secondary student bird walk
- Reach out to high schools for volunteers for events
- Attend STEM events at schools in order to contact students

Increase the Membership of the Youth Education Committee

- Work closely with the EAS

Executive Director and the EAS Board

- Continue to publicize our work in the Corvid Crier

- Seek out volunteers at Program Night, through Opportunities and at events in the community

Continuing Action

- Award college scholarships of \$2000.00 to two deserving high school seniors
- Award grants of \$450.00 each to two low-income schools for science-related projects
- Award two scholarships to campers and two scholarships to mentors for Ground to Sound STEM Environmental Challenge Summer Camp sponsored by Friends of the Hidden River
- Maintain partnerships with

schools, parks, institutions, companies and other organization

In addition, we will continue our involvement in local communities through participating in events such as those at Molbak's and Lewis Creek Park. Our school program is already fielding requests for classroom presentations and bird walks. For example, January will find a volunteer working with students at Leadership Preparatory Academy in Kirkland.

How can you help us to reach these goals? Join our committee and work with children in their classrooms, take them on field trips or help at a booth sponsored by the YEC. You will have fun while inspiring youth to become stewards of the environment. ■

EAS Book Club is Three Years Old

By Becky Serabrini

As I write this in December, our chapter's book club is about to reach its third anniversary and if there is any bird that can fly as fast as time, I'd like to know its name! To have read and discussed so many great books in such excellent company as can be found in our book club has truly been something to be grateful for. When I founded the club in January, 2017, I hoped to find kindred spirits who would like to delve into the entire natural

world, as I've always found Audubon interested in doing. Luckily, others joined me. While birds are often the stars in the books we've chosen, the first book we read as a club was *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben and we are ending our third year of meetings with a book called *What a Fish Knows* by Jonathan Balcombe. Another thing I believe is that every type of genre and style of

writing offers learning and satisfaction, and our founding members wanted to give that a try as well. We have therefore recommended to each other and voted in works of fiction such *Border Songs* by local author Jim Lynch; absorbed the journaling of a birding soldier in *Birding Babylon* by Jonathan Trouern-Trend; and picked our favorites from *Firekeeper*, a book of poetry by *(continued on pg 7)*

(continued from pg 6) Pattiann Rogers. Probably some of the glue that keeps us all together is how we alternate a light and charming account, such as *A Hummingbird in My House* by Annette Heidcamp with the more dire mix of history, politics and biology found in many of our picks such as *Death and Life of the Great Lakes* by Dan Egan. Books dedicated solely to one particular animal have been popular, such as about the wolf, the barn owl, the whale, and the octopus as well as the wolverine, the jellyfish, and the starling. We have read specifically just about dirt, grassland and chalk streams. Following the investigations of journalist Susan Orlean in *The Orchid Thief* was a distinct pleasure as were the revelations of another researcher, Kirk Wallace Johnson, in *The Feather Thief*. A personal favorite of mine, *The Peregrine* by J.A. Baker, generated both love and dislike in our group. One of our most unanimously beloved books was *The Wonder of Birds* by Jim Robbins.

Time will continue to wing onward through 2020 and beyond, but the EAS book club will slow it down a little with more authors who have captured an important story to tell- fictional or otherwise- so that

CONTACT US

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Mon, Tues, Fri. 9:00am - 1:00pm

we can stop for a bit along our various journeys and understand from each other what there is to tell about it.

For more information contact me at wingsinapril@gmail.com. ■



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Community Outreach
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YES! I would like to support EAS protect, preserve and enhance natural ecosystems and our communities for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and people.

Marymoor Park Restoration

Join the monthly work party at Marymoor Park to participate in habitat restoration in our local community.



Donations to EAS

- Enclosed is my check payable to Eastside Audubon
- My payment has been submitted through PayPal
- Please charge my ___MasterCard ___Visa

Number _____ Exp Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Name _____

Street Address _____

Email _____

Sign-up To Receive Informational Emails

- Announcements
- Conservation updates and action alerts
- Volunteer opportunities

Planned Giving

Please consider a planned gift to Eastside Audubon Society to support environmental education and conservation for generations to come.

- I have included Eastside Audubon in my will.
- I would like information about making a planned gift.
- I would like information about making a qualified charitable distribution.

Employer Contributions

- My employer matches contributions. I am sending/ will send matching information to you.

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____