



Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

A chapter of the National Audubon Society

vancouveraudubon.org

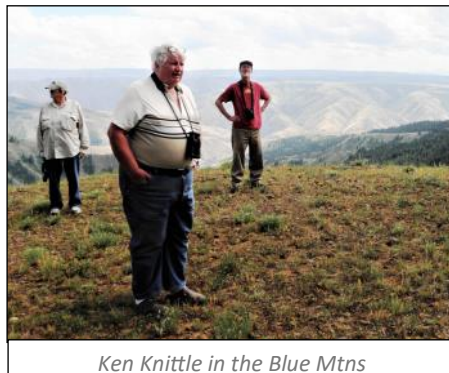
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February 2020

Ken Knittle Remembered

Washington birders were deeply saddened by the recent loss of Ken Knittle, a Vancouver resident and birder that has had major influence in the birding community. He was a tireless leader, a mentor and impacted many of our lives. Wilson Cady and Eric Bjorkman contributed the following memorials.

I am saddened by the Jan. 5th loss of Vancouver resident Ken Knittle. Ken influenced many other birders and changed the way people bird in Washington with his introduction of the concept of keeping county lists. This form of listing caused people to explore the counties more thoroughly looking to add species to their county lists which has resulted in an expanded knowledge of the distribution of species in the state as well as the addition of many species to each county's list. Ken, his wife Laurie and Scott Ray started the County List Project when they began publishing Washington Birder magazine in 1992, with the first county checklists that they compiled with the help of birders from all over the state. The county lists along with site guides and identification tips were published in the Washington Birder magazine before switching to the internet at <http://wabirder.com> where they have been kept updated. Ken was the first person to have listed at least one hundred species in each of Washington's thirty-nine counties.



Ken Knittle in the Blue Mtns

Ken became fascinated with birds while in college and he and his friends birded most of the lower 48 states. While birding along the Rio Grande River in Texas they spotted a Brown Jay, a common species in Mexico, but a new bird for the United States.

I was lucky enough to have birded with him many times all over the state during the last three decades and was amazed at his hearing, his encyclopedic knowledge of the backroads of Washington and his cheerful nature. When he

(Ken, continued on page 7)

I've just learned that Ken Knittle has passed away. This is a sad day indeed. I remember the day that my wife, Tammy, and I first met Ken. We were fairly new to birding when we ran into Ken and Patrick Sullivan at Horsethief Lake State Park. Ken was sitting on a picnic table while Patrick was frantically zig-zagging around the park in the hopes of finding a Red-eyed Vireo. No vireo was uncovered that day but that didn't seem to bother Ken, who seemed more than content to chat with us about anything and everything pertaining to birds. We became fast friends. Ken offered to accompany us on a whirlwind trip of NE Washington where he introduced us to the wonders of Washington State and we saw many life birds on that trip. One of my fondest memories of Ken came when we were speeding along a highway in our Honda Element. We had the sunroof open and the windows down so road noise was significant. Ken was in mid-sentence (no surprise) when he said "Hey, was that a Say's Phoebe?" We turned around and sure enough,

(Ken Knittle, continued on page 7)



Ken and Eric

"He's helping me identify birds from pictures that I have taken from all around the world. He had these huge, cool volumes of books that had literally every known species in them, and he loved the challenge of solving the mystery posed by each one. I'm more than likely laughing in response to one of his ultra-corny jokes"



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The Columbia Flyway is published monthly September through June (except January).

Vancouver Audubon Board Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month August through May in various locations (announced in newsletter).

Membership meetings and programs are held on the first Tuesday of the month September through June (except January).

Program meetings are held at the [West Park Community Room at 610 Esther St.](#) (just across the street from the west end of Esther Short Park, or kitty-corner from City Hall). Parking lot can be accessed from Esther Street. There is an entrance at either side of the building.

Vancouver Audubon believes in the wisdom of nature's design and promotes this through education, involvement, stewardship, enjoyment and advocacy.



Vancouver Audubon Society Membership & Donation Form

Membership dues support education, speaker programs, newsletter, and conservation projects.

_____ I wish to become a member/renew membership to Vancouver Audubon for \$20/year.

_____ I wish to support Vancouver Audubon with an additional donation of \$ _____

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**Membership Renewal
date:
September 1st**

Please include this form and make check payable to and send to:

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George Mayfield 360-360-687-0360 (membership)

VAS will not share your information with any other organization.

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For additional information on membership to National Audubon (Chapter # **Y13**) , got to <http://www.audubon.org/>

Program

Shillapoo Lake and Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Areas Update

Daren Hauswald, WDFW

**Tuesday, February 4th
Social 6:30pm, Program 7pm**

Daren Hauswald is the Manager of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Shillapoo and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Areas. He has been working on these areas for more than 13 years and will be sharing a presentation on their management strategies, including the work to restore and enhance habitats for multiple wildlife species.

The approximately 2,430 acres Shillapoo Wildlife Area, located within the floodplain of the Columbia River in Clark County, is managed as three separate units.

The Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area is comprised of units that span Skamania, Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties, and totals approximately 10,500 acres of land. Habitat include tidal mudflats, wetlands, riparian, old-growth forest, forested floodplains, early seral mixed forest, ancient lava flows and volcanic deposits, and open grasslands.

Meeting & Program Location

West Park Community Room at 610 Esther St.

***The west side lot has been closed for construction purposes. A south lot was opened and is accessible from the Esther Street entrance. Of course, street parking is free after 6pm.*

Field Trip

Clark County Late Winter Search Saturday, February 29th(+)

Where: [Salmon Creek Park & Ride](#)

When: 7:30am

Contact: **Randy Hill**

re_hill@q.com or 360-975-2573 (text preferred)

Join Randy Hill and co-leaders to explore the diversity of Clark County in late winter. This trip will concentrate on finding resident, wintering and maybe early-arriving Vancouver area specialties. Target species include Snowy Egret, Lesser Goldfinch, Red-shouldered Hawk, Black Phoebe, diving ducks and other waterfowl, loons, grebes, gulls and possibly owls.

Saturday we will explore areas that could include Ridgefield, but will concentrate on Vancouver Lake and lowlands and the Columbia River that may reach as far upstream as Steigerwald Lake NWR. Depending on conditions, a Sunday (morning only) higher elevation forest trip, Steigerwald Lake or Ridgefield NWR may be added. A Friday afternoon exploration of the Woodland Bottoms also will be scheduled for those interested.

This weekend schedule will be a joint outing with [Washington Ornithological Society](#), so there might be limited space available and/or a wait list for any or all of the three days. For more information and to sign up, contact Randy Hill at re_hill@q.com or 360-975-2573 (text preferred).



Monthly Bird Walks: 1st Day of the Month

These casual walks are intended for those wanting to enjoy the wildlife along the way and those wanting to learn or improve identification skills by sight and/or sound. You can join or leave anytime. These walks will be eBirded.

February 1st

Frenchman's Bar Regional Park

Meet in the south lot* in [Frenchmans Bar Regional Park](#) at 8:30am. We will walk the paved trail and some unimproved trail. Great place to check the river and area fields.

March 1st

Klineline Pond & Salmon Creek

Meet at the [Klineline Pond](#) parking lot* at 8am. We will walk around the pond portion of the park first, then head up the Salmon Creek Greenway Trail.

For more information, contact Cindy at nwbirder@gmail.com or 509-939-4448

**Both Frenchman's Bar and Klineline Pond parking areas require a [Regional Park Pass](#) or a parking fee. Some carpooling may be arranged—contact Cindy if interested.*

Support State Fish and Wildlife Funding

For years, Washington's Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has faced a significant budget shortfall of more than \$31 million. Sixty million was requested last legislative session to fill the gap and provide improved services and innovative conservation programs.

Sadly, last year's 2019-20 Operating Budget included only a \$24 million "increase" for WDFW; \$7 million short of filling the funding gap and less than half of what's needed for the agency to meet the demands of Washingtonians for our outdoor heritage. Lawmakers also increased payroll expenses at state agencies, adding another \$13 million to the department's budget need this biennium.

WDFW faces an approximately \$20 million budget shortfall going into the 2020 supplemental session of the state legislature, and that is just to provide basic services. The agency is requesting \$26 million from the General Fund to support the Evergreen State's fish, wildlife, habitat and public lands.

The impact of under-funding means that threatened species and habitats most in need of attention will face further cuts. Sharp-tailed Grouse, lynx, steelhead and other

native species covered by State Wildlife Action Plans need more resources, not less.

Please send state lawmakers a message that fully-funding our fish and wildlife must be a priority during the upcoming 2020 legislative session. The [District Finder](#) will link you to your state legislators.

[WDFW Budget Fact Sheet](#)

Keep Up With the Action: Sign Up for Weekly Legislative Updates

Track bills in the Washington Legislature by signing up for Audubon Washington's Weekly Legislative Updates. This year is a short session expected to end in March so bills will have to move quickly to make it to the Governor's desk for signature. Sign up at: <https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/JGKjksVTUKMSr4BoP2Nvw2>

By Susan Saul

Protect Washington's Rivers From Suction Dredge Mining

Vancouver Audubon Society's Board of Directors has voted to support HB 1261 and SB 5322 to protect water quality and fish habitat from motorized suction dredge mining.

Washington's lawmakers are considering this important bill to protect the state's rivers and streams in the 2020 Legislative session. Now is the time to speak up and demand clean water for people and wildlife.

Suction dredging, which mines for gold using gas-powered machines that vacuum up gravel and sand from river bottoms, pollutes rivers by digging up sediment and reintroducing mercury from historic mining. It also damages streambeds that are essential to spawning salmon and steelhead. Scientific studies show suction dredge mining degrades water quality through erosion and sedimentation, physically "processes" fish and aquatic life, creates fish stranding risks, and denudes riparian vegetation.

The impact to our rivers and streams and endangered fish populations is significant and directly contradicts our significant investment in salmon habitat and river restora-

tion.

The law would require suction dredge miners to comply with the Clean Water Act and obtain a water-quality permit before heading into any stream or river. Right now there's little oversight, undermining hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars spent on fish habitat restoration.

These bills are supported by a diverse coalition including recreation, conservation, academic, environmental, business, and tribal interests from all parts of Washington state.

Neighboring states have already cracked down on this destructive mining practice. Tell your elected officials to do the same and protect Washington's rivers by supporting this legislation.

Find your legislative district <https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/> The District Finder will link you to your state legislators.

By Susan Saul

Nov. 21, A **BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE** was spotted by Debbie Meader near her home in Camas, I only remember a couple of other records of this east of the Cascades species in the Clark County. Our nearest nesting colony is at Columbia Hills State Park near Dallesport in Klickitat County.

Nov. 26, **PINE SISKINS** have been scarce at our place this winter so it was a surprise to see a flock of about 200 land in the trees near our feeders for only a minute before being chased away by a **SHARP-SHINNED HAWK**.

Nov. 27, a Red **FOX SPARROW** was spotted by Les Carlson at his feeders in Hazel Dell for the third year in a row. This is the subspecies that is found east of the Rocky Mountains from the Yukon to the east coast. There are four subspecies of Fox Sparrows and this is the only one that doesn't nest in Washington.

Nov. 27, an **EMPEROR GOOSE** was found and photographed on private property in the Vancouver Lake Lowlands by Bob Flores. This lovely arctic nesting species seldom comes this far south in the winter.

Nov. 29, Bob Flores had a **BLACK PHOEBE** at the end of LaFramboise Rd, at the Vancouver Lake WMA, it was near the main parking area.

Randy Hill reported that a **SNOWY EGRET** has returned to what seems to be the most reliable area in Washington, the Vancouver Lake lowlands. He found a sub-adult in the wetland just north of the dike separating Shillapoo Wildlife Area from private holdings where SR 501 hits a dead-end gate. This is the third year in a row there but they have been seen locally, twice that long when you include ones seen on areas of Ridgefield NWR, which is only about a mile north.

Dec. 2, Arden and Sherry Hagen spotted three swans on Drano Lake in Skamania County as they drove by on Highway 14, this is not a regular location to see them.

Dec. 5, a day of birding along Highway 14 in Skamania County with Les Carlson produced 12 **TRUMPETER SWANS** at Franz Lake. At Rock Creek Pond in Stevenson there were 5 **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** and 2 **CAKCLING**

GEESE in the flock of domestic geese at the fairgrounds park.



Greater White-fronted Goose, photo by Wilson Cady

Dec. 28, There were nine members of the sparrow family under Les Carlson's Hazel Dell area feeders including the continuing Red **FOX SPARROW** and a **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW**. He says that there has been a **MERLIN** and a **SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** in his neighborhood nearly daily this winter.

Dec. 31, At Katherine Hart's feeders on Prune Hill, in Camas, she photographed a leucistic **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**. Leucistic is a term for a

partial lack of pigmentation that results in a pale coloration or out of place white areas, I see this fairly often on juncos but much less often in chickadees.

Jan. 1, I did a little afternoon birding in Skamania County to start off my 2020 county year list. From the Franz Lake overlook on Highway 14, I could hear and see 3 family groups of **TRUMPETER SWANS** among the more common **TUNDRA SWANS**. This winter there have been more of these once endangered swans reported from our area and from more locations than in any other winter I can remember.

Jan. 3, A check of the pond on the east of Skamania Landing in Skamania County, produced 13 **TRUMPETER SWANS** a first for me at this location. And at Rock Creek Pond the 5 **GREAT-ER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** and 2 **CAKCLING GEESE** continued in with the flock of domestic geese.

Jan. 8, a **PACIFIC LOON** was spotted in the Columbia River at the Fort Vancouver Historical Site by Cindy McCormack.

Jan. 9, Cindy McCormack, Les Carlson and I birded in Skamania County with our first stop being the Franz Lake overlook where the continuing flock of **TRUMPETER**



Trumpeter Swans, photo by Wilson Cady

(Continued on page 6)

SWANS now numbered 19 birds. There was a **GREAT EGRET** walking along the shore below the platform, here and Skamania Landing are the two spots where you have the best chance of seeing this species in the county. Driving along the road to Strawberry Island below Bonneville Dam, Les spotted a flock of small birds in the grassy area that turned out to be 29 **LESSER GOLDFINCHES**, the largest flock I have seen in Skamania County. At Rock Creek, the 5 **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** were still in the flock of domestic geese and easy to pick out due to their diminutive size, being not much bigger than a Mallard. At Home valley we found 18 **WILD TURKEYS** in a yard and in the foreground a blur of wings and feather rolling across the ground turned out to be 2 **RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKERS** locked together in combat. While along the road to the Spring Creek Fish Hatchery, Cindy's amazing ears picked up a calling **CANYON WREN** that was on the cliffs below Underwood that were at least a quarter of a mile away, there were many birds that we wouldn't have found without her being with us. At Drano Lake there was a female **SURF SCOTER** and a male **EURASIAN WIGEON** but the best bird of the day was a **NORTHERN GOSHAWK** that Cindy spotted soaring near some **BALD EAGLES**.

Jan. 16, A well described **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** came to Gayle Benson's feeder in Camas. This species is a rare visitor from east of the Rocky Mountains that should be in the tropics now.

2 **RED-THROATED LOONS** were spotted by Cindy McCormack along the Columbia River Boardwalk. These loons are usually on saltwater and can be identified by their gray and white plumage and a thin bill with an angled lower mandible, somewhat like a chisel.

Jan.18, 16 **RED-THROATED LOONS** were seen from Vancouver Lake Park by Jim Johnson., this is the largest group of these normally found on saltwater that I can recall being seen in Clark County.

3 **EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES** came to our feeders, we hadn't seen one here since Oct. 31st, perhaps the 12" of snow on the ground brought in search of food.

The winter migration seemed to be delayed by a lack of any major storms or cold weather and waterfowl numbers

were low with no large concentrations of diving ducks along the Columbia River. The one wintering species that I saw reported widely were **TRUMPETER SWANS** with sightings from Ridgefield, Salmon Creek, the Vancouver Lake lowlands and Steigerwald Lake in Clark County and in Skamania County sightings came from Franz Lake, Skamania Landing, Rock Creek Pond and Drano Lake.

Winter finches like Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins and Red Crossbill remain very scarce this year, these birds don't have a set migration route but rather move around taking advantage of their food. There were three **MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES** reported from low elevations in Clark County where they are unusual although they do nest on Silver Star Mountain. We had one at our feeders in Skamania County for about six weeks, it was only the fourth one here in 45 years. Even more unusual was a hybrid **MOUNTAIN x BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**



Lesser Goldfinches, photo by Wilson Cady

photographed by Jim Johnson in Fruit Valley on Christmas Day.

The total number of species reported from Clark County in 2019 was 236, with three new species added to the Clark County Check List, **BROAD-WINGED HAWK**, **MOUNTAIN QUAIL** and **CAPE MAY WARBLER**. Also added was a **RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** that was photographed by Bob Flores at his Ridgefield home in 2017 was just accepted by the Washington Bird Records Committee as the first for the state.

The cumulative year list for Skamania County was 195 and a new species for the county list was a **SAGE SPARROW**.

So far in 2020, people have reported seeing 125 species in Clark County and 77 in Skamania County. Much of this information can be found at <https://ebird.org/pnw/home> which is an easy to use checklist system that puts your sightings into a worldwide database maintained by eBird and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology that provides the information for use by researchers as well as birders.

This is a perfect spot to keep checklists of your sightings while traveling or at home, you can add notes and photos too. It is available for your computer as well as a cellphone app you can use while birding. Even if you don't wish to enter checklists, there is a lot of information to be found, including information on birds and their calls as well as

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(Afield, continued from page 6)

recent and historical sight records. Just go to "Explore" and put in your county then select "All Years" or "Current Year and click "Set". The list of birds you get can be viewed in many ways, by name, when first seen, when it was last seen or by date.

Using eBird allows you to have a good idea of what you have a chance of seeing before even deciding where to go. I search through the sightings on eBird as one of the sources of information to write this column and use it while birding and at home where according to it we saw 93 species last year. This was a new record high for us and we added two new yard birds. Clark's Nutcracker and American Pipit. Be a citizen scientist and add your sightings to this data bank.

Within the next six weeks we will start seeing the first spring migrants. Say's Phoebe, Western Bluebirds, Turkey Vultures, Tree Swallows and Rufous Hummingbirds will be among the early arrivals.

Please send me your sightings for this column or post them on the [Vancouver Audubon Afield Facebook page](#).

By Wilson Cady



Support the education of our future!

Vancouver Audubon gathers donations to purchase education materials for elementary school students through a program called [Audubon Adventures](#). Students learn all about birds and their environmental needs!

Each kit costs \$45.95 and provides students with educational magazines and teachers with lesson plans! Please consider donating to Audubon Adventures by sending a check in the mail (P.O. Box 1966, Vancouver, WA 98668-1966) or donating during the general meeting.

The kids and teachers of Clark county are so grateful to you for your support!

By Sam Neuffer

(Ken Knittle, continued from page 1)

there was a Say's Phoebe perched roadside, singing its heart out. How he heard that bird still seems miraculous to me. Of course, he followed that up with "That's a hard bird to find in (fill in the blank) county."

Ken also insisted on sleeping in a sleeping bag tossed haphazardly on the ground. He would scoff at needing a tent or trailer. While camping at Steptoe Butte on that same trip, a pretty serious thunderstorm passed through during the night and we found him curled up in the outhouse in the morning. He and his sleeping bag were quite wet and he was pretty cold, but he still clung to the idea that sleeping under the stars was the way to go.

Ken was a character for sure. He was also a good friend and a sweet man, and a great ambassador for the birding community of Washington. Our lives were richer for knowing him and we'll miss him dearly.

By Eric Bjorkman

(Ken, continued from page 1)



Ken & crew

led field trips you knew to be prepared to bird dawn to dusk and not to expect to stop for lunch, as he was happy with a block of cheese and a carton of buttermilk. Ken didn't lead people to areas to explore but rather

from bird to bird as he already knew where they were to be found.

Many birders were mentored or helped by Ken who willingly and cheerfully led them to find a species they wanted to see. One of my favorite outings with him was the couple of days we spent birding with his old friend Floyd Murdoch who was the winner of the 1973 Big Day competition detailed in Kenn Kaufman's book, Kingbird Highway. I will think of Ken every time I see a county checklist, he may be gone but his legacy will live on in the birders he inspired.

by Wilson Cady



Ken, Wilson & Floyd Murdoch

Ridgefield/Sauvie Island Christmas Bird Count Results

December 15, 2019

Thank you to all who participated in the Christmas Bird Count this year. We had 54 participants on 20 teams giving good coverage to the circle and its variety of habitats. We had access to some WA private property which really helped. At least we had good weather for the count this year making the 104 miles on foot a bit more pleasant. Although some teams thought the numbers of birds seemed a bit low, we still had 122 species for the circle with the WA side finding 105 species, one lower than the last two years. But the number of individual birds counted was indeed down by about 16% over the previous two years for the circle.

Cackling Geese took the prize for most individuals, probably no surprise, at 34,000+. Northern Pintail came in next

at 15,171 followed by Snow Geese at 10,925. Our Bald Eagle population is continuing to creep up with 3/4 of the 150 on the Sauvie side of the river. Good catches included a single White Pelican over Sauvie Island, a Vesper Sparrow along north Rentenaar Road and a Lewis's Woodpecker in the WMAs west of Rentenaar. Compared to last year, there was a reduction in numbers of individuals across the families of birds, with just a few species showing more. You wonder if waiting to the late date might have given us different results because we certainly would have had more water in our ponds and rivers. Hard to say.

Over 18 million birds have been entered into the Audubon database for 1102 count circles this, the 120th year of the count. That's an impressive bit of citizen science.

Species	WA side Total	OR side Total	Circle Total	Species	WA side Total	OR side Total	Circle Total	Species	WA side Total	OR side Total	Circle Total
Greater White-fronted Goose	1		1	American Kestrel	54	34	88	Bushtit	345	158	503
Snow Goose	1700	9225	10925	Merlin		1	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	27		27
Brant		1	1	Peregrine Falcon	1	4	5	White-breasted Nuthatch	37	62	99
Cackling Goose	8898	25504	34402	Virginia Rail	1		1	Brown Creeper	44	50	94
Canada Goose	2806	1592	4398	American Coot	212	333	545	Bewick's Wren	38	47	85
<i>Cackling/Canada Species</i>	4137		4137	Sandhill Crane	1628	3313	4941	Pacific Wren	69	17	86
Trumpeter Swan	145	8	153	Killdeer	9	20	29	Marsh Wren	18	3	21
Tundra Swan	1295	1120	2415	Greater Yellowlegs	1	10	11	Golden-crowned Kinglet	179	109	288
<i>Swan Species</i>	479	20	499	Dunlin		48	48	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	80	65	145
Wood Duck	20	3	23	Long-billed Dowitcher	5		5	Hermit Thrush	3	1	4
Gadwall	474	105	579	Wilson's Snipe	7	1	8	American Robin	152	168	320
Eurasian Wigeon	3		3	Mew Gull	91	43	134	Varied Thrush	50	18	68
American Wigeon	596	883	1479	Ring-billed Gull	202	237	439	European Starling	1513	2656	4169
Mallard	943	3358	4301	California Gull	5	14	19	American Pipit	195	4	199
Northern Shoveler	412	555	967	Herring Gull	2	6	8	Cedar Waxwing	3		3
Northern Pintail	2038	13133	15171	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull		2	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler		41	41
Green-winged Teal	186	1125	1311	Western Gull	1		1	Townsend's Warbler	4	1	5
Canvasback	124	31	155	Glaucous-winged Gull	35	42	77	Common Yellowthroat		1	1
Redhead	1	5	6	Olympic Gull (GW x W)	12	11	23	Spotted Towhee	77	68	145
Ring-necked Duck	538	5164	5702	<i>Gull Species</i>	163	175	338	Savannah Sparrow		15	15
Greater Scaup		4	4	Rock Pigeon	2		2	Fox Sparrow	56	38	94
Lesser Scaup	173	15	188	Eurasian Collared-Dove	45	24	69	Song Sparrow	328	341	669
Bufflehead	85	30	115	Mourning Dove	28	490	518	Lincoln's Sparrow	1	17	18
Common Goldeneye	50	68	118	Barn Owl	10	4	14	White-throated Sparrow	1	4	5
Barrows Goldeneye	2		2	Great Horned Owl	17	5	22	Vesper Sparrow		1	1
Hooded Merganser	130	19	149	Barred Owl	2	1	3	White-crowned Sparrow	41	279	320
Common Merganser	51	187	238	Short-eared Owl	4		4	Golden-crowned Sparrow	290	573	863
Ruddy Duck	57	4	61	Anna's Hummingbird	31	13	44	<i>Sparrow Species</i>	10		10
<i>Duck Species</i>	80	25	105	Belted Kingfisher	16	16	32	Dark-eyed Junco	451	564	1015
California Quail		36	36	Lewis's Woodpecker		1	1	Red-winged Blackbird	691	2163	2854
Common Loon		1	1	Red-breasted Sapsucker	9	13	22	Western Meadowlark	35	68	103
Pied-billed Grebe	33	9	42	Downy Woodpecker	34	29	63	Brewer's Blackbird	198	388	586
Western Grebe	4		4	Hairy Woodpecker	6	11	17	<i>Blackbird Species</i>		720	720
Double-crested Cormorant	319	486	805	Northern Flicker	86	61	147	Brown-headed Cowbird	6	30	36
American White Pelican		1	1	Pileated Woodpecker	5	3	8	Purple Finch	11	12	23
Great Blue Heron	109	89	198	Northern Shrike		1	1	House Finch	38	255	293
Great Egret	62	77	139	Hutton's Vireo		1	1	Pine Siskin	9	30	39
Bald Eagle	35	115	150	Black Phoebe	3	2	5	Lesser Goldfinch	4		4
Northern Harrier	20	26	46	Steller's Jay	122	8	130	American Goldfinch	17	3	20
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	2	4	California Scrub-Jay	138	138	276	<i>Goldfinch species</i>		2	2
Cooper's Hawk	5	7	12	American Crow	160	109	269	House Sparrow	13	36	49
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	1	2	Common Raven	12	15	27				
Red-tailed Hawk	83	83	166	Black-capped Chickadee	335	229	564				
Rough-legged Hawk	2		2	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	54	1	55				

By Susan Setterberg

The Butcher Watchman

Movement caught my eye, and I glanced up through the windshield. The flight seemed labored, heavy, something a little different, unusual in this robin-sized bird. The individual was 15 feet above the ground and flew across the grass field along Rawlins Road. It came right over the car. Maybe, it was headed for a large bush behind me. I stopped in the middle of this dead-end road on Fir Island, jumping out.

Sitting on a top of the bare bush was the unmistakable silhouette of a Northern Shrike, a plump body, a big head, upward stance. It glared out across the fields, moving its head back and forth. Last week, my birding group had found a juvenile individual along the dikes, not a quarter-mile from this location. I moseyed back along the road, keeping my eyes averted.

Sure enough, dark eye mask, the bill with a stout hook and a large tooth, black wings, scalloped cream breast feather, this was a perfect plumage juvenile. It was alert, hunting, but seemed to be ignoring me. This was my fifth trip to the Skagit in two weeks, and on each trip, we had spotted a Northern Shrike. On one trip, it was at Wiley Slough, on another at Hayton Reserve, once in the Samish Flats, and then here. These were probably four different individuals,

and all had been juvenile birds. Possibly, this was turning into an irruptive year for shrikes.

These birds nest across Northern Canada and Alaska, coming south in winter. Most winters a few can be found in

Washington, but in some years, vast numbers will come south. Perhaps, this happens when they have had an exceptionally successful nesting year or when northern winters become particularly hard, or food supplies low.

These are voracious predators, capable of taking small birds and mammals. They store prey by sticking it on thorns or barbwire, coming back later to eat more of it. Often, they sit and wait for a prey item to show itself before darting off the perch. This species occurs in Europe and Asia, too.



Immature Northern Shrike, photo by Tom Bancroft

The bird bolted from the branch, dropping down to just above the field and flying rapidly away from me. I couldn't tell if it was chasing something or just heading to another hunting spot. It probably makes the rounds of a series of good lookouts. Their scientific name is *Lanius excubitor*, which translates as "Butcher Watchman."

By Tom Bancroft

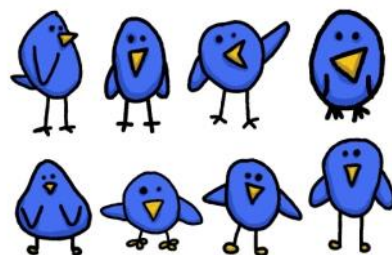
Gone Green with the VAS Newsletter!

VAS has transitioned to an all-digital newsletter format this fall. To continue receiving a VAS newsletter, be sure we have your correct email address. An e-newsletter saves paper, printing and mailing costs. Since our printed edition numbers had fallen so low, the publisher would no longer set the press for them. Digitally, you can enjoy the newsletter in full color and easily follow hyperlinks!

E-mail George at gomayf@comcast.net to have the PDF version of *The Columbia Flyway* sent to you.

PDF version also available on the website:

vancouveraudubon.org



Vancouver Audubon is on Facebook!

Follow our page [@VancouverAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/VancouverAudubon) to get up-to-date announcements, news, and events from Vancouver Audubon! We also added a group page—you can find the group by just selecting the button "Visit Group" under our page banner. Join the group to share your nature photos and experiences, or to even get ID help!



Bird ID Challenge

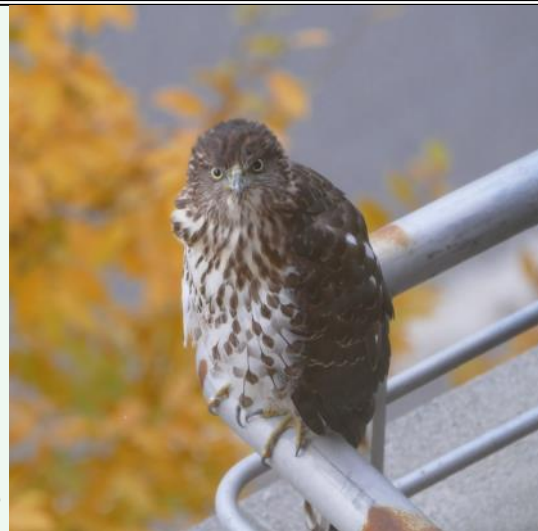
Let's make use of those partial or poor photos or just birds that can be a challenge to ID! If there are identifiable features in the photo, submit your photo for our next challenge.

Uncertain about identification or if photo has enough info? Don't hesitate to send it in for discussion and review.

Of course, if you wish to share your good photos with your fellow VAS members, you are welcome to submit them for publishing. Send questions, comments, and submissions to [Cindy](mailto:Cindy@nwbirder@gmail.com) at nwbirder@gmail.com.

This month's challenge is not a hidden or partial picture, but birds in this family can be difficult to identify at times. Well, and I thought the picture was just plain fun! Identification and discussion will be in next month's newsletter.

Can you identify this bird?



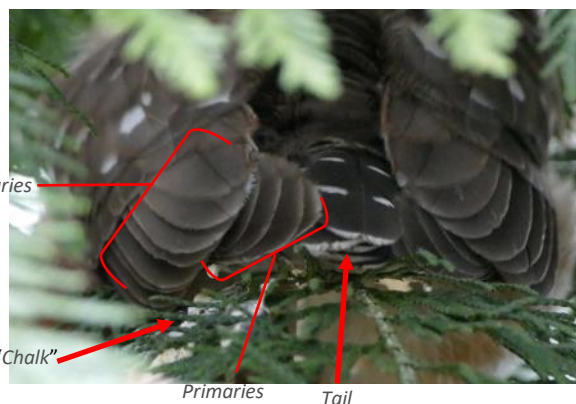
Scapulars

December's Bird ID Challenge Answer

Let's start with habitat. This bird is tucked into a tree, which appears to be a type of cedar. Compressed, flattened "leaves" with scales. Compared to the "leaf" sections, this does not appear to be a very large bird.

What part of the body are we viewing?

Since we can see the ends of both sides of the wing resting on the tail, we are seeing this bird from below, looking



Secondaries

Primaries

Tail

up along the tail and back.

The primaries and secondaries (the main flight feathers) are rounded and short and of similar length. They don't appear to extend past the tail, which also appears to be quite stubby. This bird will have short, rounded wings. It also has **broken white bars** on the individual tail feathers. Some of the fuzzy feathers seen under the tail have rusty coloration.

The scapulars (feathers that lay over the wing when it is closed) have obvious **white spots** on them, but the exposed flight feathers do not. AHA!

Even if we couldn't see the head, we can identify this bird by these factors alone. But, to make this even easier, we can actually make out some of the head shape and markings through the cedar branch. We appear to have a very broad, round head. Note the **small white streaky speckles** on the brown portion. Can you make out the edge of the eye? It

See the arc? Top edge of the facial disc.



appears to be surrounded by mostly white feathering. This bird has its head turned left, towards the camera. See the arc above the eye? We appear to have facial discs! We have an owl, a very small one!

This **Northern Saw-whet Owl** is about the size of a robin and they like to roost in dense evergreens and cavities. Note the accumulated "chalk" on the branch under the tail. These owls often leave thick, dense piles of white droppings at their favored winter roost sites, which can be a good way to find it if the chickadees don't tell you where it's hiding!



NWR Updates

Ridgefield NWR "S" Unit

Public access improvement: River "S" Bridge Replacement

The River 'S' Unit/AutoTour of the Refuge will be closed to ALL PUBLIC ACCESS Monday - Friday until the bridge construction projects finalizes in the spring of 2020.

During construction, access to the River S Unit will be limited to Saturdays and Sundays only. This includes both vehicle traffic and pedestrians during all hours.

Construction has replaced the existing single-lane bridge that previously provided access to the unit. The new bridge is two lanes wide and crosses over both the railroad tracks and the river. Keeping the unit closed is necessary even during this last phase of construction as there is limited space for crews to operate equipment while interfacing with the railroad and public traffic.

Ridgefield NWR Carty Unit

Carty Unit/Refuge Office - Detour on Main Ave

The Carty Unit at 28908 NW Main Ave will be open for regular daylight hours. No more detours required!

Volunteer Opportunities

Short-eared Owl Surveys

Looking for volunteers for Short-eared Owls at 50 survey locations in eastern Washington. The survey is road-based and consists of a route with 9 – 11 stations visited once during each of two survey windows: 1 – 21 March and 22 March – 15 April. Training videos that describe all aspects of the project and data collection procedures are available on the [project website](#).

Joe Buchanan, Washington Coordinator, Western Arid
flammeus Landscape Survey (WAfLS), WDFW
Joseph.Buchanan@dfw.wa.gov

Field Trip Leaders

Interested in sharing your knowledge and enjoyment of birds, animals, plants or other nature activities?

Contact Arden Hagen: 360-892-8872 or
iambakerman@comcast.net

INJURED WILDLIFE: WHAT TO DO?



??

**Injured Wildlife Hotline:
503-292-0304**

The nearest wildlife care and rehabilitation center is operated by Portland Audubon. Here are some general guidelines from their [Wildlife Care Center](#):

1. [Prioritize your safety](#)
 2. [Safely contain the animal](#)
 3. **Keep the animal calm and secure until you can take it to the Wildlife Care Center**
- **Do not handle the animal** any more than necessary to contain it – this is for your protection as well as for the animal's well being. Wild animals are terrified of humans. They may fight back, try to flee, or freeze. Many people mistake the "freeze" behavior for tolerance or enjoyment of contact, when in reality it is a fear response. Limiting contact will reduce stress on the animal.
 - **Keep the animal in a warm, dark, and quiet space.** Keep them away from children and pets.
 - **Many animals benefit from a heating pad** set on low under half their enclosure, or a sock filled with dry rice and microwaved for 2-3 minutes.
 - **Do not feed the animal.**
 - **Be cautious when choosing to leave water.** Many wild animals do not drink standing water, and attempting to help them drink can result in pneumonia. In addition, if an animal spills its water and gets wet, it could get cold and may die. If in doubt, it is better not to leave water.

Bring the animal to the Wildlife Care Center as soon as you can. If you can't bring it to the center during our open hours, or you believe the animal is in critical condition and needs immediate attention after hours, the Wildlife Care Center has a partnership with the [24 hour Emergency Veterinary Hospital Dove Lewis](#). To get in touch with them, call (503) 228-7281.

If you are unable to transport to the care center, try calling Arden 360-635-1828 (c) or 360-892-8872(h). If he is available to transport a bird, you will be asked to donate a gas mileage compensation and a small donation for the Care Center for the care of the bird at the time of pick up.

The Wildlife Care Center admits native wild patients and operates its Injured Wildlife Hotline from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., 365 days a year.

Upcoming Events

January 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28 Board Mtg	29	30 Lobby Day	31	

February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Bird Walk
2	3	4 Meeting & Program	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25 Board Mtg	26	27	28	29 Field Trip

Jan. 28th: Board Meeting hosted by Susan Saul, 6:30pm

Jan. 30th: [Lobby Day](#)

Feb. 1st: Bird Walk, Vancouver Lake, 8:30am

Feb. 4th: Monthly Meeting & Program: Shillapoo Lake & Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Areas, Daren Hauswald, WDFW, 6:30 pm Social, 7pm Program, *Westpark Community Center, 610 Esther St., Vancouver*

Feb. 25th: Board Meeting

Feb. 29th: Field Trip: Clark County Late Winter Search

Mar. 1st: Monthly Bird Walk

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A big THANK YOU to Vancouver's Backyard Bird Shop for their donations and support!



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