

# The Avalanche



North Cascades Audubon Society Newsletter

[www.northcascadesaudubon.org](http://www.northcascadesaudubon.org)

Volume 50, Issue 3

March 2019

## General Membership Meeting with Derek Matthews

### The Vancouver Avian Research Centre Bird Monitoring and Banding Program

The Vancouver Avian Research Centre (VARC) is a non-profit dedicated to wild bird research, conservation and education. VARC conducts bird monitoring, banding and research to identify causes of avian population change, and provides workshops, presentations, volunteer opportunities, and visitor programs at its Colony Farm field station. Derek Matthew, Chair of VARC, will delight us with a discussion of VARC's objectives in providing data and research that help safeguard bird habitats and their long-term survival by providing scientifically defensible strategies for avian and ecosystem conservation.

Habitat loss and degradation is the major cause of bird population declines and is the single largest factor affecting migratory birds crossing increasingly fragmented landscapes. This is particularly relevant in urban areas like Vancouver. Starting in 2009, VARC has conducted a comprehensive monitoring program within Colony Farm Regional Park to assess the importance of this regionally unique ecosystem. VARC data has provided invaluable information to MetroVancouver on the importance of Colony Farm as a stopover site for migratory birds and as a breeding area. This information is being used to help guide the development of best management practices to integrate wildlife conservation with recreation in the park. Other components of VARC's mandate include public outreach and education to raise awareness of environmental issues particularly as they relate to birds, and providing research and volunteer opportunities for students and the public.

Derek Matthews was born in England and developed a very early interest in birds, joining a local birding group as a young teenager. A passionate ornithologist, avian researcher and conservationist, Derek is the Chair of the VARC, a master bird bander, and a North American Banding Council Certified Trainer. He also leads field trips and bird tours and hosts Bird Monitoring and Banding and Bird Identification workshops. He has traveled extensively birding throughout the world. Derek enjoys sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for birds and the environment with others, and is known as an entertaining educator and charismatic speaker. Derek currently lives in North Vancouver, BC.

*Always on the 4th Tuesday of the month:*

**March 26, 7pm**

Whatcom Museum Rotunda Room

*free & open to the public!*



*Right: cedar waxwing, photo by Kelley Palmer-McGee*

## Mission Statement

The purpose of this society is to promote the study and conservation of birds and other wildlife, their habitat, and the environment; to increase public appreciation of the values of wildlife, plants, and the natural environment; and to stimulate action to protect and preserve them for the future.

## Avalanche Staff

Designer/editor: Kelley Palmer-McGee

Writer/editor: Lynne Givler

If you are interested in contributing, the deadline for the April 2019 issue is...

**March 15.**

Send materials to:

[content@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:content@northcascadesaudubon.org)

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## NCAS Board Members

### Officers

President	Steven Harper
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Secretary	Deborah Kaye
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Education/Volunteers	Pam Borso
Field Trips	Paul Woodcock
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Scholarship	Don Burgess

*If you are interested in volunteering with our Audubon chapter, please contact the President at [president@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:president@northcascadesaudubon.org)*

## Introduction to Birding: How to Identify Common Backyard Birds Free!

### Saturday March 30:

Class at Downtown Food Coop, 11 AM -1 PM;  
Field Trip at Scudder Pond, 2 – 4 PM

**Instructors:** Paul Woodcock and Pam Borso of North Cascades Audubon

Are you curious about the feathered friends you encounter? Come pick up some great tips for identifying local birds and learn about their feeding, nesting and other behaviors. Best practices for bird watching and things to consider when buying binoculars will also be covered. After the classroom time you'll have a chance to use your new-found skills in the field at Scudder Pond.

To register contact Pam Borso at [pborso@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:pborso@northcascadesaudubon.org) or 360-319-9004.

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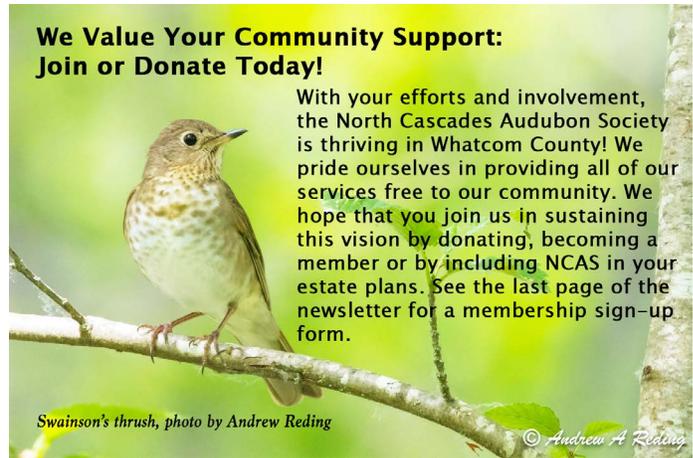
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## Harrison Reserve Planting Party

Saturday, March 16; 9 AM – Noon

Join NCAS, Whatcom Land Trust (WLT), Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and Whatcom Conservation District in planting willow stakes to improve wetland habitat at the Harrison Reserve. This 5.5-acre property along Kendall Creek has exceptional habitat, making it a unique area to observe wildlife, especially birds. It's also the site of a future educational area for the local school, Kendall Elementary. Contact Jennifer Mackey at WLT at 360-650-9470 for directions and more information.



## Volunteer Spotlight:

### Kristin Murray



### How she became involved:

"I volunteered for the education subcommittee and began helping with the Native Plants & Birds talks to raise awareness of the crucial role native plants play in the

survival of our local birds. Later, I had the privilege of working with Chris Brewer and local artists, putting together materials for the NCAS Christmas tree ornament exhibit at the Whatcom Museum featuring 26 Climate Threatened and Endangered Birds commonly seen in Whatcom County."

### Why she volunteers:

"As a wetlands biologist by trade, I enjoy any excuse to get outside and explore our local habitats. I began attending NCAS field trips to Semiahmoo and Lake Padden to brush up on birding and enjoy time outdoors with my dad. I was so impressed by the NCAS field guides' (thank you Paul and Ken) knowledge, expertise, and patience teaching us the local birds that I wanted to give back. Working with NCAS has not only been a learning experience, but I've also gotten to know some great people!"

## Summary of NCAS Board Meeting: January 7, 2019

The Board met at the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship from 7 to 9 pm on January 7th and took the following actions and/or discussed the following issues:

The Board agreed to review our bylaws and submit suggestions for changes to the Governance Committee prior to their meeting on February 4th.

Our Conservation Committee Chair worked with the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve Citizens Stewardship Committee on public comments regarding the proposed new housing development at Sandy Point. A condition to the proposed permit allowing the developer to build seven houses was granted. The condition will require the developer to allow ongoing bird surveys to be conducted at Sandy Point. More comments and clarification is needed on the details of this conditional access. The Committee will continue to work on this issue.

Our Membership Committee Chair reported that as of January 1, 2019, NCAS has 149 current paid members. A total of 34 new members joined our organization in 2018. This number reflects a significant increase compared to the total of new members added during each of the past eight years.

## CAUTION: Bird feeding makes you happy!

Mon-Fri 10-5:30  
Sat 10-4

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## March Field Trips

*Paul Woodcock, Field Trip Chair*

Sitting down to write this invitation to join us in the field and experience our local birds and their habitats, I find it hard to believe that spring is just around the corner. Glancing to my right, just outside the window, a bank of snow over two-feet deep makes it clear that winter is still in control. But I am fairly confident that tree and violet-green swallows and rufous hummingbirds will be arriving in just a few days. March is when spring, my favorite birding season, unfolds in the Northwest. I cannot wait until our tropical migrants begin to arrive. Join us for the fun and adventure.

### Information you should know about NCAS field trips:

Our field trips are free and open to anyone who is interested. Bring your friends!

Beginning birders are very welcome.

Carpooling is encouraged and even required for some sites with limited parking.

Preregistration is often required to limit numbers and reduce disturbance.

Dress for the weather, in layers, and wear waterproof clothing and footwear as needed.

Severe weather may cancel a trip; contact your leader if concerned or if you cancel.

Bring binoculars, scope, field guide or a necessary parking pass if you have them.

Pets are not allowed on field trips.

Like most organizations, NCAS now requires participants to sign a waiver to participate.

We are always looking for trip leaders or assistants. If you're interested, please contact us.

### Saturday, March 2: Semiahmoo Spit

**Time:** 9 AM - Noon

**Trip Leader:** Paul Woodcock

No registration required.

Meet at Semiahmoo County Park parking lot.

March can be a peak time for viewing wintering waterfowl at Semiahmoo. We often find three species of scoters, three species of loons and at least three species of grebes as well as another dozen or so duck species and a few shorebirds, among others. Whether you are a beginner or a pro, you will enjoy joining with an amiable group of regular participants on this monthly outing cosponsored by Whatcom County Parks. Beginners will find experienced birders willing to share their knowledge.



© Andrew A Reding

Red-throated loon in winter plumage, photo by Andrew Reding

### Monday, March 4: Fir Island, Skagit Flats and Samish Flats

**Time:** 8AM - 3PM

**Trip Leader:** Steven Harper

**Limit:** 11

**Registration required:** Contact Steven at [stevenharper2@msn.com](mailto:stevenharper2@msn.com) or 360-650-9065

This will be an all-day field trip searching Fir Island, Skagit Flats and Samish Flats for raptors, snow geese, trumpeter swans and any other interesting birds that happen to be around. The trip will begin and end at the Alger Park & Ride, I-5 exit #240. We will carpool in three cars from that location while we search for birds. Bring water, hot beverages, snacks and lunch to eat on the run. If time allows, we will stop at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center for a break and warm-up. Dress to keep dry and bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. We will see trumpeter swans, bald eagles, rough-legged hawks, American kestrels, short-eared owls and search for other less common raptors such as gyrfalcons and merlins.



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### Saturday, March 23: Stimpson Family Nature Reserve

**Time:** 9AM - ~Noon

**Trip Leader:** Richard Carpenter

No registration required

Meet at Stimpson Family Nature Reserve parking lot,  
2076 Lake Louise Road

Whatcom County Parks' Stimpson Family Nature Reserve features over four miles of hiking trails through pristine, mature forest as well as ponds and wetlands. It is an excellent place to find wood ducks, pileated woodpeckers and all the familiar resident forest species of our area such as downy and hairy woodpeckers, chickadees, dark-eyed juncos, Pacific wrens, brown creepers and red-breasted nuthatches among others. There may also be some early migrants and other surprises present. Join Richard for an easy, half-day bird walk in a fantastic location.

### Thursday, March 28: Fairhaven Park, Padden Lagoon and Mud Bay

**Time:** 8:30 - 11AM

**Trip Leader:** Bob Myhr

**Registration required:** To register contact Bob at  
romyhr@comcast.net or 360-933-4352

The group will meet at Fairhaven Park parking lot to carpool on the this south-side urban birding excursion. Species expected include resident sparrows, wrens, thrushes, woodpeckers, chickadees, juncos, wintering waterfowl, and the herons at the Post Point nesting site among others. Come prepared for the weather. Everyone welcome!

### Saturday, March 30: Point Whitehorn Marine Reserve

**Time:** 9AM - Noon

**Trip Leader:** Lynne Givler

**Limit:** 12

**Registration required:** To register contact Lynne at  
lynnegivler@gmail.com or 360-319-6042

Come look for signs of spring in the forest and at the beach at this beautiful County park. We'll look and listen for forest birds, and also do some "botanizing", along a 3/4-mile, fully accessible trail before descending to a cobbly beach. The tide will be low enough to walk along the upper shore in search of the loons, grebes, ducks, geese, alcids and shorebirds that haven't yet migrated to their breeding grounds. We're also likely to see bald eagles and great blue herons in addition to some great views of the Straits of Georgia and the San Juan Islands.

### Saturday Community Events: Free, no registration required

**March 9 at the Blaine Library from 2-4 PM**  
Winter Birds of Whatcom County  
presented by Chris Brewer

**March 9 at the Lummi Island Heritage Trust  
from 10 AM-Noon**  
Native Plants for Birds presented by Pam Borso

**March 16 at Kent's Nursery in Ferndale  
from 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM**  
Native Plants for Birds presented by Pam Borso



*Varied thrush, photo by Andrew Reding*

## Squires Lake Park

By Lorraine Wilde (writing on behalf of the Whatcom Land Trust)

Are you ready to explore somewhere new? Squires Lake Park is a hidden gem that rests along Highway 99 on the border between Whatcom and Skagit Counties, just two miles north of Alger. Thanks to a conservation easement forged in 1995 by Bellingham's Whatcom Land Trust (the Trust), and with help from the Conservation Futures Fund, Squires Lake became a cooperatively-managed Whatcom County and Skagit County Park. More than 68 bird species have been reported there and it is known as a prime eagle nesting spot.

The 82-acre park surrounds Squires Lake and a smaller water body aptly named Beaver Pond. Squires Lake was historically used by the Squires family as a private fish and fur farm. The park is part of the Chuckanut Mountain biome. Its habitat is extra valuable because it connects to the new Lookout Mountain Forest Preserve. Its 1.4 miles of looping trails also connect to the Pacific Northwest Trail that links Glacier National Park to the Pacific Ocean. Primarily used for hiking, walking, trail running, and horses, this gorgeous park is accessible year-round. It's off the beaten path, so, if you're lucky, you may find that you have it all to yourself.

Because this site has diverse habitat—lake, marsh, beaver pond, forest and cliffs—some accomplished birders have identified more than 40 bird species in a single visit. You'll see all your favorite waterfowl including wood duck, mallard, hooded and common merganser, bufflehead, redhead and common goldeneye. The forest ensures you'll see hairy, downy and pileated woodpecker, northern flicker, and the occasional osprey, barred and northern pygmy owl. This time of year, you're also likely to see golden-crowned kinglet, chestnut-backed chickadee, fox sparrow and Pacific wren. Parking is immediately off Old Highway 99 with restrooms available. From the trailhead, the route makes a quick, moderate climb, gaining about 300 feet over 0.3 mile before easing and connecting with the loop trail where you'll get your first peek at tree-ringed Squires Lake.

Here the trail forks to loop around the lake, with several benches along the way. Turning left leads to views of the dam, a waterfall and the full length of the lake. Or turn right and head uphill to a junction with the South Ridge Trail that then continues off site as the Pacific Northwest Trail. Care should be taken on the Ridge Trail as you walk along the narrow ridge with cliffs that overlook the Friday Creek drainage that flows from Samish Lake. A short side trail branches off the main trail to Beaver Pond where you'll see plenty of evidence of gnawing on trees and branches.

While you explore the birds and pristine habitat of Squires Lake, you'll discover why it was protected permanently for generations of public use by the Trust and Whatcom and Skagit County Parks.

Squires Lake Park: 2510 Nulle Road, Bellingham, WA



*Photo by Barbara Gilday*

## Wings Over Water Northwest Birding Festival

Friday- Sunday, March 15-17

Blaine, Birch Bay and Semiahmoo

The 17th annual Wings Over Water Northwest Birding Festival will soon take flight! Located amidst a premiere bird area, the festival provides indoor and outdoor birding opportunities for all ages and levels of experience. Explore birds via viewing stations, guided field trips, a 2-hour open-water boat tour, bus tours, and hourly Plover Ferry Nature Cruises. Friday features an all-day field trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary (Delta BC) and an entertaining evening reception. Saturday's free Expo at Blaine Middle School (10am to 5pm) offers engaging workshops, speakers, and arts & crafts vendors. Kids will enjoy interactive activities and games, birdhouse-building, and live raptor shows. Sunday morning there will be a Breakfast for Birders at the Semiahmoo Golf Club Blue Heron Grill along with a presentation, followed by a guided field trip along the shoreline and trails of Birch Bay State Park. Or you can take a free photography workshop focused on taking the best bird images no matter what equipment you are currently using.

Pre-registration is available online for field trips and cruises or on Saturday at the festival starting at 8:30am.

*For reservations and more information go to:  
[www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com](http://www.wingsoverwaterbirdingfestival.com)*

### Festival Viewing Stations - Volunteers Needed

Four viewing stations, two at Marine Park in Blaine and two on Semiahmoo Spit, will be staffed by NCAS volunteers from 10 am to 3 pm on Saturday, March 16, to help festival visitors locate and identify the rich variety of avian species that frequent the habitat. If you are comfortable identifying the marine birds of Drayton Harbor and Semiahmoo Bay, please consider volunteering for a 2.5-hour shift. Contact Paul Woodcock at 360-966-6549 to volunteer and share your enthusiasm for birds.

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## Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

Friday-Sunday, March 22-24

Othello, WA

Come celebrate the spring migration of sandhill cranes at the 22nd Annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival. The festival offers a variety of events for the whole family. In addition to a full slate of outstanding speakers focusing on area geology, ice age floods, a variety of cranes, and various animal migrations, the festival is also excited to have Wolf Haven International present for the first time ever. Based out of Tenino, WA, outreach coordinator Chris Montero will feature skull replicas, prey antlers, and a couple of life-sized wolf cutouts at their table. Mr. Montero is an experienced naturalist guide, environmental interpreter, field technician, scientific illustrator and for the last eight years has been teaching wildlife and conservation for National Geographic Student Expeditions in Ecuador, Brazil, Australia, Belize and more recently in the Canadian Arctic.

*Registration and information is available at:  
[www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org](http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org)*

## Olympic BirdFest

Friday-Sunday, April 12-14

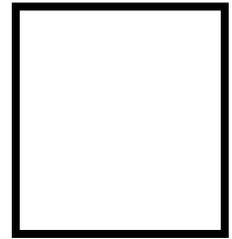
Dungeness River Audubon Center: Sequim, WA

Grab your binoculars and join the 16th annual Olympic BirdFest! The stage is set...quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready ... marbled murrelets, rhinoceros auklets, harlequin ducks, black oystercatchers, peregrine falcons, barred and pygmy owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, a boat tour, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker this year, John Marzluff, is a professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington and a noted author. Come bird with us and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula ...you just might go home with a new bird for your life list!

Precede your BirdFest weekend with a birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 9-11. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort. Extend your BirdFest weekend with the Neah Bay post-trip, April 14-16, exploring northwest coastal Washington, a region rarely seen by birders.

*For registration and information go to:  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org) or call: 360-681-4076*

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## North Cascades Audubon Society Membership

We hope you will support North Cascades Audubon by joining the chapter locally. Your commitment to Audubon is important to us. We will continue to provide you with information regarding local chapter activities through our website and all activities will remain FREE and open to the public. Paper newsletters are provided to current, paid members. Help support us - and receive a paper newsletter - by joining the local chapter at any of the levels to your right. The newsletter is published monthly between September and May, including a double issue for November/December. All issues are also available online. If you do not wish to receive a paper copy, email [membership@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:membership@northcascadesaudubon.org).

Please check your mailing labels for accuracy, including the expiration date. To make any necessary changes, please send an email to [membership@northcascadesaudubon.org](mailto:membership@northcascadesaudubon.org).

## Join or Renew (circle one)

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