

Admiralty Audubon Pippings

AAS Birding March - April 2024

Gull Identification Workshop at Point Hudson Friday, March 15, 2024, 12:30 - 2 PM

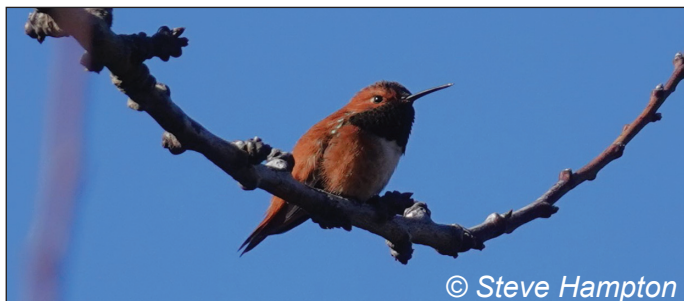
Gull School is back! Steve Hampton will lead a Gull Identification workshop at Point Hudson. There will be a low outgoing tide this afternoon. Hopefully, the weather and gulls will cooperate and line up on the spit. If not, there will be other birds. Bring a wind shell and good gloves, and a scope if you have one. RSVP to stevehampton@gmail.com (cap at 15 people).

Third Saturday at Anderson Lake State Park Saturday, March 16, 2024, 9 AM - 12 PM

Meet at 9 AM at the parking area straight down the dirt road just beyond the meadows. Discover Pass required for parking. You must contact leader Beverly McNeil to register: bevybirds53@gmail.com. The group size is limited to 5. If the weather is bad we may cancel. Bring binoculars and water, if desired. Distance is 1.5 miles and time of outing is usually 3 to 4 hours. We normally go around the whole lake on Trail B, Anderson Lake State Park (https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/anderson_lake_state_park_overview_map_pdf_1.5mb.pdf). Wear sturdy shoes and layered clothing for changeable weather. Please avoid wearing bright clothing.

Kah Tai Lagoon to Froggy Bottoms Saturday, March 23, 2024, 8:30 - 11:00 AM

Meet at the Park and Ride near Safeway, NOT the Kah Tai Park parking lot. We will spend time looking at waterfowl. I will have a couple of scopes. We will note what we hear in the shrubbery and trees there and then move up Kearney Street to skirt the bird-rich shrubby areas above the golf course, eventually following the path near Quimper Village, and come back pretty much the same route to our cars. Who knows what one might see! This is a two plus hour walk based on interest and interestingness. Bad bird weather (high winds/real rain) cancels. Limit of 12 people. Contact Monica Fletcher: by phone 360-379-3136 monicaflet@gmail.com.



© Steve Hampton

Third Saturday at Anderson Lake State Park Saturday, April 20, 2024, 8:30 - 11 AM

Meet at 8:30 AM at the parking area straight down the dirt road just beyond the meadows. Discover Pass required for parking. You must contact leader Beverly McNeil to register: bevybirds53@gmail.com. The group size is limited to 5. If the weather is bad we may cancel. Bring binoculars and water, if desired. Distance is 1.5 miles and time of outing is usually 3 to 4 hours. We normally go around the whole lake on Trail B, Anderson Lake State Park (https://parks.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/anderson_lake_state_park_overview_map_pdf_1.5mb.pdf). Wear sturdy shoes and layered clothing for changeable weather. Please avoid wearing bright clothing.

Birding by Ear Along the Larry Scott Trail Saturday April 27, 2024 8:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Meet at the Milo Curry parking lot near Four Corners, off of Discovery Road. This will be a stumble-free slow walk along the paved Larry Scott Trail deciphering all the myriad bird songs. We should get good views as well. This is such a rich time to bird as the full contingent of resident and migratory birds are busy with their lives and oblivious to birders and their peering binoculars. Limit of 12 people. Contact Monica Fletcher: monicaflet@gmail.com or by phone 360-379-3136.

Betty Renkor

Admiralty Audubon Field Trips Chair



© Wendy Feltham

photos - left: first Rufous Hummer of the year, an older male staking out what must be his previous territory. He may be lonely for the next three weeks until the rest arrive. Feb 26, 2024, south end of Redwood. above: A Varied Thrush poses with lichen in the Quimper Wildlife Corridor, January 2024.

The Importance of Dark Skies in Our Community

Port Townsend is home to many species of birds, whether they live here year-round or are just migrating through. Migratory or resident, all Port Townsend birds are affected by light pollution - excessive use of artificial or outdoor light, which often has a negative effect on human health as well as wildlife behavior.

Even small towns like Port Townsend (population, roughly 10,000 as of the 2022 census) have a light pollution problem. Many people contribute to it, whether they know it or not. It can be as simple as leaving a few bright lights on all night in your house or as drastic as having spotlights in your yard.

Birds, especially migratory ones, are some of the creatures most affected by light pollution. It's estimated that a whopping one billion migrating birds are killed each year in collisions with illuminated buildings, particularly in big cities. Along with death by collision, light pollution can drastically throw off bird migration routes.

Many birds migrate at night, following the light of the moon. But studies show that birds will be confused by artificial lights and fly toward cities and towns, instead of following their natural migration routes. The problem is even worse for seabirds, who often use the moon's reflection on the water to find their way. In Iceland, puffin fledglings use the moon's reflection on the water as a guide when they make their first flight from the nest. Now, however, instead of seeing reflected moonlight on the sea, they see and fly toward the lights of Icelandic towns, where they gather, confused and vulnerable to predators. The townspeople must bring them back to the sea and release them.

Make no mistake: Wildlife and people in Port Townsend are suffering the effects of light pollution right now, whether we are talking about migrating birds, seabirds off our shores, or the Douglas squirrels and shrews living in our backyards. Lights make small mammals more visible to nocturnal predators, including loose house cats. People, too, have been shown to experience ill effects on our sleep cycles and overall health. Our ability to take advantage of our low pollution marine air and clear skies to see the stars is affected by our neighbors as well.

So next time you notice that your upstairs light is still on and nobody is in the room, turn it off. Be more mindful of your lights and how far they reach.

Use top covers to direct porch lights down instead of illuminating the trees. Have timers installed or motion-detectors to turn off the light when everyone is in bed. Talk to your neighbors about how their lights might be affecting the wildlife.

And, most important, turn off any exterior lights you might be shining into your neighborhood. Perhaps the citizens of Port Townsend should aspire to declare our community an International Dark-skies City; a place where you can look up at the night sky and see the beautiful Milky Way!

Hilina Taylor-Lenz
Admiralty Audubon member
aspiring ornithologist

Sophomore, Port Townsend High School

editor's footnote: The City of Port Townsend undertook Dark Skies efforts with streetlights in 2019. Now it is up to the rest of us to follow Hilina's advice with our own lighting.



A Golden-crowned Kinglet flits from tree to tree beside the path near the bluff by Cook Avenue, January 2024.

AAS Kah Tai Workparties March & April 2024

Sunday March 10 & Sunday April 14, 9AM-noon

there will be workparties at Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park sponsored by Admiralty Audubon Society. We will be removing invasives (i.e., Scot's broom, spurge laurel, holly and ivy) and picking up trash. Scot's Broom pullers, garbage bags and garbage grippers and refreshments will be provided.

March 10 workparty: look for the white pickup southeast of the little pond. The nearest parking is off 12th street behind Henery Hardware in the Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park parking lot.

April 14 workparty: look for the white pickup near the bench along the main trail between the bridge and Kearney St. The nearest parking is at Chase Bank on the corner of Hwy 20 and Kearney St. For more information email ptrose53@gmail.com or call 360-385-0307.

Rosemary Sikes
Admiralty Audubon Programs Chair

Feather Forecast for March & April 2024

A number of “first of season” birds show up in the months of March and April - swallows, warblers, American Goldfinch, hummingbirds (Rufous Hummingbirds arrive with the blooming of pink flowering currant), and Savannah Sparrows in the grasslands. Favorite mid-to-late April visitors are the pairs of Mountain Bluebirds that almost yearly come for a beach vacation at Point Wilson before heading into the Olympic highlands. Be sure to look for them along the low shrubs and trees inland of the driftwood line all along the stretch of the beach from the Marine Science Center to the lighthouse.

In a mass migration, our shorebirds begin their trek north away from us to their breeding grounds further north. Point Hudson, Marrowstone Point, Fort Flagler beach campground, and Oak Harbor's back bay are excellent places to see both our overwintering shorebirds and additional birds on their migration stopovers from south of us. Look for Dunlin, Black Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Western Sandpiper, and Sanderling. Discovery Bay and Point Wilson sometimes host Whimbrel, which are striking for their enormous curving bill.

April is also a time for raptors to migrate. They don't flock like geese but they are moving north, especially in mid-April. Point Wilson at Fort Worden is good place to note Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk and the occasional Peregrine Falcon flying over very high in the sky. They are not hunting; they are moving north quickly. They appreciate the high altitude to cruise across Admiralty Inlet.

A never-to-be-skipped early spring hike that takes in all of this movement of migrating birds (and the cacophony of territorial song) is the walk from the the Fort Worden beach campground, taking the trail west and uphill. The trailhead is among the campsites near the second restroom building. Take that trail up to Memory's Vault, and then the little trail to the bluff overlooking the parade grounds, and then back down to the campground. Alternatively, once you crest the hill above the campground, make the big loop over the bluff-side Battery Row to North Beach and walk back to the lighthouse along the beach. This is a favorite walk and a decent workout - which often is NOT part of birding!

Monica Fletcher

Admiralty Audubon Education CoChair

The Chapter Considers a Name Change

As you may be aware, chapters all over the country have been changing their names. In our region, Seattle has already changed to Birds Connect Seattle. Other chapters have adopted or are in the process of incorporating 'Bird Alliance' in their names to ensure broad recognition. Examples nearby include: Tahoma Bird Alliance, Vashon Bird Alliance and Bird Alliance of Oregon. This follows a national trend with chapters from Washington D.C., New York, Detroit, Madison, New Mexico and many in California implementing similar changes.

At our last meeting, the AAS board agreed that our chapter should begin to examine a potential name change. This name change, in concert with other chapters, is viewed as an opportunity to increase recruitment of future members, expand engagement in bird and habitat conservation and further promote conservation efforts.

We wish to proceed in concert with other chapters to make sure that our efforts are recognizably branded into the future. We are in the early stages of this process. Chapter members who wish to express suggestions are encouraged to email the Board at admiraltyaudubon@gmail.com.

Rick Jahnke

Admiralty Audubon President



© Tracy LeMoine

If they weren't so common, we would appreciate their quiet beauty a bit more. Mourning dove, home landscape, February 2024.

Volunteer Opportunity to Protect Caspian Terns Locally

Friends of Fort Flagler has been working with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife to provide some protection to Rat Island during the Caspian Tern nesting and Harbor Seal pupping season which occurs during July and August. The goal is to have docents posted at the end of the Fort Flagler spit, across from Rat Island during extremely low tides. There will be signage discouraging folks from kayaking or walking on the island. The docents will take the opportunity to answer questions and talk about the value of protecting the habitat and wildlife, and how our presence may disturb the chicks and pups.

This year, the program will run from Memorial weekend (May 27) through August, coinciding with extreme negative low tides that allow access to Rat Island by foot. Docents will be engaged in 4-hour shifts, providing an opportunity to stand, sit, and walk the spit while educating visitors and observing the island's unique wildlife. With the Avian Flu devastating approximately 80% of the Salish Sea population in 2023, protecting their habitat has become more vital than ever. Rat Island offers one of the few remaining sanctuaries for these birds to breed without human intervention.

An informational meeting can be joined on Wednesday, March 20th, at 4 pm by registering at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rat-island-docent-informational-meeting-tickets-816174037517>. Additionally, if you are ready to take the plunge and volunteer, you can sign up directly at <https://friendsoffortflagler.org/volunteer>. For any inquiries

or to express your interest, feel free to reach out to us at fortflaglerfriends@gmail.com.

For more information on the program: <https://friendsoffortflagler.org/rat-island-docent-program>

Mark your Calendar: Caspian Tern Situation in Puget Sound on May 2nd by Zoom

Date: Thursday, May 2nd @ 7pm

Location: Zoom

Presenters: Katie Haman and Scott Pearson

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/846321439207?aff=oddtcreator>

Description: The presentation focuses on the ecological and epidemiological aspects of the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) among Caspian Terns, Glaucous-winged Gulls (and their hybrids) and Harbor Seals. This outbreak appeared to spread from tern colonies on the lower Columbia River to several locations in the Puget Sound region with the highest mortality rates observed on Rat Island. The outbreak resulted in very high mortality rates for adult and chick terns on Rat Island and appeared to have regional flyway level impacts to tern populations. Interestingly, there was little mortality to adult gulls on Rat Island despite high mortality to gull chicks.

Note that WDFW is working on a public access closure for Rat Island, perhaps permanent for summer season only, for breeding terns, gulls, and oystercatchers. This would be very welcome!

AAS Membership Form 2024

<https://admiraltyaudubon.org>

name _____ date _____

mailing address _____

city, state, zipcode _____

email address _____ phone number _____

Would you prefer your newsletter by email? ☐ paper copy? ☐ amount enclosed \$ _____

Send \$20 annual membership to: **Admiralty Audubon, PO Box 666, Port Townsend WA 98368**
or pay online at the 'Join' link via PayPal or credit card

*Membership includes 6 issues of our newsletter per year and the right to vote in chapter elections.
Chapter programs and field trips are free to the public. We always welcome donations! Dues and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Admiralty Audubon is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.*

Port Townsend Christmas Bird Count 2023 Summary

The 46th Port Townsend Christmas Bird Count, held on December 16, 2023, set records for bird species, total number of birds, number of participants, and party hours. A flat calm foggy morning turned into a flat calm sunny afternoon, making for excellent birding conditions, especially on the water. Traveling by foot, car, boat, bike, and paddleboard, we ultimately tallied 125 species. This surpasses the old record of 122, which was set last year. We also counted 24,656 individual birds, another record.

There were 78 participants, including feeder watchers, surpassing the old record by five. Together, we put in 153 party hours, smashing the old record of 125 set last year.

We traveled 62 miles on foot and 204 miles by car. The early hours were marked by 8.5 hours of owling.

We added one new species for the count in the form of two Pygmy Nuthatches. This species has been irrupting from the interior since this fall. A single bird found in October in North Beach was re-located on the count day – and it had a friend. Two Herring x Glaucous-winged Gull hybrids, identified from the boat, were also new for the count, though probably occur regularly.

Other noteworthy sightings included a Tundra Swan among the Trumpeters, a Western Gull from the boat, a Yellow-billed Loon in Discovery Bay, continuing Canada Jays at Gibbs Lake, a Barn Owl over the Port Townsend Golf Park, an American Dipper at the base of Discovery Bay, five Western Meadowlarks at Pointt Wilson, and an Orange-crowned Warbler along the Tollefson Trail.



An Ancient Murrelet off Point Wilson, one of a record 501 tallied on the count.

Record high counts were set for 17 species (plus our hybrid gull). These were:

Greater Yellowlegs (23 > 10)
 Common Murre (2853 > 2635)
 Ancient Murrelet (501 > 442)
 Bonaparte's Gull (273 > 239)
 Western x Glaucous-winged (aka "Olympic") Gulls (938 > 761) and the aggregate count of Olympic and Glaucous-winged combined was near a record
 Eurasian Collared-Dove (57 > 53)
 Great Horned Owl (2 > 1)
 Anna's Hummingbird (171 > 130) – this number was zero as recently as 2004
 Downy Woodpecker (24 > 19)
 Hairy Woodpecker (22 > 19)
 Northern Flicker (118 > 107)
 American Kestrel (6 > 5)
 Black-capped Chickadee (259 > 254)
 Red-breasted Nuthatch (96 > 90)
 Golden-crowned Sparrow (336 > 164)
 Spotted Towhee (237 > 216)
 Western Meadowlark (5 > 4)
 House Finch (448 > 422)

As you can see by the close margins, and factoring in our record coverage, many of these records will disappear when adjusted to birds per party hour. Nevertheless, these are robust numbers, especially for the alcids. We also counted 153 Marbled Murrelets, just off the record of 180 set in 2009.

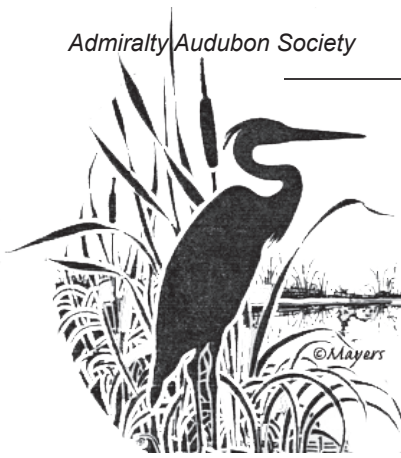
Two species tied previous high counts: Sharp-shinned Hawk (7) and American Dipper (1). There were no record low counts, but zeros for Black Scoter, Eared Grebe, Hermit Thrush, and Red Crossbill were notable misses.

In addition to the 125 species, we just missed two more, Lincoln's Sparrow and Band-tailed Pigeon. These will go down as "count week" birds, as they were seen within three days of the count in either direction.

Thanks to all the area leaders and participants! Next year we plan to return to old times and finish the day with the comradery of a potluck, replete with tall tales of adventure and birds!

Steve Hampton

Admiralty Audubon Conservation and CBC Chair



Admiralty Pippings

Admiralty Audubon Society of East Jefferson County
PO Box 666 Port Townsend WA 98368



Double-crested Cormorants at Chinese Gardens during the January 2024 freeze.

Admiralty Audubon Officers and Board

President: Rick Jahnke	360-531-3417	rjahnke@att.net
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Field Trips: Betty Renkor	--	betty.renkor@gmail.com
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Webmaster: Andrew Reding	--	admiraltyaudubon@gmail.com
Website: https://admiraltyaudubon.org	Facebook: https://facebook.com/admiraltyaudubon	

Dues, Donations, & Taxes

Your annual dues are a donation according to the IRS. If you want a donation receipt for tax purposes, please contact our chapter Secretary Ron Sikes at b1rdbrush@gmail.com and he will provide you with a donation acknowledgement. The IRS does not require an acknowledgement for amounts less than \$250. Thank you!

AAS Board Elections and News

Our new Vice President has resigned due to the unanticipated time commitment needed for other projects. Our former VP has graciously stepped up. We have officer elections every year at our May community meeting. If you want to run for an officer position or want to vote, please show up! Only members can serve or vote.