

Admiralty Audubon Pippings

Field Trips for July & August 2020

At press time, Jefferson County is in Phase 2 of Washington State's 'Safe Start' planning for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Our county has applied for Phase 3 but we will not know for some time about whether that is approved. As we are allowed groups of five maximum to congregate, Admiralty Audubon would like to offer a few small (four persons or less), socially distanced birding events, with no sharing of equipment and no carpooling outside of shared households. Don't forget your mask! Please contact the trip leaders to reserve your space.

1st Saturday Nature Walk at Fort Flagler 4 July 2020, 9am

Meet at the boat ramp on the south side of the Beachcomber Cafe. We first walk to the end of the spit toward Rat Island. This takes about an hour. We then drive to Marrowstone Point near the USGS Fisheries lab. We walk to the point to scope birds. Optionally, we will visit the sewage ponds and finish up by noon. Wear layers depending on the weather. *Trip Leader Gary Eduardo Perless: 360-643-3529 or gperless@gmail.com.*

1st Tuesday Birding at Point Hudson 7 July 2020, 8:30am

Meet at the raingarden by the beach at the very end of Jefferson Street (where there is parking). This will be a short walk to note what species are in our area. *Trip Leader Gary Eduardo Perless: 360-643-3529 or gperless@gmail.com.*

Fort Worden State Park Monday, 27 July 2020, 9am

Please meet at the Port Townsend Marine Science Center parking area next to the pier in Fort Worden. Dress for the weather. *Trip Leader Beverly McNeil: Call 360-301-4745 or email blmcneil59@gmail.com for details.*

Anderson Lake State Park Monday, 31 August 2020, 9am

Plan for a 2 -2.5 hour walk; meet at the first entrance to the park. You will need a Discover Pass to park. Dress for whatever the weather decides to be in August here. Bring your water and binoculars and appropriate shoes and clothing. *Trip Leader Beverly McNeil: Call 360-301-4745 or email blmcneil59@gmail.com for details.*

Migratory Bird Treaty Act - Time to Make Your Voice Heard

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is a 100-year-old law that protects more than 1,000 bird species. The change proposed by the Department of the Interior/Fish & Wildlife Service would make permanent a 2017 Solicitor's Opinion that ended the prohibition on the killing or "taking" of migratory birds from industrial activities, such as birds flying into uncovered oil pits or other predictable and avoidable killing – also known as "incidental take".

The Department of the Interior has released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as it continues its effort to strip away critical protections in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Despite requests from governors, state legislatures, mayors, Members of Congress, and a number of conservation organizations, including the National Audubon Society, to pause major changes to critical public protections during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Administration has continued to push its bird-killing policy along with other major rollbacks (information above quoted from the National Audubon website at <https://www.audubon.org/news/trump-administration-continues-effort-strip-away-bird-protections>).

Now is our opportunity to comment on the Environmental Impact Statement draft. Please visit <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=FWS-HQ-MB-2018-0090> for access to the relevant documents and a link to allow comments. The deadline for comments is 20 July 2020, so don't delay to make your voice heard.

The so-called 'M-Opinion 37050' is what suspended an earlier opinion that excluded incidental take of migratory species. The Department of the Interior Solicitor's Opinion M-37050 would codify that incidental take resulting from an otherwise lawful activity is not prohibited under the MBTA.

If you only have the time and energy for a single comment, the most helpful statement could be to '**support Alternative B: Withdraw M-Opinion 37050 and promulgate regulations that define the scope of the MBTA to include prohibition of incidental take**'.

Great Blue Herons take advantage of an otter opportunity

On the morning on May 19th I walked down the trail that leads to the back edge of the lagoon at Kala Point to see if there were any interesting birds or water fowl. I didn't bring my camera this time because it is heavy with the long lens and 1.2 converter, and sometimes I take a break. I did have my smartphone with me, although it is not great for birding.

Well, first of all, there was not a bird in sight on the lagoon, but I always believe that patience usually pays off. After standing behind some brush for about 10 minutes and watching for any movement near the large submerged log about 20 to 30 yards in front of me, I noticed some ripples along the log and maybe that could be a duck, but no duck appeared. Then I decided it was just the tide coming in and filling the lagoon.

Moments later, a river otter showed up swimming next to the log and then climbed up and proceeded to preen himself. He eventually came down off the log and began to forage for fish and other creatures in the shallow water that was about a foot deep.

He appeared to be digging up the sand and mud and then would bring his head up with his catch in his mouth and chomp it down. After a

few minutes a Great Blue Heron flew down fairly close to the otter and observed that Mister Otter

was quite successful at stirring up a lot of fish and other things to eat and he started to take advantage of the work of the otter and began hunting within a few yards of the otter.

Well, after a few more minutes another heron flew in to join in on the easy meal. The end of this story is that over the course of maybe 45 minutes, there were a total of 7 herons that flew down and had purposely come to take advantage of this otters' hunting skills, and all 7 of them were gathered closely around that otter, sometimes within a foot or two. One heron had to back up when the otter became too close for comfort! I found this event very interesting and enter-

taining. Patience does pay off!

Always out in nature,
Beverly McNeil
Nature Photographer
AAS Trip Leader



© Beverly McNeil



© Johanna King



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Photos top to bottom: River otter and five of seven total very attentive Great Blue Herons (taken by cell phone),

19 May 2020, Kala Point; Great Blue Heron having a bad hair day, Point Hudson, May 2020; Otter visiting at the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, May 2020.

Babies, rarieties, foxes and hares



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clockwise from upper left: Killdeer chick, Point Hudson, May 2020; Snowshoe Hare, Fort Townsend, June 2020; fox (dark phase of Red Fox?), Fairbanks AK, June 2020; Lazuli Bunting (a rare sighting here), Fort Worden, May 2020; Bonaparte Gull chicks, June 2020, Fairbanks AK; Spotted Sandpiper chick, June 2020, Fairbanks AK.



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photos clockwise from upper left: Red-winged Blackbird, Lynnsfield Ponds, June 2020; Heerman's Gulls, Point Hudson, June 2020; Cedar Waxwings eating mahonia berries near Chetzemoka Park, June 2020; a pair of Ravens raising a ruckus at Kah Tai, June 2020.

AAS Membership Form 2020
<http://admiraltyaudubon.org>

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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.

Summer - safe at (and near) home

This year, we think the Ruddy Ducks are nesting at Kah Tai Lagoon. We've seen females and, active as always, the males doing their "hey baby" call. Also, we saw goose parents with a single gosling(1). We have seen a number of Mallard moms with ducklings which mysteriously reduce in number as time passes(2).

We are thrilled by the new juvenile birds in our home landscape and believe many were raised right here. New bird teenagers include towhees, juncos, Song Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, House Finches, one Purple Finch, and robins. More are expected to come any day now, including Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Black-capped Chickadees, Bushtits, House Wrens (mean little birds), and Violet-green Swallows.

The deer have made it a practice to visit our 'produce market' everyday and devour the Fringe-cup, Columbine flowers and any others that their nose approves. They have favorite weeds as well and eat mainly the top parts. They accept me to be outside at a distance of about 15 feet. They will go about their business as long as I ignore them and keep to my business - usually pulling weeds. We have seen several new fawns with moms, so the deer are still managing to eat enough nutritious forage.



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Varn Brooks



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Another member of the AAS Board built an inadvertent deer trap as he has caught several since he put up a fence (except across his front drive). The other day he had to open gates to allow a fawn to rejoin its sibling and mother who were inside the trap. We think it is wonderful to live in a zoo.

Ron Sikes
Admiralty Audubon Treasurer

(1)[Editor's note: A few years past, some chapter members became alarmed at the large flocks of Canada Geese on the grounds of the care center on the east side of the lagoon. The concern centered on the risk of adding large amounts of phosphate to the lagoon via additional bird feces if the geese settled in and didn't migrate. Fortunately, the majority of the flock joined the fall migration. Note that at least part of Anderson Lake's cyanobacteria problem stems from too much phosphate in the nearly closed freshwater system.

(2)[Editor's note: we have watched Bald Eagles train their fledged youngsters to hunt at Kah Tai. During a chapter workparty, we watched an adult eagle circle high above the lagoon while a hapless juvenile eagle chased a large flock of shovelers back and forth across the lagoon, never successfully catching anything. The eagles left together.]

photos top down:
Bushtits, home landscape; House Wren, home landscape; Black-capped Chickadee, home landscape; Violet-green Swallows - left: male, PTMSC; right: female, Kah Tai.

Banner
Design and Art by
Larry Eifert©



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Flicker coming in for a landing somewhere in Port Townsend, April 2020.

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Red-flowering currant, Kah Tai © Artemis Celt



Coralroot orchid, Fort Townsend
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Rhododendron, Kah Tai © Artemis Celt