

Admiralty Audubon Pippings

Kah Tai Workparties

February & March 2021

**Sundays, 7 February and 7 March 2021,
9:00am - noon**

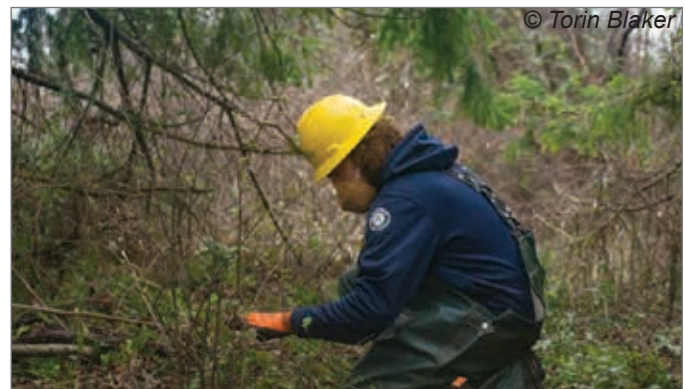
Admiralty Audubon will be sponsoring work parties at Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park, weather and Covid permitting. We hope to pull invasives, i.e. Scot's Broom, spurge laurel, holly and ivy. No garbage pickup or refreshments because of COVID-19. Please wear a mask, stay at least six feet apart and bring your own pruners. (helpful hint: if you want to pull little hollies in the woodland, a pair of pliers or needlenose make it easier.) Park at the Chase Bank parking lot. Look for the white pickup truck parked on the Benedict Street trail across Hwy 20 from Safeway gas station. *For more information, contact Rosemary Sikes at ptrose53@gmail.com or 360-385-0307.*

WCC Crews at Kah Tai

Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park has benefited in the past from the grant-funded Urban Forestry Restoration Project (UFRP), a collaboration between the Washington Departments of Ecology and Natural Resources for Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews to improve our watershed by removing invasives in our urban forests. The UFRP grant program ended, but the WCC crews are still available for hire.

Our chapter was able to take advantage of a recent opportunity to bring a WCC crew to work again in our chapter's Adopt A Park. As noted in the last newsletter, a longtime chapter member and supporter of our work at Kah Tai left us a modest bequest in her estate. At the same time, our workparties had been stopped for much of 2020 due to Covid concerns. The Board considered and approved using some of the bequest to hire a WCC crew to help us catch up. We were then very fortunate when the crew that is managed by the North Olympic Salmon Coalition had the first week of January available!

Our crew members were Torin Blaker - crew media specialist; Marlowe Moser - safety officer; Mike Hathaway - tools and equipment manager; Jakob Sulzer - records and metrics; Sabrina Wilk - Assistant Supervisor and Owen French - Restoration Specialist and Crew Supervisor. The crew cleared extensive Scot's broom as our first priority. They also worked diligently on the holly, ivy and spurge laurel invasion in the woodland west of the loop trail. Their effort was so impressive that we hope to be able to bring them back again next year.



Clockwise from top left: Resident Barred Owl keeps an eye on the crew in the woodland as they work near the remains of his recent meal; crew pulling Scot's broom; crew member tackling the young holly in the woodland; AAS President Rick Jahnke answers crew members' questions about the history of Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park.

Christmas Bird Count 2020

Considering the bizarre norms of Year 2020 our Christmas Bird Count had some extraordinary elements as well. We matched last year's species total with 119 and two additional count week additions (Killdeer and Hermit Thrush). This was a great result because the weather was singularly unhelpful to birders - very flat light, increasing rain and wind in the afternoon made for all and sundry - birds and viewers - to only wish to hunker down under shelter.

Twelve groups, or if you really examined the arrangements, about seventeen groups of smaller Covid-comfortable clusters (e.g., households) spent up to nine hours that day counting every bird and call they encountered. Wearing of masks presented challenges; a solution to the fogging of binoculars was simply holding one's breath. This proves challenging while counting flocks of ducks of multiple species. Single track trails had folks strung out with great distance between spotters, a plus for quelling conversation and hearing bird calls.

There was hardly a single route that did not produce one unique bird, and if you saw any of these on your route then pat yourself on the back. Here are the singularities, sometimes there were multiples of the species at one spot: Wood Duck (2), Greater Scaup (1), Barrow's Goldeneye (1), Ruffed Grouse (1), Eared Grebe (2), Sharp-shinned Hawk (2), Kestrel (2), Greater Yellowlegs (1), Sanderling (7), Wilson's Snipe (1), Thayer's Gull (3 - now called Iceland Gull), Rhinoceros Auklet (3), Barn Owl (1), Northern Saw-

Whet Owl (2), Northern Pygmy-Owl (1), Red-breasted Sapsucker (1), Hutton's Vireo (2), Gray Jay (4), Yellow-rumped Warbler (5), Townsend's Warbler (1), Savannah Sparrow (1), Lincoln's Sparrow (1), Western Meadowlark (1), Brewer's Blackbird (1), Canvasbacks (6). There were NO Long-tailed duck, Black Scoter or Yellow-billed Loon this year (as we didn't have Bob Boekelheide on a boat this year). No Peregrines,



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Western or Least Sandpiper, Band-tailed Pigeon, Great Horned Owl, Dippers, Orange-crowned Warbler, Goldfinch or Evening Grosbeak. If you spotted any of these no-shows at any time during Count Week (Dec 16 - Dec 22) please let me know. Thank you dedicated Owlers!!!!

Now for the high counts. Can you say PINE SISKIN? We had 4,030 individuals counted. Ken Wilson researched back in our Port Townsend Circle records and the closest high number was 1,488 in 2001. Sequim-Dungeness Circle



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had nearly 9000 this year! Apparently there is a Pine Siskin irruption - an infrequent increase in the range of a bird due to food resources, meaning the birds may be responding to an abundance of food available outside their range coupled perhaps with scarcity of food and/or high reproductive success in their regular territory.

There is much talk of this year's irruption of Pine Siskins recorded all the way

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A few of the species reported in unique CBC sightings (not photographed during the count). Top: Canvasback hen with American Wigeons, Tukey Pond, November 2020; middle: Red-breasted Sapsucker, home landscape, May 2020; bottom: Sanderling, Port Townsend, November 2018.

CBC 2020 *(continued from p.2)*

to the Gulf Coast and far down the East Coast too. Here are a couple of links.

<https://www.audubon.org/news/this-winter-marks-incredible-superflight-hungry-winter-finches>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/-pine-siskin-finch-irruption-fall-2020>

There were other high counts, most notable was Cedar Waxwing, a record year for our Circle at 353 counted. Near Point Hudson one flock numbered 180. Last year we had a high number for Red-breasted Merganser at 546 - this year we had 709, making it a Circle record. Last year we had the highest number of Red-necked Grebe of any CBC circle in the United States at 327 (not our circle's highest number - that would be 425 in 1986). This year we had a "mere" 186. This year AND last year we had 71 Bald Eagle, remaining our High Count through the decades - they seem indeed to have rebounded. Last year American Wigeons were our most numerous bird, (2019-2270, 2020-651) this year Pine Siskins win. Whether it was the harshness of the conditions this year, patchiness in general in our region, or just plain luck it is always interesting.

I highly recommend exploring the Audubon Christmas Bird Count website page, and specifically looking up the CBC Results link (with the Great Egret on it) and hitting then Historical to customize your own reports to download, and the "Where Have All the Birds Gone?" link (with the Common Redpoll on it) and play with the Trend Viewer that is arranged by regions. Very informative.

The 2021 Christmas Bird Count coming in December will hopefully be unencumbered by Covid-19 at last. There will be many birds to count. Each and every tick mark tells a story over the years, and tells a truth of our abiding interest.

Monica Fletcher

Admiralty Audubon Conservation & CBC Chair

A few more of the CBC species counted in only single reports: photos top down: Brewer's Blackbird, Three Crabs Restoration Area, August 2020; Ruffed Grouse, Hoh Rain Forest, October 2017; Wood Duck drake in breeding plumage, Nisqually, April 2016, and to show that seasonal identification can be a challenge, particularly for newbies, Wood Duck drake in non-breeding plumage, Hoh River edge, September 2020.



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Pine Siskins, Irruptions and Salmonella



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Photos - top: Pine Siskin collecting dog hair for nesting material, home landscape, April 2020; bottom: Pine Siskin, Texas Creek above Methow, 2012.

As noted in the Christmas Bird Count report on pp. 2-3, we are in the middle of a major Pine Siskin irruption. We are also, unfortunately in the middle of a major salmonella infection in siskins and a lesser one in other feeder birds.

While some information sources have advised us to remove our feeders for a few weeks, others have noted that irruptions occur in part due to loss of food sources in normal feeding grounds. If we choose not to offer food to hungry irruptions, are we helping or hurting?

The most humane advice seems to be that if you want to use feeders to just keep your feeders and water sources as clean as possible, cleaning them frequently with soap and water followed by a dilute chlorine bleach rinse. Don't use platform feeders that allow bird feces to mix with seed and transmit disease. Clean up frequently under your feeders so that birds don't forage for dropped seed that may be contaminated.

We are all now quite familiar with the ways to minimize pandemics in our own species. We wash our hands, keep our eating areas clean, and use more Chlorox than we ever imagined to disinfect our daily lives. So just extend that courtesy to our hungry visitors. It would be better for them if we all had gardens full of native plants with seeds and fruits available. Failing that, we can still help. And while you're at it, consider planting a few seed- and fruit-bearing native plants in your landscape for the benefit of our feathered friends.

AAS Membership Form 2021
<http://admiraltyaudubon.org>

name _____ date _____
 mailing address _____
 city, state, zipcode _____
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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.

Just a little anthropomorphizing



From upper left, clockwise: Great Egret visits Chinese Gardens, engages in a little birder-watching, oblivious birder looks at ducks. Great Egret shares dazzling beauty with admirers; resident Great Blue Heron spies on the flashy visitor and the competition intensifies as the heron shares some homegrown dazzle. Meanwhile, Trumpeter Swans start visiting Kah Tai Lagoon. The mostly juvenile visitors show no particular interest in such competition or concern about relative beauty or size comparison. All photos November-December 2020.

Banner
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Larry Eifert©



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Northern Harrier, Fort Flagler, November 2020.

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Dues are due

It's January. Dues for 2021 are due. If you would like to support our chapter, there is a dues form on p.4, or you can use the PayPal link on our website at the 'Join' link. We hope for better days ahead so we will be able to meet again in person. Please check the website for any updates on birding trips or other opportunities.

Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count is 12-15 February 2021. Visit <https://www.birdcount.org/> to participate. Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time.