

Admiralty Audubon Pippings

AAS Birdwalks July 2021

First Saturday Nature Walk, Fort Flagler

3 July 2021, 9:00 - 11:00am

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. Dress for the weather. *Trip Leader Gary Eduardo Perless: 360-643-3529 or gperless@gmail.com.*

First Tuesday at Point Hudson

6 July 2021 8:30 - 9:00am

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.*

AAS Workparty at Salish Coast

Sunday, 18 July 2021, 9:00 - 11:00am

Our chapter's Plants for Birds project at Salish Coast Elementary needs summer weeding. Please bring gloves and weeding tools to the front walkway at Salish Coast and join us for this ongoing project to make beautiful habitat for our schoolchildren. *For more information, contact Rosemary Sikes at ptrose53@gmail.com or 360-385-0307.*

On 3 June 2021, our chapter was acknowledged for our efforts to add native species as a learning tool to the Salish campus.

Our chapter president was able to accept the award on behalf of our chapter at Blue Heron Middle School. **We are ALL PT Schools Heroes!**



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photos from top: Black-headed Grosbeak, Fort Flagler, 21 June 2021; Cedar Waxwing at Kah Tai, June 2021; Black-throated Gray Warbler, Lake Quinalt, 11 May 2021.

A Snipe Hunt

The organic muck on the beach formed a rolling carpet with lots of bumps and depressions; wave action during the last storm molded this place. The shoreline was wide, maybe a dozen feet, from the water's edge up to the growing plants and then curled around Juanita Bay. I was snipe hunting and had my binoculars up to my eyes. One of these shorebirds should be hiding here.

One night back in the mid-1960s, I was sent on my first snipe hunt. All new scouts were gathered together, and the camp counselors had us bring a t-shirt to hold one of these elusive creatures.

The head person held a flashlight tight to his chest, shining it at his chin as he gave us directions. The light created a ghostly look, making his voice sound ominous. We were to search the dark woods, making grunting sounds to attract a snipe and then grab it, wrapping it in our spare shirt. "Don't come back until you have one," were his last words. That critter, though, was imaginary, and the older Boy Scouts had sent us on a fool's errand. I knew snipes existed by high school and had found this bird in swampy areas in Western Pennsylvania.

Behind a row of muck was a little cinnamon, off white, and black with some long creamy-colored lines, the back of a snipe. She had her long bill tucked under her back feathers, and her eyes closed. One yellow leg held her up from the mud. Her exquisite plumage was what I needed, and my spirits seemed to rise. It was early November, and the coronavirus pandemic of this past year had cast a heavy weight on my soul. Isolation, distance, masks, and zoom seemed the way of life. I needed

contact with something alive, mysterious, and wonderful.

With that thought, the Wilson's Snipe stretched and turned to walk down to the water's edge. Her six-inch bill began to probe into the mud. Her eyes set well back on the sides of her head allowed her to see behind her while she searched for invertebrates. Apparently, the bill tip is flexible, allowing just the end to separate to grab a worm. A second bird joined this one, and they moseyed along the shoreline while I settled to watch these beautiful examples of adaptation.

A couple of dozen yards along their stroll, they stopped, turning their bills back along their sides, and began to preen. One twisted its tail, showing the barring and brown tips, pulling that bill through some under-tail coverts. As a flying snipe descends, the wind flowing overspread rectrices makes that incredible eerie winnowing sound so crucial in their

courtship and territorial defense. Each of the last few summers, I've been able to listen to it in the mountains of Washington, joy filling my body.

Here on the shores of Lake Washington, one began to pull on its scapular feathers, the upper mandible bent upward near its tip, and I realized I'd just seen the end flex. These two continued preening, working their sides, breasts, and tails. Eventually stopping all activity, they put their bills under their back feathers and closed their eyes. I'd been watching them for close to an hour, and the chilly November temperatures had penetrated my bones. But these avian marvels had given me a sense of peace and serenity. Hope had returned to my soul.

Thomas Bancroft

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Rails at Hastings Pond

Hastings Pond, at the northeast corner of the PT Golf Course, is a nature preserve. It is protected by both the City and the State Department of Ecology. City code language is intended to explicitly protect it from the routine maintenance activities occurring on the golf course. Among its inhabitants are Virginia Rails, shown below in June 2021. The golf course was once referred to as Spring Valley Golf Course because of the natural springs where the pond is now.



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clockwise from top right: Ruffed Grouse adult and chick, Dosewallips, 10 June 2021; Pacific Tree Frog on a cattail leaf, Tukey Pond, 19 May 2021; Red-legged Frog, Anderson Lake State Park, 3 May 2021; Virginia Rail adult and juvenile, Hastings Pond, 22 June 2021



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Little birds, big nests: On the left is a Marsh Wren making a big point about his or her nest in the cattails, 28 April 2021, near Bellingham WA. On the right is a Bushtit adding a little cottonwood cotton to his amazing nest structure in bamboo off Cherry Street in a Port Townsend home landscape, June 2021.

AAS Membership Form 2021
<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.



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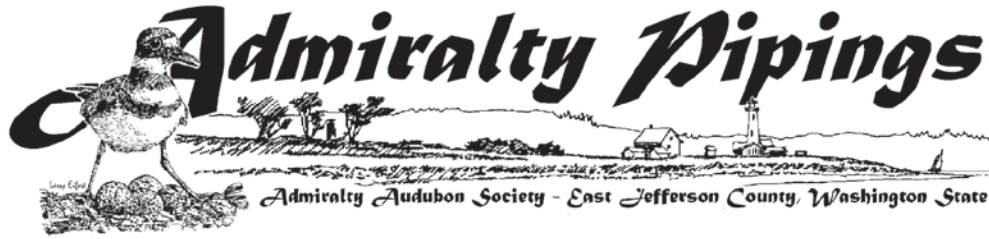
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Photos clockwise from top left: Purple Martin couples at the PT Marine Science Center, one pair arguing and one courting, 1 June 2021; a very successful Purple Martin nest at Hudson Point, 1 June 2021; Hermit Thrush on the beach at Cape George, 2 May 2021; Western Wood Pewee at Kah Tai, May 2021.

Banner
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Bald Eagle incoming, North Beach, June 2021

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We need some active members

Our chapter needs some new blood in leadership. We haven't had an election in two years, although they normally happen each May at our membership meeting (remember meetings? *@#\$\$! pandemic). Our four elected positions have been filled by the same four faithful members for years. Our Field Trips chair is vacant, and we need someone to keep track of our trip leaders

and their offerings. We could use some more trip leaders. If anyone would like to tackle making the newsletter, that would be welcome (currently 11 years and counting for the current editor...).

We have many new members who have joined during the pandemic and among them are some REALLY excellent birders. Think about stepping up to help our chapter.