



# Columbia Flyway

VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

*A chapter of the National Audubon Society*

vancouveraudubon.org

Chartered December 18, 1975

December 2018

**December 4th (Tuesday) @ 7pm:** VAS General Meeting and Program.

**IMPORTANT: Meeting will be held at a different location! (See below for directions).** Glenwood Plaza 5500 NE 82nd (enter on 81st).

**December 23th (Sunday):** Annual Christmas Bird Count

**January 29 (Tuesday) @ 6:30pm:** VAS Board Meeting hosted by Susan Saul  
10102 NE 10th St, Vancouver, WA 98664 360-892-5643

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## Program

### Audubon Washington Update

Tuesday, December 4th, 7pm

Washington Audubon Chapter Field Organizer, **Ben Silesky** will present a program about our state chapter's goals and activities, with particular emphasis on Climate Policy and Priorities. The chapter is preparing steps for the next Legislative Session, and will discuss follow up plans from the ballot measure 1361 which did not pass this time around. A strategy to include coalition partners and pushing for a 100% Clean Energy Bill are planned. Is there a role Vancouver Audubon can play?

Please note! Due to Genealogy Society losing their lease and having to vacate by the end of November, we are searching for a new meeting site. For this month, the general meeting and program will be held in a different location—the Glenwood Plaza is letting us use their meeting room on short notice.



#### Directions:

Glenwood Plaza, 5500 NE 82nd Ave, address is for the main facility, but the meeting will be held in the Plaza building on 81st.

From Vancouver Mall, head north on Thurston Way.

Turn LEFT (west) onto 51st Street

Turn RIGHT (north) onto 81st Ave.

Look for the awning over the Plaza main entrance.

Parking is available on the street or at "The Loft" across the street. Please do not park in a spot with a name on it, as these are reserved for residents.

## 119th Annual

### Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 23, 2018

The Sauvie Island/Vancouver Lake Bottoms/Ridgefield Christmas Bird Circle count will be **Sunday, December 23, 2018**, with a backup date of Monday, Dec 31st should inclement weather cause a cancellation.

As always, we welcome any skill level, feeder counters within the circle, and those who have a few hours only or those who want to count all day. Owling birders are very welcome, but it is not required that you get up before dawn to count.

**To participate in the Vancouver Lowlands/Ridgefield, WA side** of the circle, please contact Susan Setterberg at [smssetterberg@yahoo.com](mailto:smssetterberg@yahoo.com), (856)701-2542. Please contact me before Dec 10 if possible, as I will be out of the country from Dec 10 to 21. However, between those dates, you can txt or email me and I will try to respond as quickly as I can.

**To participate in the Sauvie Inland, OR portion** of the circle, please contact Karen Bachman at [pppahouie@comcast.net](mailto:pppahouie@comcast.net) or (971)207-7754.

**We need** a phone number, email address, desired count location, and team member list if you have a group that likes to count together. I will be happy to pair you with another birder or team if needed.

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## Volunteers Needed for Songbird Sagebrush Survey 2019

Thanks to all of our previous volunteer's assistance with the [Sagebrush Songbird Survey](#)! Your time and skills have positioned us to complete field work in 2019 – a whole year earlier than planned! We'll need substantial help from all our volunteers-current and former to achieve this goal.

Please join us for one last season to experience the joy of a dawn chorus as the sun peeks over the sagebrush...

Classroom/field trainings: mid-March-early April



Surveys:  
April 11-21, 2019  
May 2-12, 2019  
June 1-9, 2019

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## We have a New Newsletter Editor

I volunteered to do the VAS newsletter as of February of 1989, thus I am just short of 30 years of service. Along the way, I was asked to set up and maintain a website for our organization. I was given a few helpful hints then dug in to learn more. I secured our domain name and a local host for free. I was never an expert at either, but I got the information out to our members. This also involved 30 years of board meetings. On occasion, I also wrote "The Backyard & Beyond" articles. I have been asked if I am sad about giving it up. My answer, "Yes, there is a bit of me that is sad, but a whole lot more of me is relieved".

I handed over my notes, files, and information to Cindy McCormack and I thank her for stepping forward to volunteer. As time goes on, she will make it her own creation and I wish her well.

Thanks for your support!

*Sherry Hagen*

## Please Note....

There are no...

- Meetings
- Field Trips
- Newsletter

...in January

*There will be a Newsletter mailed during January for the February events.*



## Protecting the Marbled Murrelet in Washington

This endangered seabird feeds in the ocean and flies up to 55 miles inland to nest in old growth forest. The Washington state population has shrunk by 44 percent over the last 15 years, leaving only about 7,500 birds remaining.

For decades, scientists have concurred that the loss of nesting habitat is the primary reason for the decline in Marbled Murrelet populations. Ocean conditions are also a factor, but a significantly less important factor than nesting habitat. Unfortunately, most Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat on private lands has been logged.

Statewide, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages approximately two million acres of land. Up to 49 percent of DNR's forests that are within 55 miles of salt water are critical to Marbled Murrelets. These state-owned forests are either classified as habitat occupied by nesting Marbled Murrelets, are buffers around that habitat, or are biologically-important potential recovery habitat.

Although many of our older forests on federal lands are protected as national parks and wilderness, many of these forests are too far from the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound where the Marbled Murrelets spend most of their lives. The closer proximity of the DNR-managed forests in certain areas of the state, such as Southwest Washington, make these forests particularly important. Virtually all scientists agree that, based on their location and age, many of DNR's older forests are biologically significant for the survival and recovery of Marbled Murrelets in Washington.

DNR released its revised draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Marbled Murrelet Long-Term Conservation Strategy (LTCS) in October. All eight alternatives project a continued population decline. The proposed alternatives simply do not set aside enough contiguous older forest



habitat to allow our state's Marbled Murrelet populations to stabilize and recover. What murrelets need for recovery:

- A conservation strategy that will stabilize and increase the murrelet population on state-managed lands, broaden its geographic distribution, and increase its resilience to natural disturbances and climate change.
- Protection of vital habitat on state-managed lands in key geographic areas, including where extensive murrelet habitat has been lost to private timber harvests.
- Protection of all murrelet nest sites, quality murrelet habitat, and forests that will become quality habitat in the near future, as recommended by scientists.
- Substantial buffers around nest sites to prevent nest predation, physical damage, and other detrimental impacts of habitat fragmentation.
- Restoration forestry practices to improve degraded habitat, especially to support development of large blocks of contiguous high-quality habitat.

### Take Action

The 60-day public comment period on the revised draft EIS ends on **December 6 at 5pm**. Submit a public comment today. An online link and sample letter are available at <http://wagreen.p2a.co/xd2txYk> To have the greatest impact, personalize your letter with your own words, such as the importance to you of being able to see Marbled Murrelets and know that the population is recovering.



*By Susan Saul*

**Oct.13**, Jim Danzenbaker and Randy Hill led a small group from Black Hills Audubon to a few locations around Clark County for a day of birding. They stopped at Steigerwald NWR, Frenchman's Bar and down Lower River Road to the gate, back to Vancouver Lake at the flushing channel, and finished the day at Marine Park and Wintler Park.



After receiving a text from Cindy McCormack of a **BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER**, they departed quickly for Frenchman's Bar Park, apparently just missing a **NORTHERN SHRIKE** seen by Ron Escano's group at Steigerwald. They met Cindy as she was leaving, and a few got brief looks at the gnatcatcher that they re-located in a large foraging flock of mostly warblers, kinglets, chickadees and bushtits. Despite searching for another half hour, they did not see it again. Continuing down Lower River Road, they made a stop at Fazio's silage storage pile for blackbirds and discovered a **SAY'S PHOEBE** actively working the open areas between the road and the silage pile.

Vancouver Lake was busy with a weekend crowd, but views on the lake included single **CLARK'S GREBE** and **RED-NECKED GREBE**. Their last areas back upriver included a group of **BONAPARTE'S GULLS** and another **RED-NECKED GREBE** at Marine Park, and eventually spotting a scoter flock upstream. From Wintler Park, they had a closer look at the flock that included a wigeon and some **LESSER SCAUP** and **BUFFLE-HEADS**. They counted the **SURF SCOTERS** in the flock five times as they compacted, dove, and stretched out and came up with as many as 74; by far the most I have heard of this far up the Columbia River.

**Oct.17**, A new bird for Michelle Maani was a juvenile **NORTHERN SHRIKE** at Marker 11 on the Ridgefield NWR River "S" auto tour route, the population of this interesting winter visitor has been dropping for decades and now only a few show up locally in a year.

**Oct. 18**, After several years of absence as a yard bird at Bob Flore's home near Ridgefield. it is good to see a **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** there.

**Oct. 20**, Lyn and Gene Topinka spotted an early male **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** at Rock Creek Cove in Skamania County. This is an excellent location to observe waterfowl in the winter from the waterside trail at the fairgrounds.

**Oct.23**, While **LESSER GOLDFINCHES** are fairly wide spread in Clark County, they are still scarce in Skamania County so five of them in our bird bath was a surprise.

**Oct. 27**, Rose Fontaine photographed a **WILSON'S SNIPE** that spent several days in her Vancouver yard allowing her to share this difficult to spot bird with her neighbors.

Russ Koppendrayer and Becky Kent found a **COMMON LOON** in the river and a **NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL** calling in the orchard at the St. Cloud Recreation Area in Skamania County. And unusual location for them to find a **RING-NECKED PHEASANT** in that county was at Home Valley Park.

**Oct. 30**, Kay and Les Carlson were in the Vancouver Lake Lowlands where there were over 300 **SNOW GEESE** in a flock of **CAKCLING GEESE** viewed from Frenchman's Bar. Among the Cacklers, they spotted an adult **GREATER-WHITE FRONTED GOOSE** that had three juveniles associating with it that had white heads, mostly white necks with black speckles, legs and bills were tan or beige and may have been a hybrid with a Snow Goose.

Despite **CAKCLING GEESE** being common in the Willamette Valley, they seldom make in to the Gorge, so two of them in the flock at Bonneville Dam were a new addition to Lyn and Gene Topinka's Skamania County checklist.

**Nov. 2**, Barry Woodruff spotted a **SHORT-EARED OWL** at the Ridgefield NWR, these owls are seen at dawn and dusk flying over the open fields. They used to nest locally but are now only a wintering bird here.

**Nov. 3**. Matt Bartels birded in Skamania County finding a couple good birds including the second county **SWAMP SPARROW** at Home Valley Park and a nice

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first winter **HEERMANN'S GULL** that was resting just west of Bonneville Dam on the outflow pipes, also only the second record of that species there too.

A **WHITE-WINGED SCOTER** was spotted by Philip Kline in the Columbia River at Wintler Park.

**Nov. 7**, Les Carlson visited the Vancouver Lake Lowlands and at the end of Lower River Road along the dike in and around the second pool were 28 **GREATER YELLOWLEGS**, approximately 1,400 **CAKCLING GEESE**, 8 **GREATER-WHITE FRONTED GEESE**, a few **CANADA GEESE**, 3 **WILSON'S SNIPE**, and across the dike were 46 **SANDHILL CRANES**. It was quite a spectacle and he just stood in one spot for about 45 minutes enjoying the sight.

A **CANYON WREN** was calling near the start of the River to Rock Trail during a stop at Beacon Rock State Park by Cindy McCormack. These are birds usually associated with dry canyons in desert-like conditions. She also had a **MEW GULL** at the river there, which is not a commonly seen bird in Skamania County.

**Nov. 10**, At the Cape Horn overlook in Skamania County, Steven Clark spotted 28 **TUNDRA SWANS** (7 flying east and 21 flying west) over the Columbia River. Nearby he found and photographed a Malone's Jumping Slug, yes they actually exist. He also saw 8 **SNOW GEESE** in the field at the eastern pull-off on Highway 14 at the Steigerwald Lake NWR.

We had our first **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** since 2016 at our feeders.

**Nov. 11**. The sound of angry jays along the Oaks to Wetland Trail at the Ridgefield NWR Carty Unit led Erik Knight to spot a perches **NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL** being harassed by the jays.

By early December, most of the waterfowl and other birds will have settled in for the winter. The annual Christmas Bird Count is a good way to census bird populations as they are now longer moving around. I encourage joining in on this annual citizen science effort that provides data for researchers and habitat managers.

The wintering ducks were just beginning to arrive in early November, but soon there will be rafts of scaup on the Columbia River that, like the flocks of geese, can hold a few surprises. These flocks are gathered over sand and gravel bars feeding on freshwater clams and mussels. Other species that can join the scaup to feed on these mollusks are scoters, golden-eyes and Long-tailed Ducks. Please contact me, Arden and Sherry Hagen or Eric and Tammy Bjorkman as soon as possible if you spot any birds you think might be unusual in our area.

As of the writing of this column, there had been 233 species of birds reported from Clark County and 189 species reported from Skamania County for the 2018 Cumulative Year List project. For more information on this list go to: <http://www.wabirder.com/bartel.html>. If you have seen a bird not checked off for this year, please let me know. And please continue to send me your sightings for this column.

*Wilson Cady*

## Trumpeter vs. Tundra

It's the time of year to enjoy the large numbers of swans visiting the area. Ridgefield NWR, Salmon Creek, Burnt Bridge Creek, and Franz Lake are just a few of the great places to view these beautiful birds. Most of the swans you see will likely be [Tundra Swans](#), but there are many [Trumpeter Swans](#) over-wintering in our area as well. These two swans can be difficult to differentiate by sight without some good views (or optics!), especially when not seen side-by-side. However, if you can hear them, they have quite distinctive voices (follow the above links from the digital newsletter version to hear the calls).

Here are some of the field marks I look for when identifying our swans by sight:

- In Trumpeters, the black skin on the face includes the

eye, so the eye seems to blend with the black of the facial skin. The eye appears more visible on a Tundra, since the facial skin at the lores tapers to a point in front of the eye.

- The bill on a Trumpeter slopes very straight down to the tip from the forehead, while a Tundra will have a slightly concave slope.
- Tundra Swans often have a yellow spot on the lores (the skin in front of the eye).
- The forehead feathering extends further on a Trumpeter, creating a white "V" shape on the forehead. A



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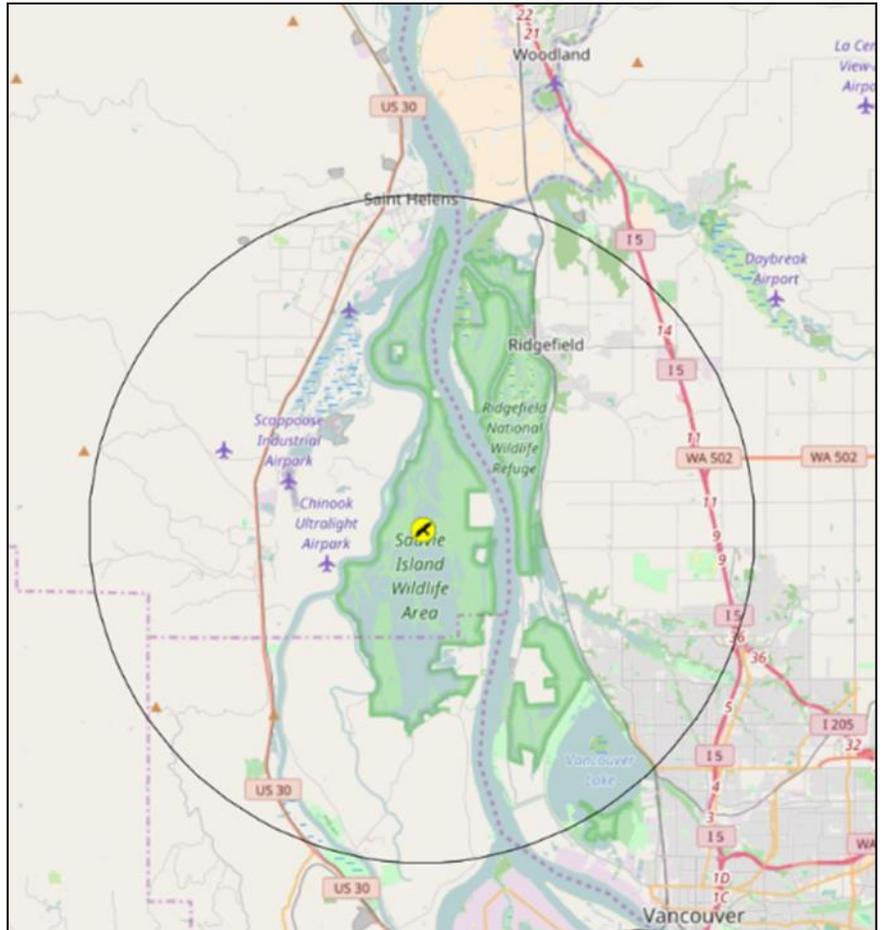
**Feeder Watchers:** I am trying to find more feeder watchers who live within the circle. This activity can be an important adjunct to our count. You don't have to count for a long time, just enough to get an idea of how many of each species come to the feeder. You note the maximum number of each species you see at one time throughout the day. You can count for 15 minutes or all day long if you wish.

Details on reporting, meeting place or assignments will be sent out in early December. We appreciate your dedication to the Christmas Count. Besides being fun, it is an important Citizen Science program that provides data for a wide variety of needs. Bring along a novice friend or a young person to introduce them to the world of Citizen Science.

General Information about the Audubon Christmas Bird count can be found here: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

The map of our Circle (Code: ORSI) can be found here: <http://audubon.maps.arcgis.com>

Last year's results (Code: ORSI) can be found here: <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/Historical/ResultsByCount.aspx>



*Susan Setterberg*

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- Tundra Swan's forehead appears more straight across. (I think of Tundra Swan forehead being like a toddler that tried to cut her own bangs.)
- Trumpeter Swans are larger than Tundra Swans. However, this can be very difficult to judge unless you can see the two species together.
  - Young (juvenile) swans can be tricky, especially earlier in the season. It can be difficult to see the borders of the facial skin, and bill shape may not be as straight as in adults. Trumpeters do retain their darker juvenile plumage through their first spring, while young Tundras will molt earlier, appearing whiter by late winter. Tundra juveniles do tend to have more extensive pinkish-orange on the bill than Trumpeters.

### *Fun swan facts:*

Trumpeter Swans are the heaviest flying bird in North America. They need approximately 100m of open water to take off!

The North American Tundra Swan is also known as the "Whistling" Swan. The Eurasian counterpart of this species is known as "Bewick's" Swan. The Bewick's Swan has more extensive yellow on the facial skin and base of the bill.

The orange coloration seen frequently on a swan's head and neck is not pigmentation, but is feather staining from the iron in the mud in which they feed.

*Cindy McCormack*

**VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY**

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**December 2018**

**THE COLUMBIA FLYWAY** is the monthly newsletter of the Vancouver Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Publication deadline is at the board meeting each month.

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