

The State of Our Environment

by Herb Curl, Science Advisor

We're starting to hear more about "Citizen Science" these days. Just what is it? The general idea is that amateur volunteers can make observations that contribute to a better understanding of nature and the environment. Seattle Audubon citizen-scientists are already involved in projects such as the Christmas Bird Count. More than that, scientifically well-informed citizens can affect decisions in the political realm.

The newly constituted Science Committee is ensuring that our policies and positions are based on the "best available science." There are many opportunities for you to get involved, and put your interests, knowledge, and birding skills to use, both in the field and as advocates. An informed citizenry, armed with scientific knowledge, is our hope for a sustainable future.

On pages 8 and 9, we'll look at the environmental problems facing us, and the science involved.

Inside

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Seattle Audubon | 2 |
| ...For Birds | |
| <i>Christmas Bird Count,</i> | |
| <i>December 28, 2002</i> | 4 |
| ...And Nature | |
| <i>Wild in the City. . .</i> | |
| <i>at Magnuson Park</i> | 7 |
| Feature | |
| <i>The State of Our</i> | |
| <i>Environment—</i> | |
| <i>Science and Seattle</i> | |
| <i>Audubon</i> | 8 |
| Field Trips | 10 |
| Classes | 12 |
| Good Deals | 14 |
| Calendar | 16 |

A Tribute to Robert Grant

May 1913 - January 2003

Bob Grant, former Seattle Audubon president, board member *emeritus*, and past National Audubon board member, passed away on January 19. Bob was a man who led by example. He believed in democracy. He represented his country overseas for thirty years and espoused an international perspective. He encouraged youth. He prized education and professionalism and civility. He worked to improve public health and to ameliorate human suffering. He treated people fairly. He loved and respected Eleanor Lewis



Robert Grant

Grant, his wife of 62 years. He volunteered his time and gave generously of his resources. We will miss him greatly.

Those wishing to make a contribution in Bob's memory may do so through the Bob and Eleanor Grant Education Endowment at Seattle Audubon, 8050 35th Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98115.

BARRIERS NORTHWEST
 Vol. 44 No. 6

Seattle Audubon

STAFF (phone: 206-523-8243)

Chris Peterson (x15)

Executive Director

Lauren Braden (x14)

Advocate for Wildlife Habitat

Dan Draais (x21)

Associate Director

Lorraine Hartmann (x12)

Volunteer Coordinator

Anita Lagerberg (x18)

FUN Coordinator

Kintea Bryant (x19)

FUN Assistant Coordinator

Alex Morgan (x13)

Conservation Program Coordinator

Cathy Pfarr

Nature Shop Assistant

Shelly Ross (x11)

Development and

Communications Associate

Emily Sprong (x20)

BirdWatch Coordinator/

Birdweb Project Lead

Russ Steele (x10)

Nature Shop Manager and

Bookkeeper

Susan Tallarico (x16)

Nature Camp Director/Middle

School Coordinator

SIGHTINGS HOTLINE

WOS Birdbox 206-281-9172

WEB SITE

<http://www.seattleaudubon.org>

SEATTLE AUDUBON CENTER

and NATURE SHOP

Hours: Mon-Sat 10AM to 4PM

8050 35th Ave. NE

Seattle WA 98115

206-523-4483

Earthcare Northwest, the official newsletter of Seattle Audubon, is published monthly except January and August.

Editor, Ellen Blackstone

Publisher, Jane Hedberg

Design and Layout, Sandy Welch

Proofing, Hanna Atkins

Advertising, Lisa Vogel,

360-802-2914

Photography, Sharon Sneddon,

Steve Dang

Production, Chris Altwegg

Destinations, Carolyn Eagan

Articles, news of events, and letters to the Editor should be submitted to Ellen Blackstone (at the Seattle Audubon Center, or e-mail to ellenb@123imagine.net) by the 8th of the month preceding publication. Submissions will be edited and published at the Editor's discretion.

© Seattle Audubon Society, 2003

Of Note

- The March new **volunteer orientation is Monday, March 24 from 7-8:30PM**

at Seattle Audubon Center. Please register with Lorraine at 206-523-8243, x12 or lorraineh@seattleaudubon.org.

- The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate for the **election as officers** of Seattle Audubon: Tom Riley for President, Jane Hedberg for Vice President, Mary Anne Thorbeck for Secretary, and Richard Lintermans for Treasurer. Please submit other officer nominations to Charles Kahle, c/o Seattle Audubon, by April 7. See the web site for more details under News/Events.

- Check out the **Spring Plant Sale**, 10:00AM-4:00PM Saturday, March 29 at the Nature Center, 8050 35th Avenue NE. Expected plant vendors include Botanica, Tadpole Haven, Wildside Growers, and Madrona Nursery.

- **Calling all scientists!** We're looking for someone knowledgeable about birds with credentials in a relevant area of science to chair the Science Committee. The committee provides Seattle Audubon with sound scientific advice and manages bird-based science projects, including the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Atlas.

- **Volunteer for FUN!** Help our Finding Urban Nature program in the Seattle Public Schools this April. Commit to four mornings or afternoons, and touch young lives forever. Training is on Saturday, March 15 at the University United Methodist Temple from 8:30AM-12:30PM. Call Anita at 206-523-8243, x18 or Kintea at x19.

- **Nominations sought for Educator of the Year and Conservation Awards.** Send ideas to Lorraine Hartmann at Seattle Audubon or lorraineh@seattleaudubon.org.

- **Hazel Wolf Birthday Party and Peace Rally**—Seattle's Town Hall 8th & Seneca, Saturday, March 8, 3-5:30PM. Call 206-523-4538.

- The **Nature Shop Committee** seeks additional members with these areas of expertise: advertising/marketing, business development, and graphics and materials support. Hard work and imagination welcome. For more information, contact Russ Steele, 206-523-4483, x10, or russells@seattleaudubon.org.

- Save the date: **Annual Wenas Campout** on Memorial Day Weekend. Call Bruce Jones for more information, 206-542-9691.

- The **Audubon Council of Washington**, hosted by the Admiralty Audubon, will meet April 11-13 at Fort Worden State Park. For complete information, e-mail jowarm@olypen.com or call Jo Yount at 360-385-0456.

- Thank you to our **December Nature Shop volunteers**: Laurinda Anglin, Cindy Berres, Marilyn Busher, Matt Cowden, Steve Dang, Joanne Davis, Carolyn Eagan, Judeanne Emmett, Rebecca Evans, Al Ferkovich, Francie Galbraith, Carol Gard, Jim Gough, Linda Grace, Miriam Gray, Helen Hawley, George Johnson, Charlie Kahle, Mary Klein, Penny Koyama, Kathy Lantz, Rachel Lawson, Carol Leenstra, Nagisa Leonard, Teri Martin, Phyllis Melvin, Marilyn Milberger, Jean Mills, Virginia Morrison, Walt Oelwein, Jane Owen, Anne Passarelli, Suzanne Peterson, Phyllis Pirzadeh, Linda Pomeroy, Roberta Roberts, Margery Robison, Jackie Saunders, Jane Sepede, Bob Soldwedel, Hester Stanley, Anna Steele, Cheryl Teague, Mary Anne Thorbeck, Connie VanDeventer, Paul Webster, Sandra West, Nancy Wilson, Marilyn Wittenmyer, Ethel Williams, Alison Wysong, and Carleen and Neil Zimmerman.

Seattle Audubon Society Mission Statement

Seattle Audubon Society protects birds and the natural environment by involving volunteers and the community in education, advocacy, preservation, science, and enjoyment.

Seattle Audubon is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

The Web of Inclusion

by Tom Riley, President

From time to time at Seattle Audubon, we reexamine how we're doing. Last year, we heard about stress and strain from volunteers and staff: we've gotten too big; we've gotten too bureaucratic; and exactly how are decisions made? These problems were the natural result of profound growth over the past five years. We just flat out do more things today than ever before. Any organization that does more things requires more management and coordination to make it all work. And that management and coordination often takes the form of more meetings, more budgets, and more bureaucracy. We know that isn't good enough when it comes to Seattle Audubon. We should maintain the values of volunteerism and empowerment of Seattle Audubon, no matter how big we get. This month, we are launching a new structure to meet those challenges. We call it the "Web of Inclusion."

The Web of Inclusion is a communications model for our board and our committees (all 40 of them), which places our mission, vision, values, and strategic plan in the center of our organizational struc-

ture, and enables decision-making and actions to be taken at the most local level possible. We have created eight groupings, or clusters, of Seattle Audubon committees. Each cluster shares a common focus or programmatic area. Key volunteers will



Tom Riley

serve as communicators and facilitators in each cluster, and assist the work of our committees. Rather than serve as decision-makers and gatekeepers, we are purposefully asking these leaders to be, in our best tradition, walking, living, e-mailable "field guides" to Seattle Audubon.

There are eight of them, and you can reach them here: clustercomms@seattleaudubon.org. You may also write to them in care of Seattle Audubon. The clusters are: Inform and Communicate; Preserve and Protect Habitat; Educate and Enjoy; Support and Initiate Science-based Activities; Membership and Development; Facilities and Infrastructure; Finance; and Human Resources.

We are a unique organization. Our uniqueness comes from combining the best of citizen volunteers and professional staff. The Web of Inclusion will be a success if we maintain that uniqueness and increase our effect on birds and nature.

Of course, you can always contact me directly at tomr@seattleaudubon.org.

Dear Editor:

I usually find Ed Newbold's paid advertisements at the back of the newsletter quite thoughtful. But in a recent column on user fees, Ed was off-base. He asserted that "if a hike in nature is free, the unmistakable ... message is that it is precisely not worth saving."

Sorry, Ed, you're wrong: user fees don't make something valuable, they just make it expensive. And while "pay to play" works fine in Disneyland, our public lands should be managed by different principles. Just as public libraries allow citizens to check out books "for free," so should our public lands allow citizens to walk "for free." Funding for these public resources should come from general taxes, not user fees.

—Marina Skumanich

Seattle Audubon

OFFICERS

Tom Riley, *President*
Jane Hedberg, *Vice President*
Jennifer Kauffman, *Secretary*
Richard Lintermans, *Treasurer*

BOARD MEMBERS

Members at Large:
Chris Altwegg
Eleanore Baxendale
Ken Jacobsen

Chuck Adams
Nature Reserves Chair
Herb Curl
Acting Science Chair
Tyler Davis
Youth Advisor (non-voting)
Jeff Baker
Education Chair
Charlie Kahle
Past President
Kathy Lantz
Development Chair
John Lundin
Legal Advisor
Marina Skumanich
Conservation Chair
Miriam Williams
Membership Chair
Richard Youel
Publications Chair



Invest in the Future— Make a Bequest to Seattle Audubon

By naming the Seattle Audubon Society in your will, retirement plan, or life insurance policy, you are investing in the future of our natural world. To find out more, please contact:

Christina Peterson
206-523-8243, x15
chrisp@seattleaudubon.org
Seattle Audubon Society
8050 35th Avenue NE
Seattle WA 98115

CBC Participants

A hearty *thank-you* to all the participants!

Team leaders and count and potluck organizers appear in bold.

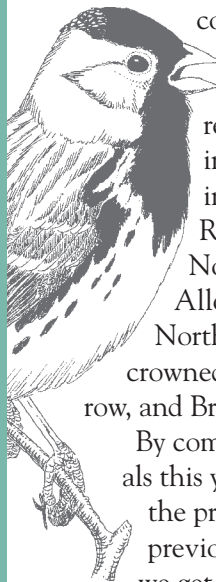
Jamie Acker, Julia N. Allen, Jean Amick, Margaret Amory, Linda Anchondo, Marti Anderson, Alice Arnold, Kevan Atteberry, Frank and Mary Lee Backus, Jeff and Lee Baker, **Lee Barnes**, Tonya Bausch, **Brian Bell**, **Fred Bird**, Jean Birdsall, Ellen Blackstone, Luci Boyle, Lauren Braden, **Jan Bragg**, **Mary Breece**, Jon Britell, Beth Bronson, **Ken Brunner**, Pam Cahn, **Art Campbell**, Steve Clark, Bob Cleland, Carolee Colter, Brad Connor, Georgia Conti, Jon and Diane Cooper, Maureen Corlas, Will Corning, **Paul Cozens**, Toby Cozens, **Steve Dang**, Lynne Darnell, Tyler Davis, Bob Derrick, Adrienne Dorf, Roark Doubt, Jeff Duchin, Jim Dwight, Sally Eastabrook, JoLynn Edwards, Candi Estrada, Rebecca Evans, Michael Fleming, Bob Forgie, John Fox, Jim Ganley, Gerry Grady, Robert and Linda Gresky, Rusty Hazzard, Michael Hobbs, Janeanne Houston, **Eugene Hunn**, **David Hutchinson**, Lu Iverson, Marty Jackson, Ken Jacobsen, **Hugh Jennings**, Jennifer Kauffman, Kathy King, Vicki King, **Lane Kittleson**, Mary Klein, **Neil Komedal**, Donna Kostka, Penny and David Koyama, Kathy and Paul Lantz, Rachel Lawson, Mary Lear, Roger and Jean Leeds, Kevin Li, Grace Lincoln, Ron Lindsay, Maxine Linial, Richard Lintermans, Polly Little, Ilon Logan, Marty Louther, Tove Lund, Diann MacRae, Douglas Marshall, Bernard Martell, Sonia Matlick, Andrew McCormick, Dan McDougall-Treacy, Clare McLean, Dave McNeil, Joyce Meyer, Nancy Morningstar, Martin Muller, Helen Murphy, Julie Myers, Hanna Nadel, Martha Nester, Don Norman, Jeff and Lee Nystuen, Deems and Margaret Okamoto, Siri Okamoto, Mike O'Leary, **Hal Opperman**, **Wayne Palsson**, Shiva Parameswaran, Sylvia Peckham, Alice Poinier, Todd Pollard, Dorothy and Randy Poulsen, Rachel Price, Gordon Rasmussen, **Bill Reichert**, Kate Richardson, Susan Ridgeley, Tom Riley, John Roach, **Judy Roan**, Wendy and **Alan Roedell**, **Penny Rose**, Turi Rose, Linda Rubik, Gary Schroeder, Jud Scovill, **Brenda Senturia**, Pat Siggs, Arn and Kathy Slettebak, Eugenia Smith, Ray Smulek, Christine Southwick, Pavel Sova, Debbie Stempf, Helen Sternhardt, **Dave Swayne**, Ruth Taylor, John S. Teutsch, Carl Tomoff, Charles Torres, Della Torres, **Myrna Torrie**, Joan Trunk, Carol Trusk, Brad Waggoner, Dan Waggoner, Paul Webster, **Tom Weir**, Lee Wheeler, Samantha Wilder, Cynthia Wilson, April Winters, Marc Wiseman, Brett A. Wolfe, Bruce Woodell, **Richard Youel**, and **Neil Zimmerman**.

Christmas Bird Count, December 28, 2002

Eugene Hunn, compiler

This count represents the 52nd consecutive year the Seattle Christmas Bird Count has been held in its present location (a 15-mile diameter circle with its center at Pioneer Square) and is the 75th count since its inception in 1907. The weather held off for most of the day after the tempest of the previous day, cloudy with just a few sprinkles in the afternoon with a narrow temperature range (37° to 42° F).

Our total species on count day (117) was slightly below the average of the last 30 years (121). The total count of individuals, 59,571, however was 15% above the average for the past 10 years and 40% above the 30-year average. The count of individuals is disproportionately affected by counts of a few super-abundant and conspicuous species, such as coots (8195), crows (9330), robins (4944), and starlings (5113), which together accounted for 46% of all birds counted. The 13 most counted species (Rock Dove, Glaucous-winged Gull, House Finch, House Sparrow, Mallard, Black-capped Chickadee, Western Grebe, American Wigeon, and Bushtit, all with over 1000 individuals) ac-



counted for two thirds of the grand total. By contrast, 32 species were represented by less than 10 individuals, eight by single individuals (Green Heron, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Allen's/Rufous Hummingbird, Northern Shrike, Orange-crowned Warbler, Harris's Sparrow, and Brewer's Blackbird).

By comparing counts of individuals this year with the average of the previous ten (1992-2001) or previous 30 (1972-2001) years, we get a sense of which species are thriving and which may be in some trouble locally.

We note substantial declines in some seabirds. Of particular concern is the Western Grebe, at 72% and 86% respec-

tively of the 10- and 30-year averages. A recent summary by Terry Wahl in *Washington Birds* (8:35) raised alarms at declining Western Grebe numbers in Bellingham Bay. Rhinoceros Auklet numbers are down to just 37% and 39% of the 10- and 30-year averages.

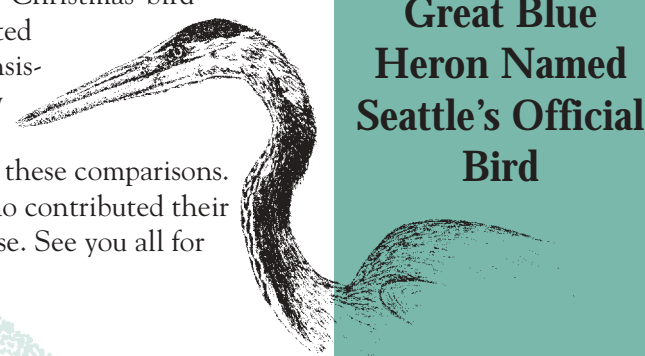
On land, we note declines in Band-tailed Pigeons, a species of concern, down to 75% and 57% respectively of the 10- and 30-year averages, and of Northern Shrikes, at 71% and 53%. Canada Goose numbers are down to 70% of the 10-year average, suggesting that local population control measures may be having an effect. Ring-necked Pheasants and California Quail have nearly disappeared from the count circle, with just one pheasant and three quail counted compared to a 30-year average of 22 and 39 respectively. Neither species may be able to sustain a local population without continuing releases. Brewer's Blackbirds (2%), and Pine Siskins (39%) were well below their 30-year averages.

By contrast, all three cormorant species registered all-time high counts, as did Ring-necked and Harlequin Ducks, Buffleheads, and Red-breasted Mergansers. This year's count of Bald Eagles was 156% and 297% of the 10- and 30-year averages, while Merlins were at 217% and 309%. Anna's Hummingbirds had another excellent year, 390% over the 30-year average. Other species that more than doubled their 30-year averages include Belted Kingfishers, Northern Flickers, Steller's Jays, crows, both species of chickadees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets,

Illustrations © Birchside Studios, www.birchsidestudios.com

Robins, Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers, Fox and House Sparrows, American Goldfinches, and the House Finch. Increases in the smaller species may be attributable to our record number of observers, but declines – particularly in seabirds – are of particular note in light of the number of observers and given the outstanding boat coverage for this year's count.

The value of Christmas bird censuses conducted carefully and consistently over many years is clearly demonstrated by these comparisons. Thanks to all who contributed their time and expertise. See you all for Christmas 2003.



Great Blue Heron Named Seattle's Official Bird

The votes are in for Seattle Audubon's "Official Bird of Seattle" campaign, and citizens selected the Great Blue Heron as the bird that best encompasses the essence of our Emerald City.

Votes for the Great Blue Heron outnumbered the second place finisher, the ubiquitous American Crow, two to one. The Northern Flicker, Seattle's most plentiful woodpecker, finished the race in third place. Honorable mentions include: the "Seattle Wren," a sub-species of the Bewick's Wren; the Osprey, a bird of prey also known as a Seahawk; and the Wilson's Warbler, a migratory songbird that benefits from shade-grown coffee.

While the official bird designation offers heron habitat no additional regulatory protection, supporters of the official bird hope it will raise public consciousness of urban nature, and foster stewardship for the Great Blue Heron and its habitat.

2002 Seattle Christmas Bird Count Results

Compiled by Eugene Hunn

Total individuals: 59,571
Total species: 117 (plus two more during count week*)

Record high numbers are printed in **boldface**.

SPECIES

Red-throated Loon 12
Common Loon 5
loon species 3
Pied-billed Grebe 158
Horned Grebe 267
Red-necked Grebe 131
Eared Grebe 7
Western Grebe 1,283
Double-crested Cormorant **958**
Brandt's Cormorant **100**
Pelagic Cormorant **85**
cormorant species 8
Great Blue Heron 56
Green Heron 1
Greater Brant 18
Canada Goose (large forms) 815
Wood Duck 9
Green-winged Teal 76
Mallard 1,447
Northern Shoveler 87
Northern Pintail 15
Gadwall 949
Eurasian Wigeon 11
American Wigeon 1,127
Canvasback 341
Ring-necked Duck **493**
Greater Scaup 452
Lesser Scaup 627
scaup species 25
Harlequin Duck 77
Black Scoter 44
Surf Scoter 761
White-winged Scoter 43
scoter species 1
Long-tailed Duck 2
Common Goldeneye 300
Barrow's Goldeneye 340
goldeneye species 21
Bufflehead **869**
Hooded Merganser 90
Common Merganser 150
Red-breasted Merganser **399**
Ruddy Duck 82

Bald Eagle (all) **43**
Bald Eagle (adult) 35
Bald Eagle (immature) 8
Sharp-shinned Hawk 18
Cooper's Hawk 14
accipiter species 1
Red-tailed Hawk 41
buteo species 1
Merlin **18**
Peregrine Falcon 5
falcon species 3
Ring-necked Pheasant 1
California Quail 3
Virginia Rail 4
American Coot 8195
Killdeer 63
Spotted Sandpiper 2
Black Turnstone 108
Surfbird 70
Sanderling 80
Dunlin 29
Red Phalarope* 1
Bonaparte's Gull 8
Mew Gull 856
Ring-billed Gull 280
California Gull **151**
Herring Gull 8
Thayer's Gull 8
Western Gull 8
Western x Glaucous-winged Gull 514
Glaucous-winged Gull 1,493
gull species 628
Common Murre 31
Pigeon Guillemot 16
Marbled Murrelet 2
Rhinoceros Auklet 18
Rock Dove 2,361
Band-tailed Pigeon 92
Western Screech-Owl 5
Barred Owl 4
Northern saw-Whet Owl 1
Anna's Hummingbird 95
Allen's/Rufous Hummingbird 1
Belted Kingfisher **31**
Red-breasted Sapsucker 2
Downy Woodpecker 60
Hairy Woodpecker 2
Northern Flicker (all) **327**

"Red-shafted" Flicker 319
"Yellow-shafted" Flicker 3
"Red" x "Yellow-shafted" Flicker 5
Pileated Woodpecker 7
Northern Shrike 1
Hutton's Vireo 5
Steller's Jay 179
crow (American or Northwestern) 9,330
Black-capped Chickadee **1,371**
Chestnut-backed Chickadee **258**
Bushtit 1,105
Red-breasted Nuthatch 87
Brown Creeper 31
Bewick's Wren 230
Winter Wren 179
Marsh Wren 19
Golden-crowned Kinglet 766
Ruby-crowned Kinglet **530**
Hermit Thrush 4
American Robin 4,944
Varied Thrush 108
Cedar Waxwing 38
European Starling 5,113
Orange-crowned Warbler 1
Yellow-rumped Warbler (all) 55
Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler 16
Yellow-rumped "Myrtle" Warbler 6
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form unspecified) 33
Townsend's Warbler 29
Western Tanager 2
Spotted Towhee 234
Savannah Sparrow* 1
Fox Sparrow **288**
Song Sparrow 759
Lincoln's Sparrow 11
Harris's Sparrow 1
White-crowned Sparrow 36
Golden-crowned Sparrow 179
Dark-eyed Junco (all) 909
Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco 906
Dark-eyed "Slate-colored" Junco 3
Red-winged Blackbird 150
Brewer's Blackbird 1
Purple Finch 8
House Finch 1,649
Pine Siskin 460
American Goldfinch **513**
House Sparrow **1,535**



Seattle Audubon

Nature Camp

at Sand Point/Magnuson Park

2003

COOL Weekly summer day camp sessions with all new nature themes!

"Great camp, great location. No hassles for parents. Great counselors. Camp experience was so fun for my daughter - songs/skits/ecology in a fun way. More, more, more!"

...Diane H, parent

Fun, hands-on learning for the young and curious naturalist

Extended Care!

Science, ecology, art, games, and field trips...

"My son loves it! I was pleased that it contained many of the elements that were typical of camps years ago: sports, arts and crafts, drama, camp spirit. The counselors were knowledgeable, friendly and responsible."

...Beth Z, parent



Small, same-age groups



Well-trained, caring adult naturalists

NEW Teen Adventure Camping Trips for grades 6-12. Girl only trips too!

"I liked the field trips because I like to experience nature and really touch the stuff, not just talk about it."

...Alyssa A, age 11

FREE "Junior Leader" counselor-in-training program for high school teens!

Call for a brochure, or visit our website:

Scholarships available!

206-523-4483

www.seattleaudubon.org

Seattle  Audubon Society
for birds and nature

8050 35th Avenue NE
Seattle WA 98115

Wild in the City. . . at Magnuson Park

by *Lauren Braden,*
Advocate for Wildlife Habitat

There is still time to support sensitive wildlife habitat at Warren G. Magnuson Park, the second largest park in Seattle. Seattle will finalize plans for the park's design this year. Unfortunately the near-final design will leave Magnuson's passive recreationists (walkers, birdwatchers, etc.) and much of the wildlife with a lot less space and tranquility.

Magnuson Park is a Critical Wildlife Habitat by city ordinance. The long fresh-water shoreline and approximately 100 acres of seasonal wetlands, along with the upland forest at Promontory Point, have made the park a unique habitat for birders and other nature lovers for years. Seattle Audubon's Neighborhood Bird Project has logged about 200 bird species at Magnuson over the years. Several species of migratory birds rest or nest at Magnuson.

The planned expansion of the sports fields into structured facilities, with eleven new playfields, artificial turf, and several hundred light poles, will make

Magnuson Park the biggest all-weather sports complex in the Pacific Northwest. All this is adjacent to sensitive wildlife habitat for birds, mammals, and amphibians. Seattle Audubon promotes a precautionary approach to lighting fields near critical habitat, and is urging Seattle to assess and consider potential impacts before moving forward with the plan.

A newly formed group, Friends of Magnuson Park, is currently appealing the Environmental Impact Statement for Magnuson's design. They challenge that the impacts of increased noise, traffic, and lighting on wildlife and on neighbors were not adequately investigated. Seattle Audubon and other concerned organizations have submitted testimony or letters of support on their behalf. When the court decision is made, the design plan will move on to the city council for a final decision.

It's not too late to add your voice. Tell Seattle's mayor and city council-members that you care about wildlife habitat in this park. Urge them to pass a plan that strikes a fair balance for all park users: neighbors, birdwatchers, dog-walkers, sports groups, and of course, the wildlife that call Magnuson their home.

More Conservation Activities —

Helping protect King County's Critical Areas

King County's Critical Areas Ordinance is going through its first major overhaul. Seattle Audubon is putting significant resources into making sure the new plan will protect important wildlife habitat. To get involved, check the action alerts section of our web site.

Playing an integral part in the future of Caspian Terns in our region

Soon Caspian Terns will be returning to the Columbia River estuary to nest on

East Sand Island. Seattle Audubon is supporting research projects and looking for solutions for their future viability. For more information or to get involved in our efforts, call Alex at 206-523-8243, x13.

A balanced plan for West Seattle Park

In February the Seattle City Council passed a plan to expand the off-leash dog area at Westcrest Park that improves the current off-leash area, yet protects the native forest understory and wooded trails. This vote is a victory for birds and urban wildlife habitat. Thanks to all who spoke up to make this happen!

DNR Monitoring

Management decisions are often made regarding our forests without adequate scientific data to fully understand what the effects are on wildlife. Seattle Audubon is currently in discussions with the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station about a bird-monitoring project. This program would be part of ongoing research analyzing the different techniques of harvesting timber.

In this study, Seattle Audubon and possibly other Audubon chapters would engage volunteers in research and bird counts that would help provide critical and meaningful information for the future management of forests in the Pacific Northwest. The ideal outcome would help identify methods of timber harvest that can provide both economic benefit for landowners and benefit for the diverse wildlife that inhabit these forests. Stay tuned for more information about this proposal!

For more information or to get involved, please contact Alex Morgan, Seattle Audubon, 206-523-8243, x13, or alexm@seattleaudubon.org.

The State of Our Environment— Science and Seattle Audubon

by *Herb Curl, Science Committee,
Acting Chair*

Sustainability of Ecology and the Economy

We have two problems. In the short term we need to hold on to what we have in Earth's life support system. In the long term we need to have a sustainable economy that maintains that system. A growing economy is merely getting bigger at the expense of resource depletion, pollution, disruption of nature's services, destruction of community, sacrifice of leisure time, and loss of biodiversity. A developing economy is getting better. Therefore, look at your community and the environment. Is the economy getting bigger, or is it getting better?

Sustainability of life on Earth requires that non-renewable resources be used sparingly or recycled, that energy use be based on the sun's incoming energy not on its stored energy, and that we not harm the biological and chemical processes that sustain life. Ultimately, long-term sustainability requires life-style changes that many people are unaware of or reluctant to adopt. Economics has been called the dismal science, but it's becoming pretty clear that, if you don't understand microeconomics in particular, it's pretty hard to figure out what's happening.

It's worth the effort.
Knowledge is power.

There's always good news and bad news. Bad news is depressing so we prefer to ignore it. But ultimately we ignore bad news to our own peril. The Ostrich with its head in the sand is not most people's favorite bird. To continue to ignore bad news leads to what psychologists call "learned apathy" and paves the way for extinction . . . ours. The good news about the bad news is that you can do something about it.

Survivors figure out what's wrong and fix it.

Seattle Audubon has been active on the ground, at hearings, with letter-writing campaigns, and in committees, confronting a wide variety of environmental issues. Our policies and positions depend on "the best available science." Late in 2002 the Bird Records Committee was reconstituted as the Science Committee. In the intervening months we've reexamined previous citizen-science projects and are contemplating new ones.

Here are some of the problem areas in the context of where our voice has been and should be heard, always backed up by the underlying science.

Habitat Loss

Birders are sometimes so focused on the birds, they forget the thing that birds need most—suitable habitat. Except for national parks and wilderness areas, almost all land in the United States has been modified in some way. Native prairies have vanished, and a French visitor in the 1850s stated, "Americans hate trees." The one thing that we can do "to save the birds" is to preserve suitable habitat. Seattle Audubon is working in many ways to keep habitat intact for birds and other wildlife.

The most important benefit of preserving habitat is the least visible: maintaining intact watersheds that provide drinking water and keep streams clear and running the year around. Salmon recovery efforts, while focused on fish, have the side benefit of preserving or enhancing stream-side areas that host Harlequin Ducks, Wood Ducks, Dippers, and Belted Kingfishers.

Resource Management

A common economic model assumes that resources are unlimited and that technology will solve all resource scarcity problems. However, even renewable resources are limited by the rate at which they can be renewed, e.g., the rate of sunlight falling on the earth. Moreover, we are at the mercy of natural cycles, such as El Niño. In almost every instance, natural resources have been over-allocated. That is, we cannot sustain the current rate of resource extraction, whether it's water, trees, or fish.

Water—quantity and quality—is going to be *the* big issue in years to come. Mining fossil ground water and draining shallow aquifers faster than they can be replenished are leading to rationing, and disappearing streams. Seattle Audubon has been actively involved in the salmon restoration and the growth management debates.

Urbanization

All of the problems of urbanization in Seattle have come together in one place, Magnuson Park, as it becomes the largest public sports complex in the Pacific Northwest. Issues of light pollution, surface drainage, habitat preservation, traffic, litter, and created wetlands have caused endless controversy. Seattle Audubon has been involved throughout. Recently, it became obvious that "re-stored" urban streams were lethal to spawning salmon due to storm-water runoff. Surface water from hardened

surfaces such as parking lots and streets without curbs drains directly into streams.

The most common birds of Seattle are introduced—Rock Doves (pigeons), House Sparrows, European Starlings, and crows. We built it and they came. Cities provide habitat, protection from predators, and abundant food from dumpsters and litter. All four species drive out more desirable species.

Gardens frequently harbor invasive species such as English ivy, English holly, and clematis, the first of which provides ideal habitat for rats. Many invasives are common garden plants that have escaped cultivation and are spreading aggressively.

Some scientists think that humans, their unique urban habitats, and the species that prefer such habitats are evolving together, radically changing the environment. Only now are we becoming aware of how alien, and not so alien, invasive species are taking over and altering whole ecosystems. We are working to inform the public of this growing threat.

Species / Population Management

When humans started to “manage” populations, it became necessary to manage the whole system. “You can’t do just one thing” is a major ecological rule. Some agencies such as Wildlife Services, a branch of the federal Agriculture Department, has annually killed thousands of mammals and birds attracted to agricultural crops and hatchery fish, despite the availability of non-lethal measures. NOAA Fisheries has advocated the dispersal and killing of Caspian Terns to facilitate recovery of endangered salmon stocks despite the fact that the birds eat mostly hatchery fish. The National Fish and Wildlife Service is preparing a national cormorant “management” plan to protect catfish farmers.

Seattle Audubon, with other organizations, has been acting on behalf of these targeted species.

Silent Spring and the Chemiscape

We’re well aware that the unrestricted application of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer can radically alter ecosystems, opening the way for invasive species and harming human health. “Integrated pest management” calls for the judicious application of pesticides and herbicides, the use of biocontrols, and appropriate horticultural practices. Excess fertilizers, whether organic or inorganic, poison waterways and drinking water. It is extremely important that we inform ourselves of the risks and benefits in the use of chemicals and tradeoffs involved. For example, the attempts to control the spread of *Spartina* in Willapa Bay involve just these considerations.

Our Gardening for Life program emphasizes the best management practices we can use individually.

What to do, what to do?

This is the only Earth we have. We cannot trash this planet and move on to another one in this solar system or some other one. Conservation as a “personal virtue” (per Vice President Dick Cheney) is going to have to be everyone’s personal virtue. Science can provide data and information, but the decisions are ultimately public, political, and individual.

A table posted on the Seattle Audubon Science web site lists environmental problems facing us today. It indicates the ones on which Seattle Audubon staff and volunteers have been working actively.



Here’s what you can do today:

- Order the *Healthy Habitats* booklet, a useful and inspiring booklet for homeowners, businesses, and communities wishing to create healthy habitats. Check our web site or call 206-523-4483 for ordering information.
- Learn how you can make fewer demands on the Earth by consuming less and supporting sustainable businesses. Calculate your “ecological footprint.” Call Earthday Network, 202-518-0044, or go to their web site, www.earthdaynetwork.org.
- Attend a Gardening for Life workshop. Call Lauren at Seattle Audubon, 206-523-8243, x14.
- Go fluorescent. Changing just one bulb at a time will help.
- Use a fish card to decide “what fish to have tonight.” (Call Seattle Audubon to get your copy.)
- Help acquire and maintain National Wildlife Refuges by purchasing state and federal duck stamps. (Available at all state sport-licensing agencies.)
- Direct roof runoff into the ground, not the storm sewer.
- Urge your federal, state, and local legislators to make eco-friendly decisions and laws.
- Reduce purchases. Recycle. Reuse.

Field Trip Rules of the Road

You must sign up in advance for all field trips. The first day of registration is Tuesday, March 11, between 5:30PM and 7:00PM. Sign-up continues daily from 10:00AM to 4:00PM. Register by calling 206-523-4483. No walk-ins, please. You may register yourself and one other person for only two trips. *If you are unable to attend a trip for which you are registered, please notify the office ASAP, so that someone else may take your place.* Repeat no-shows will be bumped to the wait list. Do not call leaders to register; their numbers are listed only for last-minute cancellations. Leaders' e-mail addresses may be found at www.seattleaudubon.org.

- Beginners encouraged!
- Scopes are welcome.
- Arrive a few minutes early.
- Wear seasonally appropriate clothing and footwear.
- Always bring a lunch, drinks, and snacks for trips that go beyond midday.
- Carpool guidelines are 10¢–15¢ per mile per car. Total expenses to be divided by all, including driver. Ferry tolls are in addition.
- No pets allowed.

Meeting Places:

- The Ravenna Park-&-Ride (P&R) is located under I-5 at NE 65th Street.

Thursday, March 20 Limit 11
Snoqualmie and Snohomish Valleys
Leader: Tom Aversa 206-782-7342
6:30AM, Ravenna P&R

The farm country associated with these valleys should produce sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. We'll bird from the car, but if the weather cooperates, we'll get out and hike. Bring boots and lunch. Return by evening.

Saturday, March 22 Limit 15
Marymoor Park
Leader: Michael Hobbs 425-869-2370
7:00AM, Clise Mansion parking lot

(first right once inside the park)
The Marymoor expert will find a variety of returning and resident birds, including ducks, falcons, shrikes, and possibly owls; maybe a Say's Phoebe, Mountain Bluebird, or Townsend's Solitaire. Early birds can meet at the Interpretive Lot at 6:00 for a pre-trip check of the East Meadow. Over by noon.

Friday, March 28 Limit 15
Sequim
Leader: Fran Wood 206-323-2296
7:00AM, Ravenna P&R

Look for ducks, gulls, shorebirds, raptors, and passerines. Bring scopes, lunch, and ferry money; dress for all possible weather. Home early evening.

Saturday, March 29 Limit 15
Spencer Island and Everett sewage treatment ponds
Leader: Brian Bell 425-485-8058
6:30AM, Ravenna P&R

Great birding any time of the year. Search for early migrants, a variety of ducks, gulls, woodpeckers, raptors, and passerines. Over by early afternoon.

Friday, April 4 Limit 9 in two cars
Bowerman Basin and the coast
Leader: Alan Roedell 206-522-0809
7:00AM, Ravenna P&R

Migration time! A long walk is involved at Bowerman; short walks elsewhere. Dress for whatever. Bring a lunch and coffee money.



Friday, April 4 Limit 11
Spencer Island and Everett sewage treatment ponds
Leader: Susan Murphy 206-363-4582
7:00AM, Ravenna P&R

A half-day mix of hiking and birding. We'll look for diverse species of shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, sparrows, swallows, woodpeckers, and gulls. Home early evening.

Wednesday, April 9 Limit 12
Arboretum and Foster Island
Leader: Brenda Senturia 206-324-3086
8:00AM, Arboretum Visitor Center (Graham Bldg.)

A morning search for spring migrants. We'll bird on foot, so moderate walking is necessary. Bring a snack and rain gear.

Sunday, April 13 Limit 15
Whidbey Island
Leader: Brian Bell 425-485-8058
7:15AM, Ravenna P&R

We could see many surprises at this time of the year. Bring lunch and money for ferry. Over by late afternoon.

Notice: The New Members' Bird Walk originally scheduled for March 15 has been canceled. The next walks will be April 19, 8:30AM, at Discovery Park and April 26, 8:30AM, at Tolt-MacDonald Park. Check the April issue of *Earthcare Northwest* for details.

Birds in the Balance: Long-billed Curlew

by Paul Webster

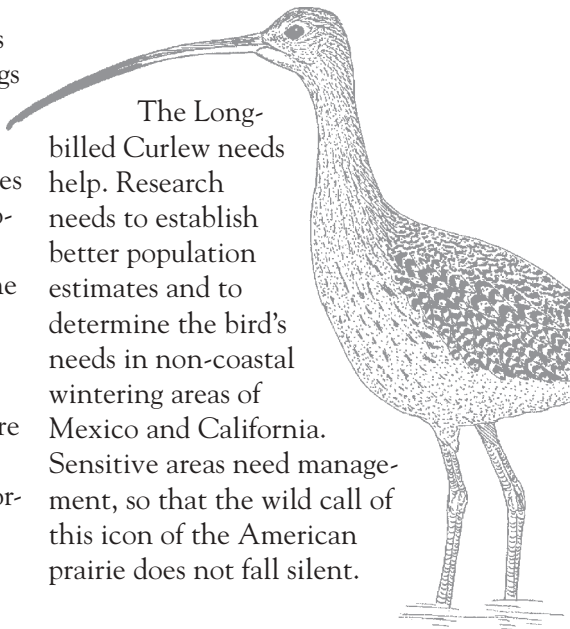
Our largest shorebird is a signature species of the American prairie, and its fortune parallels the shrinking size of that vast landscape, which once extended as far east as Ohio. Seventy-three years ago A. C. Bent wrote that the Long-billed Curlew embodied the "wild, roving spirit of the vast open prairies." Its large size, distinctive appearance, and loud whistling calls made it "a most striking feature of the western plains, as it flew in large wedge-shaped flocks in full cry." Today most of the prairie has become farmland; sturdier grasses that support grazing have replaced native varieties. But the Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*), its population now reduced to about 20,000 individuals, still finds breeding space from the Great Basin and western parts of the plains states north into southern Saskatchewan, Alberta, and south-central British Columbia.

Oddly, this quintessential bird of short and mixed grasslands spends only a small part of the year there. Its March arrival lets the Curlew exploit the awakening insects and worms as it nests and raises its (normally four) young. Eggs are laid as early as mid-April, hatch by about mid-May, and the precocial young leave the nest and feed themselves within a few hours. Curlews are carnivorous. Their diet includes both invertebrates and vertebrates, and perhaps some berries, although their long bills seem most effective for catching shrimp and crabs deep in tidal mudflats, and earthworms in wet pastures. They leave before the prairie dries up. By mid-June most have arrived at Humboldt Bay in California, the Playa Wetlands in Texas, or other intermediate stops on the way to wintering grounds, primarily in coastal

Texas, Louisiana, California and northern Baja California. Some winter inland in California and Mexico. In Washington, Long-billed Curlews are uncommon breeders in the Columbia Basin, and birders can usually find wintering Curlews near Tokeland on Willapa Bay.

Abundant in the early 19th century, the Curlews were severely reduced by shooting from about 1850 to 1918. Market hunters shot Long-billed Curlews and smaller shorebirds by the wagonload. In 1897 Red Knots sold for ten cents a dozen in Boston markets. Legislation in 1918 saved most shorebird species from extinction, but by then the Long-billed Curlew had become rare east of the Mississippi. Since 1918 habitat degradation has been the major threat for the Curlews, not just on the prairies, but in wintering areas, too. Fifty percent of the Long-billed Curlews on the Pacific Coast winter in San Francisco Bay, surrounded by some seven million people. Eighty percent of the bay's original intertidal habitat has disappeared, so the Curlews concentrate now in smaller areas and have become more vulnerable to oil spills and other accidents. The Shorebird Conservation Plan calls the Long-billed Curlew "highly imperiled."

The Long-billed Curlew needs help. Research needs to establish better population estimates and to determine the bird's needs in non-coastal wintering areas of Mexico and California. Sensitive areas need management, so that the wild call of this icon of the American prairie does not fall silent.



Carolyn Eagan Field Trip Leader



On her usual morning jogs around Green Lake about twelve years ago, Carolyn began to notice that the species of birds she saw changed with the seasons. One year her son gave her a field guide for Christmas.

"When I saw the picture of the Cedar Waxwing, it looked so exotic. I didn't think I'd ever see one," she recalls. "One day there was a whole flock of them in my yard on Capitol Hill!" She was hooked.

Carolyn began taking classes and field trips offered by Seattle Audubon. A Master Birder now, she leads field trips, serves on the Field Trip Committee, and volunteers in the Nature Shop. She also coordinates Destinations articles for *Earthcare Northwest*. Her volunteer hours at the office may soon be cut back when she and her husband move to their home on Hood Canal.

"My son is now 26 and learning to identify the birds around his home in Washington DC," she comments. "I gave him his first field guide this Christmas."

—Sharon Sneddon
Associate Editor