

Backyard Birds— Who's Out There?

by Ellen Blackstone, Editor

This issue is all about lists. Not about Life Lists or To-Do Lists, but lists full of information for the birder. There is a list of birds seen over the holidays, a list of the birds you might see in your backyard throughout the year, a list of plants to attract birds, and even a list of phone numbers that might come in handy.

Check out pages 7-9 for backyard bird information. And see the 2003 Seattle Audubon Christmas Bird Count tally on pages 4-5.

We are grateful for our birds and our fellow birders, and we hope you enjoy this issue of *Earthcare Northwest*.



John James Audubon

Program

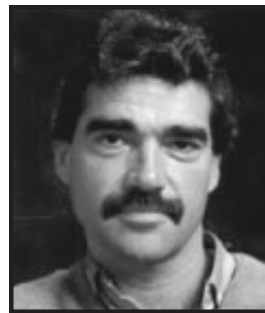
Please join us on February 19 at the program for a Celebration of Volunteers!

We'll award new service pins and thank all volunteers.

Why Are There Birds?

Thursday, February 19, 7:00PM
Center for Urban Horticulture

Peter Ward, Ph.D., is a paleontologist and professor of geological sciences at the University of Washington. He will present some of his latest research findings regarding the question, "Why are there birds?" Find out the key to this age-old question as Dr. Ward explains how the answer can be linked to some surprising new discoveries about past climate and atmospheric oxygen levels. Learn what new fossil findings tell about the evolution of birds and flight. Dr. Ward draws from a wealth



Peter Ward, Ph.D.

of life experience and has published many books, including *Future Evolution* and *The Life and Death of Planet Earth*.

Doors open at 6:30PM for refreshments, Master Birder Booth, and Nature Shop Selections.

The Center for Urban Horticulture is located at 3501 NE 41st Street, Seattle, in the Laurelhurst neighborhood. From NE 45th Street, turn south on Mary Gates Memorial Way to NE 41st Street.

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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, Steve Dang
Production, Chris Altwegg
 Submissions should be sent to Ellen
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 or e-mail ellenb@123imagine.net
 by the 8th of the month preceding
 publication. Submissions will be
 edited and published at the editor's
 discretion.
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Of Note

• The next new **volunteer orientation is Tuesday, February 24 from 7-8:30PM** at Seattle Audubon Center. Please register with Lorraine at 206-523-8243, x12 or lorraineh@seattleaudubon.org.

• Apply now for **Master Advocate, 2004**. Seattle Audubon is gearing up for the second Master Advocate program this spring. All citizens who are passionate about environmental protection and eager to take their advocacy skills to the next level are encouraged to apply. For more information, visit www.seattleaudubon.org, or call Matt Mega at 206-985-6841.

• Thanks to **Lighten Up! Weight Loss, Inc.** for the donation of eight matched chairs to the Seattle Audubon annex conference room; to **Deirdre Devlin** and to **Karl Hoehn** for the donation of digital cameras for our education programs; and to **JoAnn Riecke** for educational materials.

• **Volunteer Opportunities**
 Please contact Lorraine at 206-523-8243, x12 or lorraineh@seattleaudubon.org.

Field Trips: Lead a field trip or help us plan new types of trips and trips to new places.

Membership: Help manage and maintain the membership database. Much can be done from home.

Outreach: We seek published, professional photographers to document events, people, and gatherings. A portfolio with good candid photos is a must. You will use Seattle Audubon's Digital Nikon D100 SLR. We seek four or five volunteers to be on call so that we can ensure that we have at least one available for each shoot.

• **Gene Kridler**, 84-year old bird-bander featured in the October issue, reached the 100,000 mark of birds banded—hummingbirds to passerines to waterfowl to albatrosses to swans—308 species. Congratulations, Gene!

• Celebrate the Great Blue Heron with Heron Habitat Helpers at their annual **Heron Homecoming Party, Tuesday, February 24, 7:00PM** at Discovery Park Visitors' Center. Contact Kathy Smith at guido1031@comcast.net or 206-283-7805 for further information.

• **Thank You—**
Development: Nancy Alden, Noel Angell, Kathy Lantz

Publications: Nick Gregoric, George Johnson, Lorie Ransom, Connie Sidles
December Nature Shop: Nancy Alden, Laurinda Anglin, Diana Aubin, Marilyn Busher, Maureen Corlas, Linda Carroll, Steve Dang, Kristi deGrys, Rebecca Evans, Barbara Faville, Francie Galbraith, Carol Gard, Wes Hatch, Kay Hubbard, George Johnson, Penny Koyama, Kathy Lantz, Rachel Lawson, Carol Leenstra, Robin Lewis, Teri Martin, Amalia Meier, Phyllis Melvin, Marilyn Milberger, Jean Mills, Virginia Morrison, Brenda Neth, Walt Oelwein, Kelley Palmer-McCarty, Suzanne Peterson, Roberta Roberts, Pat Runyan, Bob Soldwedel, Karen Stephens, Kristin Stewart, Beth Stimson, Mary Anne Thorbeck, Connie VanDeventer, Bev Wagoner, Paul Webster, Sandra West, Ethel Williams, Marilyn Wittenmyer, Alison Wysong

• Save the date—**Seattle Audubon Spring Plant Sale!** Saturday, March 27, 10:00AM-4:00PM. Stock up on native plants that will feed your yard birds year round.

SEATTLE AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Take a Stand for the Environment on February 7 or March 9

by Chris Peterson, Executive Director



Chris Peterson

When I asked Seattle Audubon board member and Washington State senator, Ken Jacobsen,

“What’s the most important thing our readers should know about the Washington State presidential caucuses?” he replied, “Get yourself there! And take a friend who lives in the same precinct. It’s all about body count.” With no presidential primary in Washington this year, the caucuses are your way to voice your preference for a strong environmental candidate.

Democratic precinct caucuses will be held Saturday morning February 7. Republican precinct caucuses will be held Saturday morning, March 9. Most caucuses are sparsely attended—maybe just ten people per precinct gather for about an hour, usually in someone’s home. But

the impact can far outweigh the numbers. This is because the candidate who has highest percentage of supporters in the room (above 15%) can get all the delegates. This method of choosing delegates by proportional voting also works at the next two levels, the legislative district and the congressional district, all the way to the national convention where the party puts forth its nominee for a vote by the American people.

To find the location of your caucus, go on-line to www.wsrp (Republicans), www.wa-democrats (Democrats), or the web site of your favorite presidential candidate, or call your political party. Some legislative districts also have web sites. For a very thorough profile of the environmental record of each candidate, I recommend The League of Conservation Voters’ web site www.lcv.org.

We want the strongest possible environmental candidate in the White House. You hold an important card. Play it on February 7 or March 9.



What Is Your Wish for the Future? What Will Be Your Legacy?

You can make a lasting difference.

Would you like to help Seattle Audubon preserve our environment, protect our birds, and help our children learn about nature? Most of us give generously each year, but few realize what an impact each one can have by making a gift to Seattle Audubon in your will or estate plan.

You can make a difference when you name Seattle Audubon as a beneficiary or contingent beneficiary of an IRA, a 401(k) plan, or a related retirement plan. You can also establish a gift annuity or charitable trust that will provide you with current income and promise future benefits for Seattle Audubon.

For more information about these options, please contact Christina Peterson, Executive Director, at 206-523-8243, x15.

SEATTLE AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

Seattle Audubon cultivates and leads a community that values and protects birds and the natural environment.

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

Invest in the Future—Make a Bequest to Seattle Audubon

Contact Christina Peterson
206-523-8243, x15
chrisp@seattleaudubon.org



SEATTLE AUDUBON CENTER and NATURE SHOP
Hours: Mon-Sat 10AM to 4PM
8050 35th Ave. NE
Seattle WA 98115
206-523-4483

Participants in Christmas Bird Count, 2003 (group leaders and organizers in bold face): Kevin Aanerud, Jamie Acker, Julia Allen, Margaret Amory, Linda Anchondo, Marti Anderson, Alice Arnold, Tom Aversa, Frank and Mary Lee Backus, Jeff and Lee Baker, Lee Barnes, Coordinator, Brian Bell, Fred Bird, Jean Birdsall, Lucille Boyle, Jan Bragg, Marv Breece, Jon Britell, Beth Bronson, Pam Cahn, Kay Chase, Lisa Ciecko, Carolee Colter, Mark Columbino, Dennis and Patricia Conlon, Georgia Conti, Gary Cooper, Jon Cooper, Maureen Corlas, Paul Cozens, Herb Curl, Steve Dang, Tyler Davis, Dennis DeSilvis, Barb Diehl, Diane Doles, Peter Dunwiddie, Jim and Linda Dwight, Sally Easterbrook, JoLynn Edwards, Kathy Ehrenberg, Candi Estrada, Rebecca Evans, Susan Fallat, Lauren Faulkenberry, Decky Fiedlar, Michael Fleming, John Fox, George Gerdts, Ann Goss, Jack Gosset, Gerry Grady, Robert Gresky, Dan Harville, Carol and Tony Henderson, David Hepp, Nancy Heywood, Eugene Hunn, Jamie Ingle, Jake Jackson, Marty Jackson, Hugh Jennings, Anna Kalagian, Katie Kelso, Jim and Vicki King, Kathy King, Lann Kittleson, Neal Komedal, Donna Kostka, David and Penny Koyama, Bill Kruger, Julia Kruger, Kathy and Paul Lantz, Diane Lashky, Rachel Lawson, Megan Leach, Ronald Leamon, Mary Lear, Jean and Roger Leed, Kevin Li, Ron Lindsay, Maxine Linal,

Christmas Bird Count, December 27, 2003

by Eugene Hunn, Compiler

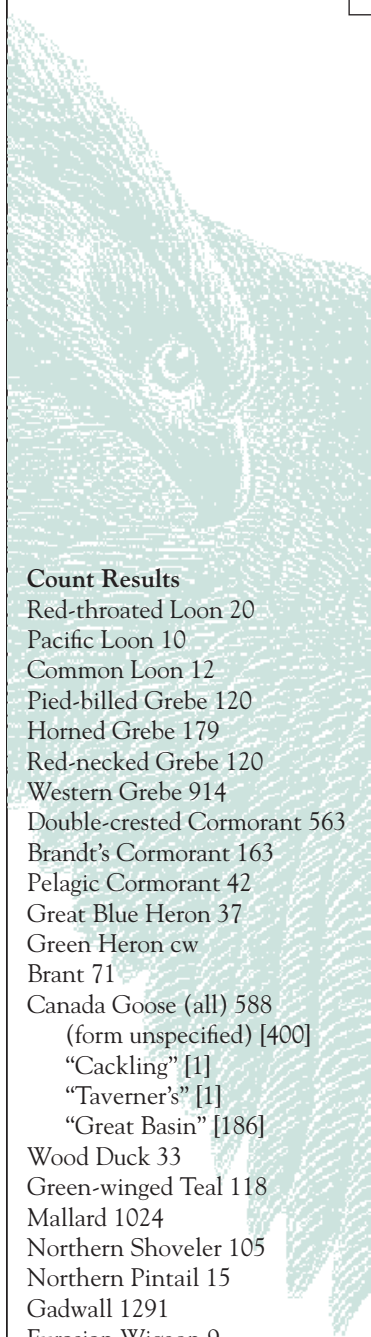
This year's count was the 74th since 1908. By one measure the count was a bit below average. The total number of species recorded, 115, was 96% of the 30-year average of 120.4. Three additional species were noted count week. However, total number of individual birds counted, 53,734, was right on the 10-year average and 26% above the 30-year par. Of course, the total of individuals is heavily leveraged by counts of a handful of abundant species, such as crows (12,504, 3.5 x the 30-year par), coots (6,582, about par), starlings (3,262, actually in decline at 76% of the 20-year par), robins (2,789, about par), and Glaucous-winged Gulls (1,965, on par, plus 115 hybrid "Olympic Gulls" and 330 "gull sp.," most likely also Glaucous-winged). It is worth noting that the crow capital of Seattle may be shifting from Foster Island (5,300 tallied) to Newport Shores (with a roost of 5,000).

At the other end of the spectrum are 12 species represented on the count by just one or two individuals: Virginia Rail, Spotted Sandpiper, Rock Sandpiper (at Restoration Point, Bainbridge Island), Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, Hairy Woodpecker, Barn Swallow, Northern Shrike, Western Scrub-Jay, Common Raven, Townsend's Solitaire, and White-throated Sparrow. Most of these are regular winter residents with small and/or elusive local populations. A few are irregular visitors recorded just a few times on the Seattle count: Barn Swallows have been recorded but once previously, Common Raven twice before, and Townsend's Solitaire nine times previously. Yet even these are not unexpected. Barn Swallows have been turning up in mid-winter in western Washington with increasing regularity. Explanations vary for how a species that should have left the state in September

for central Mexico not to return until April can put in cameo appearances in December, January, and February. Is this a hint of global warming? My pet theory is that a few Barn Swallows choose to doze off here rather than migrate, waking to feed on mild winter days. The ravens were in my area, coursing south, croaking along the bluffs north of Golden Gardens. However, ravens were found nesting in Kirkland this past summer, rather west of their usual foothill haunts. Note that the addition of just a handful of such stragglers would bring the count species total up to par.

Finally, our count this year shows that certain widely noted trends continue. On the plus side, seven Peregrine Falcons is 5x the 30-year average and nearly double that for the previous 10 years, and 52 Bald Eagles is more than 4x the 30-year average and 80% above that of the past 10 years. Both species have rebounded dramatically from near extinction during the DDT era. On the other hand, Band-tailed Pigeons and Western Grebes continue to slide. Band-taileds were at just 65% of their 30-year average, Western Grebes at 61%. Both have been singled out as species of concern in recent years.

Thanks again to the 159 intrepid observers who braved a chill winter morning and a damp afternoon to take the pulse of Seattle's bird life.



Count Results

- Red-throated Loon 20
- Pacific Loon 10
- Common Loon 12
- Pied-billed Grebe 120
- Horned Grebe 179
- Red-necked Grebe 120
- Western Grebe 914
- Double-crested Cormorant 563
- Brandt's Cormorant 163
- Pelagic Cormorant 42
- Great Blue Heron 37
- Green Heron cw
- Brant 71
- Canada Goose (all) 588
(form unspecified) [400]
- “Cackling” [1]
- “Taverner's” [1]
- “Great Basin” [186]
- Wood Duck 33
- Green-winged Teal 118
- Mallard 1024
- Northern Shoveler 105
- Northern Pintail 15
- Gadwall 1291
- Eurasian Wigeon 9
- American Wigeon 1295
- Canvasback 620
- Redhead 5
- Ring-necked Duck 305
- Greater Scaup 398
- Lesser Scaup 830
[scaup sp.] 15
- Harlequin Duck 38
- Black Scoter 33
- Surf Scoter 400
- White-winged Scoter 30
- Common Goldeneye 256
- Barrow's Goldeneye 334

- [goldeneye sp.] 63
- Bufflehead 804
- Hooded Merganser 121
- Common Merganser 237
- Red-breasted Merganser 333
- Ruddy Duck 71
- Osprey (cw)**
- Bald Eagle (all) 52
Bald Eagle (adult) [38]
Bald Eagle (immature) [14]
- Sharp-shinned Hawk 17
- Cooper's Hawk 13
[Accipiter sp.] 2
- Red-tailed Hawk 20
[Buteo sp.] 1
- Merlin 17
- Peregrine Falcon 7
- California Quail 14
- Virginia Rail 1
- American Coot 6582
- Killdeer 53
- Spotted Sandpiper 1
- Black Turnstone 250
- Surfbird 222
- Sanderling 3
- Rock Sandpiper 1
- Dunlin 21
- Wilson's Snipe 2
- Bonaparte's Gull 1
- Mew Gull 768
- Ring-billed Gull 303
- California Gull 62
- Herring Gull 8
- Thayer's Gull 7
- Western Gull 8
- Western x Glaucous-winged Gull 115
- Glaucous-winged Gull 1965
[gull sp.] 330
- Common Murre 31
- Pigeon Guillemot 20
- Rhinoceros Auklet 14
- Rock Pigeon 1623
- Band-tailed Pigeon 24
- Western Screech-Owl 3
- Barred Owl 3
- Anna's Hummingbird 75
- Belted Kingfisher 30
- Red-breasted Sapsucker 4
- Downy Woodpecker 51
- Hairy Woodpecker 2
- Northern Flicker (all) 215
“Red-shafted” [210]
“Yellow-shafted” (cw)
“Red-” x “Yellow-shafted” [5]

- Pileated Woodpecker 14
- Northern Shrike 1
- Hutton's Vireo 5
- Steller's Jay 108
- Western Scrub-Jay 2**
- Crow (Northwestern or American) 12,504
- Common Raven 2**
- Barn Swallow 2**
- Black-capped Chickadee 1530
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee 168
- Bushtit 975
- Red-breasted Nuthatch 64
- Brown Creeper 77
- Bewick's Wren 250
- Winter Wren 147
- Marsh Wren 8
- Golden-crowned Kinglet 1082
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet 524
- Townsend's Solitaire 1**
- Hermit Thrush 12
- American Robin 2789
- Varied Thrush 57
- Cedar Waxwing 49
- European Starling 3262
- Orange-crowned Warbler (cw)
- Yellow-rumped Warbler (all) 71
“Audubon's” [58]
“Myrtle” [10]
(form unspecified) [3]
- Townsend's Warbler 16
- Spotted Towhee 284
- Fox Sparrow 239
- Song Sparrow 833
- Lincoln's Sparrow 22
- White-crowned Sparrow 48
- Golden-crowned Sparrow 189
- White-throated Sparrow 1
- Dark-eyed Junco (all) 565
“Oregon” [565]
- Red-winged Blackbird 302
- Purple Finch 8
- House Finch 689
- [Carpodacus finch sp.] 3
- Pine Siskin 1068
- American Goldfinch 314
- House Sparrow 886.

Total species = 115
plus 1 hybrid: Glaucous-winged
x Western Gull, and 3 count
week (cw): Green Heron, Os-
prey, Orange-crowned Warbler
Total individuals = 53,734 Total
participants = 159

Polly Little, Ilon Logan,
Donna Luce, Tova Lund,
Dorli Mason, Phyllis Melvin,
Joyce Meyer, Doug and
Nancy Morningstar, Julie
Myers, JoAnne Myers-
Ciecko, Vic Nelson, Don
Norman, Patty North, Mark
Oberle, Hal Opperman, Don
Ostrand, Wayne Palsson, G.
Shiva Parameswaran, Sar-
ah Peden, Pam Pogemiller,
Alice Poinier, Polly Rade-
baugh, Gordon Rasmussen,
Ginger Rebstock, Fred
Reebs, Bill Reichert, Judy
Roan, Randy Robinson, Al-
lan Roedell, Helen Russell,
Katie Sauter-Messick, Mike
and Wendy Schackwitz,
Jud Scovill, Brenda Sen-
turia, Patt Siggs, Arn and
Kathy Slettebak, Christine
Southwick, Stacey Spence,
Bill Stark, Beth Stimson,
Dave Swayne, Mary Anne
Thorbeck, Coordinator,
Andrew Thurber, Suzanne
Tomassi, Charles Torres,
Joan Truck, Carol Trusk,
Pat Vivian, Bruce Waddell,
Brad Waggoner, Scott War-
ren, Doug Watkins, Isah
Webb, Tom Weir, Sandra
West, Lee Wheeler, Woody
Wheeler, David Whitten,
Cynthia Wilson, Ann Marie
Wood, Sam Woods, Charlie
Wright, Richard Youel, Car-
leen and Neil Zimmerman.

Thanks also to Sarah
Webb-Smeltzer, potluck
coordinator, and Jackie
Williams, potluck assistant.

Review Timber Sale Applications and Help Protect Marbled Murrelets

Every year the Department of Natural Resources receives 600-1400 applications for timber harvest for each of its seven regions. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reviews these applications for effects on fish and wildlife, but the large volume of applications under review makes this a difficult task. WDFW benefits from other reviewers, such as tribes and private citizens, who focus on specific areas of interest and can be more intensive in their reviews. If you have access to a high-speed modem (cable or T1) you can exercise your right of public review and help WDFW protect murrelet habitat in your area. Contact Julie Stofel of WDFW at 425-379-2301 for details.

Marbled Murrelet and Spotted Owl Status Reviews Under Way

by Alex Morgan,
Conservation Coordinator

In response to an industry lawsuit, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is conducting a status review under the Endangered Species Act for both the Northern Spotted Owl and the Marbled Murrelet. For the first time in agency history, the USFWS has contracted out the status review process to private consulting firms. Both reviews will focus on gathering the most current and comprehensive scientific information about the status of the two species. Once the information-gathering phase is completed, the USFWS will use the data and any recommendations from the consulting firms and expert panels to decide whether to upgrade either species to endangered status, to remove one or both from any federal listing, or to keep them listed as threatened.

EDAW, Inc. has assembled an independent panel of experts to assist the USFWS in preparing the five-year status review for

the Marbled Murrelet. The final goal is a comprehensive evaluation of the scientific information that has been developed since publication of The Ecology and Conservation of the Marbled Murrelet in 1995.

Sustainable Ecosystems Institute is assisting the USFWS in preparation of the five-year status review for the Northern Spotted Owl. SEI will be holding three public workshops to discuss the assorted factors affecting Spotted Owl recovery, including Barred Owl interactions, habitat availability, and genetic distinctions between different regional populations. The first meeting dealing with the effects of Barred Owls on Spotted Owls was held in mid-December. The independent panel of experts for the owl review includes Jerry Franklin and Seattle Audubon member John Marzluff of the University of Washington and five other scientists from across the country. The deadline for the Spotted Owl review has been pushed back until November 2004. For more information about the owl review or the upcoming public workshops, please see the SEI website at www.sei.org.

Please contact Alex Morgan for more information, alexm@seattleaudubon.org or 206-985-6581.

Looking for a Way to Make a Difference?

—Help Save Urban Habitat

by Matt Mega,
Advocate for Wildlife Habitat

Are you interested in protecting quality urban habitat in your neighborhood? If so, consider joining the Urban Habitat Subcommittee at Seattle Audubon. This small group of dedicated volunteers and staff has a long history of improving the state of urban habitat in the greater Seattle metropolitan area. We are currently working on the City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, protection of heron habitat, and the Magnuson Park redevelopment plan.

The Urban Habitat Subcommittee is a part of the Conservation Committee and is co-chaired by two of Seattle Audubon's most active volunteers, Marilyn Sandall and Lynn Ferguson. Together, the Conservation and Urban Habitat Committees form a strong foundation within Seattle Audubon that ensures that birds and other wildlife are valued and protected. Meetings are generally every other month as needed.

If you are an energetic person who would like to make a difference, please consider joining us. For more information or to find out when the next meeting is, please contact Matt Mega, 206-985-6841, or mattm@seattleaudubon.org.

Everyday Checklist of Common Birds of our Puget Sound Back Yards



Species	Jan-Feb	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Species	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec
Common Loon					Hutton's Vireo				
Horned Grebe					Vaux's Swift				
Red-necked Grebe					Steller's Jay				
Pied-billed Grebe					American Crow				
Western Grebe					Tree Swallow				
Double-crested Cormorant					Violet-green Swallow				
Great Blue Heron					Barn Swallow				
Canada Goose					Cliff Swallow				
Mallard					Black-capped Chickadee				
Gadwall					Chestnut-backed Chickadee				
American Wigeon					Bushtit				
Northern Shoveler					Red-breasted Nuthatch				
Green-winged Teal					Bewick's Wren				
Greater Scaup					Winter Wren				
Lesser Scaup					Marsh Wren				
Surf Scoter					Golden-crowned Kinglet				
Common Goldeneye					Ruby-crowned Kinglet				
Bufflehead					Swainson's Thrush				
Red-breasted Merganser					Hermit Thrush				
Osprey					American Robin				
Bald Eagle					Varied Thrush				
Sharp-shinned Hawk					European Starling				
Cooper's Hawk					Cedar Waxwing				
Red-tailed Hawk					Orange-crowned Warbler				
Merlin					Yellow Warbler				
Peregrine Falcon					Yellow-rumped Warbler				
California Quail					Black-throated Gray Warbler				
American Coot					Townsend's Warbler				
Killdeer					Wilson's Warbler				
Glaucous-winged Gull					Common Yellowthroat				
Mew Gull					Western Tanager				
Ring-billed Gull					Spotted Towhee				
Rock Pigeon					Savannah Sparrow				
Band-tailed Pigeon					Fox Sparrow				
Barn Owl					Song Sparrow				
Great Horned Owl					Lincoln's Sparrow				
Barred Owl					White-crowned Sparrow				
Western Screech-Owl					Golden-crowned Sparrow				
Anna's Hummingbird					Dark-eyed Junco				
Rufous Hummingbird					Black-headed Grosbeak				
Belted Kingfisher					Red-winged Blackbird				
Red-breasted Sapsucker					Brewer's Blackbird				
Downy Woodpecker					Brown-headed Cowbird				
Hairy Woodpecker					Purple Finch				
Northern Flicker					House Finch				
Pileated Woodpecker					Pine Siskin				
Olive-sided Flycatcher					American Goldfinch				
Pacific Slope Flycatcher					Evening Grosbeak				
Willow Flycatcher					House Sparrow				

The chart's *unshaded* areas denote when the birds are *most* likely to be seen. This is not meant to be an exhaustive checklist.

Want to know more?
See Seattle Audubon's BirdWeb,
www.birdweb.org.

A Birder's Contacts

Sick or injured birds—

- PAWS, Everett, WA
(wildlife receptionist),
425-787-2500, x817
For hours & directions
425-787-2500, x410
- Sarvey Wildlife Center,
Arlington, WA
360-435-4817
- Bird & Exotic Clinic of
Seattle
206-783-4538

Sightings—

- Birdbox (rare bird
sightings)
206-281-9172
- Peregrine Hot-line
206-654-4423
- Banded crows
206-543-2764
crow@u.washington.edu

Birders on-line—

- Tweepers
www.scn.org/earth/tweepers
- Swans
www.swansociety.org

Banded birds—

- Report banded birds
800-327-2263
- Report racing pigeons
800-755-2778

General information—

- Cornell Lab of Ornithology
800-843-2473
- Cornell House Finch
Disease Survey
607-254-2469
housefinch@cornell.edu
- WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
425-775-1311
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>

West Nile Virus concerns—

- To report a fresh, dead
crow
206-205-4394
- West Nile information,
King County
206-205-3883
- West Nile information,
WA State
360-236-3060
tom.gibbs@doh.wa.gov

The Northwest Birder's Year— A Calendar

January—Clean up your birdboxes and get ready to put them up again.

February—Anna's Hummingbirds may be courting and nesting.

March—Frog-singing Month! Winter Wren songs lengthen to up to 10 seconds. Early Rufous Hummers are on the move. Put out your feeders.

April—Varied Thrushes are gone by now. Last weekend is the peak of shorebird migration along the Washington coast.

May—Bird-song Month. May 8, 2004 is International Migratory Bird Day. Toast it with a cup of shade-grown coffee.

June—Watch for baby birds to fledge. Keep those cats indoors.

July—The Rufous Hummingbirds are nearly gone.

August—Be alert for the first goldfinch young at the thistle-feeder.



September—At the end of the month, begin to scour the lakes for the first wintering ducks.

October—The Varied Thrush arrives in the lowlands.

November—Stock up on seed and suet. Clean under your feeders weekly to avoid spreading disease.

December—Check out the nursery catalogs for native plants that offer fruit or nectar.

Please send us your special dates, and we'll publish a new calendar occasionally. Mail Editor Ellen Blackstone at Seattle Audubon, or ellenb@123imagine.net.

Great Backyard Bird Count 2004—February 13-16

Birders are invited to take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a project developed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The GBBC helps conservationists and ornithologists determine the status of bird populations continent-wide. By tracking the abundance and distribution of North America's winter birds, we hope to ensure that common birds remain common, especially during a time when birds face many environmental hurdles.

Instructions for participating can be found at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. There's no fee or registration. Those who would like to participate but aren't on-line can go to any public library.

Here's what to do:

- Count the birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on one or all

four count days. Keep separate records and fill out a checklist for each area.

- Watch the birds for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate.
- How to count: On the day(s) that you count, watch your bird feeders, or take a short walk (less than one mile) in your neighborhood or park. For each species of bird that you see, keep track of the highest number of individuals that you observe at any one time. Be careful not to report a bird twice in one day.
- At the end of the day go to "Submit your bird checklist" on the GBBC web site.

In the 2003 Great Backyard Bird Count, participants across North America submitted almost 50,000 checklists totaling more than four million birds of 512 species.

Native Plants— Year-round Food for Your Backyard Birds

by Pat Hughes, Seattle Audubon volunteer
and member of Native Plant Society

Just as New Englanders like their clam chowder and southern folks like their catfish, the birds in our back yards have acquired diets specific to their native land, the Pacific Northwest.

Native wildlife co-evolved with the native plants. So it makes sense that native plants provide the best habitat and food sources for the bird species found here. And, because they evolved with the rain-soaked winters and arid summers, native plants can survive our fluctuating seasons without the fertilizers, pesticides, time-consuming pruning, and costly watering required to keep nonnative “exotic” plants alive.

A yard with a canopy of vine maples, shore pines, and paper birches will attract a dozen species of birds, including finches, nuthatches, kinglets, Pine Siskins, Bush-tits, Song Sparrows, chickadees, juncos, woodpeckers, and more, for the seeds, fruits, and insects found within.

Add a few elderberries, Oregon grape, and some red osier dogwood (with striking red branches), and you'll find Chipping Sparrows, towhees, Northern Flickers, and maybe Cedar Waxwings vying for the fruits.

No back yard would be complete without a couple of hummingbirds. Native plants seem particularly adept at providing the protein sources and nectar that hummingbirds need to fulfill their



high energy demands. Hummingbirds consume over half their body weight each day. The Anna's Hummingbird will stay year round if you complement your garden with feeders, but the Rufous arrives in late February or early March, just when the red-flowering currant and salmonberry are flowering. These tiny birds also love elderberries, mock orange, oceanspray, Nootka rose, columbine, and penstemon.

Native plants are divided into the same categories as other plants: trees, shrubs, groundcovers, vines, perennials, and grasses. Many of these plants can be found at local nurseries or wholesalers that deal specifically with natives. Several local landscapers are knowledgeable in finding natives and designing landscapes with them. Call the Center for Urban Horticulture (206-543-8618) at the University of Washington or the local county extension office for a copy of the specialty nursery guide including native plant sources.

Seattle Audubon has posted a list of the native plants and the birds that are attracted to them in the kiosk in its demonstration garden. For a more complete list of native plants that attract birds, request a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary packet from www.wdfr.wa.gov, or send a check for \$5 to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program, 16018 Mill Creek Blvd., Mill Creek, WA 98012. The Washington Native Plant Society offers a consultation to landscape your yard in return for a donation to the organization, and has classes on native planting and conservation.

So next time you see the birds munching on some invasive Himalayan blackberry, it doesn't mean that is what they prefer. Given the choice, our local birds would much prefer the local specialty.

Native Plants for Your Back Yard

Large Trees:

Western red cedar
Douglas fir
Big leaf maple
Pacific madrone
Western hemlock

Small Trees:

Vine maple
Western paperbirch
Shore pine
Western serviceberry

Shrubs:

Red-flowering currant
Salmonberry
Elderberry
Nootka rose
Oregon grape
Oceanspray
Red twig dogwood
Indian plum
Snowberry
Wild mock orange

Herbaceous (Perennial) and Groundcovers:

Sword, deer, and lady ferns
Trillium
Stinging nettles
Kinnikinnick
Bunchberry
Red and evergreen
huckleberry
Columbine
Lupine
Salal
Pacific bleeding heart
Spreading phlox

You can purchase many of these through the King County Conservation District 2004 Tree and Shrub Sale. Call 206-764-3410, x119 by February 13, 2004. Plants will be available for pick-up on Friday and Saturday, March 5 and 6. Call now!

Don't forget the Seattle Audubon Spring Sale, March 27.