

## Field Trips—Not Your Average Educational Opportunity

by Gussie Litwer, Seattle Audubon volunteer

So you've done some casual birding and would like to learn a little more about the species around our region, but you're not inclined to sit in a classroom? Seattle Audubon offers a wonderful educational option—go on a field trip!

These excursions are led by experienced bird observers, many of whom are Seattle Audubon Master Birders or naturalists or ornithologists by training. Not only can they spot and identify the bird species, but they can often tell you a bit of bird biology and natural history, and maybe even talk about flora and other fauna along the way.

They can also show you areas and routes you may not know about. Often these guides, all volunteers, have taken the planned route a day or two before your trip, to see what species are around. The leaders are always willing to answer questions you may have.

Most field trips (listed on page 14 in this issue) are scheduled for the weekend, leave rather early, and return by dinner-time. But there is also an occasional weekday trip. Birders who need a shorter and less

physically demanding trip, for instance people using wheelchairs or those who just want to take it easy, can join some especially planned trips, such as Patricia Lott's "accessible birding" trips.

Most field trips are attended by experienced birders as well as beginners, and these folks provide another source of instruction. They are usually willing to explain things or help spot illusive species, while the leader is working with others.

Whether you want to get up early and range far and wide, or take a leisurely walk closer to home, you're sure to learn a lot on a Seattle Audubon field trip.



On Patricia Lott's accessible birding field trip

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## Take a Class, Expand Your Mind

by Robin Lewis,  
Master Birder and Classes Committee Co-Chair

Have you ever watched a hummingbird hover, a duck dive, or a songbird sing, and wondered how and why they do it? Birds and their behaviors are amazingly diverse, and Seattle Audubon offers a variety of classes to satisfy your intellectual curiosity. Whether you've become interested in the birds in your backyard or just reached 500 on your life list, there are classes to deepen your appreciation of birds and help you take your birding skills to the next level.

Spend a morning learning why there are thousands of crows at the arboretum. Or study an avian family in depth in a class that covers gulls, raptors, sparrows, owls, shorebirds, or herons, just to name a few.

Watch for the *Ornithology for the Birder Series*, with classes on taxonomy, anatomy, physiology, migration, breeding, and more. Find out why loons usually come first in your field guide and how a chickadee can survive the winter in Alaska.

Interested in learning about different habitats? Two recent classes were Birds of Mt. Rainier and Pelagic Birding. Did you know that the shrub-steppe of eastern Washington supports sagebrush and Sage Thrashers? Make a note to treat yourself to a class about the shrub-steppe next spring when the cacti are blooming.

You can even give your inner artist an outlet by taking a class on nature drawing, or start a new passion with a class on butterflies, bats, amphibians, or dragonflies.

Just turn to the Classes section in each issue of this newsletter (pages 16-17 this month) to see upcoming offerings. Check the Seattle Audubon web site, too. It often provides additional information about a class, plus biographies of our wonderful instructors. They are a well-qualified group of experts, including professors, Seattle Audubon Master Birders, professional naturalists, and dedicated citizen-scientists. Generous with their knowledge, they are sure to inspire you.

Class offerings are coordinated by volunteers on the Classes Committee. We welcome your suggestions or participation. Please get in touch with Vicki King at 206-525-7099 or vicki@kingdesign.net.

## Internships— Building Skills for the Future

by Matt Mega

Interns are an integral part of the Seattle Audubon culture. Typically, an intern focuses intensely on a single project over a three- to four-month period. Working primarily with one staff member, the intern discusses projects and procedures, and experiences the decision-making process first-hand. These interns gain valuable real-world experience in their fields of choice. And when an intern's passion and talents mesh with the project at hand, big dividends happen for all of us.

Ensuring that interns have a rewarding experience is a priority, and Seattle Audubon takes internships seriously. As a result, a strong connection between intern and staff often leads to a productive professional relationship after the internship ends. A few interns have moved on to permanent staff positions within Seattle Audubon. Emily Sprong, manager of the high school program, found her internship a great way to get involved with the organization, meet people, and acquire professional experience.

For more information on internships at Seattle Audubon, contact Lorraine Hartmann, Volunteer Program Manager, 206-523-8243, x12.

## Advocacy Training— Connecting Education and Citizen Action

by Matt Mega,  
Urban Habitat Program Director

Many of Seattle Audubon's successes in the policy arena derive from the involvement of citizen advocates. For that reason, we work hard to cultivate the skills of those interested in advocacy.

Effective advocates have a passion for an issue, are well informed about it, and know the strategies and techniques necessary to achieve their goals. While passion and knowledge may come easily, many people have never had a chance to master the methods and tools that can bring great results.

We offer two advocacy training opportunities to bridge this gap. Both aim to build knowledge, experience, and confidence in future citizen advocates. "Advocacy 101" is a one-day workshop, designed for individuals new to advocacy work. A quick primer, it covers topics such as

creating messages, grassroots organizing, testifying, and working with the media. The second is a ten-week course called "Master Advocate for the Environment." Aimed at people who already have some advocacy experience, perhaps even working in a nonprofit organization, this course covers similar topics but in greater depth, and adds hands-on exercises and action-oriented homework assignments. This program is taught by respected professionals who work within the advocacy realm and who provide expert insight and personal experience. The class is offered once a year, usually in the spring.

In addition to enhancing skills, both courses provide opportunities to share ideas and gain contacts. In this way, we hope, the courses strengthen not only the individuals who take them, but Seattle's environmental network.

For more information on advocacy training at Seattle Audubon, please visit our web site at [www.seattleaudubon.org](http://www.seattleaudubon.org) or contact Matt Mega at 206-985-6841, [mattm@seattleaudubon.org](mailto:mattm@seattleaudubon.org).

## Master Birders— Where Serious Birders Become Experts

by Mary Anne Thorbeck, Master Birder

Seattle Audubon's Master Birder course is unique among the 500-plus Audubon chapters in the country. This challenging course turns serious birders into experts. They study far more than bird identification, learning about bird behavior, habitat, conservation, bird evolution, banding, and other issues. Entry into the course is tough. The typical candidate for the program has been birding fairly seriously for several years, taken Seattle Audubon classes, participated in field trips, and perhaps volunteered with us. The application process includes a written statement of one's birding background as well as a slide identification quiz, and the course itself includes homework, tests, and field



Master Birder Class, 2004

trips. And students love it! The primary instructor, Dr. Dennis Paulson, brings extensive academic and field knowledge, and guest instructors lecture on particular topics. Students and instructors alike share a deep passion for birds.

Payment for the class has historically been in volunteer hours to Seattle Audubon. You will find Master Birders all over Seattle Audubon—having fun, paying back, and putting their knowledge and skills to good use!

## Public Education in the Nature Shop

by Rachel Lawson, Master Birder

As a Nature Shop volunteer, I certainly like helping customers with their purchases of birdfeeders, books, and binoculars. But I especially enjoy answering the many questions that volunteers are asked each day, over the telephone, by e-mail, and by customers in the shop.

Seattle Audubon is often the first, and sometimes the only, place that people, members and nonmembers alike, can think of to contact with questions about birds, birding, natural history, and the environment. In many cases, we simply refer people to organizations or individuals that can help them; for example, we refer those who have found sick or injured birds to local bird rehabilitators, and those wanting help preserving natural

places in their neighborhoods to the appropriate member of the professional staff.

Usually, however, we try to answer the questions ourselves. Every Spring, we know we will have dozens of people ask us how to make flickers stop hammering on the house, or robins quit attacking the windows. When people give us a description of a "mystery" bird, we try to identify it. Many visitors from out of state e-mail us, asking for suggestions about where to go birding during their trips to Seattle. One caller even asked if he could shoot the Cooper's Hawk that was catching birds at his feeder! I convinced him to think of it as bird-feeding on another level, and as a special opportunity to observe a beautiful predator in action.

I never get tired of hearing from the people who contact us, and I believe our role as shop volunteers is an important part of Seattle Audubon's education mission.

## Seattle Audubon Publications—Reaching Farther

by Richard Youel, Past President

Seattle Audubon also educates by publishing books.

The *Gardening for Life* booklet is in its second printing in response to popular demand. Developed with National Audubon and other generous grantors, it serves gardeners who have an interest in making their backyards contribute to a healthier environment for birds and all living things. Subtitled "An Inspirational Guide to Creating Healthy Habitat", it gives practical examples of how you can make a difference with energy, ideas, and a balanced, natural approach, in a part of the world that you control.

The new *Amphibians of the Pacific Northwest* will replace our previous book, *Amphibians of Washington and Oregon*. The new book covers an expanded range, with more species and updated information. Salamanders, frogs, and toads have a life cycle that links water and land habitats. Our moist Pacific Northwest

is rich in amphibians. Yet, amphibians are generally in decline here and globally. Human activities that diminish or degrade wetlands are the main reason for the decline. Amphibians are a good indicator of the health of wetlands, a key habitat for birds. Learning more about them gives us an appreciation for these fascinating animals, and engages us in protection of the habitats that sustain them—and us.

This book is for parents, educators, naturalists, and anyone who wants to know more about these interesting and special creatures. It will be available in the Seattle Audubon Nature Shop in the fall.



## BirdWeb— Seattle Audubon's On-line Guide to the Birds of Washington State

- Search for information about any bird or group of birds found in the state.
- Learn which of Washington's birds are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern.
- Find information about birds which have been seen in Washington only rarely.

People from all over the country use BirdWeb.org as an educational tool, checking for maps when they travel, looking for information on bird biology, and gathering material on bird conservation.

Have you seen BirdWeb? Check it out!

