

The Master Advocate Program: A Public Service

by Matt Mega, Director of Urban Habitat

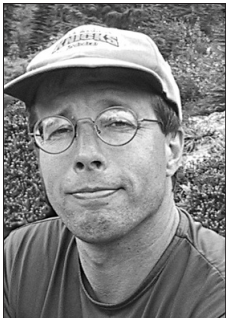
Seattle Audubon believes strongly in the importance of citizen participation and activism. We view advocacy as a dynamic process that requires patience, creativity, and an understanding of the core concepts of the issues. For the past two years, Seattle Audubon has offered a ten-week Master Advocate class to help citizen advocates gain the valuable skills necessary to engage successfully in local advocacy. The purpose of the class is to have local experts share their experiences and provide advice in a small classroom setting. Each week, we discuss a different topic. Topics covered in the class include:

- Message development
- Grassroots organizing

- Lobbying and testifying
- Working with the media

Every participant receives a binder of information to supplement lectures. In addition to lectures, the class also relies on hands-on experience and group learning. Students are required to pledge to undertake at least one advocacy activity during the course. This may include meeting with a local decision-maker, writing a letter to the editor, or testifying at a public hearing. We hope that, at the conclusion of the class, students have the confidence and skills to become advocates in their own neighborhoods. Many graduates continue to stay involved with Seattle Audubon as members of the Conservation Committee.

For more information on the Master Advocate class, contact Matt Mega at mattm@seattleaudubon.org, or 206-985-6841.



Matt Houghton: Master Advocate Graduate, 2004

As a university instructor and guide in Montana, I thought I knew a lot about environmental issues. But when I ended up in

the dense urban setting of Seattle, I wasn't sure how public activism worked. I soon discovered that the City of Seattle was planning on selling and developing a critical piece of wildlife habitat in my neighborhood near the Duwamish River. A concerned neighbor offered to send me through the Seattle Audubon Master Advocate class, and I accepted.

In the course, we worked through real-world issues. Two classes have been particularly useful to me in my current advocacy—how to interact with the media and how to approach and lobby decision-makers.

I believe anyone interested in advocacy, whether full-time activist or part-time upstart, will have something to gain from this class.

For more information about West Seattle's current struggle to save the Soundway property in the West Duwamish greenbelt, contact Matt at mogathin@hotmail.com.



Jennifer Bundy: Master Advocate Graduate, 2004

My strong interests in animal welfare and habitat preservation led me to Seattle Audubon's Master Advocate class. What I

hoped to take away from the class was the ability to be a more effective advocate. I work full-time and have limited time and energy to expend on activism issues, but I believe strongly that citizens need to be engaged in speaking out for those who do not have a voice in our political system.

My current endeavors focus on writing letters to various public entities, including my representatives, on behalf of animals and the environment. The Master Advocate course taught me how best to approach my letter-writing and how to interact confidently with local decision-makers.

I look forward to the future, when my circumstances change, and I have more time to dedicate to activism. When that day comes, I know I now have a solid foundation from which to draw upon.

New Coalition Works to Make I-90 Safer for Motorists and Wildlife

by Alex Morgan, Conservation Director

This past year, Seattle Audubon helped to form a new coalition to follow up on our large investments in habitat protection in the Central Cascades. A 15-mile stretch of Interstate 90 just east of Snoqualmie Pass is due for an upgrade. Deteriorated pavement, congestion, substandard curves, exposure to avalanches, and collisions with wildlife pose safety risks and reduce transportation efficiency. The Washington State Department of Transportation is proposing to expand this portion of the interstate from four lanes to six. The project is receiving national interest for its innovative designs to create a roadway that is safer for wildlife and for motorists. Therefore, we've joined with many conservation groups to advocate for high wildlife standards in this project. Here's why:

- The project area bisects a critical connective link in the north-south movement of wildlife in the Cascade Range. Recent conservation efforts have invested

over \$70 million to protect wildlife habitat just north and south of the project area.

- Across the country, thousands of motorists are injured annually in collisions with large animals and small animals. In a ten-year period on Interstate 90, 732 animal-related accidents were reported with 641 resulting in property damage, 114 in injuries, and one fatality.
- State biologists tell us that many of the calls they receive from motorists reporting injured Bald Eagles, Turkey Vultures, and other birds along I-90 are a result of vehicle-animal collisions. Many birds feed on the road-kill and face greater danger from motorists.
- From Montana to Europe, scientists and engineers are implementing exciting and effective solutions to make our roads safer. For the I-90 project, scientists have recommended several ways to improve passage of animals over or under the road, such as lengthening bridges over creeks and even an overpass specifically for wildlife.

To learn more about these efforts, visit the I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition web site at www.i90wildlifebridges.org.

Heron Monitoring and Advocacy Course

with Don Norman, wildlife biologist

Learn how wildlife biologists track the health of Great Blue Heron colonies. Don Norman, who has been monitoring herons since 1988, will teach you how to draw colony maps, estimate productivity, and translate this knowledge into helping protect heron habitat. The focus this spring will be on learning more about heron foraging areas. You will receive a booklet with monitoring protocols and forms to use for the course and for future monitoring. The course will consist of one

evening session and three one-day local field trips to learn to track a local colony. Learn more about the course by contacting donorman@aol.com, or call Seattle Audubon at 206-523-4483, or visit the *Classes* page at www.seattleaudubon.org for additional details.

Class: Tuesday, March 15, 7-9:00PM, Shoreline Conference Center (18560 1st Avenue NE). Coffee and snacks will be provided.

Field Trips: One field trip each month in March, April, and May. Dates are somewhat flexible and will be finalized after you register.

Cost: \$75 members, \$90 nonmembers

Limit: 32

Be an advocate for birds and their habitat— Join our Action Alert list!

by Alex Morgan,
Conservation Manager

Members of Seattle Audubon and the general public are crucial to the success of our advocacy efforts. Every issue the conservation team engages in at Seattle Audubon is supported by letters, testimony, phone calls, and e-mail messages from our members and activists, and face-to-face meetings with decision-makers. The efforts of these citizen-activists support and enhance the work that the staff and volunteers do on a daily basis in the conservation program.

Without this critical support, Seattle Audubon would be much less effective in its many pursuits to protect birds and their habitat.

We hope you will join our action alert listserve, known as SAS Action, by signing up on-line at <http://seattleaudubon.org/Conservation/Conservation.asp>. After you join, you'll receive occasional e-mails about specific threats to bird habitat. Each alert includes a list of talking points, sample text, addresses, and links to more information. Please sign up today and become a Seattle Audubon conservation activist!