

Pilchuck Audubon Profile

December 1981

Volume X Number 4

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- December 27 Sunday. CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Bank Building at the Smokey Point exit 206 on I-5. Be sure to bring a spotting scope if you have one. A Potluck Dinner Extravaganza will follow at 4:30 p.m. at Jennings Barn in Marysville to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Pilchuck Audubon and to compile the days count successes. For sign up or information contact Martha Jordan, 775-0137.
- January 2 Saturday. Field Trip to Foulweather Bluff. Meet in the Safeway Parking lot next to the Kingston/Edmonds Ferry at 9:30 a.m. We will take the ferry then drive to Foulweather Bluff near Point No Point. It is an easy walk down a heavily wooded trail to a saltwater marsh and quiet beach. Mushroom hunters may find a few along the trail. Pileated woodpeckers have been seen in the forest. Ducks and gulls feed in the bay. A good trip for kids. Bring a sack lunch. Leader Joan & Evan Lucas. 252-1684.
- January 4 Monday. PAS Board Meeting. All members may attend. Call Jan vanNiel for place and time.
- January 6-9 Eighth Annual Pacific Seabird Group meeting. Held at the Seattle Aquarium all three days. For agenda contact Lora Leschner of WDG at 464-7764.
- January 9 Saturday. BALD EAGLE SURVEY sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Bank Building at Smokey Point exit off I-5 or 12:30 p.m. at the south end of Deception Pass Bridge. Bring a sack lunch. We will be covering North Whidbey Island and Padilla Bay. Contact Sally van Niel for details 778-7568
- January 11 Monday. Special meeting on Snohomish County Sensitive Areas inventory that our Chapter is conducting. We need your help in various aspects of assistance. Meet at Sally vanNiel's at 7:30 p.m. Call for details 778-7568.
- January 15 Regular Meeting. Dan Taylor of Western Regional Office will present the Audubon film: "Last Stronghold of the Eagles". 7:30 p.m. Room 308 at Everett Community College. Be sure to be there for a spectacular film about bald eagles on the Chilkat River near Haines, Alaska.
- January 24 Sunday. Field trip to Skagit Wildlife Recreational Area. Meet at the Bank Building at Smokey Point exit 206 off I-5 at 9:30 a.m. Enjoy a walk along the dike by the river and past the ponds. Watch northern harriers and red-tailed hawks hunt in the fields. This is a wintering area for snow geese -- expect to see many thousand. Bring a sack lunch. Leader Steve Loerch 659-6901.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

A great horned owl was observed at Wiley Slough by Curt Howard. Also seen in the area was a hybrid duck - European/American wigeon cross. A Cooper's hawk has repeatedly taken song birds from the yard of Casey Jones at Coupeville.

Trumpeter swans (5) were seen flying over Hwy 99 and 164th in Lynnwood by Sally & Jan vanNiel. Flocks of Pine Siskin (125-250) regularly visit the front lawn of Martha Jordan--the birds are feeding on the abundant crop of dandelion seeds.

Fred Bird reports song bird activity near Snohomish--Townsend warblers stayed rather late due to the mild fall, the last group was seen 11/5 intermixed with ruby and golden-crowned kinglets and black-capped and chestnut-backed chickadees. The kinglets and chickadees form the usual winter resident flock supplemented by occasional bushtit and pine siskin flocks. There is a good representation of woodpeckers -- downy, hairy, common flicker, and pileated(four sightings). The woodpeckers are always in pairs; the hairy is the most common. In addition, twice this fall fly-overs of ravens have been observed (mid-October, 11/5). Varied thrushes arrived mid-November.

Terri and Steven Spencer have reported many observations from their recent trip to Rockport and the Skagit. At Rockport they observed 9 bald eagles (4 adult, 5 immature) as well as great-blue heron, black-capped chickadees, Stellar's jays, blue-winged teal, and belted kingfisher. Five miles from Rockport toward Marblemount, 9 more bald eagles were observed. An American Kestrel was observed catching insects along the stream bank. A dipper was observed in the stream. Also observed were downy and hairy woodpeckers, and golden-crowned kinglets.

A common goldeneye was seen in the river. At the Skagit Wildlife Recreational Area a Swainson's hawk was observed attacking a Northern Harrier. A short-eared owl was perched on a nearby fence post. On the way home a loggerhead shrike was seen.

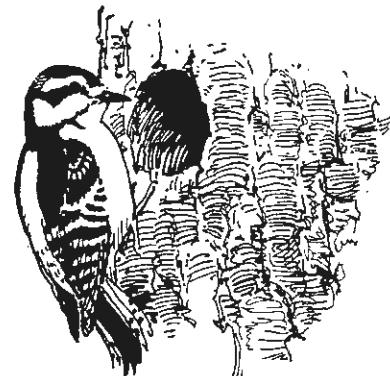
BARNEY LAKE - public access?

The Washington Department of Game has finally succeeded in obtaining a viewing point on the lake shore which will enable those who wish to watch the swans to do so without trespassing on private property. At present all of the shore is in private ownership; and public trespass results in marsh habitat destruction, harassment of the birds (often resulting in dispersal from the marsh) and complaints from angry landowners.

It will be some time before the viewing platform can be constructed, and probably this will not be accomplished for the 1981-82 season. Members will be notified through the Profile.

Meanwhile, members are urged to visit the area only on properly planned field trips led by authorized persons.

We also urge swan lovers to write the mayor of Mount Vernon to urge that development in the Barney Lake area be severely curtailed. State that you are concerned about the water quality and the drainage, and the imprisoning of small streams in culverts. Write to Mayor Ruth Gidlund, City of Mount Vernon, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.



We would like to welcome the following new Members:

Mountlake Terrace: E.L. Rutten, G.N. Benner

Marysville: Glassett Family

Camano Island: Maxine Gresset

Everett: David H. Davis, J. Schumacher, Marilyn Sampson

Lynnwood: Gloria Reading

AUDUBON LOBBYIST IN OLYMPIA--a reality?

The possibility of having a full time Audubon lobbyist in Olympia for the upcoming 1982 legislative session was discussed at the Ellensburg conference last October. The idea was enthusiastically received in principle. What remained was to produce a specific proposal, job description, and budget, and then determine whether we should proceed this year.

The Western Regional Office has prepared the necessary information and sent it to all the chapters in Washington for approval and support. In summary the lobbyist would be an employee of NAS and work exclusively with Audubon's legislative priorities in Washington State. It would be for the duration of the regular session. The budget for supporting this person has been set at \$9,000.. While this may seem like a lot of money, it actually represents only about \$1.00 per person who is a member of Audubon in Washington.

Dick Martyr of Western Regional proposes that NAS advance the necessary funds to open and operate the Olympia office and the Chapters in Washington collectively pledge to raise \$9,000 over the next year to offset the additional unbudgeted expense of establishing an Audubon lobbyist in Olympia.

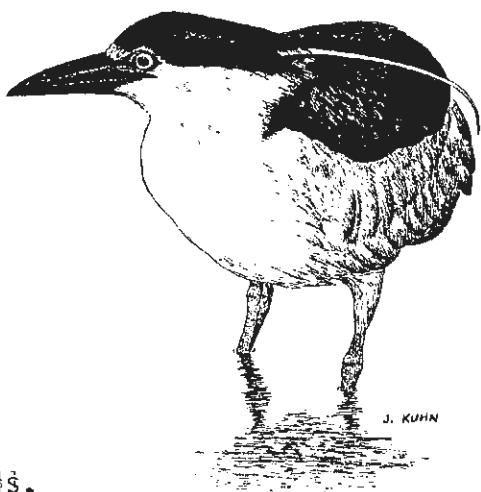
The PAS Board has voted to support the lobbyist effort in Olympia. We will know if the other Chapters support this concept by mid-December. Our monetary pledge over the next year for this effort is \$350.00. We feel this lobbyist is vital to combat the growing pressure from developers, Northern Tier, wood products and housing industries, and others who will try to weaken the state's hard won environmental standards for a clean and safe environment.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Washington Park - On Saturday, November 7, 25 people enjoyed observing many species of waterbirds, including Brandt's cormorant, a dolphin, and seals. Forty-six species were seen, including surf and white-winged scoter, harlequin, and bald eagles. Also observed was a Heerman's gull. We would like to thank Charles and Helen Nygard for providing us the rare opportunity to observe black crowned night herons roosting in trees near their home.

George C. Reiffel Refuge - Our trip started out cold and cloudy, but the skies cleared by the time we reached the border. The flocks of snow geese at the refuge were more numerous than we had seen in previous years. The fields appeared white with the geese, and they often flew up with a loud racket as they called to keep their family groups together. Canada geese were also numerous. There seemed to be a line of demarcation as the snow geese were on one side, ducks and geese on the other side of the field.

While watching the marsh from one of the towers, a Northern harrier was seen swooping down to within a few feet of the ducks finally stooping on one and plunging into the water. He recovered only to fly off and harass a group of eight great blue herons. Many species of waterfowl were seen including buffleheads, pintails, and redheads. A northern shrike was observed flitting from tree to tree. A total of 45 species of birds were observed.



NORTHWEST BIRDING

Dunlin (*Erolia alpina*)

Identification of Dunlins by the thousands is easy. The large compact flocks that frequent our coastal areas in fall and winter furnish one of the bird world's most unforgettable sights. Dunlins fly and turn in tight formations that seem to be directed by a central control, acting more like the interconnected parts of one large bird than like thousands of separate individuals. The eyecatching flash of grey to white, back to grey, as a thousand birds simultaneously turn and change directions impresses even the most casual observer.

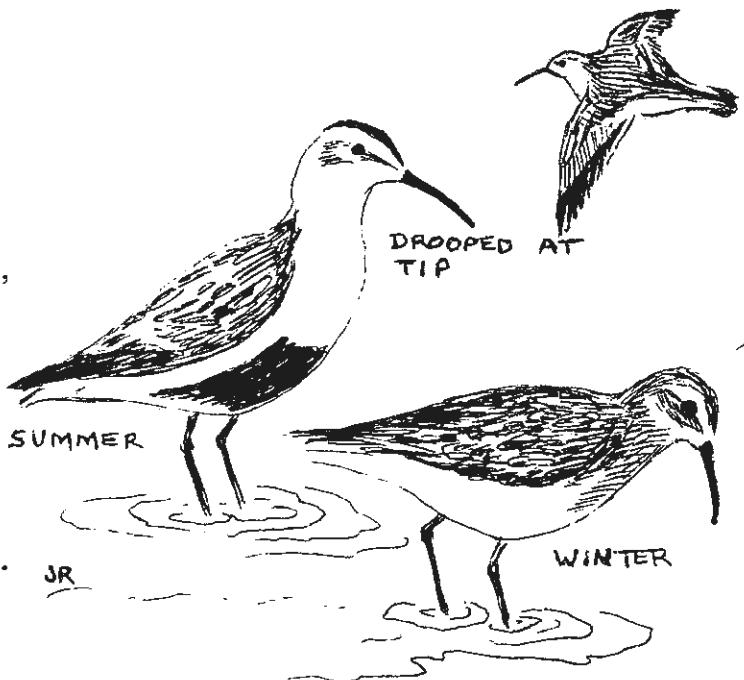
The Dunlin is relatively large in size for a sandpiper (8 to 9 inches), and, in its winter plumage, nondescript. The back is a solid medium to dark grey with no streaking, and the belly is whitish with a grey wash across the upper breast. The black bill is quite long, broadened at the base, and down-curved near the tip. The legs are greenish black. The Western Sandpiper and the Sanderling, found locally in the winter in smaller numbers, are similar and may be confused with the Dunlin. The Western also has a slightly down-curved bill. However, it is a noticeably smaller bird, and its back, though greyish, is streaked. The Sanderling is paler, has clear white underparts and a straighter bill.

In its breeding plumage, the Dunlin is quite colorful. The back is rusty-red (leading to its common name, Red-backed Sandpiper), and the breast is a streaked white, with a large black belly patch. The head is white, with grey streaks on the sides and a dark cap on top. Dunlins are only occasionally seen locally in this plumage.

The largest numbers and variety of sandpipers appear in Puget Sound during fall migration, primarily in August and September, as the birds are on their way to wintering areas along the coast and farther south. Dunlins, however, remain in Puget Sound in sizeable numbers during the winter.

Dunlins prefer the muddy margin of both salt and fresh water -- mudflats, tideflats, sandy beaches and bars, and flooded grasslands. Estuaries, such as the mouth of the Noosack River and the Skagit Wildlife Refuge, and protected bays such as Penn Cove on Whidbey Island and Drayton Harbor, usually have large flocks of Dunlins throughout the winter.

K. B.



DUNLIN

Courtesy of North Cascades Audubon Society
Text by Katy Batchelor

Nuclear Cost Overruns — Bring Voter Response

A citizens' organization named Don't Bankrupt Washington—Washington State, that is—won a decisive Election Day victory in a statewide vote. The ballot proposal the group initiated will give voters more control over public spending for new electric power plants. It was approved by 495,013 to 356,784, despite a \$1.3 million opposition campaign by utilities, contractors, and allied industries, the most expensive campaign ever waged in the state against a voter initiative. Don't Bankrupt Washington countered with \$209,000 raised from 2,500 contributors, including National Audubon Society.

Alarming cost overruns by five nuclear plants under construction by the Washington Public Power Supply System led to the voter initiative. The costs have escalated from \$4.1 billion to \$23.9 billion, with no assurance they will stop there. The money the utility must recover to pay off the bonds that financed these overruns must come from "drastic increases in our utility bills," according to Don't Bankrupt Washington, and averages out to more than \$30,000 per household in the state.

The newly passed initiative will require public agencies such as cities, counties, and WPPSS (pronounced Whoops by friend and foe) to obtain voter approval for the budget for construction or acquisition of any public energy project bigger than 250 megawatts. Only persons in the area to be served by the proposed project would be entitled to vote.

This requirement applies to all types of powerplants. Although the \$20 billion cost overrun of the five nuclear plants inspired the initiative, the citizens' organization says it is concerned about funding for any public power projects that are economically unsound.

"What we wanted was to make them justify spending the money before they sell the bonds and obligate people to pay back the money," explains Steve Zemke, organizer of the campaign and a member of Seattle Audubon Society.

Don't Bankrupt Washington amassed 186,000 signatures to put Initiative 394 on the ballot. All 19 National Audubon chapters in the state backed the campaign, providing leg-work as well as cash contributions.

There is no doubt about the legality of the state's new requirement on funding for public power projects; many states already have enacted such legislation. However, the initiative also included a provision which would subject the budgets for the five WPPSS nuclear plants — as currently planned and funded — to be approved by referendum. A spokesman for the utility has indicated this may be challenged in court, on the grounds it could retroactively change agreements between the utility and the buyers of its bonds.

Election Day voters in Austin, Texas, had a similar reaction to nuclear powerplant cost overruns. By a 58 to 42 percent margin, they authorized the city council to sell the city's 16 percent interest in the partially completed South Texas nuclear plant. Austin is one of four cities that invested in the project and planned to use its power. Now the projected costs have risen from \$2.7 billion to almost \$5 billion, and the voters have decided the city should pull out.

Latest Harris Poll. Eighty percent of the American public is opposed to any weakening of the Clean Air Act, "even given the costs involved in cleaning up the environment," according to the most recent Harris public opinion poll. This view was held by 75 percent of the respondents who voted for Reagan last fall, 76 percent of those who call themselves conservatives, 75 percent of Republicans, and 82 percent of union workers. Pollster Lou Harris called the results "one of the clearest and most overwhelming we have recorded in twenty-five years of surveying public opinion."

New Guide. A 94-page booklet, *A CONSERVATIONIST'S GUIDE TO NATIONAL FOREST PLANNING*, has been prepared by National Audubon Society in cooperation with the Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, and Natural Resources Defense Council. It offers help to citizens interested in participating in the long-term planning process for the national forests. Single copies are available without charge, as long as they last, from Information Services at the society's national headquarters in New York.

A Book You'll Want. National Audubon Society's newly revised and expanded *GUIDE FOR CITIZEN ACTION* is now available for \$2.50, including postage, from Information Services at the society's New York headquarters. The 40-page guide includes a clear and thorough rundown of the federal legislative and budget-making processes, "how to" activist information for individuals and organizations, a chapter on dealing with the media, and full details on the law covering lobbying by tax-exempt organizations. Sample copies are being sent to chapter presidents and conservation chairpersons.

Gull Chick Disaster. Between 20,000 and 30,000 gull chicks starved to death this season at Mono Lake in California. The lake is shrinking because its headwaters are being siphoned off by the city of Los Angeles. Biologists fear the great colony of California gulls that breeds there will be destroyed if the diversions are not halted before next year's nesting season.

WANTED: Someone interested in being editor or assistant editor for the Profile. Here is a chance to make a real contribution to the chapter and to be creative at the same time. Contact Martha Jordan at 775-0137.

PAS BOARD

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To subscribe to the Profile, send \$5.00 to Pilchuck Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1618, Everett, WA 98206.

(If you would like first class postage send \$4.00 to PAS. This applies to all members.)

To join Pilchuck Audubon Society, which includes membership in the National Audubon Society and the magazine "Audubon", as well as the Pilchuck Audubon "Profile" (our Chapter newsletter), please fill out the application below and send to PAS.

Name _____

Address _____

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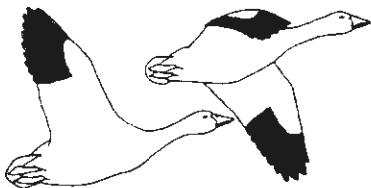
Type of Membership:

Individual (\$25.00 per year)

Family (\$32.00 per year)

Other (ask our membership chairperson)

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER IS
THE PAS BOARD MEETING DATE.



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